

contacts with opposition figures, people organizing demonstrations, opposition politicians, I think to get a better understanding of their political views and their plans. Did you get any special instructions to widen your contacts with the Shah's opponents, people who were politically in organizing demonstrations and so forth?

Metrinko: Did I get special instructions? I don't recall. Did it ever occur to me that I should not be talking to people like this? No. As it turned out, a fair number of people I knew well were actively involved in the demonstrations, in the revolutionary movement. I didn't make a conscious effort. It's just that I knew people like that and we continued our relationships. But that I would start thinking of them as people about whom I should be reporting specifically; their attitudes, their opinions? There was one point at which I was approached by a leading religious figure's emissary and asked if a meeting could be arranged. I reported that to the embassy. The embassy told me not to. They already had a contact with the person. Or at least I think they had one. Or also possibly the political section in the embassy didn't want anyone in Tabriz breaking in on what they thought of as being their turf.

Q: What kind of groupings were active? For example, there was a liberation movement for Iran that Bazargan and others were involved. Did they have representatives in Tabriz, for example?

Metrinko: The National Front people is the group you're referring to?

Q: Yes.

Metrinko: I knew a fair number of people who were associated with the National Front. They became far more vocal, far more active, as the year of 1978 progressed. I also knew people in the military who were becoming anti-Shah and who stayed in the military afterwards, or in the police afterwards. Various people began changing publicly, in the sense of becoming-- is the word "more open"?-- in their statements and their condemnation of the regime. In their support for the demonstrations. And a fair number of these people are still there, still in their positions, still in their jobs. Running the university or various hospitals or still on the police force, in the army, the navy, whatever.

Q: What was the political atmosphere like over the course of the summer of '78? Did it change? Did the cycle of demonstrations continue in Tabriz or were there moments when there was no activity?

Metrinko: There were certainly weeks and weeks when there was no activity whatsoever. Tourists came to Tabriz. Again, people went on vacation. You know, I had a whole series of visitors from the United States. It was quiet enough in general so that

my own parents came and stayed three or four months with me in Tabriz, and didn't leave until, as far as I remember, October of 1978. It was quite late when they left.

But certainly-- when you talk about a cycle of demonstrations, one factor to remember is that people become accustomed to things very quickly. It's like getting accustomed to changes in weather. You know, you get accustomed to curfews. You simply change your daily program, your daily schedule, to meet the curfew. You get accustomed to the fact that strikes in a particular factory have stopped the availability of a particular item. You get accustomed to the fact that the university's closed or that it's open. You become accustomed to new traffic patterns. You become accustomed to seeing tanks on the streets. And you simply sort of forget that it wasn't that way a year in the past. You begin to get accustomed to seeing large numbers of soldiers standing around with weapons and you simply ignore them when you're driving.

Q: That was the case in Tabriz during the summer?

Metrinko: Yes. All of these things were happening. And it happened in increments, so that it wasn't really noticed. It's like gaining weight. You don't gain forty pounds in one day. Or lose it. It's just incremental, and so you really don't notice it. Or if you notice it, it's very bearable. If you had taken people in Iran from mid-1977 to late 1978 in one day, the country

would have gone into shock. But because it happened incrementally, everyone adjusted. Power also disappears incrementally, and the Shah was losing his grip that way too.

Q: What was your assessment of the Shah's future around this time, during the summer?

Metrinko: I always thought of the Shah as something sort of not necessary, and not even really applicable any more in Iran. It was always sort of a puzzle to me how he or his family could expect to stay on as, you know, the sort of dictator of Iran, when he no longer had the education to compare with many people in his own bureaucracy, when he no longer had the-- well, if you want to call it training to keep up with what was happening in the world, when so much of his prestige depended on people not finding out what he and his family were like. But where at the same time the government was sending out thousands of Iranians every year to study, to be trained abroad, and they would sort of expect them to come back. Sending them out to the United States, to Germany, to England, to France, wherever, for three or four or ten years, and then expect them to come back and sort of ignore everything they had learned outside of Iran. They were sending out the cream of the Iranian student crop. Thousands and thousands of students every year. And sending them out of Iran for their formative years.

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Metrinko: But sending them out of Iran in the thousands in their formative intellectual years-- say the ages of eighteen to twenty-five-- and then expecting them to come back and to be satisfied with a total dictatorship that was corrupt. It was sort of crazy. And I just kept looking at the people I knew, the ones who were-- you know, the local professionals who had studied abroad or who had studied in Iran, and this system no longer fit the people.

Also I couldn't help but feel that the Shah and his family, from the speeches I heard, from the things I saw them do and say, were sort of living in a different world. They really did not seem to know a lot about Iran. They certainly had no contact with the daily life of Iran or normal people in Iran. They saw the scrubbed peasants and they saw military officers and they saw the diplomatic corps and they took their vacations abroad and they did their shopping abroad and they just didn't seem to know what was going on in the country.

Q: After some of the events of this period, during the holy month of Ramadan in August '78, apparently throughout the country the clergy were taking a greater role in preaching against the Shah in public or in the mosque. How evident was this in Tabriz or were they already taking such a role even in the preceding

months, in terms of public preaching against the Shah, the clergy?

Metrinko: I really don't know. You have to remember-- well, I just can't answer.

Q: Okay. I've read in one of the chronologies of the revolution that there were riots in Tabriz in August. On August 10th or 11th? Does that ring a bell in particular?

Metrinko: Not a particular day, no. I'm trying to think right now of the first time the consulate was attacked and I really don't even remember that. I suspect it was the early autumn, but I just do not recall any more.

Q: Now some historians of the revolution have noted that by the end of the summer the protest movements included a growing number-- included a growing working class component. Had this already been true in Tabriz or was this something that changed?

Metrinko: This was all true. My policeman was certainly a member of the working class, and he was one of many. But when you talk about the working class, don't forget that Iran was always a place where people were under-employed. And so, when you think of the working class in the United States, someone who goes to a factory at eight o'clock in the morning and comes out

at five, it's not quite the same here.

Q: I guess I assumed that people were marginally employed.

Metrinko: Certainly it was attracting-- the revolution, the protests were attracting a-- by the summertime attracting a wide spectrum of people. Not just the working class. You had upper-class people, especially their children, out there on the demonstrations too. A lot of the political groups, the Mujahidin-- the young Communists-- the Fedayeen-- groups of that sort were not composed of illiterate peasants or illiterate workers. These people were the sons and daughters of the middle and upper classes.

If you look today at-- or if you looked especially at the beginning of the Khomeini regime, people who took over the government, a lot of them were upper middle-class, and they had been very much a part of the revolutionary movement too. As the revolution wore on, too, in 1978, there were increasing numbers of Iranians who returned from their schools abroad to take part in it, just sort of gave up school and came back to Iran. I could not give you figures on that, but I knew people who fit in that category. They started reading about the protests and what was happening, the cycles, and just sort of chucked everything here or in England away and came back to take part in it.

If you took a crowd, a cross-section of any particular crowd of demonstrators in the summertime in the early autumn of '78, I

think you would be more likely to get cross-sections than a particular social strata.

Q: Sort of a cross-class coalition?

Metrinko: Yes.

Q: That's the impression I've gotten from the various histories.

Metrinko: With perhaps your upper classes, your educated classes, more likely to be part of a specific group. Not just joining crowds at random, but a specific group of-- whatever.

Mujahidin. Fedayeen. National Front people, whatever.

Q: Now on August 19th of course there was the tragic fire at the Cinema Rex in Abadan.

Metrinko: Tragic arson at the Cinema Rex.

Q: Yes. Was there any kind of response to that in Tabriz?

Metrinko: Oh, a tremendous response.

Q: What--

Metrinko: It caused sort of a shock wave throughout the entire



country, and the credibility gap between the populace and the government was already so wide, including members of the government, who didn't believe their government, that it was simply assumed-- without any proof, but simply assumed that somehow the government had been responsible for this. That this had either been SAVAK or the police or some combination thereof. And as far as I remember, people just went sort of crazy over it. As it turned out, as far as I know this was-- the arson was committed by the revolutionaries themselves, who were trying to-- if you'll pardon the pun-- set off a spark in that area of Iran. They succeeded. The investigation that was done of the Cinema Rex fire-- the investigation that was done in 1979, when the Khomeini regime came into power, basically showed that it had been caused by the revolutionary movement itself, members of it. The investigation report was simply buried. I know people who were involved in the investigation, which is why I say that. And they were very, very revolutionary. They were told to forget what they had discovered in the process of doing the report.

Q: Now in early September of '78 there were large demonstrations in Tehran, some of them very peaceful, some were militant. And around the 8th or the 9th the crowds were shouting "Death to the Pahlavis and we want an Islamic republic." In terms of the demonstrations that were occurring in Tabriz around this time, were there any people calling for an Islamic republic as such?

Metrinko: That specifically I don't remember. What you have to remember though about crowds, at least Iranian crowds, is that most crowds were not spontaneous things. They were planned. And the slogans that were being called out were also planned slogans by various groups. People in the crowd would repeat these, but it was more along the nature of a cheerleader calling out a cheer or a chant that people would repeat.

One example of that that I can give is a crowd in 1979 in the city of Shiraz that was-- well, the people at the head of the demonstration were chanting "Death to Talebani." Talebani is a Kurdish leader who's still around. Now he's pro-Iranian regime. At that point he was causing a lot of trouble on the border. But anyway "Death to Talebani." The people in the crowd didn't know his name and they thought they were supposed to say "Death to Talegani." Talegani was one of the chief religious leaders of Tehran. So this entire crowd of people in Shiraz, in their thousands, started calling out "Death to Talegani."

What the crowds cry out is often not very important. This will sound cynical, but in many cases they simply don't know what they're calling out.

Q: How much did you know about the timing of demonstrations? Did you know in advance?

Metrinko: Basically yes. I would hear about it either from friends or word would get around, don't go out on the streets on

such and such an afternoon-- you know, stay away on such a day. Don't go to the bazaar on Wednesday, because it's going to be closed and there'll be a demonstration. Basically common knowledge, and either friends would tell me or once in a while the police would tell me, or BBC would tell me that there was going to be a demonstration in two more days, in that wonderful way they had of aiding and abetting the planning for it. BBC used to report the news of the future. "There will be a demonstration at ten o'clock tomorrow, starting at-- " [Laughs]

Q: Now on September 8th the Shah declared martial law and this led to the notorious shootings at Jaleh Square, the Black Friday incidents. I guess martial law was also declared in Tabriz around this time?

Metrinko: Yes. Martial law was enforced at different times in different cities, and I don't remember off-hand whether we had it all the time that it was in force in Tehran or if we had more of it. But it was basically done by the commander of the city, the military commander, and the governor of the city would decide if it were necessary. And, of course, if you left the city limits, it didn't apply. So that sort of caused havoc with the bus schedules. People who would have to leave the city by six o'clock or five o'clock to be able to get out before martial law and not arrive in Tehran or another major city before the curfew ended in the morning. You know, you had to sort of plan your

trips carefully and often wait outside the city borders until you could get in.

Q: Were there more shootings of people? Were the shootings of people still going on in Tabriz? And demonstrations?

Metrinko: It continued all along, yes.

Q: Anything on the scale of Jaleh Square?

Metrinko: No, nothing like that in Tabriz. It's also funny, information on subjects like that is very much along the line of the blind men and the elephant. People who were absolutely reputable, who had full access and every reason to be truthful would say that hundreds had been wounded, and their colleagues who were absolutely truthful and had every reason to be sincere and had access to the information, would say, no, nothing happened. It was very, very difficult to know what was really happening.

I had fairly good information from people who worked in local hospitals. Certainly had enough friends who were doctors or on medical staffs. And the information was always contradictory. I mean, I can think of examples where people would tell me that the hospital was filled with the wounded and someone else-- a doctor would say, no, there's no one here. We're not doing anything. Apropos the same incident.

So very, very difficult to get information that was accurate.

Q: Did you ever visit a hospital just to see?

Metrinko: Yes, I did. Several times.

Q: And did you get any impressions from those visits?

Metrinko: It was a mixed bag. A very mixed bag. Sometimes it was possible to find out and sometimes not.

Q: Now how did you see the situation in Iran in the wake of Jaleh Square? Did your situation change in any way?

Metrinko: It got worse. Martial law was in full effect and the military were getting more and more tense. The police were getting more and more tense. People were getting more upset, more open, more vociferous in their conversations. Lots more stuff was being written on walls. You had a lot more minor damage, more demonstrations. The cycle was just going up. By the time of the winter, the early winter, you had a lot of random violence. Things like tires set on fire on the streets and the sort of stuff that points out something is wrong.

Q: Did your perspective on things still diverge from that of the

political officers at the embassy? Or was there some meeting of minds at this point?

Metrinko: I think they were gradually realizing that things were not rosy. I remember attending a staff meeting. This was written up in minutes that were later found by the students who occupied the embassy and were released. But I was at a staff meeting once and they called in this-- it was called a Principal Officer's Meeting.

Q: Was this June '78 maybe?

Metrinko: Possibly.

Q: Early summer. I think I've seen that.

Metrinko: Okay, but, you know, they called me in from Tabriz and the guys from Isfahan and Shiraz, and we met with various embassy section heads. And I sat there listening to these briefings and sort of status reports by various sections of the embassy, and it came to my turn and I just said, "You know, I feel like I live in a different country than you all do. What you're saying is simply not true of where I am." Literally they were describing an Iran that didn't exist, or didn't exist for me.

I think there are very good reasons for this, but you'll see that if you compare the reporting, the sort of opinions, the

analyses, of those of us who were out in the smaller towns with those people who were in Tehran, there's a marked difference.

Q: Did you have access to Tomseth's reports?

Metrinko: Oh, sure. Of course.

Q: They were all sent to you routinely?

Metrinko: Yes. Routinely, yes. But one of the reasons is that for us Iran was a more immediate fact. I couldn't just walk across the embassy compound into the commissary to do my shopping. I had to go out. I was out if I-- you know, I was simply out in the city in the area all the time. I had very little social life with Americans. There were Americans there and I saw them, yes, but my social life was not limited to officers' clubs or the equivalent. It was out with the people of the city. The same was true for Shiraz, the same was true for Isfahan. I mean, our Iran started a few feet away. For lots of people in Tehran, Iran was somewhere else. You could have a very interesting, very pleasant, very sort of fulfilling life in Iran if you were in Tehran and never talked to an Iranian. You didn't have to. You could live in an English speaking sort of middle-class America world, with your American churches and your American movies, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Never eat anything Persian. Never talk to a normal, non-English speaking

Iranian.

That was not true for us. It was certainly true for the upper echelons of the embassy.

Q: Were there any more conferences that you took part in after June, after that one meeting in particular? Like in the fall?

Metrinko: I certainly visited Tehran many times, but conferences per se, none that I can think of.

Q: Now during the course of '78, what kind of attitudes towards the United States or Americans generally did you encounter? From your various contacts with opposition people, bazaari, middle-class people, and so forth?

Metrinko: Let's start out with the various groups of people in the country. The religious classes had always been anti-Western, but they were anti-everything. Certainly anti-American. By the autumn of '78, we were getting increasing numbers of things written on the consulate walls on the outside. The walls had always been absolutely clean, always fresh clean, et cetera, nothing ever written on them for years. And suddenly all sorts of things were coming up on the walls. "Death to Carter," whatever. Things like, "Go Home, Americans," "Go Home, Yankees," that sort of stuff.

There was certainly a strong perception that was given us by



the security people that it was becoming physically dangerous for Americans there. And I was getting, certainly by the autumn, people who would have me to their homes-- well, certain people stopped inviting me. Let's say that. Because they could already sort of smell the shift in the winds. Other people, friends whose homes I would visit, were very circumspect about having me there. I would sort of be slipped in, as opposed to getting the grand welcome at the bottom of the walk. I was being slipped into the back door or whatever. They weren't so keen any more on having their neighbors know that the American Consul was visiting.

Other than that, it's hard to really point to anything specifically.

Q: Now in October there were more protests, after Khomeini was expelled from Iraq, and on the 16th of October, forty days after Black Friday, there was a general strike around the country. How widely was this strike observed in Tabriz?

Metrinko: I simply don't recall that particular, that specific strike. In general, whatever was being called for in the country was true in Tabriz. I mean, the bazaar was closed frequently. The schools, et cetera, were closed frequently. Whenever there was an excuse for a closing, the Tabrizese took it. You have to remember, the Pahlavis had never been popular in Tabriz.

Q: Do you recall much about the impact of the various strikes that were taking place in Tabriz in the fall and early winter of '78?

Metrinko: It had very little impact on my personal life. The consulate in Tabriz had its own generator. I had always, because of my representational demands, kept a huge amount of food in the house. I had several refrigerators, freezers, a large stock of foodstuffs in general, and a good cook, who knew how to use it well. So if you have a couple of bags of rice, a hundred or a hundred and fifty pounds, you can go for a long time and not worry about the effects of a strike. I mean, things like that would not have affected me personally.

I remember the frustration of wanting to buy things in the bazaar or needing things for the consulate. I can't think of anything specifically now, but-- yes, I can. Things like paint. I wanted to buy paint locally or, you know, sort of renovation material, plaster, whatever. There was a period when you couldn't get paint because all the paint stores were closed, because the bazaar was closed. And so you just had to wait until the shops reopened again. Fuel oil, deliveries of that sort, were certainly constrained.

One example, by the way, of the increasing anti-Americanism. We had a very large tank for fuel oil that was buried in the grounds of the consulate. We also had our own gas pump. So that the consulate vehicles and the vehicles, official vehicles, could

be filled up right at the consulate. Well, for years and years and years we'd had these filled normally by the oil company. They would come in, fill them, and leave. By late 1978 this was getting to be rather a problem, and, in fact, in order to fill up for the winter with fuel oil, I had to pull quite a few strings. Basically also I think delivery was done late at night, if I'm not mistaken, as well. The oil companies simply didn't want people to know that they were making a large delivery of fuel oil to the consulate.

I remember that specifically, because the person who arranged it from the oil company got in touch with me about a year and a half ago and reminded me in a long letter how he had gone about doing this.

Q: Now on November 5th there were students shot at Tehran University and there was widespread rioting and destruction in Tehran. This was what people called the day that Tehran burned down. The next day the Shah imposed martial law and appointed General Azhari as Prime Minister, setting up, you know, the martial law government. What impact did the martial law government have on the situation in Tabriz, if any?

Metrinko: I'd say the succession of governments that we had-- Sherif-Emami, Azhari-- the whole slew of them, Bakhtiar, to the best of my knowledge didn't have a great deal of impact. The local governor-general would have been the important person in

the government for us. We had one who lasted until the riots of February 1978. He was changed. A successor came in, who stayed there until he escaped when Khomeini came into power. So that government did not change. The city, the local government, was not affected that much.

Q: From your contacts with government officials-- the mayor, the governor-general, whatever-- what was their outlook on the situation in Iran?

Metrinko: Tabriz-- the two mayors that I knew there were both very sharp, sort of perceptive people. I remember one mayor, the one who was appointed mayor in the springtime of 1978. I was invited to an official lunch, an official military lunch, as a matter of fact. It was in honor of a sports meet and I was one of five or six civilians in a sea of about a hundred members of the military. And I was seated at a table with the mayor and some other civilians. The mayor spoke rather decent English. He'd been educated in Germany and had some training and certainly spoke quite decent English. This is the new mayor of Tabriz. And this is in early '78. We're talking springtime.

We sat down, and sitting there surrounded by army brass, or, you know, army officers, whatever. The mayor looked at me across the table and he said in sort of a low voice, something like, "How are Mr. Carter and Mr. Shah doing?" And it was a rather funny way to refer to the Shah, and I didn't know quite what to