

Iranians also had a Dream

**Within the grasp, with an ambition higher than
that of Don Quixote de la Mancha**

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“Our goal is to establish a modern industrialized country with high moral standards.”

Opening Remarks at the Conference on “IRAN IN THE 1980's”



Ladies and Gentlemen :

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you here today, and to gather with you around a crystal ball, as we try to see how the world, and Iran in particular, will look in the 1980's.

An ambassador should not of course attempt to be a prophet. I must admit, however, that attempting to predict the future can be very exciting in the stormy atmosphere of the second half of this decade: Stormy politically, socially, and economically.

On the other hand, considering today's problems, it requires some courage to speak even about tomorrow, and courage plus a great deal of imagination to ponder what the 1980's might bring.

And yet, planning for the future is a must for leaders in every country, big or small, strong or weak. This is especially true for Iran's leaders because, as you know, we must decide what kind of a country we want when our oil wells run dry around the end of the century. This is much more than a purely economic question of course :

There could be serious social and political consequences if a country, any country, were caught flat-footed and unprepared when its primary source of revenue disappears. And the populace of that country would be justified in accusing its leaders of having gravely neglected their duties. That, I can assure you, will not happen in Iran, where, under the wise leadership of His Imperial Majesty, we are carefully planning for the future to secure a smooth transition to a non-oil orientated economy.

“I Have a Dream,” Martin Luther King said a few years ago. We too have a dream: to create a modern, industrialized country, where our people will enjoy a standard of living hitherto known only to those lucky ones living in the United States or in Western Europe.

Is this the "Impossible Dream" of the man of La Mancha? by no means.

Planning without dreams, or if you will, without imagination, would be inconceivable. But dreams are only part of planning. The other part must be based on cool-headed scientific weighing of the possible. This is what we are doing now.

True, during the first years of increased oil revenues, we wanted to leap-frog over phases of development. We were impatient with what we thought was slow progress. But we have learned the lesson, and now we are on the right track, on solid ground.

It is important to recognize that Iran has a population of 35 million which is growing at a rate of 2.3 percent each year. The result of this is obvious. Our development needs are much larger than those of some OPEC members.

At present, 90 percent of our foreign exchange earnings come from oil and gas exports. For the future, our primary hope is petro-chemicals, natural gas, steel and copper.

To become an industrialized country, to make steel from our iron ore, we need new sources of energy in great quantities.

It is regrettable that, though agreement was reached in principle in 1975 that the United States would supply us with eight nuclear reactor plants, the Nuclear Cooperation Agreement between our two countries is still stalled, to the advantage of your competitors, such as France and West Germany, who are only too happy to build such plants in my country.

We need 23,000 megawatts of atomic energy by the mid-1990's and we are determined to get it, here or elsewhere. It would be a shame indeed if your nuclear industry had to miss out on this lucrative business.

I would not wish to say that we have now solved all our problems on the economic front. But most of those which remain are identical to those which you and your allies face. And others belong to the category of growing pains: inflation, the steep rise of labour costs, and the insufficient number of skilled professionals.

What are we doing to eliminate these problems? We have drafted a new labour law and established a Special Imperial Commission to monitor progress in all sectors of our economy. The next Five Year Plan, to be announced soon and to begin next March, will, I am sure, already show the fruits of our efforts.

So far, I have talked about Iran's economy. But this, of course, is only a part of the picture.

Iran already is, and is determined to remain, the strongest military power of the Persian Gulf area. I do not think it is necessary to repeat why we believe that we must be strong in this extremely sensitive part of the world:

To the north, we have a 1,250 mile long common border with the Soviet Union, the big power which continues to dream about an outlet to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean;

To the east, we have the uneasy area of South Asia where India and Pakistan have fought so many wars;

And to the west of us, there is the Middle East with its sad and never-ending Arab-Israeli dispute. And if there is still someone questioning why we need to be strong, let me ask him this: Who if not Iran, is in a position to guard the tranquility of the Persian Gulf through which, every day, more than 20 million barrels of oil are transported to Western Europe, Japan and also to the United States? As I said, we will remain strong militarily.

At the same time, as my Sovereign has said many times, we wish that the day would come when we wouldn't have to spend a penny on armament but could use the money instead for other needs of

our country. But, until we witness a genuine and comprehensive disarmament, we will not neglect our defense needs. We also intend to remain a land of stability, and this, I can assure you, is no problem.

Would anybody, anywhere, think—because of the looting in New York during the blackout, because of ultra-leftist terrorist activity in West Germany, because of bloody clashes between extremist groups in London, or because of last week's high-jacking of a Japanese airliner by Japanese urban guerillas,—that these four nations are on the brink of disaster?

Nonsense, you will say, and it is equally silly to believe that, because of a few agitators, Iran has serious domestic problems.

You asked me to look into the future and I am happy to say that the general picture which I see is clear and bright. As my Sovereign said in an interview with the *New York Times*: "We will keep our own identity, the Persian philosophy and the Persian soul." What does this mean in practice? It means, on the one hand, loyalty to our 3,000 year old traditions, and, on the other hand, going resolutely ahead towards our goal to establish a modern, industrialized country with high moral standards. We have no time to waste. I can assure you that we won't.

I have tried so far to sketch in for you the main directions in which I believe my country is moving as we approach the 1980's. All of the different aspects of our development will be dealt with in much greater detail by those experts who will follow me on this podium of course. And it is not my wish to preempt them now. In closing, however, I cannot emphasize too strongly that the problems we all must face in the future; of over population, of the deterioration of the environment, of ignorance and disease, of racial and religious prejudice and discrimination, of terrorism, and the threat of nuclear war, are global problems which understand no national boundaries.

Today, we live in an interdependent world, and, if that world is to survive into the 1980's and beyond, we must recognize the absolute need to rise above narrow national interests and to attain cooperation among countries. I can leave no more important message with you today than that. We cannot continue to live in a society where a few are rich and the rest are poor.

Today, approximately 1.2 billion people in the world suffer from hunger, disease and malnutrition. Unfortunately this gap is growing larger every day, as the rich continue to grow richer and the poor fall deeper and deeper into poverty. Surely, we can leave no more brilliant heritage than the knowledge that we saw the need of our fellow man and worked to save him from disease, poverty, and starvation.

As a friend and ally of the United States, let me say the challenge faces you particularly. For, as President Carter himself stated earlier this year at Notre Dame University, and I quote, "Our policy must reach out to alleviate suffering and to reduce the chasm between the world's rich and poor," unquote. It is you who have the experience, the capacity, the know-how, and the will to lead us in this war against want.

You have demonstrated your good will in the past, and I see no reason why you cannot do it now. We, in the rest of the world, can help but we cannot do it without you. If we move ahead together, in partnership, I believe then that the world can succeed.

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