

Irwin: No, it was not Sisco at that time. I think Ambassador Murphy also was with us, I'm just not sure which post he was in at that time.

In any case, those three countries in effect said that, "I think the oil companies in the United States are making a mistake in pushing for a unified agreement on the part of all oil states, because if we're forced to cooperate with all the other oil states, certain of the other states are more radical"--Libya, and so forth, picking out the radical states--"and therefore we would end up, you would end up with an agreement that was more in accord with what the radical states wanted than what your friendly states would be willing to do." Namely, they were describing themselves as the friendly states. So they said, "We think you'd be better off if you made an agreement with the three," in effect "our three states." They weren't talking together. They were talking individually, but more or less in the same vein. Well it made sense to me as an individual. It made sense to the people with whom I was traveling, and who were more expert in that area than I--both in oil and in the political-economic field of the Middle East. So that was what I recommended, and that was what ultimately happened, that the oil companies agreed in a separate agreement with those three states.

I don't know, again, the detail of what followed thereafter, but I talked to--I occasionally see one of the chief oil representatives who was negotiating in Iran at that time. He lives in Princeton, New Jersey. I asked him one day, as he looked back on it did it ever make any real difference? The fact that I had recommended contrary to what they had really, originally, started out to do. He said,

"No, I've thought about it over time," and he said, "I don't think it did." So, whether who was right or who was wrong, it made sense to me at that time. That was what I recommended and that was what the State Department recommended to Mr. McCloy and the oil companies.

Q: I have read that prior to your departure you met with President Nixon. Did he give you any special instructions before you--

Irwin: No, not any special instructions. Congress had a hearing, and they kept trying to confirm their previous opinion that there must have been a definite policy that the government wanted to take, irrespective of what the oil companies wanted, and that was not the case. I had no specific instruction to do this or do that on that negotiating mission. It was just to listen and learn and recommend. That's what I did, and it was not a preconceived decision--although ever since then, people have often thought it was.

Q: Now on your mission to the Middle East, did you go to Iran first?

Irwin: Yes, I went to Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait.

Q: How long were you in Tehran? Just a few days?

Irwin: Just a couple of days. It was just a quick visit each place.

Q: I guess you met with Ambassador MacArthur when you went to Tehran.

Irwin: Yes.

Q: Did you talk about the McCloy oil company proposal with him?

Irwin: He knew about it.

Q: Do you recall his opinion at the time?

Irwin: I think he agreed that it would have been better to negotiate with those countries that were willing to negotiate on a more friendly basis, as they would have put it, than trying to tie them up with the more radical states. I don't recall the specific position of the other two ambassadors, but I suspect it was not too dissimilar.

Q: I've read that you met with Jamshid Amuzegar, who was the minister of finance in Iran at this time. You met with him before you met with the Shah--that's what I think I read in the New York Times. I looked back at the Times at that time, and they said that you met with Amuzegar, and then the Shah. Do you recall anything about the meetings with the finance minister?

Irwin: I really don't.

Q: After you had left Tehran, he was quoted as saying that, "I don't know what Mr. Irwin's visit was for." Why would he have said that?

Do you know anything that--?

Irwin: No, I don't know.

Q: You met with the Shah by yourself when you were over there?

Irwin: Ambassador MacArthur came with me.

Q: Do you recall the substance of your discussion with the Shah?
Pretty much what you said before.

Irwin: Just what we've been talking about.

Q: Now, according to one document that I've read, Ambassador MacArthur later said that the Shah had threatened an oil embargo if the oil companies played any "dirty tricks"--I guess "dirty tricks" is a quote. Did he say anything like that to you? The possibility of an oil embargo if the countries tried to take a coercive approach, I guess, towards Iran?

Irwin: I don't recall specifically whether he said that at that time or at a different time. I don't recall, myself.

Q: Do you recall the Shah making any assurances about supplies or prices in your discussions with him?

Irwin: Yes, my impression was that he felt that if the oil companies

negotiated with Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait they could get agreement on the price for a specific period of time, roughly five years is my memory.

Q: The assumption was that there would be a stable flow of oil in that time. Yes.

Irwin: And I believe that events pretty well carried that out, only to be interrupted by the Arab-Israeli war, and then, I guess all bets were off at that point.

Q: What were your impressions of the Shah from that meeting? Do you recall much about that?

Irwin: Well, I spoke of that earlier, actually.

Q: That's right.

Irwin: I noticed. Having just re-read it, I covered it.

Q: Were there any changes since the first time you'd met him, that you can think of?

Irwin: Well I think, as I mentioned in our earlier conversation, I think he had become more autocratic and more, I suppose, more inflexible in his views once he had determined on his views. I think the sense of power was growing, and as I mentioned in our earlier

conversation, seemed to bear out Lord Acton's famous dictum.

Q: Okay. Now, in his memoirs, Henry Kissinger sort of sort of seems to be maybe gently criticizing the State Department by suggesting that--

Irwin: Who?

Q: Henry Kissinger, in his memoirs, seems to be criticizing the State Department. You said that when you met with the Shah and the other leaders in the Gulf states you told them that the U.S. government would not involve itself in the details of the negotiations between the companies and the governments of the producing states. Kissinger says that this hands-off approach, not getting involved with the details of negotiations, meant that the companies would have to yield to the producing states in terms of prices, control of oil, and so forth. Would you suggest it was the wrong way to go about it? That's the implication, I think, from reading the memoirs. Now how would you respond to that line of approach, that line of argument that Kissinger makes?

Irwin: I don't know whether I would respond. People think what they wish at that particular time. I think if the government were going to respond they'd have to do it on the basis of a lot more background study and work, rather than just a quick mission to discuss and listen and learn and recommend, as a result of what those three countries said. If it were going to happen that way, and the United

States was to take a real part, it would have been as much Dr. Kissinger's responsibility, with the influence he had on policy with the President, as it would have been Secretary Rogers in the State Department. If it had been raised, it would have been considered by all of those individuals.

Q: But was this option of a strong government role in these negotiations--I guess backing the oil companies--was that option discussed as one possibility, dealing with the OPEC issues?

Irwin: Well, I just don't recall the details. I would have thought that the government would in general measure given backing to the oil companies, but maybe not in the specifics to the degree that Mr. Kissinger speaks in that piece. But frankly I don't recall the details. Again, you're missing your best source in Ambassador Akins.

Q: Okay, one more question on petroleum. I guess during late 1972 and early 1973 the Shah advanced a plan for Iran to take over the in-country operations of the consortium, and compensate the companies--the consortium members--through a long-term sales purchase agreement. Do you recall your reaction? At the time some State Department officials considered this close to expropriation, given that the consortium had a long-term contract to run oil operations in the country.

Irwin: What date was this?

Q: This was late 1972, early 1973.

Irwin: Well, I don't really recall the details of that.

Q: Okay. Now around this time, besides petroleum questions there were other issues that involved the U.S. and Iran, such as arms sales policy issues. Did you take part in any discussions regarding arms sales policy approach to Iran, that you can recall?

Irwin: It's most likely that I did, but I don't recall details.

Q: I guess to refresh your memory, one issue that came up in the spring of 1972 when Henry Kissinger and President Nixon traveled to Iran to meet with the Shah, after the Moscow summit--this was the spring of 1972. At that meeting, as you might recall, Nixon and Kissinger agreed to let the Shah buy any weapon that he wanted in the U.S. market short of nuclear weapons--anything up to nuclear weapons--for Iranian military build up. Did you know that this would be discussed prior? Was this policy stance that they took about the Shah's ability to buy American weapons, was this issue discussed at the State Department prior to the meeting?

Irwin: I don't recall. It's entirely possible that it was not, because Dr. Kissinger often operated on that premise of not discussing some of the policies he and the President had talked about until it had actually been brought out into the open. They may have or they may not, I just don't really recall.

Q: Do you recall any discussion of it thereafter, after the meeting with the Shah in Tehran?

Irwin: I really don't.

Q: During those same meetings, spring of 1972, Nixon and Kissinger acceded to the Shah's request for CIA assistance to Kurdish rebels who were operating at that time inside of Iraq. Now I think you were a member, at this time, of the Forty Committee[?], which made decisions regarding covert operations generally?

Irwin: I could have been.

Q: Do you recall if this question of CIA aid to the Kurds came up in discussions?

Irwin: I don't recall. That doesn't mean it didn't. When I spoke earlier, my not knowing it, it's entirely possible Secretary Rogers knew more about the trip of President Nixon with Dr. Kissinger than I might have.

Q: I guess in February of 1973 you were appointed ambassador to France, or thereabouts.

Irwin: When was that?

Q: February 1973?

Irwin: Yes, something like that.

Q: In the course of that year, I guess in the fall of 1973, oil prices sky rocketed, during the Arab-Israeli war. Did you do any work with the French on OPEC matters when you were ambassador? Any coordination going on in terms of oil policy?

Irwin: Well, again I'm sure there were discussions but I don't recall any specific details or specific part that I may have played.

Q: After you left France you returned to your law practice here in New York?

Irwin: Yes.

Q: Did you do any work, or have any involvement, in Iran related issues after you returned?

Irwin: No.

Q: Do you have any comments you might want to make on subsequent developments in Iran during the late 1970s, in terms of U.S. policy, the revolution, and the role of U.S. policy in the 1970s generally? Any observations you want to conclude with?

Irwin: Well, any observations would deserve more than just off-hand comment, so I think perhaps not.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much for your time.

Irwin: Thank you, Mr. Burr.

[End of interview]

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