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coup. At one point the count was over 80.<sup>1</sup> The second coup was a success more as an accident than because of CIA's meticulous planning.<sup>2</sup> When the CIA and the SIS headquarters had practically abandoned the plan for the overthrow of Dr. Mosaddiq, demonstrations which had begun in the streets of Tehran and were led by individual Iranian agents of the CIA, such as Keyvani and Jalili, gained momentum. Unknowingly the Tudeh helped fan these demonstrations which encouraged more and more street participation from all quarters, until it ended in favor of the Shah and his supporters. This spontaneity owes its success primarily to the atmosphere which had been created by these Agencies in Iran, rather than by an accurate performance and execution of events as the CIA had planned or foreseen.

The CIA owned part of its success to the "superb job"<sup>3</sup> of its Iranian agents, particularly Keyvani and Jalili. These two agents are praised more than once throughout the documents for acting judiciously and correctly without help from the CIA headquarters. They were the main agents for conducting the "black" propaganda against Mosaddiq. They publicized the Shah's *farmans* dismissing Mosaddiq,<sup>4</sup> and they attacked and burned the Pan-Iranist Party headquarters<sup>5</sup> and were responsible for creating chaos, all in the name of the Tudeh Party.<sup>6</sup> The Tudeh was unaware of the actors behind the entire scenario and when they came to realize and called off their demonstrators from the streets of Tehran on the evening of August 18, it was already too late. The coup was on its way and the masses were out in the streets in support of the Shah and against Mosaddiq and the Tudeh party the next morning.

1. Ibid., p. 95.

2. Ibid., Summary, p. xii.

3. Ibid., p. 92.

4. Ibid., pp. 50, 65.

5. Ibid., p. 59.

6. Ibid., p. 63.

Keyvani and Jalili were at the forefront of the demonstrators on the morning of August 19. They led the crowd to burn the offices of anti-Shah newspapers, invited the army units to join in, and led the march towards occupation of key buildings, including the radio station.<sup>1</sup> While these young agents acted remarkably well, as the CIA assessed the incident, the groomed and polished high-ranking generals were hidden in "safe houses" only to surface when the time was deemed appropriate. Thus Zafedi was essentially out of sight until he was required to broadcast his message over the Tehran radio as the new appointed Prime Minister of Iran in accordance with the Shah's *firman*.



The Iranian coup was perhaps different from other sponsored coups in the world in the sense that it created unrest and fear in Iran, thus forcing the public to believe that it had only two choices available: one was Musaddiq who symbolized instability and chaos, and the other was the Shah, who could very well represent the unity and sovereignty of the country and could readily rally the army and the masses in order to insure such a stability. Thus most people opted for the Shah, fearing a communist take over of the country.

The coup was a critically turning point in Iranian history, for as Dr. Katouzian points out,<sup>2</sup> without it Iran's present history would have been certainly different. As a popular nationalist leader who certainly had the support of both the public majority as well as the Majlis deputies, the least outcome of Musaddiq's premiership could have further encouraged the development and growth of national

1. *Ibid.*, pp. 66-7.

2. See Dr. Katouzian's article in this volume.

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democracy in Iran. A popularly backed national democracy had very few opportunities to grow and thrive since the granting of a Constitution in 1906. One short lived period was after WWI. But with Reza Shah's coup d'état in 1921 followed by his clever manipulation of power, the Qajar dynasty was terminated and replaced by the Pahlavi regime in 1925. The second occasion was the period from the Allied occupation of Iran and the removal of Reza Shah from office until the coup d'état under study (1941-53).

Durability of Musaddiq's premiership would have certainly insured a monarchy limited by the constitution, and thus a genuine constitutional monarchy responsible to the Majlis and the public at large. The documents well show that the Shah at that tender age feared and held the Majlis in esteem and was not willing to act contrary to the its will.<sup>1</sup>

Among the more specific conclusions that can be drawn from the documents is the fact that the Shah was not at all willing to yield to American and British pressures for a coup. His reluctance to sign the *farman* dismissing Musaddiq took a long process and only when it was faced with a great deal of pressure and harassment. The graphic details of this coercion is provided in Appendix A, whereby the Shah is told that he must "take the initiative in over-throwing Musaddiq," and should he refuse, he must take "responsibility for the collapse of the country," and under the present circumstances his "dynasty will fall and US-UK backing of [him] will cease."<sup>2</sup> The Shah's twin sister had to be flown in from the Riviera to pressure him into accepting the coup plans. Even then, according to these documents, as reported by Colonel Nasiri who had managed to secure the signed *farmans* from the Shah and had them delivered to General Zahedi, Queen Soraya was instrumental

1. Regarding the Shah's view of the Majlis before to coup see p.32 of the documents.

2. Ibid., Appendix A, pp.2-3.

in that decisive moment to help pressure the Shah in making up his mind.<sup>1</sup> The coercion of the Shah took nearly three weeks<sup>2</sup> before the Shah finally yielded. The sources seem to be inconsistent regarding the Shah himself. After the failure of the initial coup plan on 16 August 1953, the Shah left the country and headed for Baghdad and then for Rome. These documents mention this as "an act of prudence."<sup>3</sup> However, elsewhere the Shah is described as a weak and indecisive individual who is unable to make up his mind. While profiles of the Shah that have since be drawn certainly substantiate the latter,<sup>4</sup> one could also argue that the young Shah, having been educated in Switzerland and familiar with democratic processes, wanted a more acceptable pretext for the removal of Musaddiq than the use of sheer dictatorial measures. Thus it could perhaps be argued that he wished to be sure that the Majlis would cast its vote of no-confidence before he would issue the *farman* for Musaddiq's dismissal.

It is also clear from the documents that the Shah had no alternative in choosing General Zahedi as a replacement for Musaddiq, although at one instance CIA briefly considers Abol Qassem Amini<sup>5</sup> as a possible candidate. In fact the Shah was neither very intimate with Zahedi nor was he convinced of his ability as a premier. Zahedi too was not at all the most popular figure among the military ranks and file. Zahedi was CIA's choice who selected him and groomed him to have him presentable to the Shah and the Iranians at large. In one of the appendices this is well presented.<sup>6</sup> General Zahedi, as the documents point out, had practically none or very few "assets"

1. Ibid., p.38.

2. Ibid., pp.23, 37.

3. Ibid., Summary, p. x

4. See Marvin Louis, *Majestic Failure. The Fall of the Shah*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1991.

5. See Wilber, *Overtow of Premier Mossadeq of Iran*, p. 13.

6. Ibid., Appendix D.

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for the highly sensitive task accorded him. He practically had no support among the five brigades in Tehran. He was not sure if he could win over the Imperial Guard, and his influence among the police and other military departments was limited. His one hope was to enlist the support of Colonel Timur Bakhtiar, who headed the Kermanshah army.<sup>1</sup> The document also confirms that "because of General Zahedi's manifestly weak position among the military then on active duty, and because it became apparent that it would be necessary for CIA to seize the initiative and furnish him with a military plan and military forces, the development of Colonel Akhavi was stepped up [by the CIA],"<sup>2</sup> to facilitate an appropriate plan to implement the coup. The document also confirms that while the coup was being drawn up, Zahedi himself had relatively minor role in planning all of its details, for when the military phase of the TPAJAX operation was made available to Zahedi, "he did not know any of the young officers involved and General Batmangelich," who had been promised an appointment as the chief of staff of the Zahedi cabinet, "knew only a few of them."<sup>3</sup>

Finally evidence and traces of the American coup d'état of 1953 endured for many years after the coup itself. The Shah came to establish strong links with certain influential American families, such as the Rockefellers.<sup>4</sup> For several Cabinets after the coup, key political appointments were made with the American approval, and included individuals who had been directly engaged in the coup. Several of the key elements involved rose to important positions of power and prestige in the governments that followed. In the Cabinet of General

1. Ibid., Appendix D, p.8.

2. Ibid., Appendix D, p.10.

3. Ibid., Appendix D, pp.16-7.

4. See Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion*, p. 169.

Zahedi (19 August 1953 to 19 March 1954)<sup>1</sup>, Abbas Farzanegan who was one of the most active and competent Iranian agents of the CIA was appointed as the Minister of Post and Telegram while General Batmangleeh headed the Chief of staff of the Zahedi government.

In the next Cabinet formed under Mr. Hussain Ala (22 March 1955 to 1 April 1957),<sup>2</sup> General Ahmad Vosuq was appointed as the Minister of War, while in the cabinet of Mr. Eghal (3 April 1957 to 28 August 1960)<sup>3</sup> General Vosuq continued as the Minister of War, General Batmangleeh was for a while Minister of the Interior, and Timur Bakhtiar served as the deputy to the Minister in charge of the newly founded SAVAK intelligence service.

Hence the Shah had little choice but to play into American hands. There was no doubt that the Shah's position was pro-west. The Shah came to depend on the Americans for advice and for the training of its military personnel, for high purchase of arms, for technical and scientific knowledge, for its policies regarding land reform, basic individual freedoms, the press and political parties concerned. These policies also came to vary depending on the Presidential elections in the U.S. and overall U.S. foreign policy. What the Shah came to acquire was basically what the United States saw suitable for him to maintain. Perhaps part of his insecurity was based on this very knowledge, that he was not himself but was groomed to be what was projected of him. It would not be wrong to say that towards the end, the Shah was left with very little will of his own. Perhaps the slogan "America's Shah" was not all that misappropriate for events after the 1953 coup d'état in Iran. The backlash of such dependency was well reflected in events following the victory of the Islamic Revolution of 1979. Shortly

1. 28 Mordad to 28 Estand 1332.

2. 3 Farvardin 1334 to 12 Farvardin 1336.

3. 14 Farvardin 1336 to 6 Shahrivar 1339.

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after, angered Iranian students occupied the American Embassy in Tehran and held 52 Americans hostage for 444 days, releasing them only minutes after President Reagan took office in 1981. This was a reaction to nearly 26 years of direct U.S. interference in Iran's domestic affairs. And after another 21 years, in May 2000, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright came as close as any Secretary of State in acknowledging this fact. She admitted America's role in the 1953 coup and regretted such interference in Iran's domestic affairs. How much the exposure of the CIA documents had to do with such admission is hard to determine, but at least such reconciliatory statements made it clear for the world that Iran's anger and grievances against the United States were well founded and should be reckoned with. Perhaps what President Khatami has called for since his election to office in 1997 was such a reckoning which could lead the way towards amelioration of past injuries and mutual respect for the future.

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**THE CIA DOCUMENTS AND THE 1953  
COUP IN IRAN**

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The coup d'état of 19 August 1953 marks a watershed in the history of twentieth century Iran. It was followed, first by a dictatorship (1953-60), then - after the power struggles of 1960-63 - by arbitrary government (1960-78), and last, by the revolution of February 1979.<sup>1</sup> It would be impossible to predict the chain of events had the coup not brought down Musaddiq's government, but it is clear that, without it, subsequent developments would not have been the same.

This introduction is not intended to be a comprehensive study of the 1953 coup, but an account and analysis of the secret campaigns to remove Musaddiq from office, in light of the CIA internal history of the coup and its appendices which are published in this volume. As such, it will also contain some critical assessments of the CIA history, including matters on which it is either incorrect or silent.<sup>2</sup>

1. For the reasons behind the above analytical periodisation see, for example, Homa Katouzian, "Towards a General Theory of Iranian Revolutions", *Journal of Iranian Research and Analysis*, November 1999, "Arbitrary Rule, A Comparative Theory of State, Politics and Society in Iran". *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, 1, 24, 1997, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran*, second, paperback edition, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran*, London and New York: Macmillan and New York University Press, 1981.
2. The fullest account to date of the coup, especially from the vantage point of American and British intelligence operations, is Mark Gasiorowski's "The 1953 Coup d'état in Iran", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, August 1987, although more informed and detailed accounts are likely to follow the publication of the CIA documents published in this volume. For wider studies see, James Bill *The Eagle and the Lion*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1988, and "America, Iran and

When Musaddiq became prime minister in 1951, the British embassy in Tehran immediately launched a persistent campaign, mainly through the Shah and the Majlis opposition, to bring down his government. There is firm evidence in the British Foreign Office archives that the Shah was opposed to Musaddiq's government from the very beginning, and was cooperating with the British to topple his government through the parliament, i. e. the Majlis and the Senate. The initial idea was to replace him either by Sayyed Zia or Ahmad Qavam (Qavam al-Saltanah).<sup>1</sup>

For various reasons, this particular plan did not work, the most important being Musaddiq's rising popularity, both inside

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the politics of intervention" in James Bill and Wm. Roger Lewis, *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism and Oil*, London: I.B. Tauris, 1988; Mary Ann Elviss, *Empire and Nationalism, the United States, Great Britain, and Iranian Oil, 1950-1954*, New York, 1997; Richard Cotton, "Nationalism in twentieth century Iran and Dr. Muhammad Musaddiq" in Bill and Lewis, *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and* (Cotton's classic), *Nationalism in Iran*, Pittsburgh: Pittsburgh University Press, 1964.

1. See Hosna Karouzian, "Kushesh-haye Sefarat-e Inglis baray-e Tahin-e Nakhost-vazir-e Iran az Mell Shodan-e Nahi ta Khai'-e yad", *Ayandeh*, September 1993, reprinted in *Estebdad, Demokrasi va Nehzat-e Melli*, Tehran: Nashr-e Markaz, second edition, 1997. For the documents in question, see Minutes by L.A. C. Fry on a paper by G. Kenting, 30/1/1951, FO 371/91452; Francis Shepherd (British ambassador in Tehran) to the Foreign Office, 19/1/1951, FO 371/91452; Shepherd to FO, 7/3/1951, FO 248/1518; L. F. L. Peiman, report on a meeting with Sayyed Zia, 9/8/1951, FO 248/1518; Shepherd to FO (report of lunch with the Shah), 7/3/1951, FO248/1518; Shepherd to Bowker (in the Foreign Office), 12/3/1951, FO 371/91452; Memo by Shepherd on meeting with Asulollah Alam, 21/3/1951, FO248/1518; Shepherd to FO, 21/3/1951, FO 371/91454; Oliver Frank to FO, 27/3/1951, FO 371/9154; Memo by Shepherd on meeting with Henry Grady (American ambassador in Tehran), 1/4/1951, FO248/1518; Shepherd to FO, 22/6/1951, Shepherd's report on meeting with the Shah, 1/7/1951, Memo by Perran, 7/7/1951, Peiman's report of meeting with Dr Ahmad Humayn, deputy minister of the royal court, 14/7/1951, Shepherd's report of meeting with the Shah, 12/7/1951, Peiman's report of meeting with Dr Taheri Yazdi, 10/7/1951, George Muckleton's report of meeting with Mr Daliri (Ahmad Qavam's envoy), 18/9/1951, Peiman's report of meeting with Sayyed Zia, 22/9/1951, Shepherd to FO (report of meeting with Tarjizadeh), 22/9/1951, all of the above documents in FO248/151.

and outside Iran, especially after his triumph in the United Nation's Security Council, and - perhaps to a lesser extent - America's neutral attitude towards the Anglo-American oil dispute, which led them to counsel a peaceful settlement. The Shah, the conservative politicians and the British got their first real opportunity in July 1952 when Musaddiq resigned in protest against the Shah's insistence that he should appoint the minister of war (although there was another, perhaps more important reason as well, as shown by this author elsewhere)<sup>1</sup>. This led to the 21 July uprising and return of Musaddiq to power. He was then at the height of his popularity, especially since at the same time the World Court at the Hague ruled that, contrary to Britain's contention, it had no jurisdiction in the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute.

It was then that thoughts turned towards covert operations, although the possibility had already been discussed and the Rashidian network had been active for some time. Montague ("Monty") Woodhouse, the MI6 chief in Tehran, favoured secret efforts to overthrow Musaddiq. On the other hand, Rubin Zaener, who represented the Foreign Office and had been the principal British negotiator with Iranian opposition politicians and activists, did not advise such a policy.<sup>2</sup> The British secret arm in Iran was the Rashidians' network, which had influence in the parliament, the bazaar and the religious community. As the CIA history plainly states, these "British assets" later cooperated fully with CIA agents for the removal of Musaddiq's government, when President Eisenhower decided to embark on a course which ended up in the August coup.

1. See Homa Katouzian, "Dalil-e Asli-ye Tst'fa-ye Musaddiq dar Vaqeh'eh-ye Siyom-e Jir" in *Estebdad, Demokrasi, and Musaddiq*.

2. See, for example, Wm. Roger Lewis, "Musaddiq and the dilemmas of British imperialism" in Bill and Lewis, eds., *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil*.

On 21 October 1952, shortly after the collapse of the Truman-Churchill offer for settling the oil dispute, Iran broke off diplomatic relations with Britain, explaining that the British legation in Tehran was interfering in domestic Iranian politics.<sup>1</sup> Less than two weeks before, all three Rashidian brothers and General Hejazi had been put under arrest for aiding "a foreign embassy" to overthrow the government (although they were released shortly afterwards). General Zahedi was also implicated, but he could not be arrested because of his parliamentary immunity as a senator.<sup>2</sup> The British embassy was thus shut down and, with it, the intelligence officers among other British diplomats had to leave Iran. They set up a listening post in Cyprus.

As the oil dispute dragged without a settlement in sight, the government had to cope with growing economic difficulties arising from the boycott of Iranian oil by the dominant international oil companies. At the same time, cracks began to surface from within the Popular Movement, and the general political situation tended to become more radicalised and less stable. The thoughts of the CIA and, more slowly, the State Department began to turn towards the policy of toppling Musaddiq's government, for fear of Iran "falling behind the Iron curtain". British intelligence and the Foreign Office played greatly on these American fears, which fell on fertile grounds in the intensifying Cold War - "MaCarthyist" - atmosphere of

1. See Baqer Aqeli, *Ruznamah-e Tarikh-e Iran*, Vol. 2, Tehran: Nashr-e Goltar, 1995, entry for 21 October 1952, p. 475; Gholamreza Nejadi, *Jombesh-e Melli Shirdan-e San'at-e Naft-e Iran*, Tehran: Enteshar, 1985, pp. 287-288.

2. See Khatoum Musaddiq, and *Khatrat-e Siyasi-e Kholil Maleki*, Tehran: second edition, 1989, editor's introduction and documentary appendices. It is noteworthy that the final split within the *Zalumatkeshan* party took place on 11 October, three days after Hejazi and the Rashidians had been interned. On 11 October, Dr Baqai's men, assisted by Ayatollah Khasani's activists, physically threw the majority - Maleki - faction out of the party headquarters, who went on to form the Third Force party immediately afterwards.

the period. The CIA documents published in this volume now confirm that - as this author had argued in 1979 - it was not the economic motive of getting a large share of Iranian oil, but the political motive of Cold War conflicts which led to the American determination to organise a coup against Musaddiq.<sup>1</sup>

The Foreign Office and British intelligence generally agreed in their assessment of Musaddiq, but disagreed about the most appropriate method of dealing with him. The Foreign Office still believed that it was not possible or desirable to reach a settlement with Musaddiq, but was also of the opinion that his government would collapse in consequence of its own policies; the MI6, on the other hand, advocated Musaddiq's removal by any and all possible means. By this time, the CIA - although not yet the State Department - had moved in MI6's direction.<sup>2</sup>

As the CIA history shows, the idea was discussed in Washington by American and British intelligence officers, in November and December 1952, shortly after Iran's breaking of diplomatic ties with Britain. But they realised that President Truman would not authorise such a policy, and that they had to wait until January 1953, when General Eisenhower inaugurated his presidency. Both he and the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, were tough Cold War politicians, and the latter's brother, Allen, was the new CIA chief. The CIA documents reveal that the definite political decision to go ahead with operations was taken in March. This entailed the full cooperation of MI6, which included the participation of their listening post in Cyprus and the Rashkian network in Iran.

1. See Katouzian, *Political Economy and Musaddiq*.

2. See *Ibid*; Fakhreddin Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953*, London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 1989; Bill, *Eagle and Lion*; Lewis, "Musaddiq and the dilemmas;" Eryand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions*, Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, 1982; Nikki Keddie, *Roots of Revolution*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981.

Eden and the Foreign Office still hesitated about the wisdom of a coup, rather than isolating Musaddiq further and letting him fall as a result of the failure of his policies. But Eden's gall bladder operation was followed by a sick leave that lasted until after Musaddiq's fall, and Churchill took over the running of the British foreign policy in his absence. Unlike Eden, he was completely in agreement with secret operations to bring down Musaddiq. As noted, Eisenhower and the State Department were likewise keen on the policy.<sup>1</sup>

On 28 February the Shah's announcement that he wished to leave the country for medical treatment was used as a pretext for mobs, retired army officers and other anti-government activists to gather outside the royal palace. They were addressed by Ayatollah Behbahani, and later attacked Musaddiq's home, so that he had to escape over the wall and take refuge in the Majlis. Zahedi had been arrested on 25 February on an unspecified conspiracy charge, but was released shortly afterwards.<sup>2</sup> It is very likely that the Rashidian brothers and other British agents were involved in this incident, although it happened before March 1953 when the American government took its definite decision. Therefore - at least officially - the CIA may not have had a hand in it, and it may not be surprising that the 28 February riots are not mentioned in the CIA history and other documents.

What is surprising is the complete silence of the CIA history about the kidnapping and murder of General Alshartus, the tough Prefect of the Police and chief of the entire civilian security services. On 21 April, The police chief was kidnapped

1. See C. M. [Monty] Woodhouse, *Something Ventured*, London: Granada, 1982, Lewis, "Musaddiq and the dilemmas", and the CIA history in this volume.
2. See, for example, Katouzian, *Musaddiq: Azimi, Crisis of Democracy*; Muhammad Musaddiq, *The Memoirs of Dr Muhammad Musaddiq*, (Persian edition Iraq Alshar) ed. and intro. Homa Katouzian, tr. Hasan Amin and Homa Katouzian, London: Jesh, 1988, Book II.



and subsequently murdered, as the first of a series of operations to create acute insecurity and destabilisation leading to the government's resignation. His murder was not part of the original design, but as clues were quickly discovered by the security forces leading to the uncovering of the plot, he was killed in the hope of destroying the star evidence against the plotters. Four Generals - among others - were subsequently arrested and charged as leading figures in the conspiracy. All of them confessed to it in replies to questions which they wrote and signed in their own handwriting during the investigations. They heavily implicated Mozaffar Baqa'i, but he could not be arrested and charged because of his parliamentary immunity. One of the generals, Morteza Zahedi, was a relative of the better known general Fazlollah. The plot was discovered soon after the murder of the police chief, but the trial of the accused was conducted after the coup, when not only were they acquitted but also the murder file was permanently closed.<sup>1</sup>

Even if the CIA had no hand in the Afshartus affair, it is virtually impossible that they did not know about it, at least immediately after the police chief had been kidnapped, since it is impossible that their contacts among the British agents, or their own "Boseoe brothers" or Zahedi and other military dissidents had not known about it, assuming that they too had not been involved in its planning and execution. In fact, Zahedi himself was about to be arrested on charge of involvement in the conspiracy, when he took *hast* in the Majlis with Ayatollah Kashani's full backing, only to leave it voluntarily shortly before the coup.

Apart from that, it is very unlikely that those arrested and accused were its sole perpetrators, especially since the CIA

1. See Katouzian, *Musavvatiq: Azimi, Crisis of Democracy*; For a documentation of the events, see Mohammad Turkaman, *Tathe'eh-ye Robudan va Qad-e Afshartus*, Tehran: Turkaman, 1984.

history mentions Baqai among "the individuals who were known to the [CIA] station [in Tehran] to be engaged in the coup attempt" (p.54). It is noteworthy that - according to the CIA history - on 4 April, less than three weeks before Ashartus was kidnapped - the CIA had allowed their Tehran station to spend up to \$1,000,000 "in any way that would bring about the fall of Musaddiq" and put Zahedi in his place (p.18).

No account of the expenditure is given, but it is not improbable that - even if indirectly - some of the money had found its way to the kitty of those who organised the Afshartus plot. Even if the original plan to kidnap various other government leaders (which fell through as the plot was quickly discovered) is put aside, this was an extensive and costly operation, and it cannot possibly have been financed out of the pockets of the four retired generals and Baqai.

The question therefore is why the CIA official history has kept silent about this extremely important event which was directly relevant to their plans, and in which at least two leading Iranian figures involved in their coup operations were publicly implicated. The silence gathers more significance when it is considered that the CIA history simply fails to mention the incident at all. Perhaps CIA agents were not involved in this operation, but the History's complete silence about it is still enigmatic. Might it be because they would have been embarrassed to acknowledge close cooperation in the coup with its perpetrators? At any rate, more CIA money began to flow later for the operations which led to the coup, and to Zahedi's premiership. For example, "the [CIA] station [in Tehran] on 20 May was authorised to spend one million rials a week ... in purchasing the cooperation of members of the Iranian Majlis". (p. 18; see further below)

Musaddiq's Right opposition was quite strong. It was made up of the Shah and his entourage, the conservative politicians, the splinter group of the Popular Movement, some

important ulama and members of the religious establishment, and the retired army officers (although the CIA history makes it clear that most of the key army commanders in Tehran were loyal to Musaddiq). But they were disorganised and disunited, did not very much trust each other, and needed reasonably firm guarantees of success before they would take any serious risks. They also needed money to finance any anti-government operation. CIA's indispensable role was to provide all that, not least by playing on the then Iranian faith in the omnipotence of the great powers.

Indeed, the fear of failure, and the belief in the omnipotence of the great powers was so strong that gripped the Shah himself. As the CIA documents show, although he was completely in agreement with the coup, he was extremely fearful of British double-dealing. The contemporary reader may find this beyond belief, but it is true that, since oil nationalisation, the Shah periodically fell into the suspicion that it was due to no more than a British master-plot. Indeed as late as 21 May, a month after the Alshartus plot and three months before the actual coup, the British ambassador to Washington passed on a message from the Shah to the British government, which showed his strong suspicions of the British role and current policy in Iran in the most open and explicit terms.<sup>1</sup>

1. Sir Roger Morkins, wrote in a dispatch to the Foreign Office:

The State Department informed us today that on a number of occasions associates of the Shah have told [Loy] Henderson [American ambassador in Tehran] that His Majesty is uncertain about the British attitude towards himself. He [believes] that the British had thrown out the Qajar Dynasty, had brought in his father and had thrown his father out. Now they could keep him or remove him in turn as they saw fit. If they desire that he should stay ... he should be informed. If on the hand they wished him to go he should be told immediately so that he could leave quietly. Did the British wish to substitute another Shah for himself or to abolish the Monarchy? Were they behind the present efforts to deprive him of his power and prestige? ...

Over a month before that, Hossein Ala, minister of the royal court and a confidant of the Shah, had told the American ambassador in Iran that the Shah did not trust the British. The Shah thought - explained Ala - that the British were responsible for the current cleavage between the government and the court, and were trying to foment civil war so that they could divide up the country between themselves and the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Small wonder that the Shah was hesitant throughout the months of June and July to agree to take the actions required of him by American and British agents, because - as the CIA history puts it - of "his pathological fear of the 'hidden hand' of the British" (pp. 21-22).

The CIA history refers obscurely to a Qashqa'i/Amini alternative plan, and even mentions Abolqasem Amini, the acting minister of the royal court, whom the Shah did not trust at all, as one of the Iranians involved in the coup, although the Qashaq'i brothers are not mentioned in that list (pp. 14 and 54). This is misleading. To forestall or counteract potential Qashqa'i resistance to the coup, the planners eventually decided to contact them, and it is in that context that the CIA history mentions "the alternative Qashqai/Amini plan" without further explanation. According to Nasser Qashqa'i's diaries of the time, after the failure of the 16 August coup, the Qashqa'i's turned down the American offer of \$5 million to them to use their resources in helping Zahedi to take power (see further below).

This is largely due to the fact that the CIA account, even from the viewpoint of American and British operations alone, is nowhere near a complete history of the coup. The largest omission here from the American viewpoint is the history's

Markins to the Foreign Office, 21 May 1953. For a photograph of this document see, Karim Sanjazi, *Qatil-ha va Na-qatid-ha*, London: Tebbe, 1989, p. 449.

1. Henderson to the State Department, 15/1/53, 788.00/4-1553/4027.

complete silence about the decisions and activities of the State Department and the US embassy in Tehran, except in occasional references to the full cooperation of Loy Henderson, the American ambassador.

According to the State Department documents, in a joint meeting with Abolqasem Amini and Nasser Qahsqā'i, Amini had told Henderson that either America should give financial aid to Musaddiq, or it should be suggested to him to step down to become Iran's senior statesman, and choose his own successor, who should then be given American support. Qahsqā'i had agreed with Amini that if either Musaddiq or his chosen successor are given American support, then it would be possible to take much of the radical wind out of the sails of current Iranian politics. Amini had also stressed that any coup against Musaddiq would be 'bloody', that it would destroy all the achievements of the Popular Movement, that, in any case, it would not be acceptable, and that it would have a very small chance of success.<sup>1</sup>

It is clear from various dispatches by Henderson that Amini was in fact in favour of an open and peaceful settlement with Musaddiq, and that Henderson and other American embassy staff did not trust him.<sup>2</sup> Later, in a message to the embassy, the Shah firmly rejected Amini's suggestion to them that his brother General Mahmud Amini (commander of the gendarmerie) should replace General Riahi as the chief of staff.<sup>3</sup> This is in fact what the pro-Musaddiq army officers themselves had proposed to Musaddiq, but he had chosen Riahi on strong recommendations from the latter's Iran party friends.<sup>4</sup> General Amini was a better combat officer. Apart

1. Henderson to the Secretary of State, 4/5/53, 788.00/5-4534311.

2. Henderson to the Secretary of State, 5/5/53, 788.00/5-5534324.

3. Minutes of a meeting of Henderson and some American embassy staff with the Shah's trusted envoy on 17/5/53, 788.00/5-1953/975.

4. See in particular, Colonel G. Musavvir-Rahmani, *Khaterat-e Siyasi-Bist-va-panj sal dar Ney-e Hava'i Iran*, Tehran: Ravan, 1984, who insists

from that, he and his two brothers, Ali and Abolqasem, were distrusted and disliked by the Shah.<sup>1</sup>

The embassy dispatches and documents further show that as early as 17 May - in the heat of the Alshartus affair - the Shah had expressed his full confidence in Zahedi and Baqa'i as honest and loyal people, and believed that secret American money and influence should be used to raise their credibility and arrange for the Majlis to vote Zahedi prime minister.<sup>2</sup> But the Shah himself still refused to take any initiative for the policy.<sup>3</sup>

According to the CIA history, a succession of three emissaries helped, in the end, to remove the Shah's fears sufficiently to sign the notice of Musaddiq's dismissal, and of Zahedi's appointment to premiership. Princess Ashraf was sent from France, and although the Shah was still anxious, he welcomed the news brought to him by her that General Schwarzkopf would soon come to Iran to see him. Schwarzkopf had been a senior military advisor to Iran in the 40's, and had enjoyed good personal relations with the Shah. In the meantime, Asadollah Rashidian met the Shah to convince him, as Britain's "official spokesman", of the British commitment to the coup against Musaddiq. Long before that, Henderson had believed, apparently wrongly, that he had managed to reassure the Shah by telling him that Churchill himself had told him that

that Riani's appointment had been a mistake, and that they had recommended Aminî for the post since he was more competent and daring. Rahmani was a leading member and organiser of the pro-Musaddiq army officers. When the coup took place, he was military attaché in Baghdad.

1. See, for example, Henderson to the Secretary of State, 20/5/53, 788.00/5-2053.982.
2. Minutes of the embassy meeting, 17/5/53.
3. See for example, Henderson to the Secretary of State, 19/4/53, 788.00/4-1953 and 25/4/53, 788.00/4-2553. For the State Department documents cited in these notes, and some additional documents, see Babak Amir Khosravi, *Nazar az doran beh Naqsh-e Herb-e Tudeh-ye Iran*, Tehran: Etefak'at, 1996.

Britain would find it regrettable if the Shah goes. Yet to believe Rashidian's credentials as such, the Shah suggested confirmation by a code to be repeatedly broadcast by the BBC Persian service. This was done.

Schwarzkopf's "mission" was to obtain three notices or *farman*s from the Shah, which was largely in keeping with the initial plan (see Appendix B, p. 8): one, to appoint Zahedi as chief of staff; two, a letter to confirm his faith in Zahedi; three, a *farman* to all army officers to support Zahedi as the legitimate staff chief (the CIA history, pp. 25-26). These papers having been obtained, the initial plan then was to "purchase" enough Majlis deputies, not to vote against Musaddiq, but simply to be there to maintain the quorum on the day that the thirty opposition deputies (out of the total number of 80) emboldened by the CIA, would cast a vote of no confidence against Muasaddiq's government. For the analysis that follows it is important to quote directly from Appendix B, the "London draft":

[The] basic aim will be to secure a majority plus one vote against Mosaddeq ... At the present time it is estimated that at least thirty deputies are prepared to vote against Mosaddeq if they think there is a good chance that they will be in the majority. It is to be noted that all Majlis elected members would not normally be present at any one session. However, it will also be necessary to attempt to ensure that a quorum can be maintained in the Majlis when the anti-Mosaddeq vote is to be taken. The minimum quorum requirement is that two-thirds of the deputies present in Tehran must be in the Chamber before a vote can be taken. Thus an effort will be made to purchase additional deputies solely to have them remain in the Chamber to ensure the quorum and not for the more sensitive role of voting against Mosaddeq. (pp. 19-20 of the "London draft").

This looks rather similar to the attempt to bring Qavam to power in previous July, except that, this time, the Majlis vote was to be taken *after* taking control of the army, so there might

be little chance of success if the Popular Movement deputies staged a sit-in followed by resistance in the streets as had then happened. Musaddiq might have got wind of such planned efforts to turn the Majlis against him, and that may have been his reason for deciding to dissolve the Majlis and hold fresh elections, although he consistently presented other reasons for his decision.<sup>1</sup> On 14 July, 27 pro-Musaddiq deputies resigned their seats in support of Musaddiq's decision. They were followed by another 25 deputies who belonged to other factions, or were independent, but normally backed the government whenever it asked for a vote of confidence.<sup>2</sup> This brought the number of the voluntary resignations to a total of 52 - not "28," as is claimed in the CIA history (p.31).

This is important. It shows that far from being able to "purchase" enough Majlis deputies merely to attend the House, on the right day, to provide a quorum so the 28 opposition deputies would be able to oust the government, they had not even managed to purchase any of them merely not to resign voluntarily in response to Musaddiq's call for the dissolution of the Majlis. On the contrary, it left only 28 opposition deputies, who would not make up a quorum for the Majlis to continue.

Judging by the number of deputies who voluntarily resigned to help dissolve the Majlis, it is clear that he had the vote of confidence of 65 per cent (roughly two-thirds) of the deputies - though their voluntary resignation indicated a stronger show, even, than a mere vote of confidence - when he dissolved the Majlis. Many of them may not have been sincere in their demonstration of loyalty, but what matters is that they saw their balance of interest in acting as they did.

Musaddiq then held a referendum between 3 and 9

1. See for example, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, although he has also commented on the matter elsewhere.

2. For the names of the deputies who voluntarily resigned their seats in July 1953, see Gholamreza Nejati, *Jonbesh-e Meli Shodan*.



August to dissolve the Majlis, although this seems to have been legally unnecessary because the existing Majlis, with its permanent lack of quorum, was effectively defunct.

The coup was set for 10 August, the day after the referendum, though it was postponed to the next day, and eventually to the late evening of 15, and the early hours of 16 August, mainly because of the Shah's continuing reluctance to sign the required papers. It is fairly clear from the CIA history that they changed their requirement of the Shah after Musaddiq decided to dissolve the Majlis. This time they asked the Shah simply to issue a *farman* dismissing Musaddiq, and another, appointing Zohedi prime minister (p.28). This they did, clearly because the Majlis was no longer there to put up resistance. On 1 August the Shah told Swarzkopf that "should Musaddiq carry through his referendum, then he himself would have full powers under the constitution to dismiss Musaddiq and replace him by a prime minister of my own choice" (p.30).

He was nevertheless hesitating to commit himself fully and sign the two *farmans*, even though - having received various reassurances - he was no longer afraid of British double-dealing. Between 1 and 12 August there were several other meetings between the Shah and Schwarzkopf, (Asadollah) Rashidian, Kermit Roosevelt, etc. While the Shah firmly approved of the new coup plan, he still hesitated to sign the *farmans* simply for fear of failure of the coup attempt. In the end, he signed the papers after they took them to him in his Caspian resort, where he had gone on 11 August in order to be absent from the capital when the coup commenced. There he finally signed the papers which were taken to him from Tehran on the evening of 12 August (pp. 30-35). As was noted, the coup had been initially set to commence on 10 or 11 August, but was postponed to the night of 14, then 15, mainly because of the Shah's hesitation in signing the papers. The postponement must have helped to leak about an imminent

coup both to the government and to the political parties. For example both *Best-e-ye Ayandeh*, the Tudeh party's public organ, and *Nine-ye Seratom*, organ of the Third Force party, reported coup preparations and activities on 13 August.<sup>1</sup>

This was a military coup. The details of the military plan, recruitment and preparations, etc., are described in the text of the CIA history.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, money was being spent and extensive newspaper propaganda and other campaigns organised against Musaddiq had been running for some months. The CIA history refers to the anti-Musaddiq propaganda campaigns as "the war of nerves", "the psychological campaign" etc. The idea was to harass Musaddiq himself, to weaken his support, and to frighten the general public about ordinary security and stability; what in later CIA operations in other countries became known as "destabilisation".

They also enlisted support from some religious leaders and "terrorist gang", although - not as had apparently been intended - in the form of *farva*, etc., from some important religious figures (Appendix B, pp.20-21).

Nevertheless, the CIA history says, "in the field of political action, it was planned to send the Tehran cleric, Ayatollah Behbahani to Qum to persuade the supreme cleric, Ayatollah Borujerdi, to issue a fatwa (religious decree) calling for a holy war against Communism, and also to build up a great demonstration on Wednesday [19 August, final day of the second coup] on the theme that it was time for loyal army officers and soldiers and people to rally to the support of religion and the throne" (p.57).

1. the CIA history (p.47) only mentions *Best-e-ye Ayandeh*, but the news appeared in *Nine-ye Seratom* (weekly) as well. See Katoozian, *Musaddiq*.
2. For a detailed account from the Iranian vantage point - largely oral as well as written eyewitness accounts of many of the participants, both military and civilian - see Ne'ati, *Jombesh-e Melli shodan*.

On the other hand, CIA agents tried to alarm some religious leaders in Tehran by issuing fake Tudeh party propaganda against them. In one case, they even bombed the house of one of these religious leaders (p.37).

There was a moment's depression when the first coup attempt failed, but the organisers, agents and operators in the field quickly saw the opportunity to turn the situation round by running riots. Here the role of their principal Iranian agents Keyvani and Djalili was crucial. They had a field day on Tuesday 18 August. Unknowingly, the Tudeh party played into their hands by taking to the streets, and issuing very radical slogans, which the CIA rent-a-crowd mob then spread everywhere on the walls and in loud riots in the centre of Tehran. The most radical of these was the statement by the Tudeh party Central committee published on 18 August in *Besta-ye Ayandeh* which said "Down with the monarchy! Long live the democratic republic." The same statement was also broadcast on the Persian service of Radio Moscow that afternoon (pp. 59-62).

It was on this same day, it seems, that the CIA station in Tehran received discouraging messages from Britain and America to call off the operations. Still, the message from CIA headquarters was that "in the absence of strong recommendations to the contrary from [Kermit] Roosevelt and [Loy] Henderson, operations against Musaddiq should be discontinued" (p.63). Henderson and Roosevelt were the two most senior men on the ground. Clearly, they must have "strongly recommended" the operations to be continued.

The CIA-organised mob swelled the ranks of the Tudeh street demonstrations, as they had done on the anniversary of the 21 July uprising, trying to frighten ordinary middle class people of the danger of an imminent Tudeh take-over. While the Tudeh agitators attacked Pahlavi statues and tore down street signs, replacing them with popular names, the mobs

organised by the CIA local agents "had alleged gangs of Tudehehis on the streets with orders to loot and smash shops on Lalehzar and Amirieh streets whenever possible, and to make it clear that this was the Tudeh in action". Eventually, some Tudeh leaders realised that a covert action was being staged, and sent some of their activists out in the streets to persuade their demonstrators to go home (pp. 62-63).

In view of the CIA history's graphic account of the rioting organised and led by their own agents on 18 August, its immediate claim that, next morning, the people *independently* gathered in the bazaar at 9.00 a. m. (p. 65), does not seem to hold water, though (rather like its silence about the Afshartus affair), it is not difficult to discern the motive behind it. Three famous mobsters Tayyeb Hajj Reza'i, his brother-in-law, Hossein Ramezan Yekhi and Shu'han Bitokh - all of them having strong bazaar and religious connections - brought their mobs out into the streets. At any rate, it was noted above that CIA agents had "planned ... to build up a great demonstration" precisely for Wednesday 19 August.

Apart from that, the original plan, "The London draft", had envisaged the participation of Islamic militants as well as "the Toilers party, the Sumka and sections of the Pan-Iranists" to take part in the riots and terrorist operations (Appendix B, pp. 20-21). The Toilers party was Baqa'i's organisation. The Pan-Iranist section mentioned was an extreme nationalist group. Sumka - or the Somka party - stood for Sosialist-e Melli-ye Kargaran-e Iran (National Socialist Workers of Iran) or Iran's Nazi party. However, the CIA history does admit that, on 19 August, their Iranian agents and sub-agents took charge of those gathered in the bazaar at 9.00 a. m. and incited them to riots similar to those that their mobs had led the evening before:

Djalili accompanied one group in its progress toward the

Majlis, and on the way incited them to set fire to the offices of *Bakhtor-e Enraz*, the semi-official paper owned by Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatemi ... About the same time [Mansur] Afshar led other elements toward the offices of Tudeh newspapers ... which were thoroughly sacked(66).

Later some military and police units joined them, eventually attacking Musaddiq's home, while, at the same time, capturing Tehran Radio station. Details of these actions and events are found in many accounts, including eyewitness accounts in Musaddiq's trials<sup>1</sup>, and briefly in the CIA history.

Two other important measures were taken, only one of which has been recorded in the CIA history. Between the two coups of 16 and 19 August, CIA operators sent Ardeshtir Zahedi, Zahedi's son, and an Iranian CIA agent, Colonel Aban [Abbas] Farzanegan, respectively, to encourage the Isfahan army chief (General Zargham) and the Army commander in Kermanshah (Colonel Teymur Bakhtiar) to march their forces to Tehran (p. 57). Bakhtiar accepted the call and began to move, but the second coup had succeeded in Tehran before he had managed to move far.

The other important measure which the CIA history does not mention is their approach to the Qashqa'i's for help. After the first (military) coup failed, they contacted and offered the brothers Mohammad Hossein and Khosraw Qashqa'i \$5 million cash in return for them to take Zahedi into their tribal territory, declare and recognise him as the lawful prime minister, and bring him back to Tehran - presumably backed by their own military force - in triumph. The only known source for this is Nasser Qashqa'i's posthumously published diaries of the period, who, at the time, happened to be absent from Tehran - in the Qashqa'i territory in Fars - but

1. See Jalil Bezarqmehr, ed., *Musaddiq dar Mahkameh-ye Nezami*, Tehran: Nashr-e Tarikh-e Iran, vols. 1 and 2, 1984; Nejati, *Jonbesh-e Milli Shodan*.

was informed of the offer a few days later<sup>1</sup>. It makes sense both in view of the earlier CIA plans to neutralise Qashqali opposition (see above), and by their desperate attempt to encourage civil war also from Isfahan and Kermanshah. At any rate, the CIA history confirms the payment of \$5 million to Zahedi just after the coup, explaining that it was needed because the Iranian Treasury was empty. Almost forty years ago, Ali Amini was quoted by his brother Abolqasem as having told him about the \$5 million shortly after it had been paid.<sup>2</sup>

What happened after the coup is well beyond the scope of the CIA documents and this Introduction. And what might have happened without the coup, or if the coup had failed the second time as well, is a matter for pure speculation, a scientific answer to which cannot be found. Musaddiq had strong Right as well as Left wing opponents, both of whom wished to dislodge him and the Popular Movement, and to eliminate each other as a political force. The CIA, with the assistance of the Mto, organised, financed and led the Right to overthrow Musaddiq and eliminate the Left.

1. Nasser Khan wrote in his diary entry for 26 August:

The first coup was neutralised, and the Shah ran off to Europe. Musaddiq's government wanted to arrest Major-General Zahedi; he secretly went to the American embassy. Goodwin, an American, met with Mohammad Hossein Khan and Khosrow Khan [Qashqali] and told them that the American government has decided to remove Musaddiq al-Saltaneh from office ... Here is \$5 million cash which you can take, and take Major-General Zahedi to the Qashqali tribal territory, publicise the Shah's *farman* of premiership in his favour, and then move with Zahedi towards Tehran ...

See *Sal-ha-ye Bohran, Yaidashi-ha-ye Ruzandeh-ye Mohammad Nasser Sowdat Qashqali*, ed. Nasrollah Haddadi, Tehran: Rasi, 1987, p. 407. See further, Katoorian, "Barkhi az Sal-ha-ye Bohran dar Yeki az Qarn-ha-ye Bohran" (review article), in *Estebdad, Demokrasi*.

2. See Ibid.