

exercise of taking their claims seriously, to the point of looking into their request. We had a couple of lawyers at the time looked thoroughly checking back into treaty obligations during the war, all that sort of thing. But nothing ever happened. The revolution caught up. It would not have been resolved anyways, and the revolution sort of took care of it anyways.

Q: I have one more question regarding military matters. This has to do with military intelligence on Iran. The '74 report by the Inspector General on the embassy noted that the State Department wanted information on the political views and activities of Iran's military leadership and noted that Armish-MAAG had not been very forthcoming in providing any information to the embassy on the political outlook-- you know, the political views of important military officials in Iran. To what extent did the situation change during the following five or six years regarding Armish-MAAG's willingness to provide information?

Naas: Practically none. Armish-MAAG and the whole DSAA organization historically have taken the position that their people in the field, as well as their people here, are to coordinate with the respective governments terms of training, sales or whatever. The activity of DSAA is overt and that DSAA has no role whatsoever in terms of intelligence collection. I had many people in military programs in several countries saying, "If Country X thought that we were providing the embassy with political information, it would destroy

our credibility." My response to that-- and this started frankly with me personally in the middle fifties in Pakistan arguing this issue. I said, "Well, the point is that they assume you are doing it, because they would do it, and they would think that we're damn fools if we don't use all the resources that we have to understand the country." This is not covert intelligence. It's just simply using your intelligence to understand the key people in the military. As in Pakistan, they were absolutely key, of course. Still are, as you saw. The President just yesterday, or two days ago, threw out Junego. And the military I would assume is the key in Turkey. And certainly they could have been key in Iran.

But that's a long answer to that question. Frankly, I'll jump ahead. I recommended at one point to Ambassador [Bill] Sullivan that Armish-MAAG, as part of a checkout sheet that one has when one leaves a post-- you know, have you paid your bills, have you turned in your cards for this and that, get them all checked off-- that there be one last check which was to, in effect, to report to the embassy. And until that was checked off, they would not get their tickets home.

Q: For the debriefing basically?

Naas: Yes. But Bill thought that was a little draconian, and by the time I was there in '78, we had a lot of other things to keep our people busy.

Q: Okay. At our last meeting you said that you got a full briefing from Ambassador Helms about CIA support for the Kurdish insurgency in Iraq, when he was returning from Washington-- you know, meeting with the Pike Committee on intelligence. I guess in the

mid-seventies. But you also said that at some point you had an inkling of what was going on, the CIA support for the Kurds, before you met with Helms. Do you recall the circumstances

Naas: I forget exactly what I said. As I said, I got my most thorough understanding-- what I meant to say anyway-- my most thorough understanding of what we were doing with the Kurds when I accompanied Ambassador Helms to the Pike Committee hearings. He told me very little in addition to that. That was a very tightly held operation.

I remember back before that asking somebody in our front office-- I forget whether it had been Roy Atherton or Sidney-- is anything going on? And the answer basically was, not that we know of. Now whether they did know, but were under instructions that it should not get out any further, or did not know, I don't know to this day.

Q: Now the report, after the Algiers agreement between the Shah and the president of Iraq-- Hussein? No.

Naas: Not the present one anyway.

Q: No, not the present, but the Iraqi leadership in any case. This agreement raises the question of how much support the U.S. should give to Kurdish refugees, because they were leaving Iraq in droves. In mid-'75, I guess? Some time in '75. Did you play any role in these discussions when the issue came up?

Naas: I don't recall this as being a burning issue. If it was, I've forgotten it. As you know, Barzani was eventually allowed to come to the United States and he died here. But in terms of a major program to assist resettlement of the Kurds and all that, we didn't get involved. The Iranians had the wherewithal to take care of it, and, you know, the Iranian equivalent of the Red Cross helped out a great deal in that. So we did not financially get involved at all in that process.

Q: How often did you travel to Iran during the years that you were country director?

Naas: My memory's getting bad. I think I went out there twice. Once in '75 on a general orientation visit, in which I went around the countryside with Archie Bolster, meeting governors and various dignitaries. It was primarily for my benefit, to sort of eyeball the country and meet people whose names I might be seeing in messages, et cetera. It was strictly an area orientation. I went back-- I guess it would be '76-- on one of the joint committee meetings, when Kissinger went there. I think it was '76. And I think that was it. If there was another visit there, it would have also been part of the joint commission efforts. I have trouble remembering, because I was engaged very heavily in the-- participate, let's put it that way-- as I mentioned before, in the negotiations for nuclear cooperation. And I honestly can't remember whether we made a special trip out on that or whether we hooked it on to another meeting. It could very well be that a group of us went out, three or four of us, and spent four or five days on that issue. The more I think of it, yes, it must have been three times that I went to Iran. Once strictly on the nuclear and another time on the joint commission and one general area orientation. So it would

be three times.

Q: In terms of your first visit, where you got the general orientation with Archie Bolster around the country, what kind of impressions did you have of the country? Maybe in terms of economic and social conditions. This would be in '75.

Naas: Of course these were not my first visits to Iran as such. During the sixties I was in and out of Iran two or three times a year, but almost all of these visits were based in Tehran, although our host might take us up to the Karaj Dam or to show us a particular economic development project. You know, the Russian steel mill. To sort of gape at the Russian steel mill, to look at the Karaj Dam. But most of it was centered in Tehran.

So I can't say that in all my visits that I received any particular impressions about the country as a whole. The impression that hit everybody, of course, in the mid-seventies was one of just frantic building. Wherever you looked in any major city, building was going on, and, of course, having been in Iran the first time in the early sixties, transitting on a trip I took out to Afghanistan-- so from the early sixties, the mid-sixties, on into the mid-seventies, the tremendous growth of Tehran just sort of overwhelmed me. I can remember in the early days one could walk down Ferdosi Avenue to look at the rug stores or look in the parts of the antique shops, had no problem walking. By the time I went back in the seventies, it was just sort of wall-to-wall people. This was a very palpable change, of this tremendous flight of people from the countryside into the city.

---

I suppose that would be sort of my main overall impressions at the time. The flight to the cities and just enormous building going on everywhere in the major cities.

Q: Now you said you met some government officials on this orientation trip. Do you recall any of the names of people that you met or any impressions of them?

Naas: I really don't remember the names. I remember meeting-- what was his name? Sharam Pahlavi, who was sort of the Number Two in terms of Persian Gulf security in the Navy. He was assassinated in Paris after the revolution. Mostly I met Governors. I'd meet some of the people in SAVAK to discuss security. You know, when I went to Abadan, and Khoranshar I was taken on a full orientation trip through the refinery and all that. You know, if you've seen one refinery, you've seen them all kind of thing. There's nothing particularly outstanding. It was to give me impressions really.

Q: You met Ambassador Richard Helms when you took this orientation trip? Do you recall?

Naas: I had met him before in the States.

Q: How would you evaluate Helms as ambassador? You talked a little bit about him before, but how would you evaluate him as an Ambassador?

Naas: I think he was an excellent ambassador. And we must go back to our earlier discussion on what I think and I think what foreign heads of state want in a U. S. ambassador. And I think Helms understood very clearly the bounds between official

discourse and personal opinion. I think he ran a-- I think he was probably totally trusted by the Shah and those people that he dealt with. Now whether the imagery was all wrong, as James Bill in his latest book suggests, that for the Iranians seeing the former head of the CIA come, this was sort of all the wrong signals to send Iranians, because they saw a larger intrusion of CIA and the United States into Iranian internal affairs, that I can't judge. It never came up with me, either here or the brief period that I was in Iran. It's the sort of thing that Iranian colleagues might discuss with academics or people that they've known for a long time. And, of course, one of the interesting things was that nothing could have been further, you know, from the target. I mean, Helms literally was the ambassador, and he cut, to the extent that one can ever cut, his connections. I mean, he was not there on any special mission, but as a person who had met the Shah several times when he was Director of CIA. And it was the job Helms wanted. And in effect, Nixon gave Helms what he wanted for obvious reasons.

I think he managed a good embassy. He was not the type who intruded into every bit of the operation of the embassy. He left that essentially to his DCM. And I think in a large post like that with the large number of issues that are always in front of an ambassador and the two governments, he simply has to pretty much leave the day-to-day operations, the personnel problems and this and that, to his DCM and let the DCM handle it. If the ambassador is too much wrapped up in the day-to-day issues, he's certainly not going to have the time to reflect a little bit and carry out what his main job was, which was direct relations with the Shah and the Prime Minister and members of government.

---

Q: Now Jack Miklos, I think, was the DCM all the way through Helms' years as ambassador?

Naas: Yes. Well, let's see, I think--

Q: This is-- no, that's right, Miklos went there in '74.

Naas: '74.

Q: So I guess it would be one year with someone else. I forget who his predecessor was.

Naas: It'll come to me. I'm having one of those days. I had a busy morning.

Q: Okay. How much influence did Miklos have as DCM?

Naas: I'd say considerable. Not in terms of policy so much but day to day. Policy was so much in train, and Jack was a total fervent supporter of the policy of being very close to the Iranians and what the Shah-- and trying to do what we could within the U. S. government to support the Shah. In that sense he probably had influence. He was a voice that was thoroughly committed to the policy at the time, as he probably should have been. And he ran-- I think he probably ran a pretty good embassy. Some people I know were a little unhappy with some aspects, but that's to be expected. I'm sure if you talk to



enough people who served with me as DCM, you'll find those that they didn't like the way I operated.

Q: Now the country directorate memo that Michael Michaud wrote that we were discussing last meeting, he said that at one point--he wrote that the Iran Desk needed better contacts with potential opponents of the regime. Was this issue brought up with the embassy under Helms, discussion of the contacts with the opposition?

Naas: I simply don't remember this. As we pointed out, that memo was written at just about the time that I was coming on the desk. Whether I sent a copy to the embassy, which would have been my normal practice, I don't recall, as Country Director, one of your jobs is to keep the embassy apprised, usually with official--informal letters, with sometimes maybe a big thick packet of briefing papers or action memoranda, just to make sure that they quietly understood what was going on. All of us who were Country directors failed in that now and then. So I really don't know. Now Bill Sullivan-- I may have mentioned in the last tape-- quickly gathered, when he came in, that we weren't well informed, and I think I mentioned in the last tape, I said to him, I said, "Bill, I've never dealt with a country in which I really know less about what's going on. We do have to have a better contact list. Get to know more people."

So when Bill arrived in '77 he sort of opened-- or encouraged, urged the embassy staff, particularly the Political Section, sort of to get out, get off its butt in the office and get to know people.

Q: But before that point? When you were in Washington as Director, you didn't know that much about the internal opposition basically?

Naas: I suppose if you go back and read the various telegrams and aerograms of that period, you'd almost believe there wasn't any opposition. You know, everybody who knew a little about Iranian history, the politics that went on, was perfectly aware of the individuals who made up the old National Front. Knew that they were still alive and they were still active. One knew about them. But we did not have good contacts, say, among the university people. It was a very difficult thing for older people at an embassy to make that kind of contact with young students. In the first place they're not going to trust you. There's an age gap, et cetera. So we didn't know. We did not have a good picture of the opposition.

I think what Ambassador Helms would argue is that really until quite late that opposition, while there, was invisible. I think he's right. I mean, you had to be awfully well placed and know an awful lot of people who would trust you and find somebody who had a great knowledge of the language as well to have gotten into it. And I lecture on Iran frequently, so I forget what I put in the last tapes, but the thing that I've become more aware of, since I do my part-time work at the State Department on declassification, is the fact that up until, oh, in the mid-sixties, the Embassy was extremely well informed in terms of who the figures were in the religious opposition. We had good and open contacts with them. But there was just simply an assumption, that after Khomeini was exiled, and after that period of turbulence ended, that somehow the religious leaders were no longer a major political force. And we looked really at the modernists. I think I mentioned before,

we had excellent contacts in the think tanks eventually and the university professors, which were quite different from the students. But we had practically no contacts in the religious opposition.

Q: There's one document-- I guess it was '75, there was a national intelligence estimate prepared by George Harris of the State Department's R&R Division, and apparently this estimate-- this NIE, as they were calling it, this document generated considerable debate, because it contained a fair amount of material on the internal opposition. The role of the clerics and their connection with secular intellectuals in the National Front and so forth. Do you remember much discussion about this document that Harris put together?

Naas: I don't. It's funny, I've read that.

Q: James Bill talks about it.

Naas: It's mentioned in Jim's book. And I just don't recall that as being particularly controversial. As country director I would have seen all the drafts and had a chance to comment on them. But it was up to INR in working on the NIE. Some different people do it, but everybody gets their oar in if they wish to. I can't remember any comments that I made or that it was controversial. It seemed to me at the time, as I recall reading from Jim's book-- refreshing my mind frankly-- that was a very good analysis, and that was it. If there were big fights about it, I don't remember them. Thirteen years ago. My mind slips.

Q: I guess he says that there were more objections from the Embassy than there was from within the State Department.

Naas: Well, he has access probably to some of the documents, because of those that were seized in '79. And if he's got the documents, obviously I'm not going to quarrel with them at all. I just don't recall having any particular problems with them.

Q: Now some of the documents I've seen suggest that by the mid-seventies, if not earlier, officials at the Iran desk in Washington were interested in one aspect of the problem, political stability. They were concerned about the problem of post-Shah political stability, what would happen if the Shah died or was removed from office. And apparently this concern led to the preparation in '74 of a contingency plan covering this issue. Do you recall anything about this? It's mentioned in the Inspector General's report, I think.

Naas: I simply don't remember it. I think there was a general assumption-- let me take a step back. This was a subject that concerned many; anybody who was working in Iranian affairs, either here or there, dipped into the question. You know, so much of the state was dependent upon the Shah's decisions that one simply raised that question. There was much discussion about it. I can't personally remember whether a final paper was done on it, but I know there was some stuff from the embassy, and a general consensus, whether formal or informal on paper, developed was that the chances were quite good that the process established by the Constitution, by law, had a pretty fair chance of working its way

through. In those days, young Reza Pahlavi was not of age, and so you had the Council-

-

Q: Regency Council?

Naas: Regency Council. And that Empress Farah would, in effect, act on his behalf. We had the Regency Council.

So I think we generally felt that if the Shah died-- you know, in an accident or illness-- that obviously this process had a pretty good chance. There was always the sense, that if he was assassinated or was assassinated in a period of public turmoil, then one felt much less certain of the process.

I can remember giving a lecture at West Point in that period, and that was one of the first questions that was asked of me by a young cadet. I just answered pretty much as I have now. But I ended up by saying I must warn him, that's the accepted wisdom. And I said, one thing that you people will have to do as you go along in your careers is when accepted wisdom comes along, take another hard look at it. It's the only cheer I got that night, and obviously those much-disciplined young cadets enjoyed having somebody encouraging them to do a little free thinking. It was just what they wanted. Their Commandant was sitting in the back row to hear it.

Q: Had you yourself met the Shah or been introduced to the Shah during the years that you traveled to Iran, or during the time you traveled to Iran, or during any of his visits? This would be before the Carter period?

Naas: I met him during the visits to Washington. I didn't sit down to chat with him, but the normal process of a Chief of State arrival is that the country director is invited to the White House lawn for the reception and the speeches. Then the Country director is one of those who enters the White House for that brief moment that people stand around and talk to each other. I met him then. And I met him during the Carter period. I think this would be twice. Twice in Washington.

And then Empress Farah came here to get a degree from Georgetown University, and again I met her for the third time. That picture over there, the one on the bottom, is during that particular visit of hers.

Q: What kind of impressions did you pick up of the Shah? What's your assessment of him, based on meeting him and reading about him in the various reports that you saw at the desk?

Naas: One had the impression-- I'd say a personal impression I think it would be frivolous for me to say I had much of an impression on brief handshakes. I think at the end of the Carter meeting-- we talked about on the last tape-- he was absolutely ebullient. And when I came up and he knew who I was-- his people in Washington obviously indicated that I was a sympathetic soul--and he was just beaming, and he took my hand, and it was very warm that evening, because things had worked out. He was very nervous about that visit, and by the time the White House and dinner came, he knew that he had gotten through the worst. I mean, that the Carter Administration was not going to be in any major way

different than other administrations. And the personal relationship turned out to be quite a good one. So he was absolutely delighted that evening. One could take up hours trying to discuss the Shah, and I think I-- like almost all other U. S. government officials who conversed with him.

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

Naas: --were deeply impressed by the range of his knowledge. At least the range of issues about which he was well informed. I suppose one should make a difference between information and knowledge. I don't know if I mentioned before that Dean Rusk and others who met him-- I remember Rusk coming back from the a meeting, and telling us "I never met a world leader so well informed on detail."

I think you start out there. We all know he read omnivorously on an awful lot. Probably on the wrong thing in terms of the latest technology in arms, et cetera.

You know, one goes back to the early fifties, and, of course, the general impression in the U. S. government was of a fairly weak individual. Indecisive. Very uncertain of himself. A person with a number of personality problems. A man perhaps not of great courage. The way he fled, of course. Like in the Mossadegh period and the fact that in a period several months before that, he would have been quite happy to leave the country, but was prevailed upon not to do so. So you had this whole period of looking back, in which all the NSC papers which I've read since indicate a great concern about the caliber

of the man. You move through the early period of the Kennedys, in which we were fairly intrusive frankly in terms of pushing reform, and the Shah seized upon this, like he had this in mind himself. Much of this comes from reading and not from personal contact, obviously in my position. That he himself was starting to look ahead in a sense at the mark that he would make on his country, as the Shahanshah. Honestly, when he got rid of Ali Amini as Prime Minister in '62-'63, he became less susceptible to American advice. He was getting older. His marriage to Farah had produced offspring fairly soon thereafter. The future at least of the Pahlavi name seemed to be assured. He was very happy with Farah, as one could see. A very bright, attractive person. And then, of course, we stopped our military assistance in terms of grants, and our economic assistance. There was a period in there in which slowly one could see what appeared to be developing self-confidence, a sense that he no longer really was that susceptible or really didn't want, often, advice from outside, that he felt that having been in power-- by the late sixties, you get twenty some years-- that he was competent to direct things himself. I think some people say a little bit of megalomania developed there, with twenty-five hundred years of kingship in Iran. But at least I, I think, and, many other people as well took on this new assertiveness as a natural development as a person got older and more self-confident. I think probably when we move on into the late seventies, one could see that many of those original uncertainties reappeared.

But again, as a foreign leader, he was a delight to view from an ambassador's point of view, or even as a poor country director well down the line, because if you took an issue to him, he understood very quickly. He probably was totally briefed anyways. You knew what his world view was. And if he made a decision, the decision was made, period. And



in those years I think what impressed many of us is that the ambassador would go in and ask for a particular thing and he'd say, fine, give me the details on what you need later on. I mean, he would not go along with something just for the sake of pleasing the United States. It was a question that any proposal that came to him would immediately slide into his world view, as well as what he thought was good for Iran. Now there were things that he was willing to help us on that would not appear to have had a direct relationship to Iran's security. Such as at one point he was willing to help Somalia with arms. He was willing to help Zaire. He was even willing to help Chad.

Q: With military assistance?

Naas: With some military assistance.

Q: Was this on his own initiative or a U. S. request or-- ?

Naas: On our initiative, and I think an Iranian who, we'll say, was not sympathetic to the Shah, would see this as toadying to the United States, when, in fact, from his point of view, assisting countries like Chad in its resistance to a Quaddafi, helping Somalia against Mengitsu, who was giving the Soviets major bases, helping Zaire because of Angola-- all of these he saw in the world picture of helping anti-Communist struggles. In fact, he used to say, you know, in the event of war, the Soviets with their massive strength in Ethiopia, which juts out into the Indian Ocean, could interdict-- you know, in theory-- Iranian shipping, Western shipping. Then on the reverse side of the African coast, you had

Angola. So he saw these in very broad terms. Helping Chad was an anti-Quaddafi action, and he saw Quaddafi as a major threat. Not so much major, as a threat to stability in North Africa. As a threat to Sudan, as a threat to Egypt. By which time, when we get into this period, our relationships with Egypt with very, very good, and were good with Sudan as well.

So this was a man with a world view, who as people have written since and I think it's probably true, who probably had as clear an understanding of world trends and events as any leader is likely to have. What is probably unfortunate, in retrospect, of course, was that some of this energy wasn't turned inward. You know, it's very popular to denigrate the Shah these days. I find it very hard to go along with it frankly. He was a man with weaknesses. I don't know any human being that doesn't have them. He was a man of great capacities. When I was in Iran, to jump ahead, I went three times, I guess, three or four times, to sit with him on different occasions. One was the visit of Dave Newsom, who went out to talk about the threat as posed by the situation in Afghanistan, the revolution there in May of '78 I guess it was. And when General Huyser came out to talk about some military matters, and when Lady Bird Johnson came out. And on those occasions, again I just found him terribly well informed. And I found him not nearly as stiff as his pictures would suggest. There was a warmth to the individual. I could go on and on, but I think that's enough for your purposes, unless you have questions.

Q: I might have some more later on. Now you mentioned last time, when you were talking about your duties as Director, as country director during the seventies, the whole question of human rights. You said you had a lot of correspondence that you had to

supervise from people who had questions about Iran's human rights policies. What were your views, or what was your understanding on the extent of the problem of human rights in Iran during this period?

Naas: Well, it was perfectly clear that really open political activity was not permitted. It was perfectly clear that the people, SAVAK and the police, took a very liberal interpretation of the things that one should not be allowed to do, which is to promote Communism, talk against the monarchy and the Constitution. I think there were three things in there that were not permitted. And the authorities interpreted this broadly, so that there definitely was not a free society, whether it came to individual speech or whether it came to the press or the media.

I think I was impressed by the fact, however, there was some political movement in the seventies until the Shah broke up the political parties and brought in the one party, Rastakhiz. I was disappointed by this move. I thought there was a healthy political process going on, with Iran Novin, Hoveyda very active as a politician. And I've always been very-- I've believed that democratic processes, or less oppressive policies, develop slowly. Iran does not have a democratic tradition. I felt the processes were going on about as rapidly as they could. Here the chicken and the egg kind of thing. You know, starting around '74 they did have a terrorist problem. Now did the terrorist problem develop because of the lack of democracy, free speech, all this sort of thing: and therefore, of course, resulted in more oppression? I don't know, but since Americans had been killed, and Americans were being targeted very, very persistently in the mid-seventies, I think one tends-- at least I tended to view the Shah's efforts to maintain a fairly tight control with

some sympathy. But again, as we discussed before, my overriding concern was the larger issues of the relationship. I did not want to see any single issue advocates have a major impact on the total relationship. And that's what concerned me at times about the human rightists, who were only looking at one small part of a large pie, and really would have liked to have policy determined on that one issue. And that's what upset me as much as anything with the human rights people. And also many had little understanding, of Iran's past history, in which, you know, the foreign intrusion was at times excessive, that this would appear to Iranians to be another effort of outsiders to tell them what to do. Just sort of the wrong thing at that particular time, since, as I said before, by the time the human rights people got heavily engaged in Iran, Iran had gone well beyond the point of accepting happily American initiatives and American ideas and such on this subject.

I was also concerned that-- and here admitting my own rather abysmal dismal lack of understanding at times of the Iranian society-- I was always worried that we were sending the wrong signal to people; to the Shah, the government or others, with a lot of this human rights activity. I was also distressed with the fact that we always got terribly excited about human rights in countries where we had an alliance relationship. As an aside, I have written a couple of pages for a book that Georgetown University put out under Dave Newsom on human rights and foreign policy. And I was rather critical. I said, I guess the message was that if you can't beat up on your enemies, beat up on your friends. If you recall, going back in those days, it was Korea, the Philippines, and Iran that were under continuous scrutiny by Congress and others. And, of course, three countries, at least in a geopolitical sense, which are of the greatest importance to us. I suppose now, in retrospect, it can be argued, had we been more active in working with the Iranians, et

cetera, et cetera, some of the-- you know, maybe the revolutionary steam could have been let off. I don't buy that. So my main concern, I say, was that this not become something that screwed up the relationship as a whole.

Q: Did members of Congress bring their concerns about these questions to your attention directly?

Naas: I don't know how many letters we wrote back to individual congressmen. Various human rights groups. I testified before Don Frazer and his sub-committee once. So, yes, we were terribly active in simply answering correspondence and Congressional interests.

Q: Now by 1975 William J. Butler, who was working with an international organization of jurists-- I forget the exact name--

Naas: The International Commission of Jurists.

Q: Okay. He was centering his attention on human rights problems in Iran. Did you meet with him from time to time?

Naas: I met with [William] Bill Butler several times, and to be perfectly frank, he was the first person in this human rights crowd that I had much time for, because he had a very mature understanding of what he was talking about. He did not expect massive social

change in a year, two years, kind of thing. Eminently sensible person. And his objective, which I fully supported and which later Ambassador Sullivan fully supported, was to talk with the Shah and other Iranians about a better way to handle due process. He felt-- and got the Shah eventually to agree to changes in the military tribunal system. I don't know whether those changes ever really got in place, because of the maelstrom that came.

But here was an approach by Bill [Butler]-- and I think his French colleague jurist was with him on the first trip-- of looking at a legal system and suggesting doable changes, which would be of great benefit to individuals. They did not mean a revolution in Iran's concern about dissidents, but would provide the dissidents with proper due process, so that somebody wasn't just willy-nilly caught up in a closed system and run off to jail for something that he hadn't done.

And so he came up with a variety of suggestions with respect to changing the law, permitting outside defense lawyers for one. As I recall, no one was-- able to present defense witnesses. Don't hold me to that. But he discussed all of the memoranda that he gave the Shah, with me before he went out. He checked in with the Ambassador, to show the Ambassador what he was going to do. Not asking for my approval or the Ambassador's approval. He was an independent person, but he wanted to make sure that we were informed as the people most responsible in government in Iranian affairs, and to receive advice. But had the advice been "don't do it," and he felt that it was proper to do it, he would have gone ahead and done it. He was a very independent person. Very intelligent.

I had great admiration for that kind of approach. It's a very doable thing. It's not in the public eye kind of thing. It's when somebody quietly comes along and changes the

process.

Q: Now, did the human rights controversy that was going on inside the U. S. during the Ford years, '75-'76, have much of an impact on the diplomatic relationship with Iran?

Naas: Actually I think-- I just simply don't recall this issue being on the front burner during the whole Nixon-Ford period, which doesn't mean to say I wasn't getting my letters by the scores or meeting with human rights advocates who had come down from New York and who would be interested in this particular poet or this writer, et cetera. After such meetings I probably either wrote a letter or sent a telegram to Tehran, just keeping Tehran informed, asking for information too on what is the status of this poet or writer. Is he really in jail as these people say? So we had a dialogue back and forth with the embassy on that sort of thing. And on occasion, the appropriate occasion, somebody in the embassy-- Jack Miklos probably, not usually the Ambassador-- would.

Q: Archie Bolster worked on the stuff in the Embassy to some extent.

Naas: Well, you might mention it to the Deputy Minister of Court it wouldn't hurt if So-and-So were released or So-and-So was allowed to receive a passport so he could come to the United States. And sometimes this worked and sometimes it didn't work. As you well know, the whole human rights thing didn't really become a major issue, in terms of government handling, until the Carter period and Pat Dorian came into office.

Q: Now in his new book James Bill mentions that around mid-'76 the Shah allowed strong criticisms of the U. S. to appear in the Iranian press. I think some of the articles criticized the U. S.'s reliability as an ally, among other things. Did you know much about these critical articles or do you remember much about this question?

Naas: I don't remember them specifically. Yes, I mean I remember that particular period, because the Embassy was assiduous in sending unclassifieds, often to say the following article appeared in KAYHAN or this or that. And to me it had-- my reaction was twofold. One, that it is something directed from above to needle us. And the other one was that on some of the criticisms, it was absolutely valid.

And I think, as we've seen now, in various places-- Central America and around the world, Vietnam-- maybe we haven't been as reliable. We have our own reasons, but if you're a foreigner looking at it, it adds up to making you very nervous. I was recently with a friend who was part of the-- he used to belong to CIA. We were talking about this very issue, the fact that we often deal with a country sort of day by day, week by week-- we don't pay that much attention to it. It's when a crisis occurs, we get heavily engaged, and by then we're out of it. Whereas most countries in the world-- less true today, but it certainly was true in the seventies, and in parts of the world very much true today-- are continuously looking at us. We're not continuously looking at them in terms of their reliability, but whatever we do or don't do can have such a massive impact on a particular country. They always have the microscope, looking at us, and a lot of those people tend to relate.



In other words, let's say the conditions were still going on in Iran as before the revolution and we had the Iran/Contra. Not the Iran part-- but just say aid to the Contras, off and on again aid. The Shah and people around him would have been totally perplexed of why we weren't much more resolute in defending what he would see to be as very much in our interests. And so therefore he would be starting to wonder, what does this mean? And I think if you saw Jeanne Kirkpatrick's article in the Post over the weekend, the lessons that should have been learned from the Noriega episode-- I don't particularly like her writing, I don't like her approach on many of the things in foreign affairs. I think she's very badly informed on the Middle East. She made one very good point though, that is that Noriega and others have to be encouraged by the fact of the mess that we have handled in terms of the Contras. Now it doesn't matter how you look at the Contra aid, how I look at the Contra aid, we're looking at it from our own political perspective. But they're looking at it and drawing quite different lessons than we intend. That's a little speech I had to get off my mind.

Q: That's interesting to think about. Now after Jimmy Carter became President in early '77, the U. S. had no ambassador in Iran. Between the summer of '76, when Richard Helms resigned and left the country, I guess in June '77, when Sullivan arrived in Iran as ambassador. What accounted for the long gap between Helms and Sullivan? Because usually the gaps aren't quite that long, I don't think. I've looked at some of them. There may be a few months sometimes, but usually not five or six months.

Naas: It's funny, I really don't know. I think a great deal of it was the fact of a new administration pulling together and getting advice from the State Department and other words, of who should be Ambassadors to different places. The Carter Administration understood that Iran was a unique and difficult and very important assignment. I have no idea how many people they looked at before they-- one would hear rumors and I've forgotten the names, that So-and-So was under consideration. But Bill [Sullivan] for reasons that he-- if you read his book, he was selected.

But it's interesting, I didn't worry that much about it, because I didn't think the administration was that slow. It was a little slower than it should have been. But it worried the hell out of the Iranians. They simply could not understand why a country of-- the way they viewed it-- of its significance was not immediately filled by a top-notch man.

I'm not sure whether Carter-- I've read Carter's book. I don't think it's addressed. I'm not sure it's addressed in Vance's book either or Brzezinski's, of why the delay and why the selection of Bill [Sullivan]. I think with Bill, he was known as a-- theoretically as a fairly tough customer. And I suppose the assessment eventually came down, he's a top-notch career man. And he's tough. He's not hoodwinked easily. And he's just the perfect type to deal with the Iranians at that time.

The delay-- I think it was essentially bureaucratic rather than political or policy. But it did worry the Iranians tremendously at the time.

---

Q: But otherwise it didn't make much difference for your work at the country desk?

Naas: No. It made a difference only in the sense that I kept always getting hints from Iranians at the embassy here, and kept getting hints, little things out of Tehran, maybe by official informal letters. And again the Iranians asking, well, why isn't there an ambassador appointed? They did view this as a slight. It worried them that it meant there was going to be a major change in policy and that this was sort of a lead-up to a major change in U. S. policy.

Q: Okay. Now how would you appraise Sullivan as ambassador? How effective was he as ambassador? Given the fact that he had to deal with extraordinary circumstances. Try to discount that. How did it turn out otherwise?

Naas: I would think he was a first-rate ambassador. I think he developed a kind of rapport with the Shah, with others, that an American ambassador simply had to have. He always spoke frankly and openly to the Shah. There was no groveling and no acting like an Iranian courtier. He was a very straightforward person. I think he was very, very perceptive of the people he was dealing with.

In terms of running the embassy, he was in between Dick Helms and some ambassadors that I've worked with. He probably got into a little more detail, wanted to be more informed on detail, than Helms would have. But when I went there in May of '78 and went into his office, I said, "Okay, Bill, what's my role? How do you see it? The way you see it, that's the way it will be." And he said, "Look, I'm the head political officer here. He said, I'll want your views. Nothing will go out of this Embassy, if you're in town, that

you won't see. Nothing will come in that you won't know about. But I don't want you to worry and spend a lot of time fretting about the politics. I want you to run this place. I want you to sign off and send the message on economic administrative matters, et cetera. Work with the consulates, coordinate all that. Those are your problems. I'll handle the political." And I said, "Fine."

And I'd say most of the time, I did. I just ran the place. For good or for bad. But he did, say, probably more than Helms would, wanted to know at the end of each week or maybe at the end of a couple of working days, what I had been doing. And that's in essence a pretty good managing technique. So it got me-- I kept notes as the day went on of decisions I had made. Every now and then he'd reverse one, but most of the time he wanted to be informed. So in that sense I think he was quite good. As you know from his picture, he's a very striking looking man, and I think that the people that he dealt with had considerable respect for him. And this leads obviously to the main course, shall we say, is how perceptive was he and was I or others in terms of the nature of the gathering storm. An awful lot's been written about that. I can go into it to the extent that you want to.

Q: Well, maybe later on. It will come up.

Naas: One thing that did come up before is that Bill too was rather appalled at our ignorance of Iran, and he did open the doors frankly to a political-- for us to start seeing other people.

Q: Yes. That's right.

Naas: Strangely-- this is an aside, of course-- is that again we took that action for good and sufficient reasons. The Iranians did not see it that way. It's different perceptions. So I'm afraid that many Iranians saw the Carter human rights policy and the greater effort by the U. S. government to know people who were not part of the establishment as a signal that we were weakening in our support of the Shah. And that was absolutely not the purpose, but the Iranians did read it that way.

And that's one of the real problems. If you have an embassy, fairly restrictive in your contacts over a period of time, and you get back to what should be the normal process of an embassy, you're going to raise a lot of questions. What are you doing? So you really put yourself in a terrible hole. Any ambassador who tries to restrict contacts and reporting, it's all right for his period in town, but the next guy that comes along, the situation may change. He's just a different person. You've complicated his life immeasurably.

Q: That's an interesting point. During the Carter period-- you mentioned Sullivan a little bit, but who are some of the other officials in other agencies who worked on Iran during '77 and '78, that you would have worked with? People at Defense, for example, or Commerce or other Departments?

Naas: Most of my work really was within the Department. And at the beginning, one, of course-- on the human rights side you had Patricia Darian. At the White House and the

NSC staff you had Barbara Tuchman's daughter-- I forget what her name was-- who was very interested in the control of arms sales. I never dealt much with her directly, but I dealt with her in meetings. And then in political-military affairs, you had the former New York Times correspondent, Leslie Gelb, who got very much engaged in those early days in talks with the Russians about cutting down the flow of conventional arms to Third World nations.

Now these would be-- later on, of course, Garry Sick in the NSC more or less as the Iran man. Those would be the principal ones, you know, at that period. Sort of at a level, in a sense, above me, but who were in charge. Frankly, many of these were my bete noire: one issue people.

At the Pentagon I dealt mostly with General Fish.

Q: He was still there under Carter?

Naas: For a while. I forget the time of change of the-- and I forget who his successor was. But that would have been my principal line of contact over there. You know, when we finally got to the decision-making time. And there were several other people on his staff, whose names sort of have gone by me. At the Agency [CIA], again it would have been a little bit more of the old boy network of people that I knew over there. On a couple of issues there were very informal groups established back in the Ford period, that continued on into the Carter period. At Commerce, once Kissinger left, the joint commission was not as big a thing, although in the Carter period we did have one major meeting, one that I can remember, here in Washington, which Ansari led, and Secretary Vance was the