

documents, apparently the Shah believed that because the members of the consortium opposed his independent negotiations with Enrico Mattei, Italy's ENI, they were running a campaign to destabilize his position. And he also claimed that oil companies were responsible for demonstrations by students, Iranian students, in the United States against him when he visited the country from time to time. Now this raises a lot of questions, all these various charges and counter-charges. Did the Shah complain to you about this press coverage and the oil companies' contacts with opposition-- or reported contacts with opposition figures? Did he bring this up with you?

Yatsevitch: I don't recall his having talked specifically about political action taken by the oil companies, but he did speak about his concern about the possible effect of their opposition to bringing in the Italians; he really hit the oil company profits very, very hard. That was really the first great change in the position of Iran with respect to its oil resources.

Q: So the consortium members discussed these-- they expressed their apprehension about negotiations with the Italians?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: And I guess later on there were independent talks with

Standard Oil of Indiana, that followed the Italian negotiations?

Yatsevitch: Yes. Correct.

Q: So the Shah merely discussed his concern about the reaction to these negotiations, but that's about as far as it went?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Now also in 1960 the Shah announced that there would be elections based on party competition for seats in the Majlis. I guess there had not been elections for some years, until this decision to hold them in 1960?

Yatsevitch: Right.

Q: Did the Shah explain to you why he had decided to take on this step to hold new elections based on party competition?

Yatsevitch: Oh, it was just efforts to democratize the regime and to still some of the feeling against autocratic rule.

Q: To what extent were these elections held partly because of suggestions made by you or ambassador Wailes to open up things a bit?

Yatsevitch: Well, I think that it was clear to him that this was felt to be a good idea on the part of our government.

Q: Now the elections were held in the summer of 1960 and the two official parties were more or less controlled by the Shah's appointees

Yatsevitch: Right.

Q: And of the control of Parliament. And that led to charges that the election had been rigged and there were some protests, with members of the National Front joining the protest. Now then the Shah nullified the election, dismissed Prime Minister Eqbal--

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: --and replaced him with Sharif-Emami, who had some ties to the National Fronters and the religious community.

Yatsevitch: Yes. He comes from a religious family.

Q: Now how surprised was the Shah by the protests against the election? Did he express anything about this?

Yatsevitch: I just don't remember. I don't remember that. Sharif-Emami now lives in New York. Would you like to talk to him? He's an interesting chap, a really good fellow.

Q: Did he explain to you his decision to nullify the elections?

Yatsevitch: Yes, but I don't recall what they were. It was obviously to stem criticism about having fixed the whole thing up.

Q: You knew Sharif-Emami at this time?

Yatsevitch: Yes, I knew him well.

Q: What were your impressions of him at that point, if you can separate the present from the past?

Yatsevitch: Somebody who's trying hard to do what his monarch would like him to do and isn't totally succeeding. Fundamentally quite a nice man, but he was in a difficult position.

Q: Now Sharif-Emami held new elections?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Which were apparently somewhat less rigged and the result was a Majlis which was less amenable to the Shah's control, and some National Fronters had won seats in a few spots?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: And there were more protests against the Shah. Was there any concern that the Shah might be losing a little bit of control over the domestic situation?

Yatsevitch: I don't remember that. I don't think so.

Q: Now in November of 1960, of course, John F. Kennedy was elected President. Did the Shah discuss the elections and the results of the elections with you? Do you recall any discussions of Kennedy or Nixon?

Yatsevitch: I don't recall any discussions. He would have and undoubtedly did, but I don't recall his reaction to it.

Q: He didn't express any disappointment that Nixon lost?

Yatsevitch: No. He was pretty cautious about things like that.

Q: Now how would you describe the Kennedy administration's approach to Iran as you understood it?

Yatsevitch: Well, I think, as I recall, there was a lot of Bobby Kennedy's influence at that time, and he was more inclined toward the National Front and elements of that kind. But it all reflected itself in a certain amount of correspondence and discussion between the embassy and Washington, but I know of no changes in policy.

Q: So you think there was basic continuity between Eisenhower and Kennedy in their general approach?

Yatsevitch: Yes. There was, I think.

Q: Now apparently William O. Douglas, who had done a fair amount of traveling in Iran, had some influence on Kennedy's thinking. Had you ever met Douglas during his trips to Iran?

Yatsevitch: No. Never did. Never did. But you mean this is Justice Douglas--?

Q: Yes, that's right. Supreme Court Justice Douglas.

Yatsevitch: My impression from the character of his visits was that he would actually come away with a very sort of narrow and superficial interpretation. I think his contacts were very narrowly based and no opportunity to get a further broad picture of Iran

Q: According to one recent book the Shah developed over time a personal dislike of Kennedy. How much truth-- ?

Yatsevitch: I never saw any indication of that.

Q: I've also read that Kennedy did not have a particularly high regard for the Shah. Did you get any sense of that?

Yatsevitch: No. No, I never did.

Q: Apparently the Shah had some apprehension about Kennedy's attitude, and according to a cable that [ambassador] Holmes sent later in '61, "This awareness troubles him and is part at least of the explanation for his recurrent moods of depression, which demands reassurance on our part." Did you and Holmes talk about that problem of the Shah's about the Kennedy's?

Yatsevitch: Yes, we did. We did. And the Shah's feeling of insecurity about continuing American support. Of course, what

he wanted was unqualified support for whatever he chose to do, which was unreasonable. He was a somewhat insecure man, I would say.

Q: In terms of particularly his position of power or more personal insecurity?

Yatsevitch: Yes, his position of power.

Q: How often did that manifest itself in discussions that you had with him, where he would allude to his spirits?

Yatsevitch: Oh, it came up fairly often. Any time the Russians made some significant move that might affect on

Iran. This business of Pakistan and Kashmir. All that brought out the insecurity in him.

Q: Now during the course of '61 the National Front was operating more and more openly, from what I've read, and according to a report by Stuart Rockwell, the Shah had an, "almost psychopathic fear of the National Front as a political force." That's a quote. Why did the Shah let the National Front operate fairly openly during this period, if that was a scare?



Yatsevitch: I think he felt that he had to, because of the general criticism of his suppression of opposition groups. He had to allow some manifestation of freedom to take place.

Q: What was your own assessment of the National Front and its leadership? What was your appraisal of this group?

Yatsevitch: I think a rather impractical group of intellectuals, who have a kind of idealized concept of how governments function, and whose ideas were not really too pertinent to the actual time that we're talking about. I think that they would probably have weakened Iran's position if they had come into power.

END OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1; BEGINNING OF SIDE 1, TAPE 2

Q: Now you suggested a minute ago that you feared that if the Front had any real influence in Iran that it could lead to a weakening of the country?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: What was the basis of your apprehension?

Yatsevitch: My apprehension was based really on the possible increasing Soviet influence within the country. It would weaken the links with the United States.

Q: Because of the neutral posture they would have taken?

Yatsevitch: Yes. Exactly. Exactly. If we wished to use Iran as an ally in that area, I think it would have weakened their usefulness.

Q: Now were your officers continuing their contacts with the Front during the Kennedy years?

Yatsevitch: Yes. But that was kept up continuously, whether the Shah liked it or not.

Q: He still continued to make complaints about this?

Yatsevitch: Yes. He felt uneasy about it all the time.

Q: But you had the ambassador's support on this issue, so you could continue?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes.

Q: Now in early May of '61 protests by teachers led to a major demonstration in Tehran, which was suppressed by the police, army companies, and I guess a special force parachute battalion, from what I've read, which led to the death of one teacher. Now according to one cable message that I've seen, people in the royal palace were very worried about this turn of events and the possibility that the military might break ranks over this issue.

Do you recall anything about these strikes and the Shah's reaction to these developments?

Yatsevitch: Yes I remember that it was a tense situation and we were trying to keep track of what was going on by having people, observers, on the scene and that kind of thing. I think that the Shah's reaction was that the only thing to do was to put this down by force. I don't remember anything more profound than that.

Q: Now in the wake of the teachers' strike and the suppression of the demonstrations, the Shah dissolved the parliament. Dismissed Sharif-Amami as prime minister and appointed Ali Amini as his successor?

Yatsevitch: Yes. Who was supposed to have more appeal to the National Front in that way, that kind of thing.

Q: Now apparently in the years that followed many Iranians have felt that Amini had been the U. S.'s favorite candidate for this post?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: And some years later Armin Meyer, who had been ambassador and who was a member of a task force on Iran that was meeting in Washington around this time, that Meyer suggested that there was something to that, that the U. S. extended thirty-three million dollars in aid in return for certain changes, such as the appointment of Ali Amini as Prime Minister. To what extent was Meyer's recollection on target, that there was some U. S. encouragement and financial support for such a change?

Yatsevitch: I think he is right on target.

Q: How would you describe the U. S. role in the decision of the Shah to appoint Amini?

Yatsevitch: I think it was made clear to him that that would be considered a very wise appointment, and I think that was it. It wasn't forcefully suggested to him.

Q: Tactfully suggested?

Yatsevitch: Tactfully suggested. We always thought that Amini was our man for some reason. I personally don't think Amini was a total success. I personally don't regard him as a really effective politician for this day and age, but he was obviously highly thought of in Washington.

Q: I think partly because of his roles in the negotiations in the consortium agreement back in '53?

Yatsevitch: I think that was it.

Q: He was ambassador for a while too?

Yatsevitch: Yes, he was. He was ambassador in Washington. That's when I met him first, when he was ambassador.

Q: Now back to this question of Amini's appointment. Was he suggested by name or just that it was good to find--

Yatsevitch: By name.

Q: By name. Was this by Wailes or both of you?

Yatsevitch: Not me. [Laughter]

Q: So it would have been the ambassador?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Making the suggestions. Now according to the accounts that I've seen, the Shah, in fact, feared Amini. Did he tell you what he thought about his Prime Minister? Did he discuss this question with you and his apprehensions and fears about Amini?

Yatsevitch: I think he feared that Amini might have strong links with, or might develop common interests with the National Front.

Q: Did you think that fear had much of a basis to it?

Yatsevitch: I think it had some basis to it, yes. I think it had some basis to it.

Q: But I read earlier that Amini had more social ties with conservative generals and conservative people in Tehran than he did with the National Front or performers like that.

Yatsevitch: Of course he came from such a prominent family that he had close ties with anybody who was prominent, prominent and important. But I think he belonged to the sort of-- he was more

inclined toward the Western educated type of intellectuals, who formed the real base for the National Front.

Q: You got to know him fairly well?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes.

Q: You met with him from time to time?

Yatsevitch: Yes. He was afraid that Bakhtiar was going to stage a coup.

Q: That's right. Some of those reports I've seen suggested, in Washington at least, that some CIA people were apprehensive that the military might move against Amini in May of '61? Around that time?

Yatsevitch: Right. Yes.

Q: Was there discussion of this in Tehran, of this possibility?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Was the concern based upon something that was--

Yatsevitch: I don't think that there were any very serious indications of it, but there was concern that something might happen to Amini.

Q: But there were some quarters of the military that were restive?

Yatsevitch: I think not very happy about it.

Q: Were any preventive measures taken to forestall any development that might lead towards a coup?

Yatsevitch: I think it was just a matter that those of extra vigilance at the time.

Q: So your officers kept their ears open basically to see what--

Yatsevitch: No specific measures were taken, but watch it.

Q: Now according to one CIA report from the period, Amini and the people around him wanted to find ways to circumscribe the Shah's power. To what extent did the Kennedy administration and



the State Department share in that purpose, to try to find ways to put limits on the Shah's power?

Yatsevitch: I think that that actually took place and I think that Bobby Kennedy was one of the figures in Washington that was promoting that line at State.

Q: To what extent was the embassy--ambassador Wailes--supportive of that purpose?

Yatsevitch: I would say he was not supportive of it.

Q: Now around the time that Amini became prime minister, the Shah fired SAVAK-head Bakhtiar?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Replacing him with General Pakravan?

Yatsevitch: Right.

Q: What did you learn about the reasons for this change? I think you alluded to them earlier, the Shah's fears about Bakhtiar?

Yatsevitch: I think the Shah-- at that time the Shah canned the Chief of the Supreme Staff, General Hedayat; the J-2 of the armed forces, that is, the Chief of Intelligence for the Supreme Staff, Kia, the head of the national police, General Alavi Mogaddam, and General Bakhtiar.

Q: It was a wholesale purge?

Yatsevitch: A wholesale purge at the top level, of which all but Bakhtiar were put in prison, and Bakhtiar was asked to leave the country. Bakhtiar came to me immediately after he got his instruction from the Shah and he was absolutely appalled. He'd just had instruction to leave Iran in-- I think he was given twenty-four hours, which was later extended to forty-eight hours to wind up his affairs. He felt very bitter about it. He felt that this was really a total failure to recognize his past servicess and recognize his loyalty.

Well, there's wasn't anything that anyone could do. It was not the place of the United States to interfere in things like that. So then he really turned against the Shah. He had already questioned some of the Shah's policies before that.

Q: Well, for example, do you recall some of his concerns?

Yatsevitch: He felt that the Shah had isolated himself from the country. He felt that the Shah's entourage were a group of people who were only helping to drag the Shah down, rather than help him administer the country in a rational way. He also was opposed to the corruption, although I got the impression that he had his share too. It was the standard way I think of rewarding people in top positions, a system dating back to the time of Cyrus and Darius and so on, I'm sure. Traditional.

But in any case he became very bitter and then he started to work against the Shah more.

Q: Did you stay in touch with Bakhtiar after he left the country? Did you have any contact with him after he left?

Yatsevitch: I did, yes.

Q: Just a personal contact?

Yatsevitch: A personal contact, yes. Switzerland, France.

Q: Did he discuss with you his activities?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Did the Shah explain to you his purposes in making this

wholesale purge of the top leadership of the military? Did he go into this question?

Yatsevitch: Yes, I think generally he felt that they had all become such rivals of each other that the efficiency of the whole system was somewhat in danger and the only way to clean things up was to start afresh. And all their replacements were weaker people after this. He was really very much concerned about their ability to act against him if they found it desirable to do so.

Q: So his basic purpose was political in nature?

Yatsevitch: It was political, yes.

Q: Would General Pakravan be in that same category somewhat?

Yatsevitch: No, Pakravan was a much weaker personality and Pakravan was an intellectual really, and academically inclined; an analyst of intelligence, in the serious sense of providing serious intelligence. He was a much less forceful man than any of the others. And, in fact, I think he found it very hard to carry out some of the functions that SAVAK was obliged to carry out.

Q: In terms of internal policing and repression?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Now according to a report from 1962, prepared by the agency in Washington, Pakravan was loyal to the Shah, but there were some doubts about lower level SAVAK officers in terms of their loyalty. How serious a problem was that considered?

Yatsevitch: I don't remember that it was considered a serious problem. I think it was recognized that SAVAK actually managed to have assigned to it some very superior and quite intellectual officers, and among them were people who recognized the weaknesses of the Shah's conduct, his line of action. But I don't think that any of them were, at that time, at the stage where they would have plotted against the Shah.

Q: Now at the same time that Amini was made Prime Minister, when this military purge was occurring, the embassy's reporting about what ambassador Wailes called "growing sentiment among influential Iranians in favor of a neutral policy for Iran and withdrawal from CENTO,"a did you have any conversations with Iranians? Did any of your contacts in the Iranian community discuss these ideas with you?

Yatsevitch: No. I don't think they would have raised that question with me, but certainly with members of my staff.

Q: Did you share this concern with the ambassador about this turn of opinion in favor of a neutral posture?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes.

Q: You made this before. It was something that comes up again and again, I guess.

Yatsevitch: Yes, indeed. Yes, it comes up again and again. It was a constant matter there. I think that kind of thing is really part of the Iranian national character.

Q: In terms of-- can you elaborate upon that?

Yatsevitch: In terms of positioning themselves. Well, they're very opportunistic people and they would like a maximum amount of flexibility to profit from all directions, and I think that there was some feeling that a neutral stand would eliminate some of the pressures from the Soviet Union. I guess that's about it.

Q: And perhaps give Iran more control over its oil revenues as well? Would that have been an issue?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes. It would have been hard to try any harder to get control of the oil revenues than the Shah tried. That was a major objective of his too.

Q: To increase his power over the consortium?

Yatsevitch: Over the consortium, yes, and to increase the proportion of Iran's take from the oil.

Q: I know this was quite an issue in the later 60's, but how often did it come up during your stay in Iran?

Yatsevitch: During my stay? Well, I stayed there, you see, until really the end of '63, and there was a lot of discussions about that. I think the Shah took great pride in this first case involving the Italians, where they gave such a large portion of the oil price to Iran. It was fifty per cent or so.

Q: Something along those lines?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: But his position vis-a-vis the consortium itself was fairly weak at this stage?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes. Yes, that's right.

Q: Now turning to this question of neutralism in Iran in 1961, to what extent did the Embassy or you and your officers make any efforts to counter these sentiments among influential Iranians?

Yatsevitch: I just don't recall any great effort on that.

Q: Now according to a report from the State Department's Iran desk, the Shah was still under pressure from the Soviet Union to move towards neutralism, and because he could make such a switch-- this is a quote-- "one of our Ambassador's main tasks has been to dissuade him, to soothe him, and to reassure him of U. S. support." Did you provide any assistance to Ambassador Wailes in his efforts to assuage and sooth the Shah on U. S. support?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes. Yes, indeed. This came up in the course of ordinary discussions quite often.

Q: What kind of assurances could you make to him, did you make to him about American support?



Yatsevitch: Well, I don't think that one could do much more than to assure him that it is there and it should be manifest to him by our actions that it's there.

Q: In terms of military assistance and so forth?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: But again he was not always persuaded by that apparently?

Yatsevitch: No. No, he was not. Always hoping for more.

Q: Now in early May '61, soon after the teachers' strike, President Kennedy appointed a special NSC task force, headed by Philips Talbot of the State Department, to assay the situation in Iran and make recommendations as to policy changes, and I guess by mid-May the task force had made a preliminary report, but continued to meet in Washington during the spring and summer, winding up its activities I think in the fall of '61. Did you have any input into the task force work? Did you see their papers from time to time and make suggestions?

Yatsevitch: I did. In fact, I think I attended one of their gatherings when I was back home, but the details are certainly vague in my mind.

Q: So you made periodic visits to Washington as station chief?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: And you consulted with responsible officials at the agency about Iran?

Yatsevitch: Indeed.

Q: The State Department as well?

Yatsevitch: Yes, the State Department.

Q: Was it mostly the people in INR or the desk officials as well? Or on a higher level?

Yatsevitch: A higher level.

Q: The assistant secretary?

Yatsevitch: Yes, the assistant secretary. And desk men.

Q: That would have been Talbot, I guess?

Yatsevitch: Phil Talbot, yes.

Q: And you'd just give them your appraisal of current developments?

Yatsevitch: Yes. Or answers to specific questions we had on Iran.

Q: Now during the spring or early summer of '61, Julius Holmes replaced Edward Wailes as U. S. ambassador. You mentioned Holmes earlier, but how-- had you met him before, before he became ambassador?

Yatsevitch: No. I hadn't met him before.

Q: I think he had mostly European assignments up until that point, I think. Britain and elsewhere, I'm not sure.

Yatsevitch: And South Africa, as I recall.

Q: And South Africa. How closely did you work with him?

Yatsevitch: Very closely. We had a very good working relationship.

Q: And how effective do you think he was as ambassador?

Yatsevitch: I think he was a very effective ambassador. Probably more effective than his successors. He was very effective.

Q: What in particular made him stand out as an ambassador?

Yatsevitch: I think he was forceful in defending the embassy's positions against State. He was forceful in the handling of the execution of our policies in Iran, both within the framework of the embassy and the military mission. So that he really asserted his authority as the number one American commander in the area very well. Very well.

Q: How would you describe his relationship with the Shah? From what you could tell?

Yatsevitch: He seemed to have a good relationship with the Shah. He seemed to have a good relationship with the Shah, but I think he, perhaps, was not too happy with the fact that there was somebody there who knew the Shah much more intimately and in a much more personal way than he did. However, I think he made full use of the situation. You know, this is off the record, so you might press your button there.

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Q: You were saying?

Yatsevitch: I was saying that the day after he arrived, he summoned me to his office and told me that he was afraid that he would have to send me home. I asked him why, and he said that Iran just isn't big enough for the both of us, as far as he could see from the situation which he discovered on arrival. Then I explained to him that I knew my place perfectly well and that I thought this could be useful to him and I would do everything I could to make myself available for his purposes during the remaining time of my tour. And this evolved into a very effective and happy working relationship and a close personal friendship.

Q: So he merely had been concerned about your close relationship with the Shah and that might interfere with his job?

Yatsevitch: Yes. That's right. And the fact that I knew all cabinet ministers and the entire top level in the government and circulated freely among them, on a social level and often in connection with the work.

Q: That's interesting. Now, of course, Holmes was becoming ambassador at the stage where Amini is prime minister and is trying to move on certain reform issues, but apparently with some difficulty, because apparently in August '61 President Kennedy expressed concern that Amini had not done enough to establish his own political base in the country. Why did Amini fail to develop a constituency? What difficulties did he encounter in this?

Yatsevitch: I don't really know and don't really understand that. He came from one of the top families, so that his position among the top people in government was thoroughly established. But I think that he was considered perhaps a little bit too intellectual and liberal.

Q: Well, President Kennedy's concern was that he had not developed a constituency among the middle class or the lower class elements of the society. That might have been the issue.

Yatsevitch: Absolutely. Because he was strictly upper class.

Q: Did the prime minister make much in the way of an effort to develop a relationship or an entente with the nationalist opposition?

Yatsevitch: Yes, I think he did..

Q: How successful was that from your--

Yatsevitch: I think he was-- he certainly had much closer contacts with them than the preceding prime ministers, and I think that it was thought for a while that he would get a lot of their support.

Q: But he didn't or did?

Yatsevitch: And I think for a while he did. I think for a while he did.

Q: I guess there were mixed interpretations of that, because I've seen one embassy report from this period that suggested that he tried to reach an understanding with the National Front, but failed, and because of that failure, or relative failure, he had to seek support or toleration from more conservative elements, like the military.

Yatsevitch: I just don't recall that in detail. He was always a little bit concerned about the military, and just after he was appointed, as I told you, he was afraid that Bakhtiar was going to stage a coup, and I think that his cultivation of the military was just a normal step that he would take to strengthen his

position.

Q: What did your contacts at SAVAK think about Amini as Prime Minister?

Yatsevitch: I don't know if we ever really discussed that. I don't think that that really was a matter that came up.

Q: Now according to an October '61 message from Philips Talbot in Washington, the U. S. had strongly urged Amini to implement various social and economic reforms. Now why did Washington think it was necessary to urge the Prime Minister to press the reforms? Because, I think, wasn't the understanding was that he would move on certain questions as prime minister, move on social reform issues? Wasn't that the assumption that was made when he took his job?

Yatsevitch: Yes, it was, but I think that things were moving very slowly. And I don't know quite why that happened. Either he was too timid in-- or what the reason was. Trying to ingratiate himself with the Shah perhaps for the moment in order to establish his position, he couldn't push those things as far as we hoped he would.

Q: Do you think he had a personal commitment to pushing for



these reforms?

Yatsevitch: I think so. I think so.

Q: So it might have been a question of fearing to upset the Shah?

Yatsevitch: Yes. I think that would be more or less right. A tactical matter.

Q: Now back to the-- Talbot suggested the U. S. has to urge the prime minister to move on these issues. Would Ambassador Holmes have been the one who did the urging?

Yatsevitch: Yes. Yes, he would be.

Q: Do you recall how much success he had with Amini?

Yatsevitch: I just don't recall a specific reaction to it. I think that I came away with the conclusion that Amini was weaker than, perhaps, we originally thought.

Q: Now according to some of the cables that I've seen, it seems that by October of '61 the Shah was giving some thought to

removing Amini and ruling Iran directly, without a strong Prime Minister, but that Holmes and the British ambassador-- whose name escapes me-- that both of them discouraged him from moving along those lines.

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Did the Shah discuss this issue with you?

Yatsevitch: I don't recall.

Q: Now it sounds like Holmes had not really convinced the Shah, because according to Richard Cottam's recent book, when the Shah made a state visit to Washington in the spring of '62, he wanted to know whether Washington would object if he removed his prime minister. Do you recall if there's any truth to that or does that evoke any recollection?

Yatsevitch: It does not, but I think that the Shah would have sort of tried to test Washington's reaction to that without asking for permission to remove him. He'd be very sensitive about anything that smacked of that. Just to see what the reaction would be if he would, because he felt that we had imposed Amini on him. He felt that very strongly that Amini was our man. We had-- I mean, he used to talk to me like that very

often-- our man. We had imposed him.

Q: Did you know when the Shah made his decision to dismiss Amini or finesse him out of the job?

Yatsevitch: No.

Q: Now according to a message that Holmes sent Washington, when the Shah made his visit to D. C. in the spring of '62, he was depressed and insecure. That's a quote, "depressed and insecure." Do you remember much about that?

Yatsevitch: Yes. Well, I don't remember much, but I remember that he was in a depressed frame of mind, and he always felt that we were not backing him with complete sincerity. But the details slip my mind.

Q: Now when the Shah made his visit to Washington, he and President Kennedy agreed on a multi-year program of military assistance. I think it was a five-year plan of military aid?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Did this agreement touch upon your activities in Iran? For example, was there more funding for internal security related

programs or was it purely a military-- ?

Yatsevitch: Purely military.

Q: Now at the end of '61, when Allen Dulles resigned after the Bay of Pigs and John McCone took over as director of Central Intelligence, did McCone make any visits to Iran during his tenure as DCI?

Yatsevitch: I used to see him, but I don't remember his coming to Iran. I saw him in Washington a lot during my visits, but I don't remember his coming to Iran.

Q: How interested was he in Iran?

Yatsevitch: Quite interested. Yes, he was quite interested.

Q: So he'd want to meet with you, so you could report on the latest developments?

Yatsevitch: Yes. Right.

Q: And of course Richard Helms replaced Bissell as chief of the clandestine division at the same time?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Did he travel to Iran at any point when you were in Tehran?

Yatsevitch: We came once.

Q: How knowledgeable was he about the country?

Yatsevitch: He was quite knowledgeable, for somebody who wasn't-- it wasn't his full-time interest. He was very knowledgeable.

Q: Now apparently one incident that hurt Amini's credibility as prime minister, at least his credibility among liberal nationalists, was in January of '62, when military commandos attacked a student demonstration at Tehran University, which led to the university being closed down I think in '62 for a while. Do you know if the Shah had consulted Amini before he approved action against the students?

Yatsevitch: I don't know. I just don't know.

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Q: Now some months after the demonstrations at Tehran

University, Douglas Marshall, who was with the consular section of the embassy, met with Dr. Baghai, who was one opposition figure at this time, and Baghai said that the recent riots, resulting in the closing of the university, were the results of the manipulations of General Bakhtiar, that General Bakhtiar, he

said, was encouraged and assisted in these activities by-- this is a quote-- by "that Colonel in the Military Attache Office at the American Embassy, the one with the Russian name." And then he went on to mention Colonel Yatsevitch by name, and he suggested that you had been in touch with Bakhtiar and were involved in some way in the recent riots at the university. Did these charges come to your attention at this time?

Yatsevitch: As I recall it, they did, and, of course, that was obvious to everybody that that was absolute nonsense. But rumors like that are endemic in Iran. They feel that they're always being controlled by some outside power and there's always somebody manipulating them.

Q: The idea of the foreign hand?

Yatsevitch: Exactly.

Q: I guess the assumption was that because you had some personal friendship with Bakhtiar, therefore you were involved?

Yatsevitch: I presume that might have been the basis for it.

Q: Now some months later, in July of '62, Amini resigned and the Shah began to implement his own reform program. Now the incident that prompted Amini's resignation was a dispute with the Shah over the military budget, which he wanted to cut somewhat, so he could reach a better fiscal position. Did the prime minister seek any U. S. financial support in order to resolve the dispute over the military budget? Did he try to get any American support, so he could keep his position as prime minister?

Yatsevitch: I just don't recall. I just don't know.

Q: That might have involved Holmes more than you?

Yatsevitch: Yes, exactly. Amini could have talked about a matter like that with me, but I don't recall his ever having done so.

Q: Now when Amini resigned, the Shah appointed Assadolah Alam as prime minister. Did you know Alam on a personal level?

Yatsevitch: I knew Alam extremely well.

Q: How would you characterize him?

Yatsevitch: Alam comes from a ruling family in eastern Iran. He, I think, was a very wise and a very skillful manager, and he was probably almost the only person among the Iranians who could call a spade a spade to the Shah's face. But he also was completely the Shah's servant.

He had an excellent manner with all classes of people and was, I think, generally highly regarded.

Q: Do you think the Shah's decision to appoint Alam had any special significance on its own?

Yatsevitch: I think the significance was that he decided that he's got to appoint somebody in whom he has complete trust, and Alam was one of the few people that he trusted completely. As he did General Fardust, but in the latter case that trust was highly misplaced.

Q: So it seems in recent revelations.

Yatsevitch: But those are two personalities who had really



complete freedom from the Shah to express differing views from his.

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Q: Now Amini's minister of agriculture, Hassan Arsanjani, who was in charge of the land reform program, stayed in office for some months after Amini's resignation. Did you meet Arsanjani? Did you know him?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes.

Q: What were your impressions of him?

Yatsevitch: Arsanjani was slightly left, or leftish leaning type, with ambitious ideas about what he would do with the peasantry and so on. I don't really think that he was a very serious person. He certainly didn't last very long, but he talked a good liberal game for quite a while.

Q: I think I have a recollection that there was some concern, perhaps on the Shah's part, that he was moving too quickly on land reform?

Yatsevitch: Yes, there was concern on the Shah's part that he was pushing things too fast.

Q: Do you think that accounted for his political demise?

Yatsevitch: That and his sort of general leftist inclinations, I think.

Q: Now in September '62 the Shah began what might be called a detente with the Soviet Union by announcing that Iran would not be the site of foreign missile bases?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: I think this was the first such announcement from a U. S. ally. Did this take you and Holmes by surprise or were you informed in advance?

Yatsevitch: I don't think it took us by surprise. I think he was just leaning in that direction, what with the Soviet steel plant, steel mill, which I don't recall whether that took place before or after.

Q: It was a few years later.

Yatsevitch: But he kept talking about the need for establishing a less confrontational relationship with his neighbor, and often there was sort of an intimation that he was forced into this position because our military aid wasn't really quite enough.

Q: Could this have been partly to appease the nationalists?

Yatsevitch: I think the nationalists, yes.

Q: Did this cause much concern at the embassy, this decision? What was the reaction to it?

Yatsevitch: Concern, no, but I think disquiet. Not serious concern, but uneasiness. It seemed to be a totally unnecessary move at the time in view of the external pressures on him, so he could have been more soft, or if I may say, liberal.

Q: Now during the period after Amini's resignation, Prime Minister Alam undertook negotiations with the National Front leadership. Did he discuss these negotiations with you?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: What was his purpose? Just trying to get it on top?

Yatsevitch: Broaden the base of support, to see if they could be won over. And, of course, I think it was a matter that was often suggested to him by us, that it would be wise to broaden the base and win more support among the public.

Q: Now apparently one of the issues during these negotiations was the fact that the Front was requesting or asking for holding national elections, because parliament had been disbanded for a couple of years?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: And I think they wanted to hold new elections?

Yatsevitch: Right.

Q: Alam would not accept that?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: And apparently in January of '63 the Shah had much of the Front's leadership arrested, from what I've read. Do you know why the Shah finally decided to crack down against the National Front?

Yatsevitch: I think he was preparing a different type of political organization to represent the so-called opposition. That is when he created these two parties, the Mardom Party, and I think the other one was called the Rastakhiz Party.

Q: That was later. That was in the mid-seventies. But one was the Mardom Party and the other was--

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Yatsevitch: As I recall it, Hasam Ali Mansor was one figure in one, the Rastakhiz Party, and Hoyveda and I think Alam took the lead to organize the other one.

Q: The one party was supposed to be the official regime party and the other was sort of like the loyal opposition? Was that the idea?

Yatsevitch: That was the idea, yes. And I think it was the Rastakhiz Party that was supposed to be the loyal party, and the Mardom, headed by Alam, was the opposition, and I think that's when Alam was transferred to the job of minister of the court.

Q: Something along those lines. Now I think in the early fall of '62--or late summer, I'm not sure which--Vice-President Lyndon Johnson traveled to Iran. Did you meet him during this visit?

Yatsevitch: Yes. I did. And we had brief congenial discussions, but then most of the time was taken up with official functions and so on. I don't think that anything very memorable came out of that visit, as far as I recall.

Q: I have read that during the visit Johnson made several statements about the need to balance social justice with military strength, trying to encourage the Shah to move along social reform lines. Do you remember the Shah's reaction to that?

Yatsevitch: I do not. He received a lot of those suggestions. I think he was pretty inured to them.

Q: Did you get any sense of what the Shah thought about Johnson?

Yatsevitch: Nothing that I can recall off-hand. It was obvious that no great rapport was established. I think that the Shah would have expressed himself warmly in terms of admiration for Johnson if he had been impressed, but he did not. I really don't recall.

don't recall, I don't recall.

Q: When I interviewed Robert Komer a year or two ago, he mentioned that he accompanied Johnson on his trip to the Near East and South Asia. Did you meet Komer at this time?

Yatsevitch: I don't recall when I had my first meeting with Komer. Perhaps it was in Johnson's party, but I don't remember that. However, I already knew him during his subsequent visits, so it's quite possible that our first acquaintanceship developed when he accompanied Johnson. Otherwise I don't remember his presence.

The ambassador, in principle, felt that it was a great mistake for people from the White House staff to go travelling around the world and talking with heads of state, when that was primarily the responsibility of the ambassador. He felt very strongly that Komer, who was an active and enterprising fellow, would contrive a meeting with the Shah, even if the embassy didn't formally wish to arrange one for him.

So the ambassador asked me to just take up all of Komer's time during Komer's visit, so there'd be no effort on Komer's part to see the Shah. And so I was instructed to meet him at the airport, put him in a plane, take him down south to the area where a tribal revolt was under way, and keep him down there for - I think it was already known how many days Komer planned to stay and so fill in his time that way. Bring him back and send

him off home after his having seen an important activity under way, the quelling of that small revolt.

Q: Was this the Fars rebellion? One of the tribal groups?

Yatsevitch: The tribal groups in Fars, yes. The tribal groups in Fars. Two tribes, the Boyerahmdi and the Mamasani, the tribes I think related to the Qashgais, but I'm not sure. In any case, I think that they were Turkic, unlike the Bakhtiari, who are was a straight Persian tribe.

Q: And this rebellion was being put down with military force?

Yatsevitch: Being put down by military force. The commander of the armed forces was down there with his staff and a little bit of air action and a certain amount of tank activity and so on.

Q: Were any American military advisers on the scene? Or did they keep their distance?

Yatsevitch: I encountered none. As far as I know they were not there. But the commander of their ground forces was there. When he received us, he had great maps spread on table and walls. He looked like Napoleon at the Battle of Austerlitz or something like that. This was essentially a battalion scale operation, I



should say. But it was something that was the topic of much conversation at the time and the political implications were greatly exaggerated by some. So it was a suitable place to take Komer.

Q: So people exaggerated the extent of the rebellion or the possibility for--

Yatsevitch: I think the possibility of its spreading.

Q: I know in earlier years the agency had some contacts with some of the tribal groups, as they had with some of the opposition people in the cities. Were there any contacts at this stage?

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes, of course. Of course.

Q: Was this part of the effort to keep tabs with various groups?

Yatsevitch: Exactly. To keep track of everybody who might have some special axe to grind or special cause to promote. The tribes used to be very important, in the early days. Now that they've been disarmed, the tribal organizations are beginning to atrophy and fall apart. But through World War II I think the tribes were basically important. Now, many of them have been

forced into a settled form of life as peasants living off the land, and they have some education and there is a big change in the loyalty to the tribal chiefs, many of whom became thoroughly spoiled and corrupted by Western culture and prefer to spend a good deal of their time in places like Paris and so on, instead of leading the tribes. So that tribes are-- almost leaderless, rather pathetic bands of people going through their traditional pattern of annual migrations with their flocks.

Q: Was the Shah very apprehensive about this rebellion or did he take it in stride?

Yatsevitch: He was-- I think he felt aware of what trouble tribes had caused in the past, and so he was a bit apprehensive. You know, his father had quite extensive military operations against the Turkmen, the Bakhtiaris, and the Quashqa'is. They They had been accustomed to a great deal of tribal autonomy.

Q: Now at the end of '62 the Shah announced a social and economic reform program that became known as the White Revolution, and early in '63 he sponsored a national plebiscite on this program of social reform. What was your assessment of this effort on the Shah's part?

Yatsevitch: It was a genuine effort to inspire a certain amount of popular unity behind this thing, which sort of tied in with the other programs they already had under way, land reform and all those other things. And I think that the great-- if I'm not mistaken, the great party that was supposed to be the big mover behind that was, I think, the Rastakhiz Party, not Mardom, but I'm afraid I've forgotten the details. There was a great deal of publicity for it and people going around and making speeches all over the country.

Q: Now one CIA report from this period suggested that the Shah might fail in his reform efforts, because he still lacked the support of the urban middle classes. To what extent did you see that as a possible obstacle?

Yatsevitch: I think that was really quite a serious threat, because the disaffected people, many of them National Front types, I think questioned the sincerity of all of this and saw it only as a political manouver.

Q: And also, I guess, according to a State Department reports from this period, the Shah's program made traditional elites: landlords and businessmen, as well as the clerics, frightened, confused and furious. Did you get any sense of how your contacts in the security apparatus might have seen the Shah's

programs? I imagine some of them had ties to the old elites as well?

Yatsevitch: Yes. They did. Well, the old elites just thought that it wouldn't work, and the clergy were outraged, because an essential element of all this program was the removal of the clergy from the administration of the lands owned by the great religious foundations and so on, like the foundations in Meshed and Qom, where operations were conducted by the clergy in a very old-fashioned and inefficient way. The Shah imposed a sort of political management on these great-- I don't know whether you should call them trusts, foundations, or whatever the term may be.

Q: The vagfs?

Yatsevitch: The vagfs, yes. Those are the things that used to support, Istanbul, all those great mosques were all supported by vagfs that were located in other parts of the Turkish empire, like Morocco and Algeria and Egypt and so on. And as those vagfs collapsed, Istanbul began to get rather run down in appearance, when the money stopped. Turkey, of course, abolished vagf, but Iran still has these religious vaqs. Very, very rich.

Q: Now in the months after the White Revolution was announced, there was some debate in Washington over whether the Shah was

moving fast enough on his reform programs, and some officials at the Budget Bureau and the NSC staff, such as Kenneth Hanson, as well as Robert Komer, criticized Ambassador Holmes, because he apparently did not press the Shah hard enough on these issues. On the other hand, people like Philips Talbot, back at State, warned that excessive intervention could backfire and lead to an anti-U. S. reaction. How familiar were you with this debate that was going on in Washington?

Yatsevitch: Rather than being a participant, I simply made my little contribution in expressing my views but I think that it was quite correct that pushing things harder could have created trouble. And, in fact, I think that this drive to introduce more ideas of that kind is responsible in part for the events that later developed in Iran, when modernization was forced on the country more rapidly than it could digest it.

Q: So you were more or less satisfied with the rate of the Shah's progresss?

Yatsevitch: I think it was impossible to do anything faster.

Q: And Ambassador Holmes was as well?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Did Hanson make any visits to Iran?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: To press his views?

Yatsevitch: Yes. I used to see him. He later went to California and became involved in some pharmaceutical company, making birth control devices or something like that.

Q: I'm not sure. Now during the first months of that same year of '63 there were major protests in Tehran and other cities against the Shah, and religious critics, such as Ayatollah Khomeini, were beginning to play a major role in the protest movements against the Shah. Now how much did you know at this stage of things about the influence of critics like Khomeini?

Yatsevitch: Merely that they were opposition figures and I think maybe that was the time when Khomeini was in exile. He was exiled first to Turkey and then went to Iraq.

Q: That was in '64, I think.

Yatsevitch: Maybe yes.

Q: A year or so later.

Yatsevitch: Right. I personally didn't realize the importance of the influence of the clergy at that time. I mistakenly thought that Iran had traveled a little bit further along the road to modern systems. So I'm one of those who failed to appreciate it.

Q: Did any of your officers have any contact with the clergy?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: So there were some contacts?

Yatsevitch: There were some contacts.

Q: Including some that were critics of the Shah?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: Now Khomeini was arrested twice in '63 during the first six months of the year?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: And he was arrested the second time in early June and at that stage major demonstrations broke out in Tehran, Tabriz and elsewhere. The government moved fairly quickly against the demonstrators, which led to some loss of life in Tehran and a few other cities, but I think particularly in Tehran. Did any of your officers witness the demonstrations in Tehran?

Yatsevitch: I'm pretty sure. Yes. Must have been. But again I say must have been. I don't have a distinct recollection of it, but my people generally tried to be present at all demonstrations of that kind.

Q: Now I interviewed Gordon Tiger, who was country desk officer in 1963 at State. He observed that the Iranian military and police used American supplied equipment when they cleared the streets. Did any U. S. officials play an advisory role in these efforts against the crowds?

Yatsevitch: I would be very surprised if they did. I'm pretty sure it was not the case. But we did have a police mission..

Q: To the gendarmarie?



Yatsevitch: Yes. And I know that we did supply a lot of riot control equipment and that kind of civilian stuff, civilian equipment for riot control. So they naturally used whatever they had.

Q: The gendarmarie mission, that was a U. S. Army mission, right?

Yatsevitch: Yes. And one that sort of antedated other missions and was of long standing.

Q: Back to General Schwartzkopf in the forties?

Yatsevitch: That's right.

Q: Now according to a number of accounts, the Shah was unwilling to call troops against the demonstrators in Tehran in June '63 and that Asadollah Alam made the decision to use force. Did you hear anything to that effect? Or was the story designed to pin the blame on Alam?

Yatsevitch: I think Alam urged it, but Alam would not have taken action without the Shah's approval. So I think it's more a device to pin the blame on Alam, but Alam wouldn't have acted without the approval of his master.

Q: Did the Shah discuss these riots, these demonstrations, with you?

Yatsevitch: Yes. We talked about them and I just don't remember that we really got into anything more than that they have to be put down and you have to do what it takes to do that. Nothing more profound than that.

Q: Is it true that he believed that Nasser was indirectly responsible for the demonstrations?

Yatsevitch: He had all kinds of suspicions about Nasser and I think it's quite possible he did believe that. He talked about Nasser as a possible factor. Arabs in general, I mean he had a thing about Khuzistan as an objective of Arab expansion. The old Arabistan, because-- well, he always used to try to tell me that the inhabitants were really Arabic speaking Persians rather than Persian speaking Arabs in that area.

Q: A fine distinction.

Yatsevitch: But he felt that Iraq and Nasser, as a sort of patron of a greater Arab movement in the area, were very much interested in subverting, in tearing away Khuzistan from Iran.

Q: I'll ask you more questions about that in a few minutes, but-- . Now according to some analysts, after June '63 religious opposition and dissident middle-class elements in the bazaari and elsewhere began working more closely together than they had in the past. For example, General Eckhardt, chief of Armish-MAAG during this period, he noted this relationship in a report that he presented in '65 when he retired from Armish-MAAG, and Eckhardt suggested that the clerics were the opposition group with the greatest capacity to lead an anti-Shah rebellion or uprising. Now you mentioned a minute ago that you were not at this time you were not appreciative of the role of the religious elements?

Yatsevitch: Right.

Q: Did you change your mind during the sixties or would you have disagreed with Eckhardt's analysis?

Yatsevitch: No, I think it's correct that that closeness between the bazaari crowd and the church was one of long standing and politically, I think, quite significant.

Q: Now how closely did the Agency follow the activities of

Khomeini and other religious leaders during the following years after '63? Was there some attention paid to their--

Yatsevitch: Oh, yes, attention was paid, and I think that reports were sent in routinely about what we could find out about their activities. Yes, indeed.

Q: Did informal contacts continue with religious groupings in the country?

Yatsevitch: I can only say as far as I know.

Q: As far as you know. Of course, in '63 you were in Washington?

Yatsevitch: That's right. I was in Washington with broadened responsibilities and interests, although I always maintained a personal interest in what went on in Iran.

Q: I guess also, during the mid-1960s, covert and informal opposition groupings, such as the Fidayan and the Mujahidin, began to develop in Iran, and I guess outside of Iran as well?

Yatsevitch: Yes.

Q: How much did the Agency's Iran specialists know about those particular developments?

Yatsevitch: I think they knew quite a bit. Yes. They certainly were aware of quite a bit of that.

Q: Now some months before the June uprising, in April '63, Dean Rusk visited Tehran. I think as part of the CENTO meeting, I'm not sure. And at this meeting the Shah expressed his concern about Egyptian influence in Iraq. Now you mentioned a few minutes ago some of the Shah's apprehensions about the role of Egypt in the Persian Gulf area.

Yatsevitch: Right.

Q: To what extent did you share this concern? How realistic did you think it actually was?

Yatsevitch: I didn't think it was very realistic at all at that time, and I think that it never really proved to be realistic in subsequent events, as far as Egyptian participations.

Q: Why do you think the Shah was so fixated on this question? How would you explain it, if you could?