

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A-20

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A Former Envoy Says Brzezinski Hurt U.S. in Iran

Sullivan Accuses Aide of Pressing for Use of Force

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WASHINGTON, Sept. 6 — The last United States Ambassador to Iran has accused Zbigniew Brzezinski, President Carter's national security adviser, of undermining American interests in Iran by urging the Shah and his army to use force against the Iranian revolution rather than reach an accommodation with it.

An aide to Mr. Brzezinski said the article was self-serving and incorrect.

In an article certain to fuel the controversy over whether Washington could have avoided the hostage crisis in Iran, former Ambassador William H. Sullivan said Mr. Brzezinski disregarded the advice of the embassy, the State Department and the Central Intelligence Agency in a vain effort to keep Shah Mohammed Riza Pahlavi and his designated successor, Dr. Shahpur Bakhtiar, in power.

Mr. Sullivan's article, in the current issue of the magazine *Foreign Policy*, is the first published account by an American official involved in the chaotic Iranian events of 1978-79. It is a bitter attack on Mr. Brzezinski, with whom Mr. Sullivan said he had "increasingly acerbic" exchanges in the days preceding and following the takeover by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's followers.

Accuracy Questioned by Aide

Asked to comment on Mr. Sullivan's article, Alfred Friendly Jr., a spokesman for Mr. Brzezinski, said: "The article is self-serving and factually inaccurate. But this is not an appropriate time to debate such allegations in detail."

A White House official said: "When the history of the period is written it is certain to reveal at least one conclusion: none of the participants was blessed with infallibility."

"The reconstruction of those events identifying Ambassador Sullivan as uniquely farsighted could and would have been written by only one man," the official, who asked not to be identified, went on. "At some point, we will have to have a systematic evaluation of the events and policies surrounding the fall of the Shah, but until the safe release of the hostages, it would probably be better if everybody could restrain his eagerness to make personal versions of history part of the public record."

Head of Nonprofit Organization

Mr. Sullivan, a veteran diplomat, said that he decided to resign after he received a message that contained "an insulting aspersion upon my loyalty." He is now president of the American Assembly, a nonprofit organization.

The article is not so much a detailed history of the events as much as an attempt to defend his recommendations to Washington, which he says could have led to an American-supported transfer of power to Mehdi Bazargan. He called Mr. Bazargan "a benevolent social democrat." Mr. Bazargan became Prime Minister after the fall of the Bakhtiar Government but was forced to resign by radicals after the American hostages were seized on Nov. 4.

Mr. Sullivan said that on Nov. 9, 1978, while the Shah was still in power, he cabled Washington that if the Shah fell the United States should "broker an arrangement" so that the armed forces would remain intact and be under the direction of a government "that would have the blessing of Khomeini."

He said he never received a replay. "Instead," he wrote, "it soon became apparent that my views were no longer welcome at the White House."

He said he regularly reported to Washington that the Shah had told him force would not be used to quell the mounting revolution. But Mr. Brzezinski and others, he said, apparently thought he was "tailoring my telegrams to fit what they conceived to be the mood of the State Department."

When the Shah decided to leave and turn over power to Dr. Bakhtiar — who Mr. Sullivan said had no popular support — "I proposed that an authoritative emissary be sent from Washington to consult with Khomeini."

He said that Cyrus R. Vance, then the Secretary of State, approved the idea and named Theodore L. Eliot Jr., then the Inspector General of the Foreign Service, who spoke Persian, as the emissary. Mr. Sullivan said that this mission to the Ayatollah, which he maintained had the Shah's support, could have conveyed American sincerity toward the revolution.

"I believed the revolutionary transition could occur peacefully," Mr. Sullivan said, and the United States could "help the new regime in its economic and security programs."

Mission Suddenly Canceled

But Mr. Sullivan said that while President Carter was at a meeting of allied leader in Guadeloupe, where he was accompanied by Mr. Brzezinski, he suddenly canceled the Eliot mission. Mr. Sullivan's appeal was rejected and the Shah "reacted with incredulity and asked how the United States expected to influence 'those people' if it would not even deal with them."

He said that Mr. Brzezinski then sent Gen. Robert E. Huyser, deputy commander of American forces in Europe, to Iran to try to persuade the armed forces to transfer their loyalty to Dr. Bakhtiar. Mr. Sullivan said that "I received terse instructions telling me that the policy of the United States Government was to support the Bakhtiar Government without reservation and to assist its survival." He said Gen. Alexander M. Haig Jr., then the American commander in Europe, resigned in protest over the Huyser mission.

Mr. Sullivan said he told Washington that the Bakhtiar Government was a chimera that would be swept aside when Ayatollah Khomeini arrived in Teheran.

"Moreover," he said, "I argued that it would be feckless to transfer the loyalty of the armed forces to Bakhtiar because this would cause the destructive confrontation between the armed forces and the revolutionaries that we hoped to avoid. It would result in the disintegration of the armed forces and eventually in the disintegration of Iran. It would be directly contrary to United States interests."

Mutiny by Enlisted Men

He said the confrontation he had feared took place when the junior officers and enlisted men at an air base in Teheran mutinied and overwhelmed an armored unit of the Imperial Guard.

The situation was chaotic, Mr. Sullivan said, and he was trying to save Americans trapped in the fighting. "I received a telephone call in the clear from Washington relaying a message from Brzezinski,

who asked whether I thought I could arrange a military coup against the revolution," he said. "I regret that the reply I made is unprintable."

"Thus, chaos descended on Iran," he continued. "The armed forces disintegrated, their weapons fell into the hands of all those disparate elements in the revolution who in turn fell to fighting among themselves once the Shah had gone. Bazargan and his Government had no means to enforce order; and Khomeini, in his desire to remain the nominal leader of the revolution, would issue no directions that would be substantially disobeyed. This situation meant that the extremists would be able to set the pace, and in most matters, that has been the pattern ever since. The disintegration of the nation is well-advanced and a growing dependence on the Soviet Union has begun."