

care what happened to him. And these were people who were qualified members of the revolutionary movement.

Q: So to that extent there was no real concern that if the U.S. admitted the Shah, that it would have some bad implications?

Metrinko: There were some people who were saying, yes, it would cause a problem, but that was one of those things that was still unclear.

Q: As of the early summer or mid-summer?

Metrinko: Yes. When the Shah had been admitted to Mexico, the Iranians definitely had made a squawk, and the Mexicans had basically told them to mind their own business, that it was a domestic Mexican affair. And the Iranians had shut up about it.

Q: Yes, this will come up again in a little bit. Now also during the summer, probably even before the summer of '79, there was similar violence against the Kurds, because of their demands for provincial autonomy. Did you learn much about this development from your Kurdish friends?

Metrinko: Yes and no.

Q: Or from other sources as well?

Metrinko: A lot of the violence in Kurdistan had nothing to do with demands for autonomy and nothing to do with the revolution. It was simple-- the sheer joy of looting and the sheer joy of fighting and getting something that you didn't own last week. But of course a lot of the revolution was derived from-- it certainly was an important part of the revolution, this desire to grab, steal or loot something. That's true of every revolution. It's especially true in Iran.

The Kurdish troubles, we had no officers in that area. We heard some stuff about it. A lot of it was in the press. But what more can I say about it? It was pretty well covered even in the national press at the time. And certainly some of the Kurdish religious leaders-- the trouble with Kurdistan is a mixture of things. You have on the one hand all the accusations of anti-revolution activity and specific charges by the Iranian central government and by the press that various old Shah officials were raising trouble in Kurdistan and they complained a great deal and charged that General [ ] Palizban, the Kurdish ethnic general, who had been the last military commander-- the last governor-general of Kermanshah Province, they charged that he was fomenting anti-revolutionary activity and fighting in the Kurdish area.

They said the same thing about various other people. I remember at one point [Ibrahim] Yazdi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, even complained that there was a whole group of suspicious Americans-- or had been a whole group of suspicious

American doing something-- you know, spy activity in the village of Nagadeh.

Q: In Kurdistan?

Metrinko: In Kurdistan. Nagadeh, of course, as we pointed out to them, was the site of a very large and a very, very world famous archeological site that had been developed by the University of Pennsylvania, and they all left the year before, during the revolution. But you had this sort of accusation.

Activity in Kurdistan ranged from simple villagers fighting villagers to get each other's property to some anti-revolutionary or counter-revolutionary activities, to demands for autonomy, to the general sort of chaos that was going on all over Iran, where people made lots of noise, bang-bang with their guns, and you didn't know what in hell they wanted. The whole mixture.

Q: But there was some state repression against--

Metrinko: Oh, God, yes. They bombed some of their own towns. One of the first missions the Iranian Air Force was sent on by the new central government was to bomb the town of Mahabad. No, the anti-Kurdish activity by the central government started immediately. If you'll recall the pictures then, this happened in '79 and a whole number of Kurds were executed, including in one case a group of Kurdish doctors and nurses were executed for

treating people who had been injured by the central government forces. A lot of that got hotter after the hostage situation. It went on into the 1980s, especially '80-'81, and there was some really serious fighting in Kermanshah.

Q: Some have argued that Khomeini over-reacted to the whole Kurdish situation, so that he could use it as a lever to strengthen his version of Islamic control. Was there something to that?

Metrinko: Absolutely. Yes. A lot of the Kurds were Sunni, to begin with. Some of the Kurdish religious leaders, Sheik Isadeen, Hosseini, for example, were anti-Khomeini. There was a fair amount of trouble there and the Kurds saw a chance to gain some independence. They had been suppressed for a long time by the previous regime. This regime had made promises to them. The promises were not being kept and the Kurds revolted once more.

Q: You might have alluded to this at one of our earlier meetings, but according to some accounts that I've seen, in September '79 the American Embassy komiteh that was protecting the embassy-- protecting in quotes, I guess-- this komiteh was disbanded and the Revolutionary Guards took over embassy protection. Now what accounted for that change?

Metrinko: No, not the Revolutionary Guards.



Q: Oh, okay.

Metrinko: Just a quick chronology. When the embassy was first attacked on February 14 of 1979, three groups of security guards were sent to the embassy compound to protect it. There was one group that was basically Air Force, Air Force homafars. They had control of about one-third of the compound and they lived in a former police barracks which we had in our compound. There was another group, which had been sent by the Central Committee. These were Mashallah Kashani and his group. They were down at the main gate. And a third group sent by Foreign Minister [Ibrahim] Yazdi. They were headquartered in the Ambassador's residence and had control of that area.

In the course of time the Air Force group pulled out. I'm not sure any longer of lengths of time, but for about a month or two, perhaps longer, the other two security forces stayed there, constant rivalry and tension between them. To the point of open fighting. And even when Ambassador [William] Sullivan left Tehran, there was fighting over that. He was protected on his exit out by one group, who purposely did not tell the other there might be people leaving. With good reason. There might be trouble.

Eventually Mashallah's security group got rid of the other group.

Q: The Yazdi group?

Metrinko: Yes. And as time went on the police were able to move in and Mashallah's group was removed. There was some fighting and some fisticuffs over that. I no longer remember exactly. It was a long time ago now.

Q: So the city police were doing the job?

Metrinko: The police, yes.

Q: Did that make any difference in terms of security at the embassy, that the police were doing it?

Metrinko: When things were quiet outside, we had good security inside. When things were noisy outside, security decreased. We no longer had the sort of quiet, well-run, orderly, manicured compound that Middle East posts used to have in such-- you know, what we used to have in Iran. In 1979 it was no longer possible. It was more like a Middle Eastern circus.

Q: So the local police were the security people up through the November crisis?

Metrinko: Yes.

Q: Now in September of '79 the State Department sent another message to Bruce Laingen about admitting the Shah to the U.S.,

raising the whole question of what the implications were, in terms of foreign policy and the Mexico situation. Did you see that cable or know about that particular cable or of the series of cables?

Metrinko: I just don't remember. Don't forget, that was the sort of thing where the political counselor, Vic Tomseth, would have seen it. Or we all would have seen it in the briefings. He would have discussed it, but it's hard to remember after ten years which things I saw and the things I didn't see. I can't even remember the ones that I wrote. [Laughs]

Q: Was this a subject of fairly constant discussion at the embassy?

Metrinko: Oh, yes. Yes, yes, yes, absolutely.

Q: But you mentioned a few minutes ago that there was some division as to the implication?

Metrinko: There was lots of talk about it, what would happen, but in a sort of intellectual sphere. I've always felt a bit of disagreement with other people from the embassy, who complain or who say that they told Carter, they said that this would happen. A lot of it was simply covering their asses afterwards.

People talked about this. No one that I know of acted on

the belief that if the Shah were to be let into the United States, we'd be in serious trouble.

[TELEPHONE INTERRUPTION]

Metrinko: Let me give you an example. If the people in the embassy had really believed there'd be serious trouble against the embassy, I think they would have taken some steps to remove embassy documents, embassy files, to bring the embassy down to minimal staffing. There were all sorts of things that could have been done to sort of have a-- you know, a bank vacation, that sort of thing, for a while. It would have been very, very simple to do and any excuse could have been used, whether it was reconstruction, whatever.

That's why I say there was talk about it, but only on the intellectual level. Nobody really paid attention to what it might really mean.

Q: Including yourself?

Metrinko: Including myself, yes. I'm as guilty as anyone else. But I was up in the air, because I didn't know if there would be trouble. I really didn't think there would be.

Q: Now all the files had been brought back, right, to Washington? Or a great number of files, right? During the summer? Spring and summer?



Metrinko: The files, I don't think they ever left the embassy.

Q: I think some of them were shipped back temporarily.

Metrinko: No.

Q: No? I read that some were shipped back and then they were sent back again.

Metrinko: None that I know of were shipped out. At least not in my section, the political section.

Q: Now by the fall of '79-- say September, October-- what was your assessment of U.S. relations with Iran? How did you think things stood at that stage?

Metrinko: Spotty. Getting better. They were certainly getting better with the provisional government and with Bazargan and his group. There were hundreds of thousands of Iranians who wanted to go to the United States. There was lots of interest in the United States with what was happening in Iran. Assistance programs looked as though they might be picking up again. There was an awful lot of chaos in the streets and a lot of security trouble, but it wasn't all directed against us, it was affecting everybody. The country was still running on an adrenalin high and Khomeini was as bizarre as he was later to prove. But other

than that, not all that bad. There was an awful lot of anti-American rhetoric, but there was anti-everything rhetoric.

Q: What was your take on the Bazargan government? Did you think it was weakening or did it seem fairly stable at that point?

Metrinko: It seemed as stable as it had any right to be, and it looked as though they might be able to pull it off. Although it was clear to everybody that there were other people in the country with real power. You know, in the telegram we discussed on the security situation in Iran, it's pretty clear that there were lots of security problems, and a government has to be able to control the security in the country. If it doesn't, it's not really an effective government. The Bazargan government was there in Tehran, but in lots of places there were still lots of problems and it looked like they weren't getting any better. There was still an awful lot to be sorted out.

Q: Now on October 22, '79 the Shah flew to New York for medical treatment. Did you know that this would happen? Were you given advance notice?

Metrinko: Yes. Yes. But I don't really remember what we did. I think we may have closed the embassy down for a day or two or over a weekend, but I'm really not sure any more. What was the date again?

Q: October 22, 1979. Give or take a day. What was your reaction when you heard this?

Metrinko: My reaction was "So What"? [Laughs]

Q: Did you have any discussions with your contacts about the Shah's arrival in the U.S.? What did people say to you when they heard this in the Iranian press?

Metrinko: There wasn't that much interest in it actually among my friends. Most of them didn't care. He was already something - you know, the position of the Shah was of importance to the politicians, to the old Shah supporters, the high officials, and to some of the people who were still rabidly anti-monarch in the new government, but most people just did not give a damn. In a lot of ways all of the emotion about the Shah's arrival in the United States was an artificial, made-up cause celebre. It's like the cause celebre that's been made of Salman Rushdie's book. No one in Iran has read it. They don't care about it. But it's a political drum that they have to beat.

Q: Also in his recent book James Bill argues that the managers of the Chase Manhattan Bank might have pushed the Shah's admission into the United States, in the hope of provoking a diplomatic crisis that would help the bank protect its exposed financial position in Iran. They'd made many loans in the late

seventies and there was some concern about the security of those loans. Had there been any discussion at the embassy about the Chase Bank's financial problems or its exposed position?Metrinko: Not that I knew of, but if that were true, I would think they'd be trying to cause revolutions and similar trouble all over South America and all over Eastern Europe, since Chase Manhattan was exposed in many places. [Laughter]

Q: Is there anything that you've heard in the following years that might have confirmed or disconfirmed Bill's interpretation?

Metrinko: There is a book written on that particular subject, but I've never-- and there was a long article in Playboy about two years ago. But other than that-- I have the book here. I really haven't read it. It seems a little bit farfetched.

Q: Okay. Now on November first there was a big demonstration against the U.S. admission of the Shah in Tehran. Apparently after it was over some embassy staff officials believed that the worst may well be over, that the demonstrations were over.

Metrinko: That they'd shot their wad.

Q: Was that your thinking as well, that this was a reaction to what had occurred and that that would be it?



Metrinko: Honestly I don't remember now. I really do not remember. You know there's a problem with the demonstrations. When I try to remember how I felt on a particular day, demonstrations were a way of life in Tehran. They went on every day, about something or other somewhere or other. Whether it was against women not wearing the veil or women wearing the veil or, you know, frozen meat as opposed to unfrozen, they quite literally-- oh, yeah, Khomeini had come out against frozen meat at one point, which led to a lot of butchering of fresh young lambs on many sidewalks.

But demonstrations were going on all the time. Groups would form. There'd be fights. There'd be shooting. And it had been going on since the middle of 1978 in various forms. It just continued all through 1979. So one tended to get the reasons for demonstrations mixed up, and it was just a-- when you saw one, you simply walked around it or turned a block earlier, lest you be caught up in it. And the embassy was always a focus of demonstrations.

Q: Now at the same time of this November first demonstration Khomeini was calling upon the students to attack the United States. Do you recall hearing about that?

Metrinko: Yes. But it wasn't the first time. Khomeini had been railing about the United States since the day he came to power.

Q: But was the rhetoric his way of saying, we should attack the United States or its representatives?

Metrinko: I remember feeling that this was going a lot farther. That's about it. It certainly didn't stop my social life or my business life.

Q: What do you recall of the mood of Tehran for the next few days, before the taking of the embassy? Anything striking going on or just the things you were telling me?

Metrinko: More street activity, but other than that-- let's put it this way. What was going on in the city and the country was not so outrageous that it stopped normal business. Even the day of the attack on the embassy, it was a normal business day in the embassy. We had lots of Iranian visitors in the embassy and the visa section was filled with people trying to get visas. I had appointments scheduled for the morning. I had a lunch appointment for twelve o'clock. I had a dinner appointment for that evening. And all of these had been made that day or the day before by normal Iranians with me, and there was just no reason to think this day would be really different than any other day of business being carried out in a harried, noisy sort of frenetic environment.

Q: What are some of your recollections of what actually happened

that day? Where were you at the time the students went over the wall or broke through the wall? The gates, I guess.

Metrinko: In my office waiting for a couple of Iranians who had made an appointment with me, and basically started hearing noise and realized pretty quickly that a mob was forming around the embassy.

What I had done that morning specifically was to wrap up-- to rewrap a gift an Iranian had sent to me, which I did not want to accept because it was too valuable. Actually rather funny and very typical of Iranians. It's worth repeating. An Iranian revolutionary figure, without going into names, had asked me if I could help out a particular Iranian well-known professor and his family, who wanted to get visas. Because of the person who asked me, who was well known, and, as I say, a revolutionary personage, I arranged for the visas. The gentleman who got the visas, a former university president, called me up and said that he would like to come to my house to thank me. I agreed to let him come. He said that his wife wanted to meet me, and his children, before they left on their trip to the United States.

He came to my house and when he walked in-- it was just a five-minute courtesy call, but he had been so insistent that I said okay. And I was never averse to making more contacts. But when he came to the house he handed me a large package and he said, "This is from Isfahan." I thought it was a particular candy, since it was wrapped in a paper that the Isfahan candy was

always wrapped in. I thought it was a particular candy that Isfahan was famous for, called gaz, which is a white nougat candy. So I simply thanked him, put it on my kitchen table, where I had other boxes of candy and, you know, wrapped packages of candy and nuts and things of that sort, and didn't think about it.

About two days passed or three days passed and I had some more guests, and so I went back to the kitchen to get some candy to serve to the guests when they came in, unwrapped this and discovered a huge silver bowl, a rather beautiful Isfahan bowl. It was really funny, because I got so angry. I thought that I had the candy for the guests and instead there's this massive piece of silver.

So I rewrapped it, wrote him a note that night, and said, "Thank you very much, but I can't accept it," et cetera, and the next day took it to the embassy, called him, called his office and explained that I would not be able to accept it, that I was leaving it at the front gate with the receptionist and would he please come and pick it up. And he said that he would send someone to pick it up.

But I mean, that was the sort of day I was having, and I had more people who were supposed to be coming in. It was otherwise a normal day. I've always wondered whether he got the bowl, because there it was, a rather nice piece of silver. So-- well--

Q: So you heard the crowd assembling outside the embassy?



Metrinko: All around the embassy. Looked out, and instead of the normal group of ten or twenty, there was just a sea of faces. And when I looked out, they were already over the walls and, you know, crossing the yard. So I locked my safe and went over to where everybody was gathering in the ambassador's area.

Q: And then what happened?

Metrinko: Oh, basically the local employees and others were brought up from the main floor. We gathered on the second floor of the embassy, closed the doors behind us. Gas masks were distributed to protect us from tear gas, and the Marines took up positions with weapons at the various windows, and we just waited. We were in communication with the chargé, Bruce Laingen.

Q: He was at the foreign ministry, right?

Metrinko: He was at the foreign ministry. We had gotten to him by phone. We were in communication with a number of other offices. They all told us not to worry, things would straighten out. Help was on the way. The Imam was not going to let this happen. And all the other claptrap, for which the Iranian government later became infamous.

It took us a while to start burning documents and to start destroying things, because we assumed that-- we'd locked up, of course, and simply assumed that this would be dispersed. It did

not get dispersed.

END OF SIDE 1, TAPE 1;

BEGINNING OF SIDE 2, TAPE 1.

Q: How soon after that did the students start invading the embassy building as such?

Metrinko: It's really hard to remember. That's sort of pretty well covered too.

Q: Yes, that's true, that's true.

Metrinko: Within, you know, the next hour or two hours.

Q: What did the students tell you about their purposes? You could communicate with them better than some of the staff members, I suppose.

Metrinko: I tried not to have to, but ultimately did.

[CROSS TALK]

Q: Yes, ultimately.

Metrinko: I was bound and blindfolded and not talked to by

anyone the next couple of hours. Just led over to an uncomfortable seat in the ambassador's residence and sat down and that was that, and nobody talked to us for the next couple of hours, or talked to me. So we didn't really have a chance to question them.

Q: My impression is that the takeover was originally supposed to be symbolic and temporary. Did you get that--

Metrinko: We had the feeling it would be over soon, but the soon just dragged on.

Q: Were there any indications that Khomeini knew about the plans?

Metrinko: I'm sure he did. There were clergy with the students.

Q: Now Gary Sick argues that Khomeini saw the hostage taking as a way to strengthen his hands against his opponents and to win an upcoming referendum on a new constitution.

Metrinko: I think he's right.

Q: To what extent would you agree with that?

Metrinko: I agree. Khomeini is totally unprincipled and he

would have used something like this quite quickly and ably.

Q: In general how would you describe your experience as a hostage during '79 through '81?

Metrinko: Twenty second time period? [Laughter]

Q: Well, no-- no, I mean-- but it would be too long to go over, you know, a week by week or day by day.

Metrinko: Excruciatingly boring. Excruciatingly boring. Basically boring. Boring to the point where you wanted to scream from sheer and utter boredom. Dangerous at times. Frightening at times. But in general the basic emotion I had was boredom. Occasionally amusing. Occasionally, I have to admit it, amusing.

Q: What moments were amusing and what moments were frightening, if you care to talk about it?

Metrinko: Frightening was when you had young, frightened, rather stupid guards waving around automatic weapons, or threatening you with automatic weapons. That's frightening. These were not professionals. They were just young, frightened and stupid, many of them. Some of them were vicious.

Boring most of the time, because there was sensory deprivation. You were sitting in a room with no windows and you



haven't seen the sky or anything natural or anything green in five or six months.

Q: So you were in solitary basically?

Metrinko: Ten months. And you were sitting in a very, very small room, just exactly big enough for a single mattress to go on the floor. That's exactly how big it was, the size of a large closet. For several months.

Q: Why were you treated worse than the rest of the hostages?

Metrinko: People were treated at different times different ways. I spoke Persian and I had an awful lot of reports that I had signed, sitting in various files, and also knew a lot of people. A lot of people knew me. They thought for the longest time, although they later realized they were wrong, that I was CIA. Other things like that. And also because I was not particularly polite towards them. But basically excruciatingly boring. What do you do all day, when you can't do anything you want to do, and you sit on the floor for exercise and do sit-ups. This is not intellectually stimulating. When the only people you have to speak with are extraordinarily ignorant, uneducated fanatics. That's the only way to describe them. Some of them were interesting, some of them were entertaining at times.

Q: What were their social backgrounds for the most part?

Metrinko: Lower class. Basically lower class. A couple who were not. A couple who had studied in the United States, who presumably had fairly decent educations by Iranian standards, which admittedly are low for education.

Q: Were most of them really students though or not students or just sort of--

Metrinko: Of course, the students-- most Iranian universities had been closed since '77 or '78. So what was a student? Am I a student now or not? Yes. But, you know--

Amusing things would happen. Once when-- once in Evin prison, for example-- I'm sorry, not in Evin prison, in the Komitech prison that I was in--

Q: In Tehran somewhere?

Metrinko: In Tehran, yes. I had a roommate at that point for about a month, Dave Roeder, who was an Air Force attache. This prison had huge, I mean these sort of really heavy, clanking iron doors, with little holes in them to look through. You know, from their side only. And the door would swing-- you know, it sounded like something from an Edgar Allen Poe story, when the door would swing open and the guard would come in. You never knew when they

were going to be opened up. Just this awful grating noise and the door would swing open.

Well, one day-- it was around dinnertime or so-- the door was suddenly swung open, and the guard apparently kicked it open after he had unlatched it from the other side, because he was carrying the tray of food. But he kicked it and the door swung so heavily it fell off its hinges, and this huge, heavy, several hundred pound iron door went crashing to the concrete floor, and Dave Roeder and I just went into hysterical gales of laughter. The guard looked so silly standing there with the food, looking at the door. [Laughter] And he got so mad, because we were laughing so hard. How could you help it? But things like that, you know.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

Q: Was there some particular episode that led them to make a decision to put you in solitary or were these just the general problems you referred to?

Metrinko: No, what happened, in the very, very beginning they isolated those of us who spoke Persian, as far as I know, and they discovered very quickly that I spoke Persian, because one of my stupid colleagues told them. I was careful not to let anyone know and to only speak English, figuring, quite rightly, I believe, that I might be able to hear something that would either

save my life or save me lots of trouble.

But it had been about, oh, the second day, they walked into a room where a lot of us were being held, held and tied, and they were asking a question of one of the other men, and he just yelled out, "Ask Metrinko. He speaks Persian really well. Why don't you ask him? I don't know." "Oh, he does?" And they just took me away.

Q: What did your captors say about their purposes? They didn't give you an explanation of what their purposes were in turning up this--

Metrinko: Oh, just to hate the Great Satan, and basically that they didn't know.

Q: Sort of ideological? A lot of rhetoric?

Metrinko: Ideological cant. They didn't know really. They really didn't know. By the end of it all-- or, you know, within a couple of months, a lot of them were heartily sick of the whole thing.

Q: Pretty much the same people throughout?

Metrinko: Oh yes. They wouldn't have trusted anyone new on the showboat, although they got rid of a lot of the original people

too. There were purges. Rifts.

Q: Were there any that only wanted to get this over with and just settle the dispute?

Metrinko: Oh, yes.

Q: But it was out of their control by that stage?

Metrinko: Yes. At least one of them told me that. I'm sure there were others too.

Q: How much did you learn about developments outside of the embassy or did you happen to be--

Metrinko: Zilch. Nothing at all whatsoever. In fact-- you know, literally nothing about what was going on in Iran. Nothing about the political part of the United States. The letters that I got were very, very limited. They just simply-- they very rarely gave me letters. In the whole time I was there I might have gotten about fifteen, although hundreds were sent to me, and in the letters I got there was no news whatsoever about conditions in Iran or anything else. It was family-- sort of non-informational letters. Just "we're thinking of you," things like that.



Q: Did the Iranians tell you about the aborted hostage rescue mission?

Metrinko: No, they did not. We found out. We found out because one of the other guys in prison got the news somehow in a letter and he passed it around. People were changed just enough-- you know, the roommates and the cell mates-- that the news spread. And also a little bit of it-- I found out, for example, by reading-- they gave me a copy once of the Sporting News. Not a newspaper that I would ever think of sitting down and reading here. You know, who reads sports trash like that? But I would have read anything there. Cereal boxes I would have read if I could have. But in this particular one, one of the articles was about the great sort of-- gave a baseball game or something, at which the escaped Tehran embassy employees and the Canadian ambassador had been. And didn't mention the names, it just said the seven. Seven who escaped? Whatever number.

Q: Yes, I think it was seven.

Metrinko: Yes, the seven who escaped and the Canadian ambassador were present, and how the crowds went crazy and cheered. And I had no idea that this had happened. But that's how a lot of us found out. I mean, somebody sort of-- that's how we found out from that article, I think, that that had happened.

Q: But you had heard about the hostage rescue mission yourself?

Metrinko: No. No, no.

Q: Because you were solitary. But others had?

Metrinko: Others had, yes. That took a long time to get passed around.

Q: Now how much did you learn later on? Actually you had left Iran. How much later on did you learn about Eagle Claw, as the plan was called?

Metrinko: I know a great deal about it now, because I've read books on the subject, and also know a number of people who took part in it, but that's not really a subject for comment.

Q: Can you say generally what you thought about the plan?

Metrinko: I'd rather not comment on it at all. I really wouldn't.

Q: Okay. Were you kept in solitary up till the day you left Tehran?

Metrinko: Yes.

Q: I guess mid-January '81?

Metrinko: Not the whole time. For the first two days or so I was mixed in with other people. Then I was put in solitary and stayed in solitary from, let's say, the sixth or seventh of November, in solitary continuously until the rescue attempt at Tabas.

Q: Till April '80?

Metrinko: April. So that was November, December, January, February, March, April. On that day, or the day after, when we were dispersed, I was taken down to the city of Qom and there I was put into a prison with-- it was a former SAVAK prison at first-- with two other people from the embassy. It was the first time I had been with anybody since November, and really, I guess, the first time I'd spoken English since November. At least on other than the guttural level.

Q: Things they won't understand?

Metrinko: And had those roommates. Three different people at various times, until-- I'm trying to think. The whole time I was in Qom, which was about two months or so, two and a half months, we were then taken up to Tehran again and for a while to the old Komiteh prison. That's the name of the prison, it was that name

before the revolution. And for the time that I was there, most of the time had cell mates, except that once I was put into a punishment cell for two weeks.

Q: What were the circumstances that led to that?

Metrinko: An argument with one of the guards. I'm not even sure now what inspired it. But basically "go in there, sleep on the concrete floor for two weeks, you'll improve." Made me feel self-righteous. Self-righteousness makes you feel good for about ten minutes, and then for the next two weeks you feel really pissed at yourself for having been so stupid.

But then we were-- I'm trying to think of which other prisons I was in. That was that prison. We were then taken to a different prison. I've forgotten the name of it already. I'd have to check that, you know, on the old chronology of who went where when, but there at various times alone. Up at Evin prison I was in a room by myself or a cell by myself most of the time. This is in the autumn and winter, 1980.

Q: Into '81?

Metrinko: Into '81, except that a couple of times I was allowed to talk to other prisoners in the yard and allowed on several occasions to talk to and sit with Colonel Lee Holland, who was in the cell next to mine.

Q: He was with the MAAG group?

Metrinko: No. He was defense attache, the army attache.

Q: So permissions were loosening up?

Metrinko: Yes. But then in the late winter of 1980 I was removed from that prison. I was thrown out of that prison actually. Literally. The guards had a strike against me. They refused to come into my room any more, so the head committee of the students had to remove me and take me down to the prison I had previously been in. They put me again into a solitary, into a punishment cell. Just for two weeks.

Q: You were there up till the day you left?

Metrinko: No. I stayed for two weeks. Then I was removed from that one, because even they started feeling guilty about that after a while. After two weeks anyway.

Q: I should say so.

Metrinko: They removed me from that one. Brought me back up to Evin, and I was in Evin for a short while, then taken-- and I'm guessing just before Christmas it must have been-- taken to our last holding place, which was an old guest house that had once



been the home of Timor Bakhtiar, the founder of SAVAK. It had been turned into the prime minister's guest house and they had turned it into a prison by putting bars and metal plates on the windows, that wonderful way they had of beautifying buildings. But there, the last month I always had a roommate. Again it was Dave Roeder, the Air Force attache, who is superbly intelligent and delightful to be with, if you have to be in prison.

Q: Did you know anything about the negotiations that were going on? Did you hear more about things during the course of '80?

Metrinko: A little bit more. We had some rather pathetic clergy come in, some Iranian really pathetic clergy come in, Protestant clergy of some sort, but Iranians who thought they were doing God's work by giving us Christmas cookies. They're despicable people. They're really despicable.

Q: Didn't some people from the United States come and visit the hostages? Didn't Ramsey Clark or somebody like that?

Metrinko: No, Ramsey Clark never made it past Istanbul, as far-- I don't know, I'd like to get--

Q: Maybe not. Maybe I'll have to get somebody else.

Metrinko: What an idiot he was! [Laughter] And what a jerk!

Isn't that bizarre? Then we had-- at various times various American clergy came through.

Q: That was about it in the way of visitors?

Metrinko: I'm trying to think of the infamous one from Kalamazoo or from Kansas or somewhere, who came through, spoke to just a couple, basically followed the Imam's line himself, came back here and did a number of talk shows, talking about how well we were being treated. There were some wonderful comments made about him in prison, because we were all forced to watch the video one by one of his show. He did a show in Baltimore, talking about how well we were being treated.

Q: Must have been excruciating.

Metrinko: The best comment on it was one of the Marine guards, who yelled out, "Did you see So-and-So's video?" "Yes. They must have given him a blow job." Marines are so earthy. Yes, he was sort of a male Jane Fonda.

Anyway, the last month things were loosening up quite a bit. Not that we were getting any real news, we were suddenly getting a lot more mail. They gave us Christmas cards, stacks of Christmas cards, and would talk quite a bit more suddenly. You know, as in "we haven't done anything wrong," et cetera, et cetera. You know, "if you get out," or "when you get out." And,

you know, this sort of trying to excuse themselves quite a bit, which was interesting.

Q: Trying to act more moderately?

Metrinko: Yes. And then, of course, the last couple of days you suddenly had visits from the Algerian diplomats. They came through. That was a welcome sight, believe me. Absolutely welcome sight. I will always have a soft spot in my heart for the Algerians. Always.

Q: I've read somewhere that the day that you were all put on buses and taken to the airport outside of Tehran that there was some question whether you would make it yourself?

Metrinko: Oh, yes, I had some trouble on the bus. It was actually stupid of me. I have a rather short temper. It has not improved over time either. But we were put on the bus blindfolded and we really didn't know where we were going. We didn't know if this was just another trip to some other prison or what. They had told us to pack our things, but they had always told us to pack our things when we were being moved in the past. But, you know, packing things, I could have-- I mean, everything I had fit into a paper bag. It basically meant a change of underwear and one or two books. I have the books here, as a matter of fact.

But we were put into the bus. I know it was in a bus, because you could tell by the seats, and by walking down the aisle, but totally blindfolded. And told to sit down and told to shut up. "SHUT UP!" And two of the Americans behind me started whispering to each other. One of them said, "What's going on? Where we are going?" "I don't know," that sort of thing. And the guard yelled from the front of the bus. He said, "Shut Up!" A real loud "Shut Up!" And then in Persian he said, "Peder-sookhteh-e-amrikayi." It's just a curse in Persian and it means, "you American bastards," basically.

So in Persian I simply said, "Hodetun kaaffeh-sho, peser-e-jendeh-e-irani," which is basically "Shut up yourself, you son of an Iranian prostitute!" He took offense. And I got hauled off the bus and beaten up. And then they had-- you know, the bus left. So they held me for a while, but then they had to send me out to the air-port. I got a ride out in a Mercedes-Benz, which was the only way to go.

Q: Still blindfolded?

Metrinko: By this point, I had the blindfold three-quarters off and they didn't care. They were sitting in the front seat. Just sort of annoyed that I was-- but, if you're going to leave, you might as well leave in style. Why ride a bus when you can go out in a Benz? [Laughs]

It was stupid of me. In retrospect, it was absolutely

stupid, because I didn't realize it then, it was jeopardizing other people. I could have started an incident. I could have started somebody shooting or whatever, I just wasn't thinking. I have long since learned my lesson on that subject. It is better to not be stupidly macho, just to sit there and take things at times. This was not a time for making a stand.

Q: Then you all flew to Frankfurt, then back to Washington, right?

Metrinko: Algeria.

Q: Oh, Algeria first? Okay.

Metrinko: Yes. Algerian plane to Algeria. Transfer planes there after a short and very nice ceremony, and from Algeria to Wiesbaden. Wiesbaden for a couple of days. And then from Wiesbaden directly to West Point, to Stewart Air Force Base. And then West Point and then to Washington and then home.

Q: When you and your colleagues were brought back to Washington, shortly after Reagan's inauguration, it was in an atmosphere of triumph. To what extent did you share in those feelings?

Metrinko: I was just very tired and wanted to go home. And wanted all the hoopla to be finished. You can't expect someone--



number one, none of us had any idea, certainly I did not, of the amount of emotional investment the American population had made in us. It wasn't possible for us or for me to comprehend. I would not have made that investment myself and I couldn't understand how we-- I really did not. I knew we were of concern to our families, our friends, to the government, but that was it. I had no comprehension of the extent, the depth, the magnitude of the emotion or the feelings, the anti-Iranian feeling.

I mean, I got to Wiesbaden and among others I called up a lot of my Iranian friends to tell them I was out. It never occurred to me that this would be considered unusual. What can I say? And, you know, that was in the first day when we had, gee, free long-distance telephone calls, all we could make. I'm gonna use this phone. I wasn't a student for nothing.

But went out in Wiesbaden, touring for a while with some American friends who lived in Germany. I just skipped out of the hospital, because I didn't feel like staying in the hospital, and took off with them and did some touring. Came back, left with the group, and came to the United States and, you know, still wasn't-- I remember the pilots on the plane asking for our autographs and I had no idea why. And I really didn't understand why. And, you know, things like that didn't sink in for a while.

But you have to understand that I had been for fourteen months in a situation-- up until then, in Iran, in a very tense, political, emotional situation. During that fourteen months in very, very isolated sort of sensually deprived circumstances,

with either no light or no windows or no access to the outside. No ability to just go out and walk. To see a tree or a bush, nothing like that at all for the whole time. And to suddenly bring us to Wiesbaden and keep us in the hospital, and then two days later, three days later, expose us to millions of people, the transition was difficult. Everybody made it, but it was a difficult thing to ask of us.

So when you say share in the triumph, I was not in the mood to share in the mass reaction or emotion of any group.

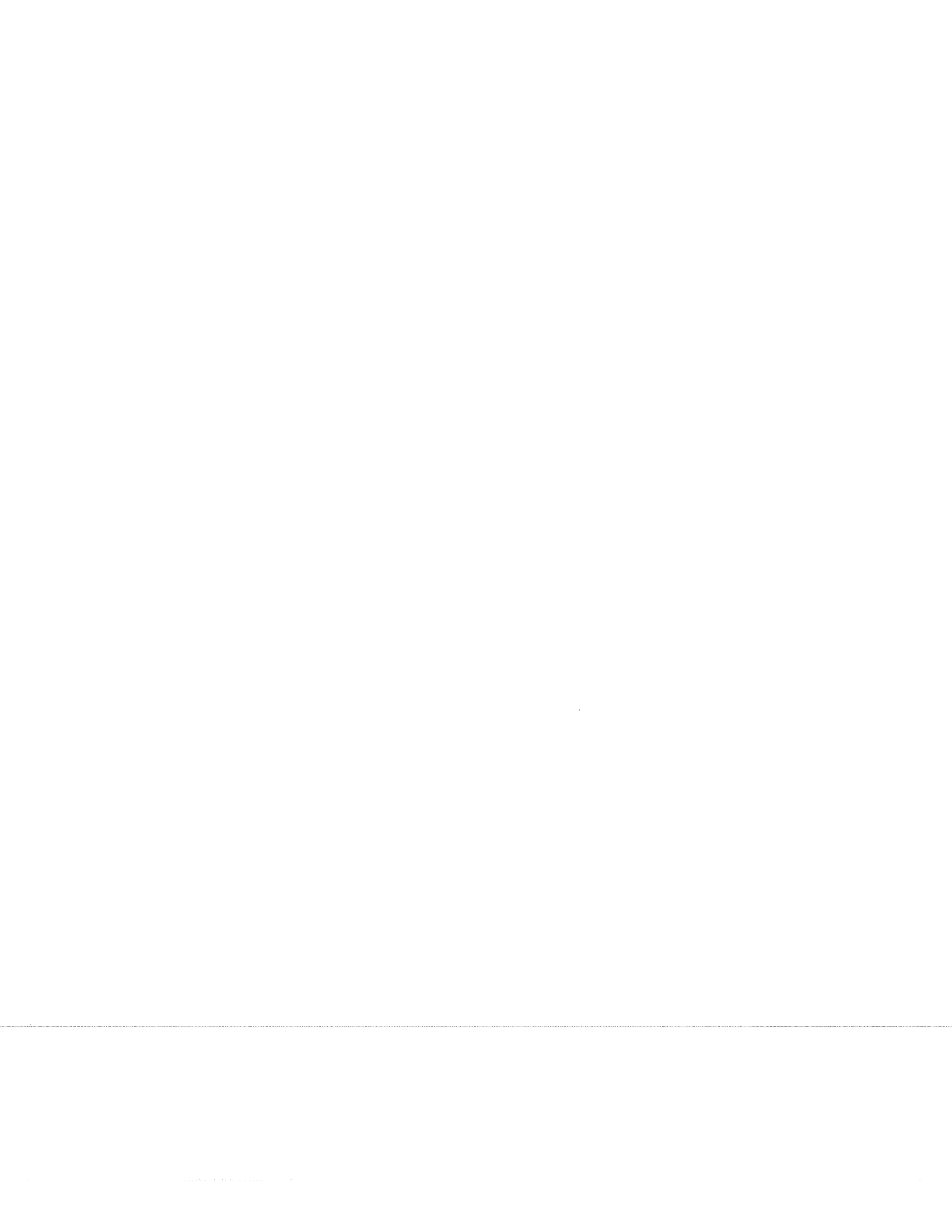
Q: I have no further questions. Thank you very much for your time.

Metrinko: You're more than welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW

METRINKO, MICHAEL

Name	Page
-----	-----
Pahlavi, Mohammad Reza Shah,	10-11, 21-23, 79, 82, 104-105, 119, 139, 142, 155-156, 169-170, 191, 195, 201-202, 207-209, 211-213
Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO),	198
Palizban, General,	203
Pishevvari, Ja'far,	192-193
Rabi'i, General Amir Hosein,	194
Rastakhiz Party,	82-84, 91
Reagan, Ronald,	136
Revolution of 1978-79,	85-238
Roeder, David,	223-224, 232
Rosen, Barry,	182
Rushdie, Salman,	212
SAVAK,	10-11, 24-25, 31-32, 73, 109, 131, 145, 229
Sazman-e Cherikhay-e Fada'iyān-e Khalq-e Iran,	108, 130-131, 159, 162, 165-166, 183
Sazman-e Mojahedin-e Khalq,	108, 130-131, 159, 165-166, 183
Sens, Andrew,	196-197
Shari'atmadari, Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Kazem,	138-140
Sharif-Emami, Ja'far,	119
Sick, Gary,	220
Steinem, Gloria,	167
Sullivan, William,	100-101, 123, 125, 147, 151, 169, 206
Swift, Ann,	181
Talebani, Jalal,	110
Taleqani, Ayatollah Seyyed Mahmud,	110, 158, 161
Teachers Training College,	14-15
Tomseth, Victor,	115, 181, 201, 208
Tufaniyan, General Hasan,	152-153
White Revolution of 1963,	9-10, 14-17, 26-27, 31-34, 87
Yazdi, Ebrahim,	203, 206
Young, Andrew,	154
Zahedi, Ardeshir,	131



METRINKO, MICHAEL

Name	Page
-----	-----
Agence France Presse,	195
Amuzegar, Jamshid,	99
ARMISH-MAAG,	30-31,63-64,79
Azarabadegan University of Tabriz,	77,85-86
Azhari, General Gholam-Reza,	119,138
Bakhtiyar, Shapur,	119,128,138-141,144,147
Bakhtiyar, General Teymur,	232
Bazargan, Mehdi,	101,169,180,196-197,211
Beheshti, Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Hosein,	198
Bill, James,	45-46,173,175,178,199,212, 213
Birjandi, Amir,	16
British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC),	111,134-136,191,195
Brzezinski, Zbigniew,	194
Carter, James E.,	137,153,156,193-194,208
Cave, George,	174
Central Intelligence Agency (CIA),	66,156,173-174,222
Chase Manhattan Bank,	212-213
Clark, Ramsey,	232
Clements, Carl,	125
Cohen, Steven,	125-126
Cottam, Richard,	198
Elqaniyan, Habib,	194-195
Entezam, Nasrollah,	174,180
Farahani, Reza,	186
Griffin, George,	125
Holland, Lee,	230-231
Hoseini, Sheikh `Ezzeddin,	205
Huyser, General Robert,	140-141,194
Imaniyan, General,	125
Imperial State Gendarmerie Department,	9-11,133
Javits, Jacob,	169,194-195
Javits, Marion,	169-170,196
Kashani, Mashallah,	186-188,206-207
Khomeini, Ayatollah Seyyed Ruhollah,	89,94,107,117,120,128,134,139, 141,144,154,165,169-170,178- 179,195-198,201,210,214,220-221
Kissinger, Henry,	156
Laingen, Bruce,	201,207,218
Limbert, John,	181-182
Macomber, William B.,	38-39
Miklos, Jack,	66,74,78
Naas, Charles,	122,147,151
National Front,	102,108
North, Colonel Oliver,	172