

Whatever the Shah Wants?

One of the Central Intelligence Agency's most celebrated capers was the salvation of Mohammed Reza Pahlavi, His Imperial Majesty, the Shahanshah, Light of the Aryans and absolute monarch of Iran.

More than two decades ago, the CIA saved the Shah's throne. It was a comic-opera coup, with the Shah fleeing for his life and the CIA sneaking to the rescue. The cloak-and-dagger boys simply bought off the opposition leaders who, for cash under the table, dispossessed the Shah's arch-rival, Premier Mohammed Mossadeq.

But there is nothing comic about the Shah today. For having restored him to power, he has repaid the United States by leading the drive for higher and higher oil prices. Alarmed Washington policymakers have described his oil policy as no less than economic warfare against the United States.

Yet the United States continues to court him slavishly. The word in Washington is that whatever the Shah wants, the Shah gets. This has baffled policymakers not only at home but abroad. According to a confidential Senate memo, for example, the French "cannot understand why the U.S. government continues to pay tribute to the Shah, particularly in the aftermath of his recent Washington trip where he 'spit in your eye' with his announcement of a September (oil) price rise."

We have investigated the strange U.S. benevolence toward the Shah for several months. We have talked to scores of sources, some of them scattered in such faraway places as Geneva, Bonn, Tehran and Mexico City.

Some have first-hand knowledge of how the CIA saved the Shah. The late Mohammed Mossadeq, a moody man given to fits of weeping, forced the Shah to appoint him Premier in 1951. Mossadeq's first act was to nationalize Iran's oil fields, which brought a retali-

atory boycott against Iranian oil. Unrepentant, Mossadeq threatened to turn to Moscow for support.

This brought the CIA into the act. A CIA operative named Kermit Roosevelt, grandson of President Teddy Roosevelt, slipped into Tehran. CIA chief Allen Dulles flew off simultaneously for a "vacation" in the Swiss Alps, where he conspired with the Shah's assertive sister, Princess Ashraf.

As the outcome of this intrigue, the Shah was persuaded to evict Mossadeq from the premiership. A colonel was dispatched to deliver the notice, but he found Mossadeq ensconced behind a military barricade. The messenger wound up in the slammer; Mossadeq announced a revolt had been crushed; and the Shah suddenly departed for Rome for rest and relaxation.

For the next four days, CIA agents ladled out enough bribe money to turn the tide. The forlorn Premier, clad in silk pajamas, was captured in bed, and the Shah made his triumphant return to Tehran.

The Light of the Aryans wasn't altogether ungrateful. He provided the CIA with strategic sites for long-range radar, telemetry interceptors and other sophisticated electronic equipment, suitable for snooping on Iran's great neighbor to the north, the Soviet Union.

Not only did the United States save the Shah's bejeweled Peacock Throne but kept him in pocket money before the oil boom: Over the years, the United States has poured \$2 billion in foreign aid into Iran. Although the Shah is now wallowing in wealth squeezed from oil consumers, he still owes the American taxpayers \$200 million.

In 1973, the Shah was one of the most vociferous champions of the oil cartel, which rocked the Western

world by quadrupling oil prices. Yet President Nixon praised the Shah to the skies as "good and old friend," a "courageous leader," and a "world statesman of the first rank."

Secretary of State Henry Kissinger also romanced the Shah who receives a report from Kissinger on almost every foreign policy step he takes. Only two or three other world leaders share Kissinger's confidence to such a degree.

The United States, meanwhile, is building up the Shah as a military power. Declares the confidential Senate document: "Kissinger's handling of the oil problem exhibited the tendency to treat our adversaries kindly and our friends shabbily. Kissinger . . . never put pressure on the Shah on the central oil price question but has instead reinforced his behavior by equipping him with one of the world's best armies and air force and thus enhancing his prestige . . ."

A State Department spokesman pointed out to us that the Shah dominates the vital, oil-rich Persian Gulf. This makes him the linchpin of U.S. policy in the Middle East. Kissinger must weigh his policy toward the Shah, therefore, with an eye on geopolitics as well as economics, the spokesman said. It is more important to keep the peace in the Middle East and to prevent a Communist takeover of the Persian Gulf, suggested the spokesman, than to hold down oil prices.

But some policymakers believe the Shah is as stuck with the United States as the United States seems to be stuck with him. He can turn to no other source, they say, for military support. They contend, therefore, that he should give oil concessions in return for the billions worth of sophisticated planes, missiles, destroyers and submarines that the United States is shipping to Iran.