

December 31, 1977

President Jimmy Carter's Speech

THE PRESIDENT. Your Majesties and distinguished leaders of Iran from all walks of life:

I would like to say just a few words tonight in appreciation for your hospitality and the delightful evening that we've already experienced with you. Some have asked why we came to Iran so close behind the delightful visit that we received from the Shah and Empress Farah just a month or so ago. After they left our country, I asked my wife, "With whom would you like to spend New Year's Eve?" And she said, "Above all others, I think, with the Shah and Empress Farah." So we arranged the trip accordingly and came to be with you.

These visits and the close cooperation that we share, the intense personal and group negotiations and consultations are very beneficial to both our countries. They are particularly beneficial to me as a new leader of the United States. I might pause parenthetically and say I apologize for taking 10 years off your service this afternoon when I said 27 years. It should have been 37 years. And Empress Farah, thank you very much for correcting me on that. The Shah said he felt 10 years younger when I did that. [Laughter]

But we do have a close friendship that's very meaningful to all the people in our country. I think it is a good harbinger of things to come--that we could close out this year and begin a new year with those in whom we have such great confidence and with whom we share such great responsibilities for the present and for the future.

As we drove in from the airport this afternoon to the beautiful white palace where we will spend the night, and saw the monument in the distance, I asked the Shah what was the purpose of the beautiful monument. And he told me that it was built several years ago, erected to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of this great nation. This was a sobering thought to me. We have been very proud in our Nation to celebrate our 200th birthday, a couple of years ago. But it illustrates the deep and penetrating consciousness that comes from an ancient heritage and a culture that preceded any that we've ever known in our own lives.

Recently, Empress Farah gave us a beautiful book called "The Bridge of Turquoise"--and we get many gifts of that kind from visitors--and for a few days I have to admit that we didn't pay enough attention to it. And one night I started to thumb through the pages, and I called my wife, Rosalynn, and I called my daughter, Amy, who climbed into my lap, and we spent several hours studying very carefully the beautiful history that this book portrays of Persia, of Iran, of its people, of its lands, of its heritage and its history, and also of its future. It caused me to be reminded again of the value of ancient friendships and the importance of close ties that bind us as we face difficult problems.

Iran, because of the great leadership of the Shah, is an island of stability in one of the more troubled areas of the world.

This is a great tribute to you, Your Majesty, and to your leadership and to the respect and the admiration and love which your people give to you.

The transformation that has taken place in this nation is indeed remarkable under your leadership. And as we sat together this afternoon, discussing privately for a few moments what might be done

to bring peace to the Middle East, I was profoundly impressed again not only with your wisdom and your judgment and your sensitivity and insight but also with the close compatibility that we found in addressing this difficult question.

As we visit with leaders who have in their hands the responsibility for making decisions that can bring peace to the Middle East and ensure a peaceful existence for all of us who live in the world, no matter where our nations might be, it's important that we continue to benefit from your sound judgment and from your good advice.

We also had a chance to discuss another potential troubled area, the Horn of Africa. And here again we live at a great distance from it. But this region, which already sees the initiation of hostility and combat, needs to be brought under the good influence of you and others who live in this region. And we will be glad to cooperate in any way that we can. We want peace to return. We want Somalia and Ethiopia to be friends again, border disputes to be eased and those of us who do have any influence at all to use that influence for these purposes.

We have also known about the great benefits that we derive in our own nation from the close business relationships that we have with Iran.

As I drove through the beautiful streets of Tehran today with the Shah, we saw literally thousands of Iranian citizens standing beside the street with a friendly attitude, expressing their welcome to me. And I also saw hundreds, perhaps even thousands of American citizens who stand there welcoming their President in a nation which has taken them to heart and made them feel at home. There are about 30,000 Americans here who work in close harmony with the people of Iran to carve out a better future for you, which also helps to ensure, Your Majesty, a better future for ourselves.

We share industrial growth, we share scientific achievements, we share research and development knowledge, and this gives us the stability for the present which is indeed valuable to both our countries.

We are also blessed with the largest number of foreign students in our country from your own nation. And I think this ensures, too, that we share the knowledge that is engendered by our great universities, but also that when these young leaders come back to your country for many years in the future, for many generations in the future, our friendship is ensured. We are very grateful for this and value it very much.

I have tried to become better acquainted with the culture of Iran in the preparation for my visit here. I was particularly impressed with a brief passage from one of Iran's great poets, Saadi. And I would like to read a few words from him. Empress Farah tells me that he lived about 600 years ago.

"Human beings are like parts of a body, created from the same essence. When one part is hurt and in pain, others cannot remain in peace and quiet. If the misery of others leaves you indifferent and with no feeling of sorrow, then you cannot be called a human being."

I asked Empress Farah why this poet was so famous here in Iran, because he had impressed me so greatly, too. And she said that because he had the greatest facility for professing profound thoughts in the simplest possible words that the average citizen could understand.

Well, this brief passage shows that there is within the consciousness of human beings a close tie with one's neighbors, one's family, and one's friends, but it also ties us with human beings throughout the world. When one is hurt or suffers, all of us, if we are human beings, are hurt and we suffer.

The cause of human rights is one that also is shared deeply by our people and by the leaders of our two nations.

Our talks have been priceless, our friendship is irreplaceable, and my own gratitude is to the Shah, who in his wisdom and with his experience has been so helpful to me, a new leader.

We have no other nation on Earth who is closer to us in planning for our mutual military security. We have no other nation with whom we have closer consultation on regional problems that concern us both. And there is no leader with whom I have a deeper sense of personal gratitude and personal friendship.

On behalf of the people of the United States, I would like to offer a toast at this time to the great leaders of Iran, the Shah and the Shahbanou and to the people of Iran and to the world peace that we hope together we can help to bring.

*Note: The exchange began at 10:18 p.m. in the Niavaran Palace.*

*Later in the evening, the President met with the Shah and King Hussein of Jordan at the Niavaran Palace.*