

Barry Zevan's Interview With

Ardeshir Zahedi

October 1, 1998

Barry Zevan: Your excellency, was the end of the Shah's regime a surprise to you and all who were around the Shah?

Ardeshir Zahedi: Well, the end of the regime depends when you are talking about because I think if you would have looked about eight or nine months earlier this would not have happened if everything had been done correctly. I think if we would have had a better understanding among our friends outside of Europe, the allies - the United States, Britain and France. Secondly, if His Majesty, the Shah, would not have left the country Khomeini would not have dared to come to Iran. Thirdly, the sickness of His Majesty, which that again was the cause of the part of leaving the country and also in the last year or so in Iran being not well and having cancer, which most probably caused him a lot of trouble. Yes, maybe in the end if you are talking about a few weeks before what happened, it was a surprise for many people.

Barry Zevan: A lot of people are not aware that Iran was our very best friend in the Middle East and one of the best friends in the world especially economically; Chrysler, Bell Helicopter, all the companies were there. Maybe you can tell us what American companies were there and how the United States was benefiting from its

relationship with Iran.

Ardeshir Zahedi: If we actually look into the years of the late 40's and 50's, those days the United States was the country that was helping Iran. Those days were the days which we were fighting communism and those days were the days which we had been able to get rid of the Russians, the Soviets, which they wanted to make Iran the same as what you saw in Vietnam or in Korea, a divided country. Then in 1953 I think I would call it the time of the takeoff. I, myself, as you probably know was working on Point Four with President Truman and was known and later on it became AID. We started with about \$500,000 and then two years later it was about \$23 million, which was in agriculture and education and in different fields in different parts of the country. Then after 1953, which we were able to get rid of the communist to the party mostly and we were able to build up our country and so our close relationship became closer and closer.

Iran, when you look at different times of President Truman and the time of President Nixon and President Johnson and President Kennedy, all these days up to President Ford and Carter was a close tie. In the end in the later part our close relationship has been that we were actually having about \$50 billion contract with the

United States for helping us. Iran was the only country at the time of the Arab/Israel War which all the Arab countries stopped their oil to the West because of their differences and the Shah was the only one which said that we cannot deprive the people of the oil because oil is like bread and water for the people. I remember very well vividly at that time when President Nixon called and wanted to have the oil for the Seventh Fleet and the Shah accepted right away when I called him by telephone. It was very secret in those days. Not only did we have at our disposal our wonderful friend, the United States of America, but we never wanted to be repaid because we thought we were ally and friend and this should be.

Barry Zevan: If Khomeini had never come and the Shah had remained in power and sadly of course he died but young Reza would have taken over, would the situation in the entire Middle East and in the world today be a lot different?

Ardeshir Zahedi: I think yes. If the Shah had not left and if the situation would not have been changed Khomeini would never have dared to come. It was the publicity, especially BBC in those days, which were giving to Khomeini and the French and sadly it was a competition between the three powers; the United States, France and

England because the Europeans were not happy with our relationship with the United States. If the Shah had not fallen and had not left first of all I don't think he would have died so early because this terrible, sad episode had naturally helped him to his disease to go faster.

Secondly, I don't think we would have had the War; the Iraqi's wouldn't have dared to attack Kuwait. I remember once talking to The White House at that time I was the Foreign Minister and we had a central treaty organization meeting in Washington. At that time it was President Nixon and I said anytime anything is against a small country other side of Persian Gulf we would not allow them. Not only that but you have to remember that even during the War when Iraqi's were going to send the troops to conquer the Israeli's by just one announcement we were having maneuvers at the border of Persian Gulf in Iran, they did not send their troops which it might have even at that time changed the balance between the Arabs and Israeli's. I think economically it would have been completely different.

You have to remember that those days Iran had about more than \$35-40 billion reserved and we were helping to give to Britain and France and Italy. I think one was \$12 billion and the other about \$10 billion and the other one \$9 billion. Those were without interest in order to help the economy. The situation in Afghanistan would not have happened and you know what a disastrous thing today is Afghanistan at the hand of these savage people. The situation in Pakistan would not have been the same. Bhutto would not have been assassinated at the hand of the army in Pakistan. The whole

geopolitics of that part of the world which would have affected the other part would have been completely different especially now with all these countries you see in the Northern part of Iran which are cousins with the Iranian and have become independent. Iran being there with the leadership of the Shah would have been so important not only for the Middle East but also I think for Asia and Europe as well as the United States.

Barry Zevan: You worked with several of the United States Presidents. Who was your favorite and who, if I may, and as diplomatically as possible, might have been the least cooperative for you?

Ardeshir Zahedi: I think I worked with about seven Presidents of the United States of America. I remember when I came here in 1959 to 1961 it was the time of President Eisenhower which was a great honor and privilege for me to know such a man especially my father was a soldier too. I was so impressed because those days nobody knew about that part of Middle East and suddenly the President in the Oval Office when I had come to give my letter of credential and asks me the situation in Khuzestan and now these days not a lot of people talk of Khuzestan. In those days many of the Congressmen, Senators, and officials of the press did not know about Khuzestan. After that it was a time of President Kennedy whom I had the privilege of knowing. In 1954 when we came for the state visit as a guest of President Eisenhower and we were staying at Mr. Reichman's house in Florida. This is how I met the Senator which later on was President of the United States and also the brothers and the father of the Kennedy family. Of

course later on because President Nixon as the Vice President of the United States came to Iran in 1953 which at that time my father was the Prime Minister I had known him at that time and this friendship went on.

When I came here for the second time as the Ambassador to the United States from 1974 to the end of the fall of Iran I had worked with President Nixon and later on President Ford and also with President Carter. When I was Foreign Minister I had the privilege to see often President Johnson which I knew since I came to the United States in 1959. I had the honor and privilege to know them and the family and the children and Mrs. Ladybird, Mrs. Johnson, the first lady at that time. Each of them I have different memories.

As for me and for my country, we would not look at any Presidents of which party they belonged to. We would look at them as representative of the United States of America and we respected them and had a very warm relationship. I don't think we had any time with any of these Presidents which I had the privilege to work with any kind of misunderstanding or the hardship. With some it was closer relationship, warmer relationship. Some because they knew the Shah or as you probably remember I was a student here in the United States in 1948 when the Shah came first as the guest of President Truman. That was the first state visit which President Truman gave me a tremendous welcome. I had the honor to meet President Truman in the time which we came in and also the lovely lady daughter, Margaret, who I met in New York many times in that time. With each of them it has been a relationship and some of them who

knew geopolitics like for instance President Nixon having great knowledge of geopolitics and President Eisenhower had a great knowledge. Those we did not know they left especially in each administration whether Democratic or Republican, many of these people have been in the former of previous administration and have the knowledge and understanding of the importance of Iran.

Unfortunately, in the time of President Carter, he was a wonderful person and a very religious person, but maybe not knowing in the beginning it was a bit of misunderstanding. In the end you do remember I am sure when he came to Iran to visit Iran as a guest of the Shah what he said on the New Year's Eve as Iran stayed an island of stability in that part of the world. Then afterward maybe it was difficult among some of his colleagues, Secretary of State, National Security Advisor and all but overall we had very close relationships or at least I thought we did. Although after 37 years of friendship with the West, His Majesty, the Shah, and coming out of the country those days the way they treated him and the way I mentioned earlier about the oil for the Seventh Fleet. This time it was the time

see all that the Shah had done and all that you had done as well to cement relations and make it a very beautiful time. How does that feel as a human being? Can you have a diplomatic face and a personal face?

Ardeshir Zahedi: This is the thing which really you asked earlier if I was surprised at this time. I was surprised. I would never have thought that the Western civilization which we had so much respect and especially the Shah had respect for them that they would treat him that way. I have experience being in England in which I left Washington as Ambassador in the 60's, and as a Foreign Minister and again here as Ambassador and I am traveling to different parts of the world because of my job as Foreign Minister.

During the Israeli War I was very active on 242 resolution. I could really not believe the West, which we respect too much, and the West, which we are going to get so many good things from to bring to our country. The West, which we sent our students to the United States and to Great Britain and to France, that they would behave so brought the Shah here to New York and he was in the hospital and the demonstration by the people who were paid and also the majority who were the terrorists. It was really kind of shocking. It was a very sad episode for him.

Barry Zevan: That is it. Did you have something else you wanted to say?

Ardeshir Zahedi: No, no.

Then Crown Prince and Ardeshir Zahedi



The BBC Interview With Ardeshir Zahedi

Interviewer: We have talked about the level of high politics and bit issues and important issues and historic issues and you talk about your feelings toward Shah as a head of state. As a human being you had a personal relationship with him. I am not really sure still what kind of a man he was if I had met him and had an incident with him. How did he come across at a more personal level?

Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi: You see he was taught that a King would not show his pleasure or agony. He was a very shy person. He was known to a lot of people as arrogant. His arrogance was because of his shyness. He was not an arrogant man, in my opinion, I worked with him and fought with him and when he knew you were right he would accept that. He was a man with the mentality of being educated in Switzerland hoping for democracy and growing up with a lot of European mentality and loved French culture and loved the Swiss and the West because he believed the country should be built. Then he was caught up in the middle of how can he do it and alone he cannot do it. He needs a team and each team needs a team because the country is not a little house or a little fort. That is the place which actually confused him and in some ways derailed him. Those liars or those who were not loyal to him by

intention or some because they were stupid and wanted to have a job or a situation in which they did that but they bend everywhere. I think the Shah would be remembered, in my opinion, as an honest person and a loyal person and as a wonderful father and as an excellent husband and as a good friend. I had the honor and privilege to be like a friend. He was my friend and was my King and he was my boss.

Interviewer: We all know he worked very hard. Everyone says that even his enemies. When he wasn't working, what kind of things did he do?

Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi: One of the things I respected was I used to give him red boxes brought from England and two of these every day I sent to him. I used to talk to him for one hour and a half everyday to brief him as a Foreign Minister from 11:45 to 1:30 or 2:00. Sometimes we would continue through lunchtime. At night he would sit and read all these reports plus any other things and yet he was up at his office. There was a fire in - and as Foreign Minister I had to call him at 1:00 in the morning and wake him up. He was not asleep but working. He asked me after I reported to him about one or two things of my report. We had a long discussion with the Foreign Secretary of Great Britain until 2:00 in the morning. I have three

of my colleagues still working sending him at 8:00 because at 10:00 we had the meeting with the Foreign Secretary, His Majesty and I. He brought up the small details of this 45 - 50 page report I sent him and discussion we had in foreign office at the British Embassy. He was a hardworking man and he had a brain. He was excellent in his memory. I always teased him that he had a computer as his brain.

He was a wonderful sportsman whenever he was free. He was a great skier. He was a wonderful tennis player and an excellent horseback rider. He loved to watch movies. When we were outside with Queen Soraya in those days we would go to the zoo. We did that in Great Britain and here in Switzerland or in the States. When we came as a guest of Her Majesty the Queen of England we went to the zoo. He enjoyed the animals. He enjoyed the nature. He was a great sport. He also played backgammon which he loved. Sometimes we would travel by train from Tehran for hours and I played so much with him doing this dice like this by the time I come home I said I had a lot of blood coming to my hands. He was a wonderful person. He was a very unique person.

Interviewer: Is that period during his marriage?

Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi: As a grown-up person. That photo is 1948

when His Majesty came as first head of state. A wonderful welcome by the United States and I was a student in the West and met him in Arizona. Then in 1950 when I came and joined Point 4 and went to briefing on what they were doing at different parts of the country and then later on I became his Aide and the time of Her Majesty. Queen Soraya and traveling inside of country or outside of country I was mostly with him. We became friends and naturally later on although he used to come to my house before and loved Persian tea but after I married his daughter, my beloved wife, we became much closer. It was most of the time in the house and this was how the new Queen was introduced to him. I was very much engaged in my own pocket of solving any problem an Iranian student had abroad and had an office in my own house which I give as a gift to foreign office the house that belonged to my father. This is how I met this young lady. This is how I introduced her to the Shah.

Interviewer: A portrait of Queen Soraya, it is said she was the one the Shah loved the most. Maybe you can tell us about that.

Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi: I agree. She was a wonderful wife to her husband. The marriage to Queen Foziah did not go well. After the divorce the Shah was very lonely and when I saw His Majesty in the United States it was at the time when he had the divorce. In 1950 among the candidates he finds this lovely lady which I think from what I hear from the Queen Mother and Princess Shams and others right away the Shah fell in love with this fine lady especially after it was the time which he came to Tehran

and they were engaged. She had some problem and became ill with female problem and I think this was the first time His Majesty went to visit this beautiful lady and cried. I knew Queen Soraya which my father was the Chief of the Army and her father was among the dignataries. I was going to get my Visa in Zurich in 1949 and her father and mother were living in Zurich and the gentleman was with me and we were passing. We saw each other in the street and he invites us for tea and I see this lovely young lady which was not as lovely and just a young student. I tried to know them better about four times a week I was privileged to be with His Majesty and Her Majesty and traveling to Caspian or Ramsar or Rome or to Russia or to the United States. He was sweet and she was powerful lady but I think he loved it. She was the type the Shah loved. They had a wonderful life. I think one of the reasons which their marriage would not continue was the constitution. The laws and their religion had played because a lot of people thought that the Shah needs an heir. The Shah's brother who was Prince Ali Reza a few years earlier had a plane accident and it crashed and he was killed. Two brothers by law could not become because they were from Ghajar and the constitution says none of them would be able to.

I had been living here with my father and my wife. His Majesty called me if I would discuss a very confidential matter with my father to get his advice which I did. I go to Tehran and discussed the matter with His Majesty and he has been told and we have a consult and we write everybody and everybody told him he has no other choice. Having another wife

which the Shah was not for it and neither was Queen Soraya. When I saw a big photo of Queen Soraya in this big room which was in the palace in Tehran and talking about her, he had tears in his eyes coming down. I saw the love because when Queen Soraya got in touch with me and I said I would discuss it with His Majesty because he was going to be operated. That evening when I discussed it with His Majesty and he asked me to go to Soraya right away and his face was just blooming and a big smile on a man that was going to have an operation the next morning of his cancer. I said I didn't want him to see me like this and now is not the time. Her father at that time was here too and was ill. He was very pleased. When I came back I had tea with Queen Soraya in Paris and talking about this and she was crying. I could hear her. They loved each other very much, very much.

Interviewer: The problem was they couldn't have children?

Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi: True. They could not have a child. It is sad because everybody said there was nothing wrong even when we were in Moscow they took us outside of Moscow and the doctor examined her. We did it in New York for three days in New York hospital and the doctors found nothing wrong with her. The same thing in London. The same thing in France. I was not with them that time in France. All of them say the same thing. She may have needed an operation which was less than tonsillectomy. I don't know. That is what happened. She was very sad when they were going to be departed.

Excerpts from the Book **Ambassadors At Sea**

By: Henry E. Catto Jr.

The High and Low Adventures of A Diplomat

A larger party in November was also typical. Chief of Protocol Emil "Bus" Mosbacher and his wife, Pat, had a dinner at Blair House, the president's guest house across Pennsylvania Avenue from the White House. Wall-to-wall ambassadors, the gathering fairly glittered in the nineteenth-century elegance of the handsomely furnished old mansion. Jessica sat between the ambassadors from Iran and Malaysia, while I was bracketed by the latter's wife and the Uruguyan ambassador's wife. It was our first exposure to Iran's remarkable Ardeshir Zahedi, later to become a friend and our host for many an evening. After dinner, a singer accompanied by a harpsichordist, both in period costume, performed eighteenth-century music into the small hours. The Bushes were there, and I was not the only one to get a bit restless; George had the fidgets and that glazed look in the eye that meant "Will this never end?"

Lessons in Hardball Diplomacy

In mid-March of 1975 Iranian ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi wanted to discuss the Shah's forthcoming visit, set for May. We had been to many of Ardeshir's lavish parties, where

champagne and caviar were scarfed down like hot dogs and soda pop at a baseball game. We considered him a friend, and I anticipated no problems with the proposed trip. I was surprised, therefore, when over lunch at the Hay Adams Hotel, he started us off by saying, in effect, "Here's how it's going to be." I had no problems until he said, "We will have a dinner at the embassy on the second evening, and the president will come."

At that point, I demurred. "President Ford has a firm policy of not attending dinners given by visiting heads of state: he won't be able to be there. Vice President Rockefeller will represent him." Ardeshir lifted a heavy black eyebrow and said, "Well, we might as well leave, because there will be no state visit by the Shah," and he pushed back his chair as if to go.

"Whoa," I said, beating an inglorious retreat. "Let me talk to Brent Scowcroft at the White House and explain your position." At that, we finished our coffee and talked of other things.

When he departed, I bolted across Lafayette Square to the White House and told Brent what had happened. He was annoyed; the demands on the president's time are huge and one more party was not what he needed. Furthermore, it would set a precedent: if we did it for Iran, it would be hard to

resist doing it for other countries. (Like a wolf in the wilds, precedent constantly stalks diplomacy.)

In the end, as I knew they would, Scowcroft and Kissinger caved in and the president agreed to attend. Our fallback policy became, in effect, if the country is big enough or rich enough, the president will attend. Otherwise, forget it. Life's not fair.

A contrast to developing-but-rich Iran came the following month in a visit from developing-but-poor Zambia. Its president, Kenneth Kaunda, the deeply religious son of a Presbyterian missionary, became the first African head of state to visit President Ford.

I welcomed the official party at Andrews and got them settled at Blair House. Kaunda, 50, struck me as an open, pleasant, friendly man. He and his wife, who always wore traditional Zambian dress, both spoke excellent English. Rumor had it that he was a bit emotional, though he clearly had dedicated his life to eliminating racial injustice in southern Africa.

The visit began well. The first event, a luncheon at State given by Secretary Kissinger, went smoothly. At three o'clock, I took Kaunda to the White House for his private visit with the president, and afterward I asked how it had gone. His response was contagiously positive, and I felt keenly his honesty and integrity.

Return to the Private Sector

More than once we had wondered about being in Washington but out of power. Would anyone remember our name? And, of course, what we would do loomed large. I had told several Swiss and British friends that I planned to open a consulting office, and as time went by, those contacts proved fruitful. Edgar de Picciotto's Swiss bank retained me as its Washington representative, as did the British conglomerate Hanson Industries and media mogul Rupert Murdoch. A string of such clients was less a tribute to me than a recognition that Washington, the political capital of America, had become in no small measure as important as New York, the country's financial heart. Having representation there was comforting to Swiss, Briton, and Australian alike, and having an ample income was assuredly comforting to me. Furthermore, I found a number of ad hoc clients. Marylou Sheils joined me as president of our small firm, and I felt quite content.

And Washington did, after all, quickly prove that underneath its cynical veneer lay many kind people and good friends. Susan Mary Alsop, the Rowland Evanses, the Lane Kirklands, the David Brinkleys, and many more welcomed us back, as did friends in the diplomatic corps, such as Sweden's able ambassador, Willie Wachtmeister, and his wife, Ulla, a superb painter; the Yaqub Khans of Pakistan; Iran's Ardeshir Zahedi; and countless others.

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Ardeshir Zahedi and Princess Shahnaz

The meeting of the OAS foreign ministers was held that year in Atlanta. For reasons that were obscure to me, Kissinger had agreed to go, so I decided to go down in advance to become familiar with the layout of the airport, to see the arrangements at the handsome new Hyatt Hotel, and to get to know the key Atlantans who would be our hosts. (One was the governor, a pleasant chap named Jimmy Carter.) When Henry arrived at the airport, a huge crowd awaited him, and to my amazement, he and Nancy were cheered like rock stars.

Doubtless pleased by his reception, Kissinger nonetheless was not too happy to be there. He considered Latin America a bit of a sideshow, having once described Chile as a "dagger pointed at the heart of Antarctica." Jessica and I, on the other hand, looked forward to the event and to the chance to see, for the last time as it turned out, our friends the Salvadoran foreign minister, Mauricio Boronovo, and his wife, Patricia. Henry's general unhappiness showed when, after sitting through several typically florid and

lengthy speeches, his turn came. Said he: "Most people think the United States is a developed country, but in one area the United States is distinctly underdeveloped compared to our Latin friends. I refer to the area of epic oratory." The laughter was restrained - except from those of us who knew right he was.

Kissinger used humor constantly. We went to one party at Joan and Tom Braden's, a varied group that included the Rockefellers, the George Schultzes, Mrs. Alice Roosevelt Longworth (excited to be turning ninety), and the Iranian ambassador, Ardeshir Zahedi. As we were all leaving, Ardeshir pulled Henry aside and said, "May I speak to you alone for a moment?" Henry replied, "Only if you lower the price of oil." Another evening, Zahedi was the host and Henry the honoree. The ambassador gave his after-dinner toast to his guest in good but heavily accented English. In his response, Kissinger said jokingly that his assistant had once thought he was listening to a code language, but it was only Zahedi speaking English.

Excerpts from the Book:

Power at Play

A Memoir of Parties, Politicians and the Presidents in My Bedroom

By: Betty Beale

Everywhere on the international front there was a swelling under-current of concern over America's abdication of leadership. The Carter administration had failed to help the Shah when threatened by Khomeini's forces and, in fact, urged the Iranian military not to resist. And while our government kept emphasizing human rights, Khomeini had killed, in his first eighteen months, an estimated five thousand in Tehran alone, brutalizing women into submission and eliminating all the rights they had gained under the Shah and empress Farah. This time, it seemed, we were not screaming out against Khomeini's endless executions and other acts of unspeakable terror.

Ali Tabatabai, former press attaché of the Iranian Embassy, begged me to put in my column a notice of the anti-Khomeini demonstration that would take place in Washington five days from then. Threats would not stop it, he said. (He had founded the Iran

Freedom Foundation and had lined up ten professional men and women who volunteered their services to speak to their people on the Voice of America. But the White House and the State Department turned a deaf ear to his inside information.)

Two hours after our talk, he went to the door to get his mail from the postman. It was one of Khomeini's men in a postman's uniform; he shot Ali dead.

Under those circumstances, it was a particularly sad day when Ardeshir Zahedi quietly left Washington. He had not only given all who crossed his path a lift in making diplomacy work, in making the U.S. and Iran closer than ever before, he had been generous not only to the powerful, but to Washington charities, and, very quietly, he had given money even to strangers in need whom he read about in the newspapers. He had braved angry American campuses to tell students "not how great his country was, but how

great our country is," said Ronald Reagan at a dinner Zahedi gave for the Reagans. "I have known no one in his position who at the same time has proven his loyalty to his own country and had so much love for our country." Ardeshir had worked his way through college in the U.S. by washing dishes in a restaurant in Phoenix. Reagan had "topped him there." He worked his way through college by washing in girls' dormitory.

The Carter administration pressed the Shah to make concessions to the anti-Shah forces in Iran, then tried to placate Khomeini by refusing to give asylum to the man who had favored America above all his neighbors. All the Wall Street Journal pointed out, when we let the Shah, who was dying of cancer, in for medical treatment, the new terrorists of Iran showed their mettle by taking American hostages right out of our embassy in Tehran. We rushed the Shah off

to Panama as soon as possible but all we got for our betrayal of friendship was "a reputation for impotence and unreliability," stated the Journal, "and the continuing spectacle of both is having no small effect on world politics."

President Carter's snub of foreign ambassadors only emphasized his indifference to our standing abroad. He was the first president of the United States to give no yearly reception, dinner, or whatever for the envoys accredited to him. They had not seen him in two-and-a-half years, not since the brief reception two days after his Inauguration. Only the representatives of Egypt and Israel, and those included with their bosses during a state visit, had been invited to the White House. "A diplomatic reception is useful," stated an ambassador. "It gives us an opportunity to see the president and members of all his staff, to talk to them and have an exchange of viewpoints. When we read in the newspaper that the White House had a reception to hear a musician or see a dancer, and members of Congress and the cabinet were invited to the performance, we ask why couldn't some of us be invited to each reception. Don't they believe that the diplomatic corps is part of Washington?"

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It was almost a toss-up in January of 1977 as to which

caused the biggest stir in Washington - the installation of Jimmy Carter or the retirement of Henry Kissinger. Jerry Ford's farewells seemed almost solemn compared to his secretary of state's festive reentry into private life. Wreathed in smiles and full of witticisms, he greeted friends who came to thousands of miles for parties in his honor. International socialites Gloria and Loel Guinness flew up from Acapulco and the Gregory Pecks and Kirk Douglasses came all the way from the west coast for the dinner and dance for 120 of Henry's chums tossed by Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi. From New York came CBS President and Mrs. Bill Paley, the Walter Cronkites, NBC chairman and president respectively, Julian Goodman and Herbert Schlosser, and their wives; Kitty Carlisle, Polly Bergen, and so forth. That Kissinger was enamoured of society had long been apparent. He peppered his official luncheons at the State Department with unofficial upper crust names; at his luncheons for Egyptian President Sadat were Mrs. Vincent Astor, David Rockefeller, Pamela Harriman, the Louis Auchinclosses, the Henry Fords, Clare Luce, Mrs. Douglas Fairbanks, Jr., and the Oscar de la Rentas. No wonder he and Nancy would become the darlings of New York society.

With the beginning of a brand-new administration, the

question was always posed: Will there be a big change in the Washington social scene now? My answer had always been no. Presidents come and go, but official Washington goes on forever. A new administration had about the same social effect, I wrote, as a change of the leading actors in a play.

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March witnessed another extraordinary happening in the Capital. The holding of 134 Jewish hostages in a Washington building by a group called the Hanafi Muslims. No progress was made toward their release until help came from three Moslem ambassadors - Iran's Zahedi, Pakistan's Yaqub Khan, and Egypt's Ashraf Ghorbal. Ardeshir Zahedi went without sleep for sixty hours during negotiations, and, over the objections and fears of the authorities, insisted on meeting the Hanafi leader face to face. By his sympathetic understanding of the leader's problems, Zahedi won the release of all 134. In doing he won the instant respect and gratitude of the Carter administration which, up until then, thought of him as only a giver of glamorous parties. (Many people think big party-givers, as well as party-trotters, are superficial and flighty - perhaps forgetting the intense daily pressures on the powerful of the earth and the importance, after each long day's

journey, of congenial recreation.) At a dinner at the Iranian Embassy for all who had worked to end the hostage siege - from Mayor Walter Washington and police chief Maurice Cullinane to Attorney General Griffin Bell -- the latter called the diplomats "the three brave ambassadors."

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A more acceptable style of titillation was the elegant sensuality of entertainments at the Iranian Embassy. Ambassador Zahedi often had a belly dancer perform in his silken, seductive Persian room. One evening, actor James Mason, Clare Boothe Luce, and the Swiss and Finnish ambassadors were all so intrigued they each tried to emulate her subtle movements. (They didn't know that the belly dancer had a B.S. degree in mathematics from Maryland University -- not that math helped her dancing -- and formerly taught it. Three hours a day practise before the arrival of her nine-pound baby was "an excellent way to have a natural birth.")

Zahedi gave a particularly brilliant dinner following a gala performance by the American Ballet Theatre. Elizabeth Taylor came to town for it, paying her first visit since she was very young. It is hard to imagine a more glamorous sight than Elizabeth, in an orange-red gown and necklace and eardrops of big emeralds and

diamonds, on a divan in the oriental splendor of the Persian room with stunning Polly Bergen in sapphire satin, big-orbed pixie Liza Minelli, Washington glamor girl Page Lee Hufty, and two men of considerable note - Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (Nancy was out of town), and TV's most prestigious commentator Eric Sevareid. The photographers had a field day. That was only the beginning. Dinner was served to 180 people at fifteen tables in the embassy ballroom where Rudolf Nureyev was a sartorial standout in the black tie company. Rudi wore a black satin shirtwaist and matching trousers with a black belt and large silver buckle. When mountains of caviar were passed for the first course, former chief of protocol, New Yorker Angier Biddle Duke, gazed around at the scene and exclaimed, "It's great to be back in Washington. This is the exciting place to be!"

As the ranking person present, Kissinger, with his marked German accent, responded to the host's toast. "Ardeshir is the one man in Washington who is slightly more incomprehensible than I am. In fact," he quipped, he had been "trying hard to break the code that was coming out of the embassy until I realized that it was Ardeshir reporting in English."

That was also the night when Zahedi and the gorgeous Elizabeth, in her sexy décolletage,

danced together with both arms around each other, the start, perhaps, of her infatuation with the bivrant, dark-eyed diplomat. Liz later did the new hustle dance with Massachusetts Senator Edward Brooke and the photo of them in this harmless pursuit appeared in the Boston papers. Having a good time with a movie star probably looked frivolous to his constituency; he was defeated in the next election. In the meantime Liza, or pussycat, as Liz called her, had already danced more than once with Mikhail Baryshnikov but she came up to me and said, "Ask him to dance with me." I said, "Is he such a good ballroom dancer?" "I don't care about the dancing," replied Pussycat. That was clear when, at my suggestion, Baryshnikov danced with her again, their bodies were glued together as they barely moved around.

* * *

If any proof was needed that Washington officialdom loved to step out and cut a rug it was the response to invitations we and the Morse Dials sent out for a springtime dinner dance at the Chevy Chase Club. And if any proof were needed that before she married John Warner, Elizabeth Taylor had flipped for the Iranian ambassador, that evening provided it.

Of the 236 seated at tables for eight there were eight senior White

House staffers, nine members of the cabinet and little cabinet, two Supreme Court justices, sixteen ambassadors, seven U.S. senators, and seven congressmen. The rest were residential friends, all happy to dance to Mike Carney's jazz beat.

I had asked Zahedi to bring Elizabeth. He did; I seated them at my table, facing each other across the center of a narrow rectangular table. If she hadn't already fallen, she fell for him like a ton of bricks that night: The sparks that flew between them almost ignited the centerpiece. But Ardeshir was not about to consider marriage to an already much-married Hollywood superstar. He had introduced her a few days earlier to John Warner. At our party, John asked her for a dance the first chance he got. The rest is history.

* * *

In spite of my criticism of the Carters' informality, George and I were invited to that dinner because Ambassador Zahedi asked to have us there. The hosts could have crossed us off the list; either they did not choose to, or did not catch our names. In any case, we were delighted to be there.

There was one other occasion when an act of friendship was extended.

It was at one of the state functions. I was standing in the

Blue Room; the only other person there, a Secret Service man, seemed surprised to see me, and asked why I was there. I told him I was a member of the press and present to cover the occasion. He next wanted to know why I wasn't wearing a press badge. I told him I never wore mine because it ruined the looks of my evening dress. He said I had to wear it.

I told him that I had been covering since Truman's time and had never been required to wear it, that he must be new to this detail. He said I had to put it on now. I was prepared to tough it out.

Just then the president walked into the Blue Room. Seeing a familiar face, he shook hands with me - before, maybe, realizing I was that Beale woman who had been telling him and Rosalynn how to behave in the Casa Blanca.

In any case, the smile and handshake did the trick. The Secret Service man faded from sight, and no one ever bothered me about the missing badge again.

* * *

I interviewed the beautiful empress Farah of Iran during her visits to Washington and in the summer palace in Tehran, and again in Williamsburg during their last official visit in the days of the Carter administration. She was immensely proud of the progress

in women's rights. By the Midseventies women in Iran had many equal rights with men, including the right to vote and the right to divorce. And they could get bank loans as easily as men. She had traveled over thirty thousand miles in her country to check on the needs of the people. She got the pill distributed free; abortion for women for health reasons; and enriched milk for pregnant mothers and little children to ensure their brain development; she was known for visiting - and embracing - the nation's lepers. The Shah so respected her opinion that he had her crowned - the first Persian queen in two thousand years to wear a crown. And he made her regent for the crown prince should something happen to him. Certain cabinet members consulted her regularly. Education was one of her main interests and she proudly told me about the service required of their young people. At a certain age they had to serve either in the military or in rural areas to help the poor.

When I told her I thought prostitution should be legalized to protect women from punishment from the law of pimps, she agreed wholeheartedly. I told the Shah that later during cocktails before dinner in the governor's Palace in Williamsburg. He said, surprised, "Did she say that?"

* * *

In June 1978, at a dinner at the French Embassy, Ardeshir invited George and me to take a flying, cross-country trip with three of the Shah and Empress Farah's children who were coming to the U.S. for a see-America tour. He invited us as friends. he never asked me to write about it but, if I wanted to, he insisted I wait till the trip was over for their safety's sake. (A Life photographer joined our party at the second stop).

Ardeshir had been a good friend of mine since his first tour as ambassador to Washington. He had arrived in March 1960 with his wife, Her Imperial Highness Princess Shahnaz, who was just twenty years old. To have to participate in the official life of formal dinners of middle-aged people when she was a young girl longing for some informal fun was difficult for Shahnaz. I suggested they give some dances and hire an orchestra that could play some hot twist numbers. They did and the princess looked happier, but they stayed only two years. The Shah resented the fact that they were not accorded the attention due a king's daughter by the young Kennedy couple in the White House.

The children came over on an Iranian Air Force 707 which, I must say, accommodated thirty-five of us comfortably. We flew first to disney World in Florida, then to Yellowstone Park, San Francisco,

Honolulu, Los Angeles, Acapulco, and back home, spending three nights in every place except for the four in Los Angeles where Crown Prince Reza, eighteen, who has since proclaimed himself Shah, joined us. the three children were Princess Farahnaz, fifteen, Prince Alireza, twelve, and Princess leila, eight. Each was accompanied by a uniformed military aide, and every time we landed the aides lined up at the foot of the ramp and kissed the hand of every child when they got off. It was an incongruous picture - these normal-looking kids wearing American jeans, T-shirts, cowboy hats, or other headgear they bought en route getting this imperial treatment.

The thirty-five passengers included Madame Diba, the empress's mother, one colonel and three majors of the Imperial Guard, five sergeants, four Iranian diplomats, four friends of the children, two personal maids, Leila's nurse, a U.S. protocol officer, and eight American guards. So the children didn't always have to have us along; and to thwart Zahedi's efforts to pay for our shelter, we accepted an invitation to stay with Cap and Jane Weinberger in San Francisco, Clare Luce in Honolulu, and Delores Hope in Los Angeles. (Bob was putting on a show somewhere. Delores said she only saw him on an average of one

night a week. When she knew she was going to see him several days in a row her eyes crinkled with the excitement of a young girl planning a tryst with her lover - and Bob was then seventy-five years old!)

The trip was wonderful, from the caviar for lunch on the plane to the afternoon at the Gregory Pecks' house in Beverly Hills with the Kirk Douglasses and Michael Yorks. The most fun of all was when Delores Hope took us to Hollywood Park race track where our hostess Florence Hamilton, a director of the track, had a table in the Turf Club smack next to that of another director, Cary Grant. Cary had as his guests Greg and Vernonique Peck, Zahedi, the crown prince, and his two sisters. Tips, talk, and laughter were shared between the two tables as we all tried to chalk up some wins. It was one glamorous day.

Ambassador Zahedi wanted the royal children to see how many hours it took to cross the United States and how many nationalities lived peacefully together under one flag. But he little dreamed that in six more months he would lose his country and his home and his servants, whose children were even shot. When he left Washington in January 1979 a lot of joy and kindness went with him.

Excerpts from the Book:

Plassey to Pakistan

The Family History of Iskandar Mirza The First President of Pakistan

By: Humayun Mirza

I will never know whether he would have got off the tiger's back if I had succeeded in stopping Benazir from putting out the white papers and had become a member of his cabinet. My friends, like Ardeshir Zahedi, still believe that I could have saved Bhutto, and that I should have continued to deal with Zia regardless of Benazir's attitude. My subsequent contacts with Zia were limited to improving relations with India. After I retired from the World Bank, some of my Doon School alumni, who held senior positions in India, contacted me in an effort to reach an accommodation with Pakistan. At issue were the perennial Kashmir problem, Pakistan's support of the Sikhs and Sri Lanka's actions against India. In these discussions I began to realize that Zia was not being honest with me. I felt that unless I could rely on his word I would not be able to improve Pakistan's relations with India. I, therefore, quietly withdrew from pursuing these discussions further.

* * *

President Iskandar Mirza was laid to rest in a mausoleum that had been built for General Zahedi, who had saved the Shah's throne from the Communists a few years earlier. There the two graves lie side by side. Apart from myself, the only Pakistanis who attended the funeral were Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran and a personal friend, S. Shahnawaz Khan, and his wife, Maliha. Shahnawaz performed very delicate diplomatic duties

throughout period with great skill and competence, though by so doing he risked the wrath of Yahya Khan and his military government. In a small way he tried to regain the respect that Pakistan had lost in the eyes of the world by the shameful behavior of its government.

* * *

The family had reserved spot for Iskandar Mirza. But when he died two years later, as recounted earlier, the military government of Yahya Khan prevented us from burying him in his own country. Instead, the first President of Pakistan was buried in Tehran, Iran where his body lies in a mausoleum next to General Zahedi, father of Ardeshir Zahedi, then Foreign Minister of Iran.

* * *

In London, he lived very modestly since his financial resources were limited. His only income was an annual pension of 3,000 pounds (about \$4,500) as a former general and president. People like the Ispahanis, Ardeshir Zahedi (then Ambassador and later Foreign Minister of Iran), the Shah of Iran, Lord Inchcape, Lord Hume and other heads of European governments helped make his life in exile tolerable. Even I, who at that time was a young and struggling staff member of the World Bank, helped out financially as much as I could afford. Each time I passed through Europe, whether in home leave to Pakistan or on a World Bank mission, I stopped off in London to visit my father, who totally monopolized me as if to make up for

lost time. I paid for meals, etc., on these trips, because my father could not afford to pay for them. But for me to be with my father was extremely gratifying. This was the first time since the latter became President that I was able to spend quality time with him. Thus, these were very happy times for me despite my father's unfortunate situation. I also learned a great deal of my father's thinking about those turbulent years in Pakistan, material which I used to write this book.

* * *

During a cabinet meeting chaired by Ayub, as aide brought the news that the former President had been admitted to a London hospital after a heart attack. Ayub turned to his Finance Minister, Shoaib, and ordered him to send 500 pounds to help Iskandar Mirza with his expenses. When Shoaib, with his characteristic clerical mentality, responded that he would send the money as soon as the family came up with an equivalent amount in rupees, Ayub, flushed with anger and barked, "You send the money forthwith and do not trouble the family." While in the hospital in London, the Iranian Ambassador Ardeshir Zahedi visited Iskandar Mirza frequently. On one such occasion, as he approached his room, he overheard the former President tell Nahid, "We cannot afford medical treatment, so just let me die." The Ambassador was so overcome with emotion, that he turned away without visiting his friend. On another occasion, when Lord

Hume, then Foreign Secretary, saw Iskandar Mirza walking down Brompton Road with a laundry bag in his hand, he stopped his car and offered him a lift, because the former President of Pakistan could not afford the taxi fare.

Iskandar Mirza died intestate in England, and his estate was distributed by the firm of Coward Chance, London, to his heirs. Since then, Pakistan's subsequent leaders have illegally accumulated grotesque amounts of wealth (and continue to do so) while in office, at the expense of the Pakistani people.

* * *

Iskandar Mirza's death occurred peacefully in his sleep on his 70th birthday, November 13, 1969. The morning after his death, the Iranian Ambassador to the United States, Dr. A. Aslan Afshar visited me in my office at the World Bank. In a somber tone, he read a telegram that he had received from His Majesty the Shah of Iran. In it the Shah informed me of my father's death and, expressing his condolences, said that he wished to honor the former President of Pakistan with a State funeral in Tehran. Accordingly, he said that his personal plane was on its way to London to pick up the body of the former President and have it flown to Iran. The Iranian Ambassador in Washington was charged with ensuring that I reached London in time to accompany the body on its final journey. I left Washington the same night, arriving in London the following morning. Stepping off the TWA plane, I boarded the Shah's plane on which my father's body had already been placed. The plane took off immediately, landing in Paris, Rome, and Cairo on the way to Mehrabad Airport in Tehran. At each of these cities, representatives of the local governments came to pay their last respects to the first President of Pakistan. Notable by their absence

Ardeshir Zahedi and Iskandar Mirza



were the Pakistani diplomats stationed in those countries.

When the plane landed at Mehrabad Airport, it was met by Iran's Foreign Minister, Ardeshtir Zahedi, the diplomatic corps in Tehran, and chiefs of the armed forces and court ministers. A royal salute was given, and President Mirza's body taken to the Sepah-Salar Mosque where he lay in State covered by a Pakistani flag. The next day the Shah's Honor Guard carried his body on their shoulders through the grounds of the Mosque and then placed it on a gun carriage. The procession moved slowly through the streets of Tehran led by members of the Honor Guard, each carrying a decoration that Iskandar Mirza had earned during his life time. The lead soldier carried the official picture of the dead President. The streets of Tehran were lined with people and ecked with flowers. At a respectable distance behind us came the Iranian Ardeshtir Zahedi. Behind them were the chiefs of the armed forces, followed by the diplomatic corps in Iran. It was a

moving tribute to a great man.

The funeral ceremonies were marred only by the absence of Iskandar Mirza's family still living in neighboring Pakistan. They were detained in Karachi by Yahya's military government, in spite of the best efforts of the Iranian Foreign Minister and President Mirza's friends in Iran and Pakistan. The Iranian government even delayed the start of the procession from the Sepah-Salar Mosque, hoping for news from the Iranian Embassy in Karachi, that the family was on its way to Iran. Finally, Ardeshtir Zahedi told me that he could not keep all the dignitaries assembled at the Mosque waiting any longer. He gave the order to start the procession. A helicopter was sent to Mehrabad Airport to bring the family to the burial site in the vain hope that they would arrive in time. In the event, the family did not make it to the funeral. Yahya's cronies prevented them from leaving Karachi until it was too late.