influence in Iran at this time. What kind of leverage did it give? Could you give some examples.

Meyer: Well, it maintained our relationship. Our whole relationship with the Shah, I think depended on the military side of things. He wanted to maintain his American orientation. We had the MAAG mission there, training his people. He wanted to maintain that orientation; he did not like the Russians. And as I mentioned earlier, to me it was (later) the essence of the Nixon Doctrine, i.e., to let him fight his own battles. But there was another factor, and I sincerely believed it. If there was any trouble on the other side of the Gulf, if some extremists, for example, would upset the Kuwait regime, they would know that they would have to put up with the Shah immediately. I think that an adequate Iranian military capability was a good deterrent to extremism on the other side of the Gulf.

Q: Did the U.S. refuse any weapons systems purchases to the Shah?

Meyer: All the time, all the time. If we would have left it to the Shah, during my days, the sky would have been the limit. He wanted everything. I would have to explain why he didn't need Hawk missiles, for example. I'd say, "Your boys will all be sleeping out there at Sharoki [air force base] when the Iraqis lay their eggs. By the time they wake up, they'll be outside the 25 kilometer dome. So you don't need any Hawk missiles." I was always trying to talk him out of equipment.

Q: You mentioned a few minutes ago that you questioned the Shah on certain regional issues that he was concerned with. The Median Line problem you mentioned.

Meyer: Very definitely.

Q: Could you explain that briefly?

Meyer: Yes. There was a long-standing dispute between the Saudis and the Iranians with regard to the middle of the Gulf. There was an overlap in the ARAMCO concession with the Iran consortium concession. The overlap involved, I don't know how many miles; five miles, something like that. Suddenly, right after I got there, the Shah initialled an agreement sort of splitting the disputed area down the middle. But then he discovered there was 13.9 billion barrels of reserves underneath that little strip of land, most of which was on the Saudi side, and going downhill toward the Saudi side. So the agreement never got ratified. I was talking to him one day and I said, "Why don't you ratify that agreement? You've initialled it." He said, "Well, I couldn't get my parliament to approve it." You knew there was no such thing as the Shah's not being able to get his parliament's approval. I knew darn well he himself was not going to go through with it.

So I wrote to our Ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Herman Eilts, and to Tom Barger, who was the head of ARAMCO, an old friend of mine. I said, "Tom, isn't there some way we can find an answer to this? How about joint production inside the disputed area, and splitting the

proceeds?" Tom wrote back (and I kept Herman Eilts, our ambassador in Saudi Arabia, informed) and said, "Armin, we've tried that. It doesn't work. But what worked in one case was to get the geologists to figure out where the oil is, and then split that area fifty-fifty as far as oil resources are concerned." So I put that bug in the Shah's ear and made him think it was his own. Then he sent his people to Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, Tom Barger got the Saudis organized as though it was their idea. They all were able to take credit that it was their own idea; they didn't realize the foreign hand that was involved. But they came to an agreement on that basis. It was an historic solution, preventing serious future trouble. There had already been some minor nationalistic action by the Iranian navy against an Aramco drilling rig, an incident which I got quickly resolved via Alam, and the C-in-C of the Iranian navy, who was ordered by the Shah to work with me in the solution.

Q: That's interesting. You also mentioned the Bahrain question.

Meyer: Iran, for many generations, had laid claim to Bahrain island. A lot of people of Iranian ancestry lived there. This issue would come up from time to time and it was a potential source of conflict. On one occasion, tHe Shah at the last minute cancelled his first ever visit to Saudi Arabia because King Faisal mentioned publicly something about Bahrain and made the Shah very angry. But later on he did make that trip, and I pushed him hard to do it. I don't know much more, because it was finally decided after I left. But he said, "I have to have some face-saving device to do this. I'm the only man

that can do it. After me, nobody can do it. All I need is some sort of referendum or something, an arbitration committee or a survey committee. Something that will save me face, and I'm prepared to sign off on it." That's exactly how this issue was then resolved.

O: Did you play any official role in this?

Meyer: Other than to encourage it at the outset, no.

O: Any more thoughts on the arms sales issue, or is what you've said already pretty much what you recall?

Meyer: I think so, pretty much. I could get into much more detail. When we provided the F-4's, for example, that was a major decision by the time we finally came through with it. It was so major that the Pentagon decided to send Townsend Hoopes (then deputy chief for International Security Affairs at DOD) to Tehran to inform the Shah, instead of me doing it. Hoopes and I went up to see the Shah when he was, as was his usual custom, at the Caspian [Sea] in the month of August. The night before, Hoopes was reading exactly what he was going to tell the Shah. He read it to me--asking whether this would be the right line. I said it sounded fine. The next day he even read his draft to the Shah. Me, I would always talk in person, the way you and I are doing, informally. Hoopes got to one point where he said, "To show you how important this decision is, this is the first time the United States has ever sold F-4s to any foreign country."

"You're wrong, Mr. Hoopes," the Shah interjected, "You sold F-4J's to the British." He knew military things as nobody else knew them, including what was on the military drawing boards.

Q: Let me go on to some of the petroleum issues. When you consider American interests in Iran at this period--the 1960's, or the 1950's for that matter--did petroleum have much great weight in the U.S. calculation of its interests?

Meyer: Oh, very much so. We realized Iran had vast quantities of reserves. Of course, after the Mossadegh affair, the United States sent out that special mission headed by Herbert Hoover, Jr., which put the oil consortium together, and got Iran back into production. During my days, the problem was usually one of off-takes, primarily that. And relinquishment. The Shah wanted undeveloped portions of land relinquished which had been allocated to the consortium oil companies so that he could parcel it out as new concessions. He parcelled out, for example, the whole offshore area in the Gulf.

He was always wanting more oil revenue to finance his development plan and defense costs. He'd come pleading--he'd plead to Lyndon Johnson, "Look, I want to buy military equipment and pay for it, but phave your people buy more oil from me, so that I can have the money to pay for it. Why should you buy so much oil from Saudi Arabia?" He was very jealous of Saudi Arabia. He accused the oil companies of being unfair, that they were exploiting the cheaper cost of Saudi crude, which they were: seven cents a barrel versus eleven, or something close to that at that time.

The Shah always wanted to have more crude oil sales. Every year, he would sort of threaten to close the consortium down. The moguls of the consortium companies (the four American majors and British Petroleum) would have to come out. They would sit in Tehran for two weeks. They'd come crying on my shoulder. In effect, I was often the middle man; I'd work through Alam, and we'd get this settled, that settled, through the course of those meetings.

But that was before the big break. During my years, the Shah didn't see the power of oil. The companies were paying $1.20 a barrel, really--even though the posted price was $1.80 or something like that. He had no use for OPEC, because there were mostly Arabs in it. He didn't care much about it. OPEC members did try to divide up the pie, but the Iranians weren't too happy about that because they wanted more for themselves. In short, the Shah at that time saw very little value in OPEC, and paid little attention to it.

It wasn't until the Arab oil embargo in 1973, when the Shah saw that oil producers had real strength, that he became a leader in the price hikes that occurred subsequently. He rationalized his position, of course, contending that what we westerners needed was a big shock, that oil wouldn't be with us forever. In hsi view, we had to be shocked, in order to develop other sources of energy, also that oil should be used for derivatives like plastics and things of that kind rather than for combustion.

Q: He was thinking of petrochemicals and so forth.

Meyer: That's right, petrochemicals.

Q: How much influence did the major oil firms have on the State Department's approach? You said they came crying on your shoulders at some points, that they were complaining about the Shah's demands. How much influence did you have on them, or much influence did they have on policy?

Meyer: I don't think they had much influence on policy at all.

If you want to know how I broke the arms impasse, I'll tell you a real secret. The way I broke that was, shortly after I came back from seeing Lyndon Johnson. I was feeling pretty blue when I got off the plane--

Q: Yes.

Meyer: I mean the meetings with Lyndon Johnson and McNamara. I was feeling pretty blue, because I didn't expect much to come out of it. I was in my office when I got a call from the Israeli representative in Tehran. He wanted to come see me.

Q: What year was this?

Meyer: This was 1967 I guess. The Israeli representative came to see me and he said, "What are you trying to do, turn the Shah over to the Russians? Why don't you provide him with some military equipment?" I said, "I'm glad you raised that question, because I'm just back from Washington where I tried to do something about this.

You're preaching to the converted."

I went on, "Incidentally, it so happens, I just read in this morning's wireless bulletin that your president is on a visit to Washington this week. Now, if you think this is an important subject, I would suggest you have your president mention it to President Johnson when he sees him." Not surprisingly, that's exactly what he did. It was on a Tuesday morning. Johnson came out of the meeting with the Israeli president to his regular Tuesday luch with "the awesome foursome" (Rusk, McNamara, Rostow, and the President) and said, "Hey, the Israelis are very worried about what's happening in Iran if we don't provide military equipment."

That's how I got that damn thing broken loose. Because until then, Johnson's basic mentality with regard to foreign affairs always was--he was so overawed by Kennedy and Kennedy's advisors, the Rusk/Bundy/McNamara/Rostow group, he thought they knew much more than he did and he deferred to them. That's why he had told me, "I hope you can get the government to go along with you." Because in foreign affairs he didn't feel competent to make such a decision.

When the Israelis--then you get some domestic politics factored into the thing--came and said, "Hey, you're about to lose the Shah", that carried some weight with Lyndon Johnson. He took a position, and that broke that thing loose.

O: This was the approval of the F-4 sale?

Meyer: The approval of fifty million dollars a year for four years, including the sale of two squadrons of F-4 aircraft.

Q: Back to the oil question, when the majors dealt with the Shah on these questions, they tried to resist his pressures for more production I take it.

Meyer: Yes, right.

Q: Did you think they were behaving responsibly, in what you saw as the national interest?

Meyer: Actually, at one time I sent in a telegram, which Jerry what's-his-name, who was on Senator Frank Church's committee, later got hold of, in which I used the words "restraint of trade." He loved that, and wanted to make something of it. I didn't mean it in a technical or legal sense.

I did feel that the Shah had a good point. He wanted to buy military equipment. He had a bigger country, and he was trying to develop it, and he needed funds. If the companies could just shave a bit more from Saudi production and buy from Iran, that made some sense.

But I didn't really get too much involved in that. Frankly, I was never instructed to push for more oil sales from Iran or anything. I was a middleman, really, for the companies. I was never told by Washington to push this or that. The oil companies would come in and gripe to Washington, but Washington didn't do anything other than report to me the conversations. Action in Tehran was left to me, with Alam and I serving as middle men between the companies

and the Shah.

Q: I have some questions about some of the oil matters that came up in the late 1960's. In 1966, apparently, the Shah asked for more production of course, but also cost oil [?] that he could sell to Eastern Europe, plus relinquishment of public concessions.

Meyer: That's right.

Q: Apparently, there was an agreement that was made on these issues.

Meyer: Oh yes.

Q: Did you play any role in this?

Meyer: There were several issues that came up during the years I was there. Greater off-takes was number one. Relinquishment number two; cost oil sales another. Of course, the oil company people, with reason, said, "Look, who are you kidding? There's so much oil being used in the world. If you sell cost oil to Eastern Europe, it means we're going to get hurt in the long run." That was their basic argument.

Q: Sales in western markets?

Meyer: That's right. And there was a fourth issue; I forget what it was. One time, I remember, Alam came and talked to me. He said,

"Armin, you tell your oil friends that if they will give just a little bit here on this point, a little bit on that," (he specified; I forget the details) "there'll be peace for ten years." So they went into their meetings with Eqbal, the head of NIOC [National Iranian Oil Company], and they agreed to the relatively minor concessions. The next year, the Shah pounded on them again. [laughs]

Q: Did you talk to the Shah much about the oil questions?

Meyer: Quite a bit, yes, quite a bit. Of course, he would call them "thieves" and similar epithets, the oil company people.

Q: I have the impression, from looking at some of the documents from the Church Committee report, that the State Department initially opposed the idea of relinquishment because it might set a bad precedent for other concessions in the Middle East.

Meyer: I don't remember that. I thought some relinquishment had happened (in Saudi Arabia) before I got there, but I may be wrong. I think there may have been some concern, but I didn't work very hard on that point.

Q: Okay. I was just curious. Another problem that came up in 1967 was the issue of aggregate program quantity, the system by which the consortium members--it was what they used to regulate production of the consortium as a whole. It was designed to prevent overproduction, to limit production to a designated level to prevent

price problems.

Meyer: I remember that terminology now, but I don't remember much of the details. But there was a fight most of the time between the British--BP--and the five American participants who were in the consortium.

Q: Would you have much to do with the British ambassador on these questions?

Meyer: Oh yes; Ambassador Denis Wright and I quite often worked very closely together. David Steel, the head of BP, would come with the other boys, usually, to see me.

Q: In terms of British interests, were there any conflicts there?

Meyer: Pretty much no, because British Petroleum (BP) was in the consortium; BP was feeling the same way as our majors were.

Q: I remember reading in the Church Committee documents that in 1968 the Iranian Oil Company--the NIOC--presented the consortium with a plan for a five revenue commitment. They had to commit themselves to five years guaranteed revenues.

Meyer: Yes, I remember that.

Q: Apparently the Shah threatened at one point that if the companies

did not meet his revenue goals he would take over the oil fields.

Meyer: Yes, I remember that.

Q: Was that a serious threat?

Meyer: He always made a lot of threats of that kind, and the poor oil companies didn't know whether he'd carry them out. I forget how that was resolved. I've forgotten the details. I remember, now that you mention it, that episode, but I don't remember the details.

Q: They apparently changed the calendar or something.

Meyer: Yes, that's right. They resorted to some gimmicks. They gave a little bit here and they gave a little bit there, as they usually did.

Q: But you don't recall any--

Meyer: The calendar change I vaguely recollect, now that you mention it.

Q: But you don't know who was involved in that?

Meyer: Well, it was the oil company leaders.

Q: There was no embassy role or State Department role?

Meyer: No, none.

Q: It was all privately done.

Meyer: Right. But they always kept me posted on what they were doing.

Q: Are there any other comments about the oil question that you'd like to make?

Meyer: No.

Q: When you were Ambassador, in this period, did the CIA have any special role?

Meyer: Very definitely.

Q: How would you characterize it?

Meyer: CIA had two roles. Its main role was developing intelligence facilities in Iran. As you know, the place was loaded with facilities. In our embassy compound--that's why the Khomeini regime later called it a "den of spies."

Actually, I was there when we had to make a decision whether to build a "warehouse" on the embassy compound. The whole basement--we called it a "warehouse"--was nothing but electronic

gear. In the meantime we had all kinds of other monitoring devices on the compound. We had invaluable devices at the Shah's game preserve. We had stuff extensive facilities out north of Meshed, monitoring every blast that the Soviets ever emitted, every missile they ever shot, their intercommunications between their military units, and so on. It was fabulous, really. The Shah was working with us on that.

The CIA man, once a month or two, would go to see the Shah, and they would discuss questions on this subject. He would come back and tell me about it. But it was the kind of thing that I was delighted to have him talk to the Shah about.

Q: Did you have any oversight authority over their activity?

Meyer: Oh yes. I thought we had very good relations. What's-his-name, who wrote a book on it--somebody wrote a book on CIA, and put me in it, showing how I was taken in by CIA. I forget; who wrote that book on CIA? Anyway, one of my kids brought it to me in class at Georgetown about ten years ago. He said, "I noticed you're mentioned in this book."

It tells the story about how I received a Roger Channel telegram from the State Department one day. A Roger Channel message goes only to the Ambassador and assumes, "Don't show it to anybody." It usually deals with CIA--the CIA wants to send two more people out, or something. That's usually what these messages were. "What's your view on it?" Well, my relations with Alan Conway were so close--

Q: He was the station chief?

Meyer: Station chief. I called Alan in. I said "Al, what's this all about?" I sent in my reply, and gave him a copy. This book says--professing to show how at odds theCIA and the Embassy were--the Roger Channel response came back, the CIA had smuggled a copy from the Ambassador and it wound up at CIA headquarters in Washington. CIA didn't smuggle it; I shared the information.

Q: Just a routine--

Meyer: It was a routine thing. To play it up as though the CIA station chief had spied on me and my message had wound up on the CIA Director's desk in Washington, it just appalled me, really. Basically, I had very good relations with Alan. I have no way of being certain; maybe he did some things that I was not aware of. He was close with Nasiri, the Iranian intelligence chief.

Q: Did you know anything about the CIA's contacts with the SAVAK?

Meyer: That's SAVAK. Nasiri was SAVAK.

Q: Do you know much about that end of things?

Meyer: Not too much, no. I don't know that CIA provided very much to Nasiri, but they did have fairly good relations. Basically, in all these CIA operations, your main target is the Russians, it's not

local. You're getting information about the Russians, what agents are up to.

Q: At this time, in the 1960's and late 1950's, that whole period before Nixon, did people see the Soviet Union as a threat to Iran in some respects? Was it more of an indirect threat?

Meyer: Oh, very definitely. After all, since World War II, we have been concerned about the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement in 1940, i.e., that the aspirations of the Soviet Union after World War II would be in the direction of Batum and the Persian Gulf. Period. We just assumed that. It had been confirmed by what the Soviets did immediately after World War II in Azerbaidzhan in support of their ambition for access to a warm water port.

Q: Was there a sense that the Soviet Union was an active military threat, or was it lower level than that?

Meyer: Both. There could always be the possibility of an Azerbaidzhan type of move. At that time, at the end of World War II, the Russian troops refused to get out of Azerbaidzhan. The Soviets had set up puppet regimes in Azerbaidzhan and in Kurdestan. But nobody had any illusions that the Shah could stave off the Russian army very long. As he himself said, "If they come, it's World War III, and you're in it with me. What's more likely is wars by proxy," as he called them. "The Iraqis will do the fighting. They will attack Iran. That I want to handle myself. I don't want you to come

in and help me on that."

Q: The Shah said that?

Meyer: Yes.

Q: Do you think he saw himself as the weaker vis-a-vis Iraq?

Meyer: Very definitely, for a while there.

Q: Was that true do you think?

Meyer: Very much so, because the Iraqis getting MIG aircraft--quite a number of them; I forget what the numbers were--at 700 thousand dollars each. And as I say, there was the prospect of his getting nothing from us. He had some F-5's that we'd provided earlier. But he did not have as much as the Iraqis had and the gap was growing.

Q: So on balance, in this period, the 1960's, you saw the major threat as sort of like regional as opposed to domestic instability?

Meyer: Absolutely; what he considered wars by proxy, right.

Q: When the British--I guess it was late 1967, early 1968--made the decision that they would be pulling out of the Persian Gulf several years away, how did State Department officials react to that?

Meyer: I'm a little weak on that. I know the British were more worried about it, I think, than we were. The Shah, of course, got very much interested in it. What role should he play and all the rest of it. He had a visit by Ted Heath, a top British political leader, and they talked a lot about it. I don't recall that it was a major issue about which I was instructed to talk to the Shah, although no doubt it was a subject of concern to State Department policy planners. Ideas about building up over-the-horizon naval capabilities at Diego Garcia were emerging.

Q: Was there any contingency planning, or advance planning or whatever?

Meyer: Except for Diego Garcia, no. We had our four Comideast Force naval units in the Gulf. That was as far as we went. That didn't change any.

Q: When you left Iran in 1969 to go to Japan--you were in Japan for four years--when Iranian issues came up under Nixon were you consulted at any point about policy towards Iran?

Meyer: No.

Q: They kept their own counsel.

Meyer: That's right. But you know, an interesting omen of a new policy occurred when I was still in Iran during the first months of

the Nixon administration. I sent in a telegram one day about a talk with the Shah in which I was holding him back on military procurement. Ted Eliot, who was still the Iran desk officer, wrote me a letter saying, "Armin, you should know that with regard to that telegram you sent in on your last talk with the Shah, where you talked about the arms problem, a certain senior official--(I won't mention his name)--said 'What's the matter with Armin? If the Shah wants to buy more military equipment to clobber the Arabs, so much the better.'"

That began the whole process of breaking the dam, and opened the floodgates for American military supplies to what became, ultimately, three billion dollars a year instead of fifty million. That was, I think, a travesty, and I think it contributed to the Shah's downfall.

I made speeches after he fell, and identified what I considered eight indigenous reasons that caused the Shah's downfall, and four American contributory reasons. [* [redacted]]

[See appendix for specific details]

Q: Do you want to mention those briefly?

Meyer: Well, I don't remember them all. The eight indigenous ones obviously included too fast economic development, SAVAK, and maladministration. Also, a sort of a bureaucratic attitude--the Shah had the basic belief that you had to run the country with strength and that his people would appreciate and support him as his regime achieved impressive economic development and international prestige. He had no charisma; that's the point. He had no charisma. He had national television and most of the media at his control but wasn't

able to make the Iranian people feel, as a Nehru would, that they were moving, that he was part of them, and they were a part of him, that type of relationship.

Q: He lacked the common touch.

Meyer: He lacked it completely. On the American contributory side, I think first of arms. The massive arms sales was a great mistake, particularly bringing in all those Americans that produced a cultural shock which Khomeini was able to exploit with great effect. You can imagine all those Iranians in Isfahan getting indignant at the blaring away late at night of all that hi-fi stuff, and the importation of prostitutes; it was awful. Secondly, human rights. I am referring to Carter's ostentatious pressure on human rights.

There's an interesting story, and I know it's a true story. When Carter came to power, the Shah knew that he was critical of the Shah's performance but he sent him a friendly personal greeting on inauguration as he would do for any President. Two months went by, and the Shah never got a reply.

Now, I know the Shah, and the Shah could be a brooding Hamlet. He could sit there thinking, "What's going on with my relations with Washington? This guy Carter appears to be another Kennedy. I'm in trouble. Why hasn't he even done me the courtesy of acknowledging my greetings?" He got very worried, and that's when got started on on a course of udertaking a lot of human rights actions that he thought would placate Washington.

It turns out--I heard this directly from our deputy chief of

mission in Tehran--that the reason that the reply never came was simply, when a new administration comes in, bureacratic snafus can easily occur. No one understood the normal formality of sending a reply. Nobody thought about it; nobody did it, and it took two months. But the Shah, being the brooding kind he was, took it as a sign that Carter was against him, specifically vis-a-vis human rights, and he'd better let more people out of jail, which he did do. And as I mentioned, he told Ambassador Sullivan, "They're all murderers, but I hope it will make Washington happy."

So I think our handling of the human rights issue was a contributing factor. I'm all in favor of human rights, but I think you work on it in a more quiet way than we sometimes do.

The third contributing factor was our chronic postwar tendency to play God, that we know all the answers to everything, and that we should publicly tell other countries (I call it "loud-mouth diplomacy") how they should run their affairs. That always grates on locals no matter what the character of their leadership, and makes us very unpopular.

I forget what my fourth reason was, but anyhow, you can neatly put them together. Eight to four, an appropriate proportion, eight indigenous reasons and four contributory in which I think we were involved.

Q: You mentioned before the interview began that you had a rendezvous with the Shah on the way to Eisenhower's funeral.

Meyer: Yes, that was an unusual and particularly memorable

experience. Do you have your tape going?

Q: Yes, it's on now.

Meyer: In April, 1969 (just before my transfer from Iran to Japan), I got a call at six o'clock in the morning from Washington saying Eisenhower had died. The family did not want a state funeral and didn't want official guests to come, but there were only leaders in the world whom they considerd personal friends of President Eisenhower, one of them being the Shah. Would I convey to him an informal message that if he would like to come to the funeral ceremonies he would be welcome. I called Court Minister Alam and within half an hour he called back to say that the Shah would be very pleased to attend. In the meantime, I told Ted Eliot, the desk officer, "If the Shah goes I want to go, because I don't want him mishandled when he's over there." This turned out to be a valid concern. Eliot informed me in London that the protocol officials planned to rank the Shah as #24 among world representatives because his coronation had occurred only a year earlier. Pointing out in a strong telegram that the Shah had been in power for 28 years,, I was able to get him appropriately seated on the first row at Washington's National Cathedral. I asked Alam--they were commandeering an Iran Air plane to fly to London--if I could fly with them. He said, "His Majesty graciously invites you to come along." So I went with the Shah and his entourage. Soon after we took off, the Shah sent back word that he'd like to have me come up and join him up in his special cabin up in front. We chatted. We stopped in Turkey, where he had

to go out and greet the Iranian consulate people and a few Iranians. Then we took off again and went on to London.

Our stopover in Istanbul was only an hour or so. When we took off, I went to the back of the plane. But soon word came back again that the Shah wished my company. So, during the flight to London I went back up to talk with him some more. I think he had one drink. He never drank very much. We talked about a lot of things.

The thing that I will always remember was probing the Shah's thoughts on subjects not on the normal agendas during audiences. The poignant question was, "What happens if something happens to you, in Iran?" He said, "Chaos." He had been very much impressed when Kennedy was shot that automatically there was a change of power. He didn't have that in Iran. Realizing this would not be true in Iran, he had revised the constitution when I was there--in my early years--to set up a Regency Council. If anything happened to him, there would be a Regency Council with the Queen in charge, and including the Prime Minister and the Speaker of the Parliament. So I said, "You've set up this Regency Council, so government should continue." He said "Yes, but in my country people only understand strength. Within a matter of six months, they will have no respect for the Queen. They'll be quarreling with one another, and there will be chaos in the country."

I thought that was an interesting observation because basically, his idea of ruling was not to be associated with the people, but to be above them, to be strong. You have to be strong. A lot of Americans, obviously, didn't like that idea. It's not democratic. So many, if not most, Americans were with those young Iranians who

went back to overthrow the Shah and have a democracy. Well, what we have got to an even greater degree now in Iran (the Khomeini regime) is exactly strong, tough, ruthless leadership.

If you look at the history of Persia, the only time it has ever had any kind of stability is when there have been tough leaders. Nadr Shah, one of Persia's most revered leaders, used to put piles of skulls in front of his tent just to let people know who was boss. I mean, that's the Iranian mentality.

The Shah had that to think about, but at the same time--he said it publicly and he said it to me on several occasions--he never would forget how his father had made a very disturbing statement when he was a young man. His father made a public statement saying, "After I leave, this country's going to fall apart." This Shah said, "I'm his young son, standing next to him. It sounded as though he had no confidence in me. But now I know what he means. He was not able to establish the institutions that would carry on." The point was that all depended on the individual, the Shah explained, adding, "My father had not been able to establish the institutions."

That's what the Shah was trying to do. He was trying to establish the White Revolution, various institutions, including a multi-party parliament. But it was a pretty tame parliament. Then when in the late 1970s he came up with his silly Rastakhiz, his one party system, it was absolutely absurd.

In that connection, I must say--I left there in 1969 and didn't get back again until 1974. The difference in the mentality of the people was enormous. When I left in 1969, people like Prime Minister Hoveyda or Finance Minister (later Prime Minister) Amozegar, the

cabinet people of various kinds, were regular fellows. Many of them had been trained in this country. You talked to them; they had the same sort of give-and-take re the pros and cons of the Shah's regime. Just normal people.

But when I went back in 1974, after the oil price hikes and so on, there was a different atmosphere entirely. The Shah was almost a god. Even people like Hoveyda , who I never dreamt would ever do that, were making obeisance all the time, and as sycophantic as they possibly could be. They had never been sycophants before. They had been regular normal humans democratically oriented. Yes, they worked for the Shah and respected him. But they became too sycophantic; the whole mentality was wrong. The Shah, I think, specifically after the 1974 oil price hike, became a megalomaniac.

Q: That was less so when you were ambassador? That problem was not then?

Meyer: That was not true when I was there. I was there at the absolute best time. I was there when the Shah got on his own feet, and he need no longer be a Hamlet. Things were really booming. He developed what he called his "White Revolution," wich included fine concepts. It was only after the oil price-hike, and when the Nixon-Kissinger people came in with all that military equipment that he went way off into outer space and, in effect, became a megalomaniac.

Q: When you were the ambassador, did you try to get him, in any

thorough way, to consider building more stable political arrangements that would secure stability in the long term, and would be less dependent upon personal rule? Was there anything you could do for a more parliamentary-minded political system--a constitutional monarchy or something like that?

Meyer: I'm not so sure that I specifically recommended specifics, but certainly in conversation generally, I encouraged parliamentary democracy, sure. Iran's economic progress was dramatic and the Shah's White Revolution's objectives were certainly commendable, as was his institution building which was his prime interest. I tried to encourage that. Of course, that Rastakhiz thing came later. That's when he got into this outer-space type period. As I say, I think I was probably the last American ambassador who could talk to him rather frankly, and get him to change his mind and make changes. After that, anything he said was the word of God, and nobody challenged it, including our own ambassadors as far as I can see. It was a different ball game.

[end of interview]

APPENDIX - Armin Meyer Interview

The Fall of the Shah

A. Indigenous Factors

1. Alienation of the Clergy. No spiritual anchorage. Cultural collision. Spearhead of revolution.

2. Economic Indigestion. Too much, too fast. Inefficiency, waste.

3. Disparate Affluence. Nouveau riche, stashed large sums abroad. Villagers (1/3 urban population) disgruntled.

4. Excessive Military Expenditures. Outlandish, diverted from social needs.

5. Special Privilege/Corruption. Opportunities abundant. Damaging linkage to royal family. Extravaganzas.

6. Administrative Mismanagement. Reported Savak ruthlessness.

7. Unrealistic Expectations. "Great Civilization". Frustrations, disillusionment, antipathy.

8. Shah's Lack of Charisma. Communications gap. Impressive but autocratic leadership. People had no feeling of participation or loyalty.

B. American Contributions

1. Excessive Identification. Image as American stooge was kiss of death.

2. Excessive Military Emphasis. Jump from $50 million to $3 billion p/a. Thousands of US GIs. "Yankees Go Home"

3. Human Rights Lecturing. Quiet diplomacy preferable. On spot, Shah's "liberalization" efforts backfired.

4. Playing God. Since WWII, USG's "arrogance of power"; treat rest of world as "heathen". Others resent "holier than thou" attitude and pretense of omniscience and omnipotence. Cf daily State Dept briefings where whatever occurs anywhere in world, almighty USG "supports" or "deplores".

AHM