

Mullahs by importing vulgarity, which is also what he did -- another big factor against him. I think he would have survived all that if he had had any good sense in picking loyal, intelligent advisors whom he could trust. But he didn't trust anyone. That must go right back to his childhood, I suspect; growing up under that towering figure but without a loving father. I don't know whether he had a loving mother -- never looked very loving to me, the old lady, but I can't judge that. I think that he never had any trust implanted in him, and that's near to "soul murder."

Q: What you were talking about -- soul murder?

Ramsbotham: Where you actually deprive the growing child, who needs you like anything, of the capacity for joy and love, and you leave the capacity for pleasure in life and power and all that, but not joy or love, and that's what happened to him. I think it was a degree of soul murder somewhere in his make-up -- not his fault. That's why I think he should be rehabilitated for all these reasons.

Q: Yes. What other sort of salient anecdotes come to your mind about your years with Iran?

Ramsbotham: With Iran, I had quite a part to play on the 2,500 Celebrations at Persepolis.

Q: But what do you think of that? Did you think it was a good idea?

Ramsbotham: I thought it was splendid. I love jamborees -- nothing better. I couldn't get the Queen to go, of course. She doesn't like jamborees. The Shah was very upset.

Q: She said, "I just don't like --"

Ramsbotham: No, no. Mercifully, and fortunately for her, because in point of fact, she wouldn't have gone. The Queen doesn't go to collective jamborees, except Royal funerals. She's prepared to meet other relatives at Royal funerals. she is very grand, the Queen. She won't go to a big jamboree. She won't go to a collectivity of Royals and heads of states and all that -- And then I don't know what I would have said, because there was no possible excuse other than saying the Queen doesn't want to come. Mercifully, she'd already arranged a year before to do a state tour and take the Royal yacht to Turkey, which she'd never done before, and which coincided with the 2,500 Celebrations. It was very awkward, because it meant that she was alongside the country of Persia at the time -- She was there in vicinity, but didn't come. But that was the excuse. But he was upset about that and then said to me, "Well, in that case, I'd be very honored and pleased, and I'd like to issue an invitation to the

heir apparent, Prince Charles, to come in the place of the Queen." And I had to take the message back to him again saying, "I'm very sorry, Your Majesty, but Prince Charles is a Lieutenant now in the Royal Navy, and for the next year nothing, but nothing, can take him away from his naval duties -- not even anything as unique and as prestigious as your 2,500." The Shah could not accept that. He couldn't understand that. How could he? Even the English find it a little hard. But we understand it, because, you know, that is a naval tradition. You are serving in the Navy, and you can't be released for anything else. But he didn't understand that, so he was peeved, quite a bit, and there were all sorts of waves going out and repercussions. Finally we settled for Prince Philip and Princess Ann, who came out and stayed with Frances and me for two days. We had -- that great garden of the embassy and gave a reception for them -- you might say most of the British people in Persia, I think, were there to receive them. And we flew down to Shiraz. We raced Prince Bernhard, because he and Prince Philip both pilot their own planes. And in our plane -- a terribly slow plane -- they were both the same -- and we raced down the Persepolis with Prince Philip and Rupert Neville [Lord Neville], Frances, me, and Princess Ann. We really had great fun. And when we got there, they went into one of these tents, you know, in Shiraz, and it was a remarkable evening. I've still got the menu. It was a fantastic menu -- the best wines I've ever had in my life. Very enjoyable. And then we went up to the great Son et Lumiere up in

Persepolis -- it's where the knights sat -- and all the crowned heads of Europe, and Haille Selassi and with the presidents. They did a wonderful Son et Lumiere of Alexander the Great burning Persepolis. It was dramatic. You can imagine the big clouds of smoke and fire over Persepolis and out of the dark, and then the voice of Artaxerxes II coming out from the great stone grave on the hillside -- a great deep voice. It was very well done dramatically.

Q: What did the voice say?

Ramsbotham: Something like the equivalent of "My name is Ozamandias" -- something like that, you know. "My name is Ozamandias as king of kings. Look on my works you mighty and despair." Something like that. I've got some good photographs of Princess Ann in a marvelous white fox coat. She'd just been to Alaska. That was her first visit abroad, and they'd given it to her -- a complete white fox fur thing right down to her ankles. I had a part to play in the preparations for 2,500. The head of protocol was worried because the Shah, having invited the whole world, hadn't thought about the placement. How do you do that without upsetting some people? For example, with the Sheykh of Kuwait and the President of Bulgaria, who has precedence? The King of Lesotho or Haille Selassi or the President of Uruguay or Pompidou -- or whoever he was. Pompidou didn't come in the end, and that upset the Shah. The head of protocol said to me, "The

people who know most about his are the British. They have an age-long tradition. They know exactly how to do these things. They have pageants and shows and things. Could you please find out from your head of protocol what would he do in the circumstances, because I haven't a clue?" And then we went back and forth, and finally, we devised a brilliant idea. There was this great tent at Persepolis, which I think was put up by Maxime's. It was an enormous great tent. And the heads of state and royalty were to be seated at a high table. And what they did was, they made the top table like that, with a node, so you couldn't look down and see who was below you or above you, because it was curved like a snake.

Q: Like a figure of eight -- like a snake.

Ramsbotham: A big snake. It had about five big sweeping nodel points. Two wouldn't have done. At each of the nodel points was either the Shah or the Shahbanu or the young heir apparent or the younger son -- maybe eleven or so -- it didn't matter -- or the Queen Mother or Abdol-Reza or somebody. So they had everybody near some place with honor. You couldn't look at the table to see whether you were up or down or whether someone else was better placed -- it was very good. And then Prince Philip told me the next morning -- we were driving together -- I brought my Rolls down, I think, down for the occasion or had flown it down, and we were driving around. It went on for a day or two.

And he told me an amusing story -- that he and Prince Bernhard -- they were rather pals, you see -- and both of them were morganatic marriages; their wives were the sovereigns. How did the story go? Prince Bernhard had said the next day -- in the morning -- "How was it, Philip, did you notice that down at the other end of the table the ladies were mixed together, but you and I had only men; I had the President of Bulgaria on my right and the Sultan of Oman on my left, and you had the President of Australia on your left and the Sultan of something on your right?" And Prince Philip said, "But don't you realize, Bernhard. That's perfectly understandable. After all, you and I are a couple of royal queens?"

Q: A lot of people have said in retrospect that the Jamboree of the 2,500 Anniversary of Monarchy was a tremendous mistake in that a great deal of money was spent ostentatiously -- where the rest of the country was still not very rich -- and that it caused resentment.

Ramsbotham: In Persia?

Q: In Persia and that it didn't serve any purpose except for giving ammunition to the opposition, to the mullahs, and to --

Ramsbotham: No. I don't think so. It happened in my first six months, and I was there two years afterwards, and I heard none of

that then. I think that's all retrospective stuff. In so far as a Persian is a patriot, I think it did a lot of good for his or her country. It put Persia-Iran on the map. When I was in the United States afterwards, people knew about it -- "Oh, gee, were you at Persepolis?" They actually knew where Persia was. They never knew before. It was a successful way of putting Persia on the international map. It used to annoy the Shah that Iran and Iraq sound the same to other people. He hated Iraq. And I exploited that, because I said one day to the Shah, "Your Majesty, you know, in England where we have the oldest relationship with your country -- our first ambassadors were there in the 17th century -- the people are still confused about names. Now you call yourself Iran. They know Persia. We know about Persian poetry and Persian language and Persian this and Persian that, but we don't know Iran, and they muddle it up with Iraq, which is a new country too, and it's very difficult. And they often attribute things to Persia they should attribute to Iraq. May I have your permission in my speeches and around the country to talk about "Persia"? I know it's not an accurate designation, but it would help to remove the confusion --" "Oh, yes," he said, "certainly." I never told Hoveyda, and I remember annoying Hoveyda at some public function where we both were making speeches, and I was talking about "Persia" all the time, and he was upset and was going to make a fuss about it. And I told the chap who became ambassador here who was his private secretary --

Q: Raji.

Ramsbotham: Raji. I told Raji, "You'd better, out of kindness, stop Hoveyda making a thing of this because the Shah has given me his permission to speak of Persia."

Q: The last one everybody objected to in that respect and called the Shiraz Festival, which is another thing that everybody objected to --

Ramsbotham: Well, I think that started off well and was right, and then I think that Shahbanu was badly advised. She wanted to emphasize modernity, having been brought up as an architect in Paris. I think she wanted to bring modernity to her people. She overdid it. And I think the mullahs were shocked by some of the vulgarity and the sexual intonations of the Festival and pieces that were brought in. It was a mistake. I think she could have done it and sustained it on a higher level without doing that -- It's all right in England or America. We're used to that; the explicit society is part of our experience. But it wasn't so at that time in Persia and I think she went too quickly. The idea was good, and some of the Peter Brook productions were excellent.

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Q: Yes. Did you have any dealings with the Shahbanu?



Ramsbotham: Yes, and my late wife, Frances, knew her quite well. They organized together a great historic pageant, reconstructing the costumes of the ladies of Iran going back two thousand years. It took a long time. They made the dresses and all that, and the Shahbanu was the patron and did it with her. And then, when a British woman of distinction came out, Frances would take her to see the Shahbanu. I liked her very much. She would go to Kerman, for instance, and take Hoveyda and introduce reforms. She wasn't just a Shahbanu. She was co-ruler. And if there had been a regency, you know, she would have taken over if the Shah died and she'd survived. She did a lot of good work. I went to Kerman afterwards, and the people were talking about her visit, how intelligent she was and the good suggestions she had made. The Shah, I think, put her down quite a lot. But I think he respected her, and I think she had influence on him on the cultural side. I don't think any influence at all on politics. I asked Asadollah Alam once. But on the cultural side, I think he did respect what she did; otherwise he wouldn't have allowed her to stage the Festival at Shiraz. I think she was a great lady. She looked magnificent in those Kaftans.

Q: Anybody else or any other anecdotes or episodes that you can remember which would have any bearing on events --

Ramsbotham: We always write a valedictory dispatch before we leave a post -- the ambassador has to do this without consulting

anybody. For most of our dispatches on technical subjects, there is a member of your staff who helps you prepare it. But the valedictory dispatch must be your own thoughts -- rather what I'm doing now -- I mean, summing up what the ambassador has felt from the day of his arrival. You write a dispatch as soon as you arrive -- first impressions. Then you write one when you go. And at the end, looking around at the end of 1973 -- and I think I was right at the time -- I could not see anything that would undermine the Shah. He had total control over the Armed Forces, total control over SAVAK. He had a succession lined up, and he'd arranged for the regency. He was only then just starting his OPEC price rise, so I couldn't evaluate the consequences of that. But even then, I did write a paragraph or so about the mullahs, saying that I thought the mullahs were getting restless with the Shah importing all this vulgarity of Western civilization -- American vulgarity in particular -- which is always bad. It's not America as I know it. It's always the vulgar side, as they say, that gets exported. That was irking people. One could see the change in Tehran. The doctors, for instance, they all had swimming pools, and you shouldn't be able to make that sort of money as a doctor so quickly in any proper society. And that was having its effect, I thought. And I thought that -- out in the country, too, it was all going too quickly -- the secularization and industrialization. And that might cause the Shah trouble.

Q: You said that?

Ramsbotham: Valedictory dispatch will be published, whenever it is, thirty years from 1973 -- another fifteen years -- all those things. One says what one can, and that is in the historical record, but it didn't do any good really.

Q: But you didn't give it to him, did you?

Ramsbotham: No.

Q: No, so he wouldn't have known what you thought about it?

Ramsbotham: No, but I talked to Asadollah about it. You see, Asadollah wouldn't -- even he -- no one had closer access. No one was less fearful of talking to the Shah. But he wouldn't have dared to do it. He was a lonely man, the Shah. He did not encourage advise; he didn't want to hear, and that was one of the troubles -- a pity. In his own way, he had several phases of development. He started out as a tormented little boy, I expect, spoiled beyond measure, but given a wonderful education, and highly intelligent. And then he went through a weak playboy period where he cut a poor figure in the Mossadeq time, and then sobered up for the reasons that I have given. And then he worked hard at the reforms described in "Mission for my Country." He really set about it in the 1960's and afterwards, doing remarkable things for his country. Perhaps he should have died

in the sixties, and established his place in history as a great reformer.

Q: You mean he should have died ten years earlier than he did?

Ramsbotham: I think so probably, yes, from his point of view. There was a question of whether he should take refuge in England, you see, when he was over in the States.

Q: Well, what happened? Were you involved at all?

Ramsbotham: Yes, we had to persuade him. I was Governor of Bermuda at that time, so I couldn't go. I thought that I might be sent to talk to him, but I couldn't go. Denis Wright went.

Q: He went to say what? You can come to England or not?

Ramsbotham: To explain why he could not -- not an easy thing to do.

Q: Why couldn't he?

Ramsbotham: Because it would have put our whole embassy at risk in Tehran. We weren't prepared to do that.

Q: Your embassy was at risk. I mean, you haven't got an embassy

-- even to this day.

Ramsbotham: But we did then. We lost our embassy after the American hostages were taken.

Q: So he went all the way to America to explain to the Shah why he couldn't come to Britain?

Ramsbotham: Well, somebody had to explain it to him.

Q: So what does it matter? You could have closed your embassy for the time being?

Ramsbotham: No, we wanted to keep our embassy open. And there were other reasons -- I've forgotten now -- why it wouldn't have been prudent for him to come to Britain. I think there were too many other things at risk. I've forgotten what the reasons were. I don't think he was very insistent. He was in Mexico. Far better for him to be in a country which didn't have an embassy at risk. Why risk other people's lives?

Q: So poor Denis was put into this very embarrassing position?

Ramsbotham: I don't think it mattered to him. I'd have done it, only they thought that as I was a Governor at the time, and Denis was retired, they didn't want to involve me. I think the Shah

half knew the answer really. He was an intelligent man. He knew the calculations better than anybody.

Q: According to what I have heard, and everything confirms this, he was extremely tolerant of that kind of thing. He fully understood the *raison d'etat* of various people.

Ramsbotham: He understood. He'd have done the same himself. If you yourself live with political calculations -- you deduce the same arguments. You know what the other side is going to say. It was hardly worth going to tell him, but it was the polite way of doing it. He liked Denis, and it was a polite gesture, rather than just send him a message.

Q: Nonetheless, everybody seems to agree -- everybody I have talked to for this series, as well as otherwise -- that the way the Shah and the Shabanu were treated after they left Iran by everybody -- all the people who've got money and help from them -- advice and lots of other things -- and then turned them down -- was pretty awful -- I mean, very dishonorable.

Ramsbotham: Are you saying that he ought to have been allowed to go to Britain? I don't think he wanted to particularly.

Q: No, I mean, what I'm saying is that people should not have dropped him who had benefited from all their money and oil.

Ramsbotham: I see, but who, for instance?

Q: Well, just about everybody except Nassir and the King of Morocco.

Ramsbotham: I bet the King of Jordan didn't. He was a loyal friend.

Q: No, he didn't. The King of Morocco and President Sadat were the only three people who stood by him.

Ramsbotham: And Jordan, yes. They were loyal people. Well, that's the world, isn't it? It's not a world of love. It's a hard world, and there's not much human relationship in that human family. It's a hard world, and the Shah would have done the same. I'm not talking about nice people in a sort of romantic way. I'm talking about historical personages, and that's why the Shah should be assessed in his historical setting.

End of Interview

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