

ADMINISTRATIVE - WORKING PAPER

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## III. COVERT ACTION

## A. The Genesis of TPAJAX

The many chroniclers of Central Intelligence Agency misdeeds, whether in their books, magazine articles, or newspaper columns, have long placed the August 1953 coup that overthrew Premier Mosadeq near the top of their list of infamous Agency acts. Complete secrecy about the operation that was known under the cryptonym of TPAJAX has been impossible to enforce under existing laws, and enough talkative people, including many Iranians, were privy to segments of the operation to make it relatively easy for journalists to reconstruct the coup in varied but generally inaccurate accounts.<sup>17</sup> The point that the majority of these accounts miss is a key one: the military coup that overthrew Mosadeq and his National Front cabinet was carried out under CIA direction as an act of U.S. foreign policy, conceived and approved at the highest levels of government. It was not an aggressively simplistic solution, clandestinely arrived at, but was instead an official admission by both the United States and United Kingdom that normal, rational methods of international communication and commerce had failed. TPAJAX was entered into as a last resort.

The target of this policy of desperation, Mohammad Mosadeq, was neither a madman nor an emotional bundle of senility as he was so often pictured in the foreign press; however, he had become so committed to the ideals of nationalism that he did things that could not have conceivably helped his people even in the best and most altruistic of worlds. In refusing to bargain--except on his own uncompromising terms--with the

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<sup>17</sup> A number of these are included in Appendix C.

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Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, he was in fact defying the professional politicians of the British government. These leaders believed, with good reason, that cheap oil for Britain and high profits for the company were vital to their national interests. There had been little in their experience to make them respect Iranians, whom company managers and Foreign Office representatives saw as inefficient, corrupt, and self-serving. That the British misjudged their adversaries badly is obvious; they were convinced that when Iran felt the financial pinch, its resolve would crumble, and an agreement could be worked out to the satisfaction of both sides. Henry Grady, who spent two unhappy years as U.S. Ambassador to Iran during the height of the oil dispute, quoted<sup>18</sup> the British theme that he had heard in so many variations as: "Just wait until the beggars need the money badly enough--that will bring them to their knees."

In fact, of course, the loss of oil revenue did not bring the Iranians to their knees; it merely forced them to take the risky steps that increasingly endangered their country's future. It was the potential of those risks to leave Iran open to Soviet aggression--at a time when the Cold War was at its height and when the United States was involved in an undeclared war in Korea against forces supported by the U.S.S.R. and China--that compelled the United States  in planning and executing.TPAJAX.

How real were the risks in what Mosadeq was doing? Had the British sent in the paratroops and warships, as they were to do a few years later against the Egyptians at Suez, it was almost certain that the Soviet Union

<sup>18</sup> In his article in the 5 January 1952 Saturday Evening Post, entitled "What went Wrong in Iran?"

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would have occupied the northern portion of Iran by invoking the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of Friendship of 1921. It was also quite probable that the Soviet army would have moved south to drive British forces out on behalf of their Iranian "allies." Then not only would Iran's oil have been irretrievably lost to the West, but the defense chain around the Soviet Union which was part of U.S. foreign policy would have been breached. The Soviets would have <sup>had</sup> the opportunity to achieve the ancient Russian dream of a port on the Persian Gulf and to drive a wedge between Turkey and India. Under such circumstances, the danger of a third world war seemed very real. When it became apparent that many elements in Iran did not approve of Mosadeq's continuing gamble or the direction in which he was pushing their country, the execution of a U.S.-assisted coup d'etat seemed a more desirable risk than letting matters run their unpredictable course. Mosadeq was already openly threatening to turn to other sources for economic help--the Soviets--if Britain did not meet his demands or if the United States did not come forth with massive aid to replace his lost oil revenue. Peacefully or in war, the Soviet Union appeared to be the only potential beneficiary of Mosadeq's policies.

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the aged Premier was rapidly become a "prisoner of the left" because of his growing reliance on the support of the Soviet-backed Tudeh Party,<sup>20</sup> which had a membership in 1952 of about 25,000 plus many more thousands of supporters and sympathizers.

High-level

approval to explore the matter was obtained through Department of State

<sup>20</sup> As the organization replacing the Communist Party of Iran, outlawed by Reza Shah, Tudeh had been receiving Soviet financial support and advice since 1941.

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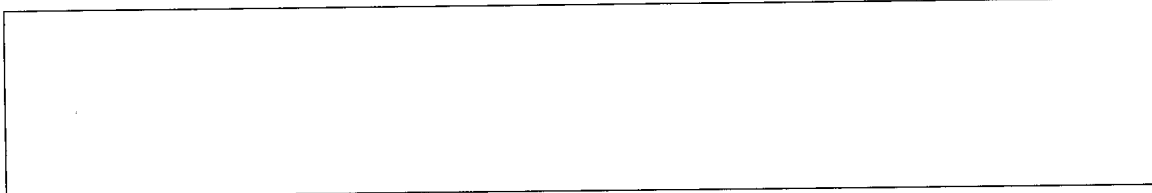
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channels, / a CIA NEA Division officer who was there recalls attending a decisive meeting<sup>21</sup> at State in company with Kermit Roosevelt at which Gen. W. Bedell Smith presided, shortly after he left the Agency to become Under Secretary of State early in February 1953. Smith's affirmative response to the question, "Do we go ahead?" was the informal green light that the planners in NEA Division had been waiting for; his laconic, unprintable answer was Smith's main contribution to the meeting, at which the reasons for overthrowing Mosadeq were carefully discussed.

<sup>21</sup> No minutes of this meeting are available in DDO files.

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[redacted] Final official approval of TPAJAX came on 11 July 1953<sup>24</sup> as an action based on NSC Report 136/1, "U.S. Policy Regarding the Present Situation in Iran," which had been adopted by the National Security Council as action No. 680 and approved by the President on 20 November 1952.

The fact that this decision and the staff work preceding it were very closely held in Washington is borne out by a memorandum of 10 June 1953 from the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs (GTI) to the Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs recommending policies more supportive of Mosadeq. It reasoned that since conditions <sup>in Iran</sup> were deteriorating almost to the point of no return and since an attempt to remove Mosadeq would risk a civil war and would, even if successful, alienate the Iranian people, we should increase our financial and technical assistance to Iran in the hope that Mosadeq would be able to muddle through. The desk officers' position paper recognized that increased U.S. aid would, of course, frustrate British policy, which was to undermine Mosadeq's position. By late June, however, State was aware of the planned operation, and a further position paper that stipulated certain conditions to be met by the British was prepared on 25 June, as described in the discussion of planning, below.

#### B. The Planning Phase

To carry out a [redacted] operation [redacted]

[redacted], a great deal of advance planning was necessary, [redacted]

<sup>24</sup> No documentary evidence of this approval is available in the CIA Executive Register or the remaining files on TPAJAX.

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[REDACTED]

Their first point of agreement was that Maj.

Gen. Fazlollah Zahedi<sup>26</sup> was the logical choice to head the coup, despite the fact that his career balance sheet had nearly as many minuses as pluses. Zahedi's obvious assets were his record as a leader and combat officer, his devotion to the Shah, and his aggressive desire to change the course of his country's destiny. His debits were many: his wartime reputation as a pro-Nazi and suspected agent who had been arrested by the British and sent to Palestine was further tainted by charges of corruption. In addition, he had been out of the army for four years and had only limited contacts with active duty officers at the regimental and battalion levels. He nonetheless was regarded [REDACTED] [REDACTED] as the sole Iranian with sufficient support among Iranian army officers and pro-Shah politicians to be the central coup figure.

[REDACTED]

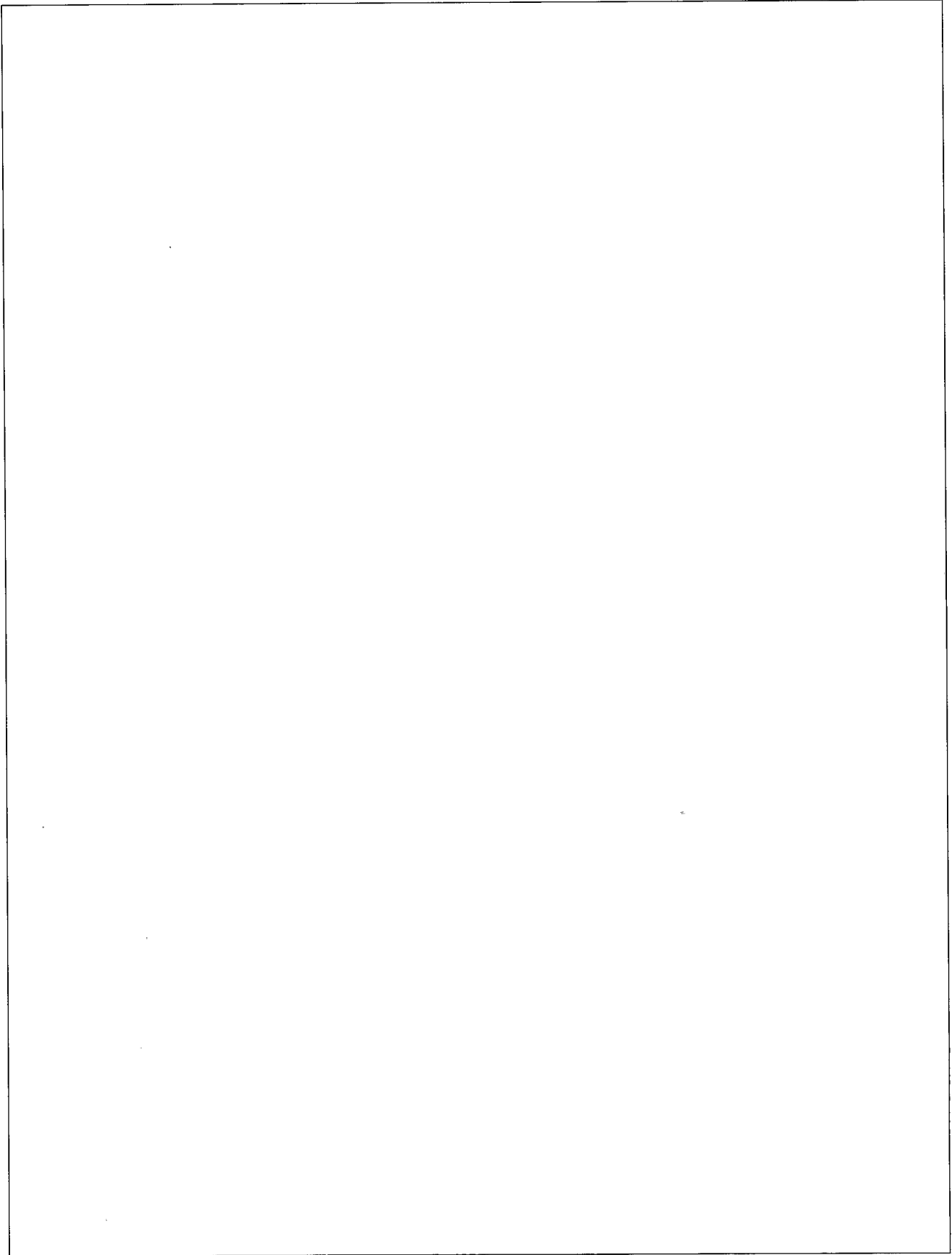
<sup>26</sup> See Appendix B for biographic details.

[REDACTED]

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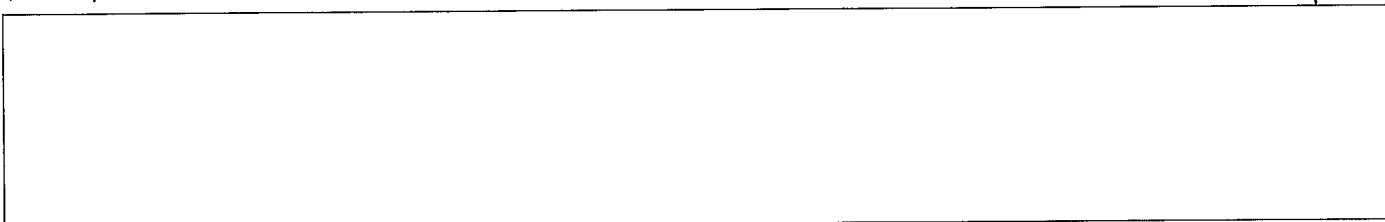
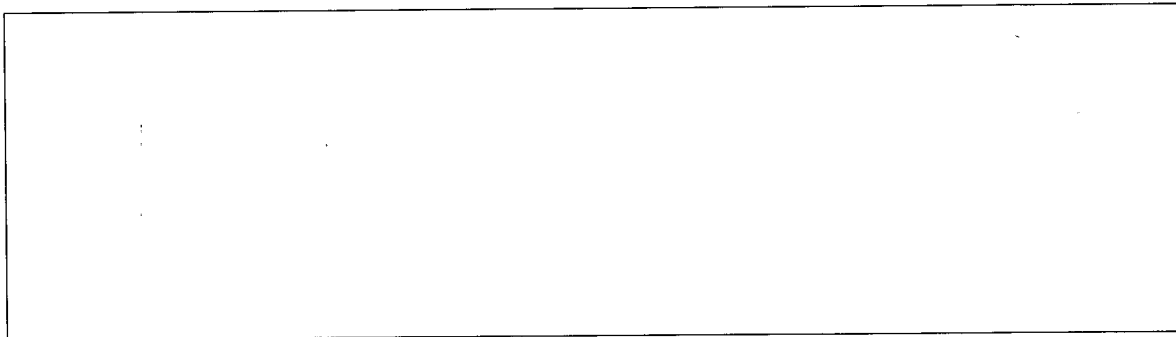
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The planning discussions [redacted] [redacted] also took up the assumptions on which the plan would be based. These were: that Zahedi was the best candidate for coup leader; that the Shah must be brought into the operation, against his will if necessary; that the army would follow the Shah rather than Mosadeq if given a clear-cut choice; that a genuine legal or quasi-legal basis must be found for the coup; that public opinion must be aroused against Mosadeq; [redacted] [redacted] and, that the new government to be established in power must be guarded from possible Tudeh countercoup attempts. Tehran Station and Headquarters

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were kept apprised of these assumptions, with which they did not always agree. The Station, for example, backed Ambassador Henderson when he told Washington that the Shah probably would not act decisively against Mosadeq, while Headquarters was concerned about finding a possible substitute for General Zahedi because of the negative aspects of his background.

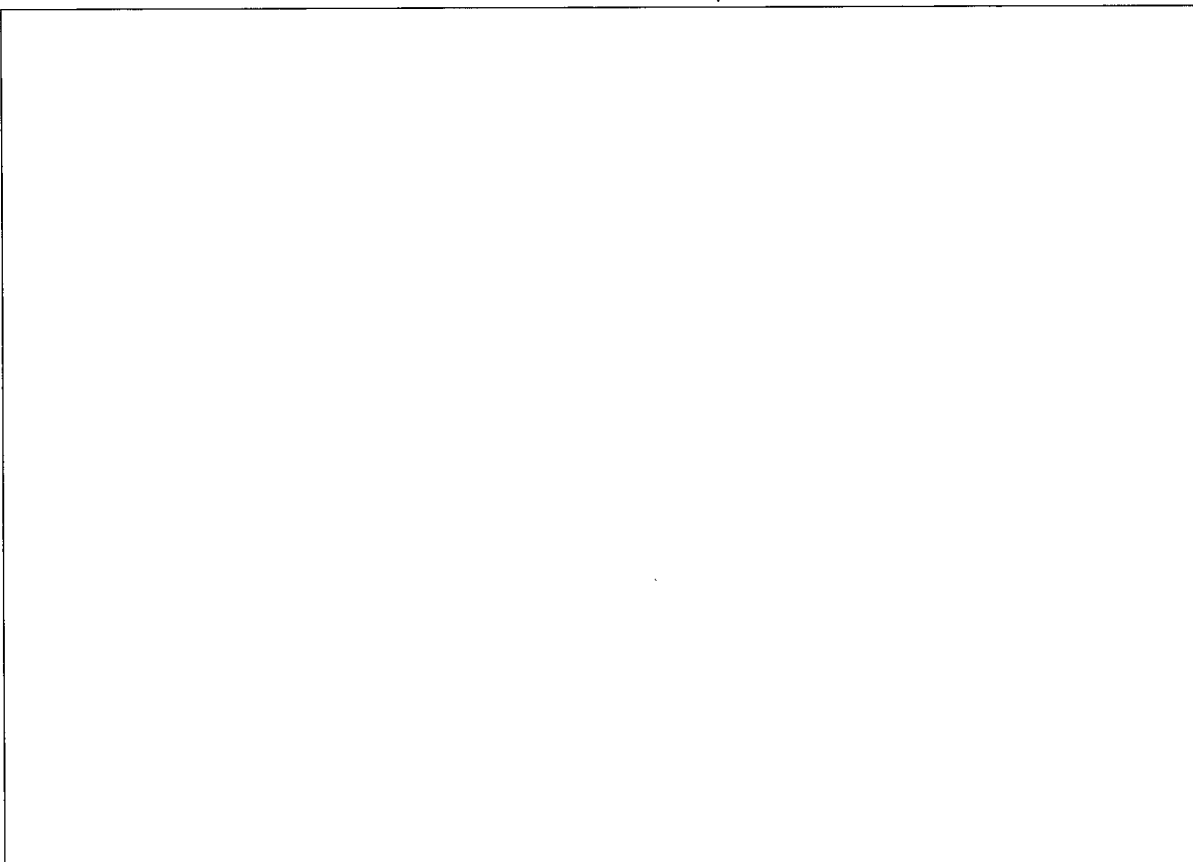
The proposal that anti-Mosadeq leaders seek "religious refuge" was never implemented in the field; it probably reflected the views of [redacted] primarily concerned with psychological and propaganda operations was attuned to the utilization of local customs and traditions.

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completed a revision of the plan. Their major change was to concentrate on building up the size and effectiveness of the anti-Mosadeq forces rather than on countering actions by the elements supporting the Premier.



Reduced to its essentials, the plan called for the following sequence of events, in which timing was of great importance:

The goal of the operation was to replace Mosadeq with a leader whom the Shah and the army would support and who would be willing to negotiate a reasonable oil settlement that would prevent an economic collapse and reduce Iran's vulnerability to the Soviet Union. General Zahedi was such a man, perhaps the only one who met all the requirements.

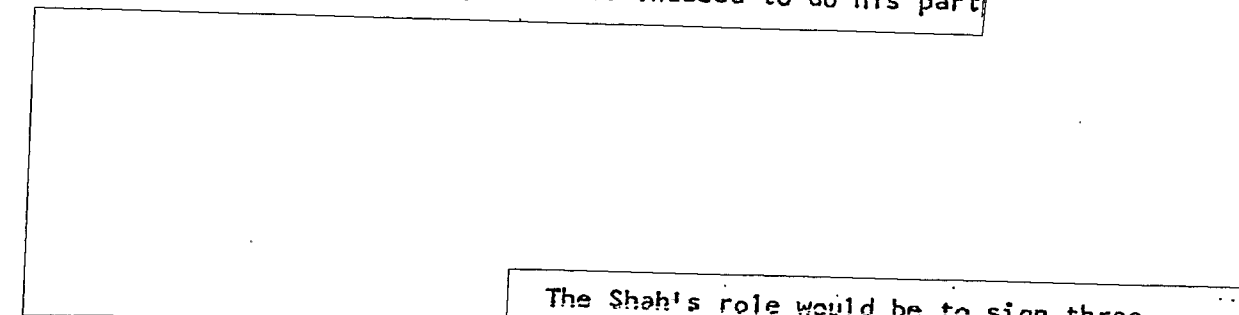
<sup>30</sup> Also included in Appendix D.

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Zahedi would be brought to power through a military coup that would, because of the Shah's participation, be fundamentally legal. The Shah, who had been indecisive under the pressure of the oil dispute and Mosadeq's maneuvering for more power, would be induced to do his part;



The Shah's role would be to sign three documents: a royal decree (firman, in Farsi) naming Zahedi as Army Chief of Staff; another firman appealing to all ranks of the army to carry out the orders of the new Chief of Staff; and, an open letter calling on army officers to support the bearer, General Zahedi. The letter would be used by Zahedi to recruit the coup group of officers in key posts that would enable them to carry out the military objectives of the plan, including the seizure of army headquarters, Radio Tehran, the army radio station, the houses of Mosadeq and his principal associates, police and Gendarmerie headquarters, the telephone exchange, the Majlis building, and the National Bank. Key government figures, army officers, and newspaper editors supporting Mosadeq would be arrested. Special measures would be prepared for dealing with the anticipated violent reaction of Tudeh Party members to Mosadeq's overthrow.

The plan envisaged three different scenarios by which the coup might be carried out: first, a massive religious protest against the government,

<sup>31</sup> The Gendarmerie were a national, paramilitary, rural police, whereas the National Police were an urban force.

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followed by military action by the army officers loyal to Zahedi; the second alternative, taking advantage of the crisis that would develop at the anticipated moment when Mosadeq would force the Shah to leave the country, and then starting the military action; or, as the third alternative, starting the military action the moment that Mosadeq, frustrated by the Shah, presented his resignation<sup>32</sup> and sent the Tudeh and National Front mobs into the street. Under any of these scenarios, the military action itself was seen as beginning with General Zahedi assuming the post as Chief of Staff, seizing army headquarters, and ordering the arrest of Mosadeq and his compatriots. The Shah would then appoint Zahedi as Premier, and the Majlis would be called into session to confirm his appointment.

The plan also discussed the use of the press, including propaganda themes, as well as utilization of the Majlis, the political parties, religious leaders, and bazaar merchants in carrying out the operation. Finally, it estimated<sup>33</sup> the coup's chances of success and the probable implications for the United States if it should fail. It was this plan that [redacted] CIA to the Department of State in order to obtain simultaneous high-level approval.

As a sidelight, it should be mentioned that before Roosevelt left [redacted], he briefed U.S. Ambassador to Iran Loy Henderson, who was in Washington for consultation. The briefing on the proposed operation [redacted] was attended by General

<sup>32</sup> This was a technique Mosadeq had used before to rally the street mobs to his support and to intimidate his opposition. It was anticipated that he would try it again if the Shah put any sort of pressure on him.

<sup>33</sup> No formal estimates as to the potential for success of the coup were prepared by ONE, although that Office was producing special estimates on the situation in Iran. [redacted]

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Cabell (the Deputy Director of Central Intelligence), Frank Wisner (the Deputy Director for Plans), [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the Ambassador stated categorically that the Shah would not back Zahedi when the time came for action unless extreme pressure was exerted, possibly including the threat of replacing him. Ambassador Henderson also warned that the army would not play a major role in the coup without the Shah's active cooperation, and he urged that an alternate plan be prepared [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] In more general terms, he pointed out the inconsistency of telling the Shah that no more U.S. aid would go to Iran while Mosadeq remained in power, while at the same time the Point Four (technical assistance) program was in the process of implementing a \$3,400,000 Village Council program. Overall, the Ambassador was negative about many aspects of the plan, although less so than he had been when consulted in Tehran. He agreed to delay his return to Tehran by arranging a prolonged European visit, thereby adding his absence to the war of nerves against Mosadeq.

By mid-June, the purpose of the plan was known to some senior Department of State officers, and the Office of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian Affairs prepared a comment on 25 June for the Secretary of State that in general approved of the plan--including the assumption of the risks of failure. However, State set forth two conditions that had to be met:

- 1) the United States must be prepared to offer immediate and substantial economic assistance--an estimated \$60 million the first year--to the new government in Iran in order to stabilize the economy and convince the public that their new government would be able to do more for them than

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the old one, and 2) the British must give a firm commitment to be flexible in approaching the oil settlement and not attempt to force the new government to accept terms that would alienate public opinion. To be acceptable, State said, the oil settlement should recognize nationalization of the oil industry, provide for Iranian control of all property, installations, and production in Iran, allow the Iranian government complete freedom of choice of technical and managerial personnel as well as freedom in the sales of oil and oil product, and dispose of the problem of compensation within the framework of the existing nationalization law and on a basis which would not saddle Iran with excessive indebtedness to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company.

On 7 July these views were passed to the British by Henry A. Byroade, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern, South Asian, and African Affairs, and on 23 July British Ambassador Makins gave Under Secretary of State W. Bedell Smith a Foreign Office memorandum which in diplomatic language acceded to the U.S. conditions. The memo set forth the principles that compensation should be left to the impartial arbitration of an international tribunal and that terms of a future arrangement must not appear to provide a reward for the tearing up of contractual obligations or disturbing world oil prices. The British government would thus be ready to cooperate with the new Iranian government in trying to reach an agreement, within the bounds of those two principles. While this answer was obviously not an across-the-board acceptance of the State conditions, it was not a specific rejection and was clearly an affirmative answer to the question of the British taking a reasonable, flexible approach that would not arouse the Iranian people against the new government.

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C. Putting the Plan into Action

After formal approval came [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted] on 11 July, NEA Division organized itself for the support of the operation. [redacted]

[redacted]

[redacted]

The news

that General Zahedi had virtually no military assets of his own was also painfully confirmed.

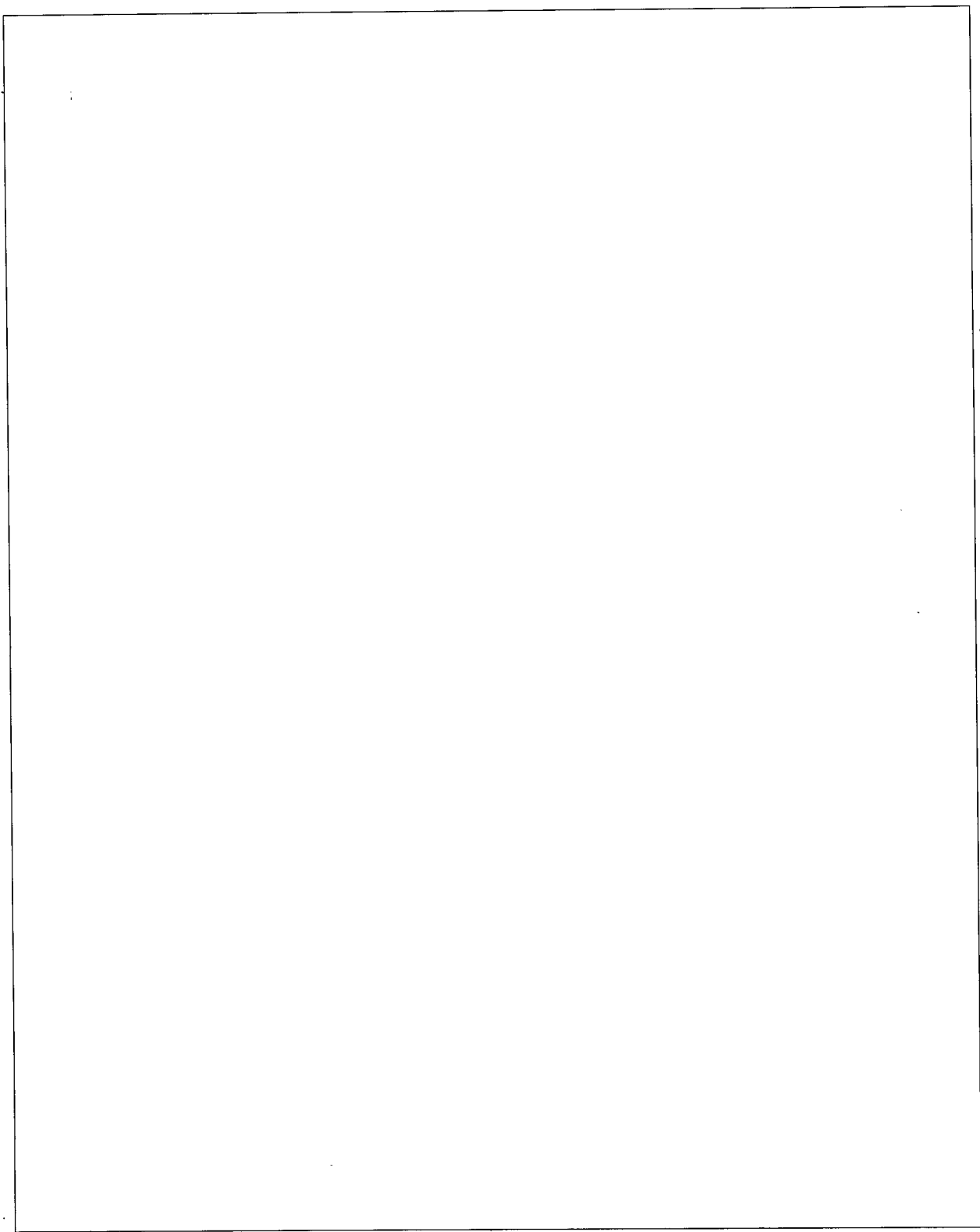
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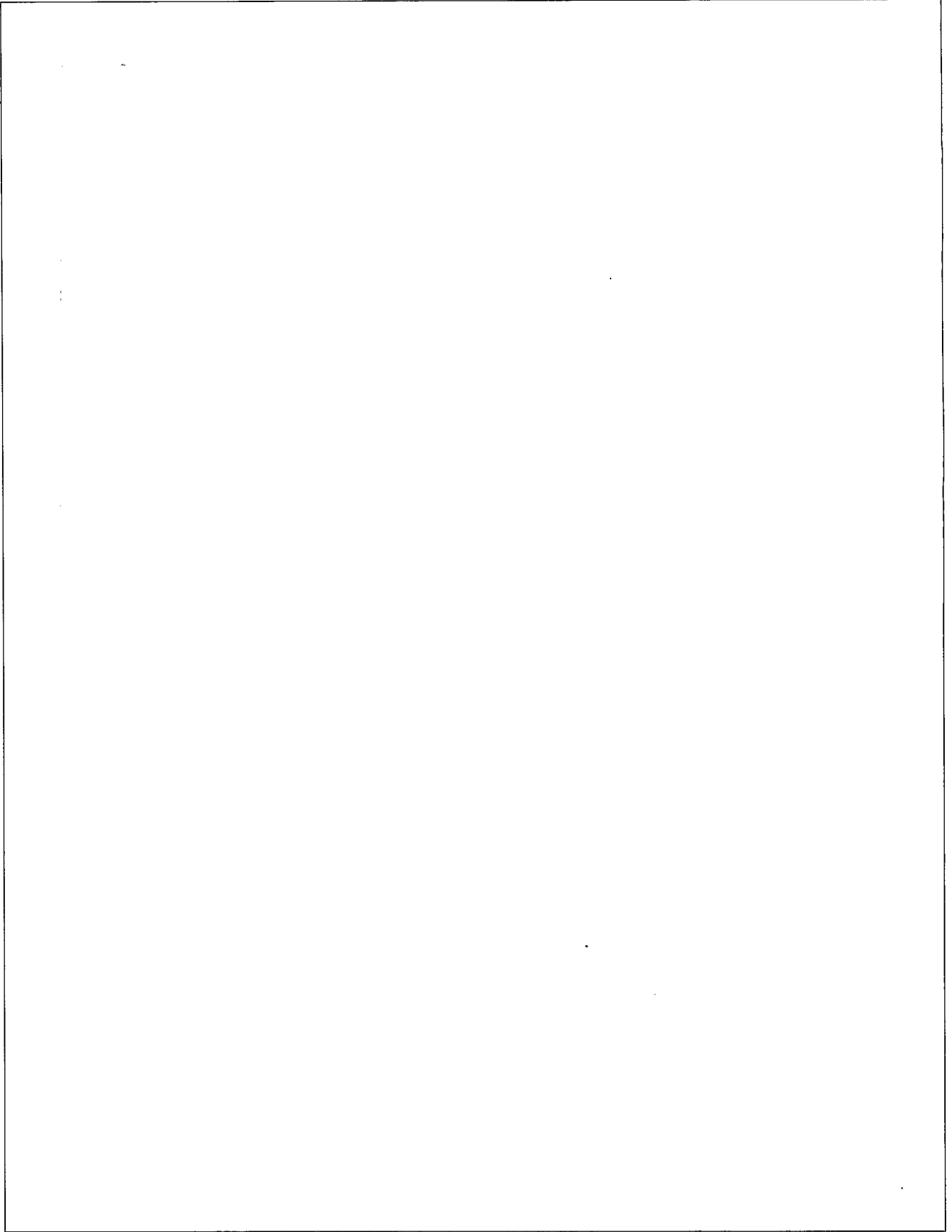
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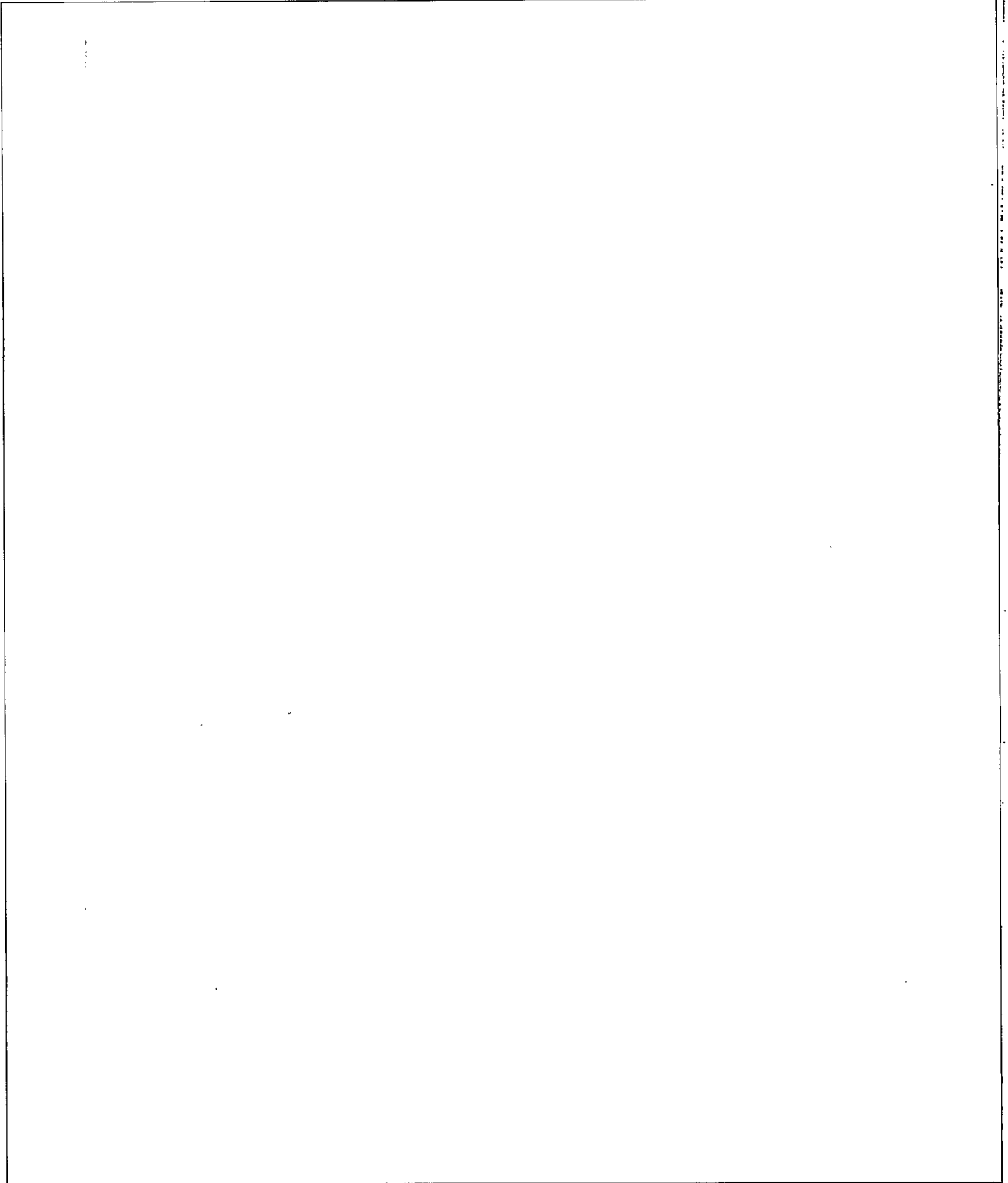
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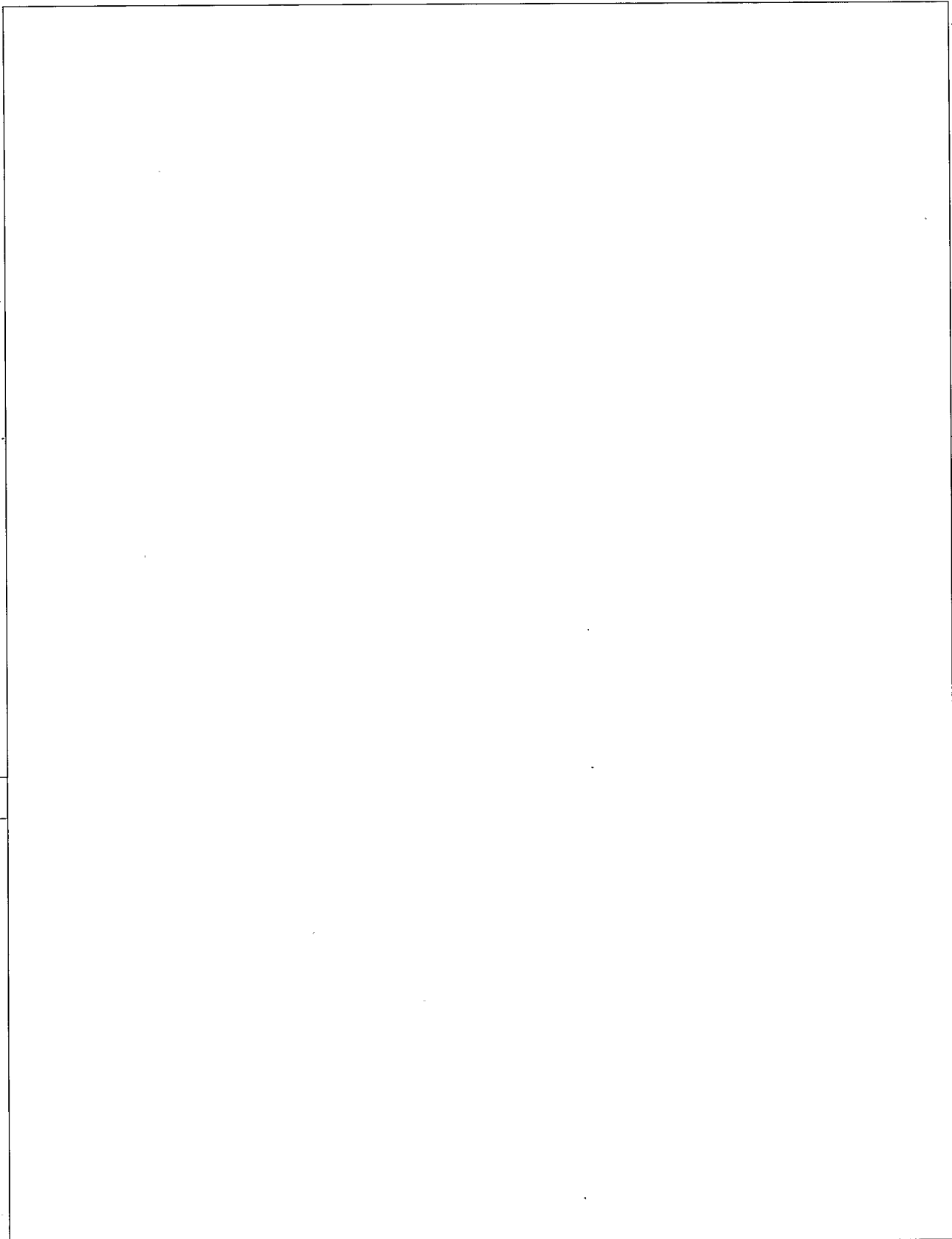
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A question that arose during the planning phase was whether or not to proceed with the U.S. Point Four aid program to Mosadeq's Village Council program (part of the Agrarian Reform Law of 1952, under which landlords had to give the government 20% of their profits, 10% to go back to the peasants and 10% to the Village Council for health, educational, and agricultural improvements). Point Four officials had committed \$3,400,000 to the program, which was being exploited in Iran as evidence of U.S. support for Mosadeq, and, despite some misgivings, both Ambassador Henderson and the Department of State felt that cancelling the aid would only serve to irritate Mosadeq and perhaps alert him to the fact that the United States was beginning to actively oppose him. Over Station and Headquarters objections, it was finally decided to proceed with the Village Council commitment. Then, late in July,

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D. Involving the Shah

Probably the biggest question mark for TPAJAX planners was the Shah's role in the coup--not only how he would play it, but would he even play it at all? They had little reason to be overconfident, for his indecision and susceptibility to bad advice were notorious. The Shah had his reasons, however. He had assumed the throne in 1941 when his father, a semiliterate strongman, was forced to abdicate by the occupying power, Britain and the U.S.S.R. Leader of a defeated and humiliated country for the first  $4\frac{1}{2}$  years of his reign, the young Shah<sup>37</sup> attempted to survive by ruling as a constitutional monarch. His very existence was threatened by Tudeh on the left and by Premier Ahmed Qavam on the right; a British correspondent who interviewed him in 1947 described him as "a very frightened young man." Although Qavam, as a strong Premier, was in a position to bring the Pahlavi dynasty to a premature end, he apparently decided to keep the monarchy and took steps to build up the Shah's popularity, crediting him with recovering Azarbaijan from the Soviets. Seemingly stimulated by this appearance of success, the Shah took a more active role as ruler, and in 1947 began to intervene more vigorously in political affairs. The attempted assassination by a Tudeh Party member in 1949 frightened him again, but he survived

<sup>37</sup> A biography of the Shah is included in Appendix B.

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the shots and cast about for some stabilizing factors in his situation.

The U.S. Embassy made this assessment of him in 1951:

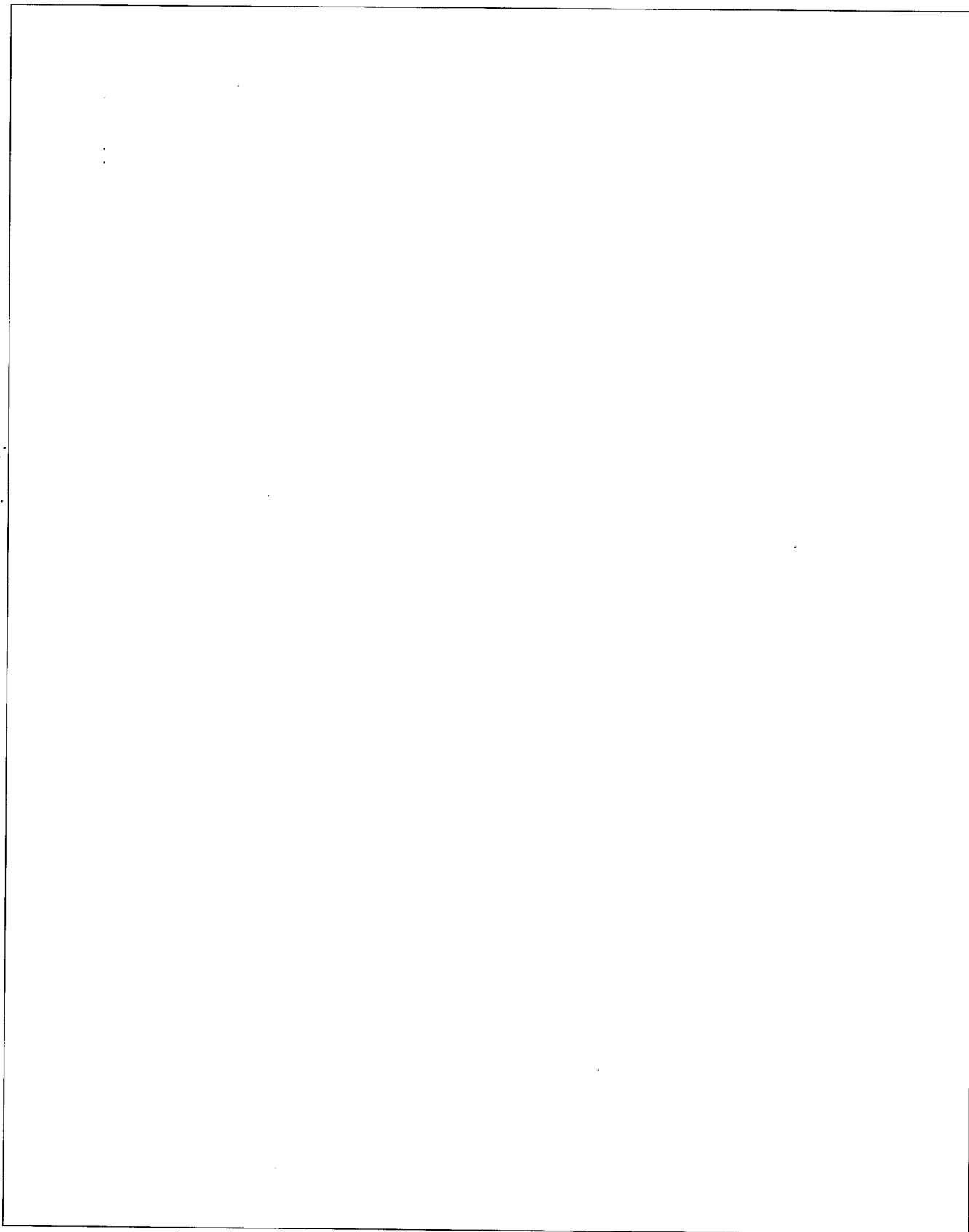
The Shah is confused, frustrated, suspicious, proud, and stubborn, a young man who lives in the shadow of his father. His fears, questionings, and indecisiveness are permanent instabilities of character. Yet, he has great personal courage, many Western ideals, and a sincere, though often wavering, desire to raise and preserve his country. He is, at all times, eager for and a victim of advice.

How then to convince this mistrusting but gullible ruler of the soundness and effectiveness of the TPAJAX plan in which his own participation was such a key element?

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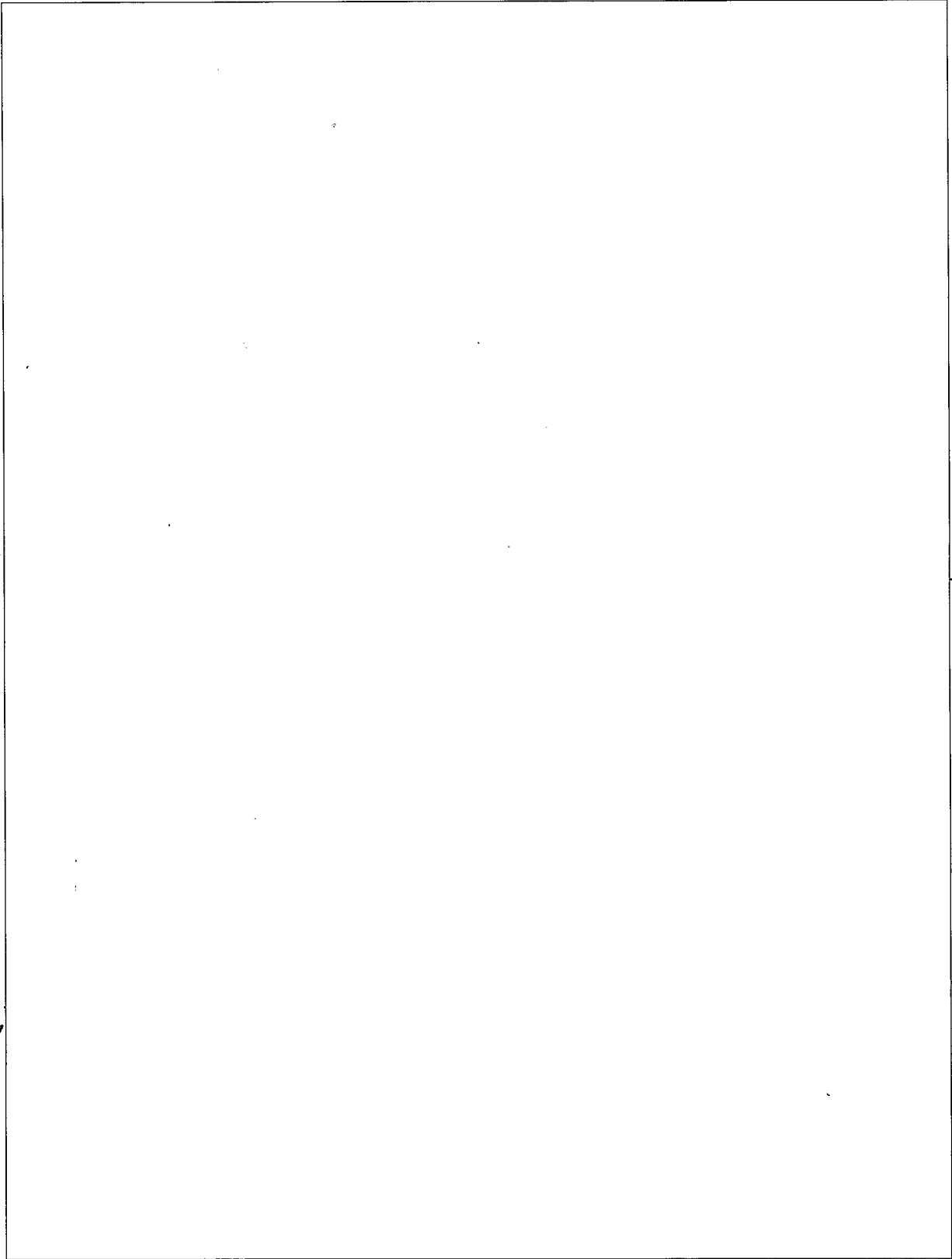
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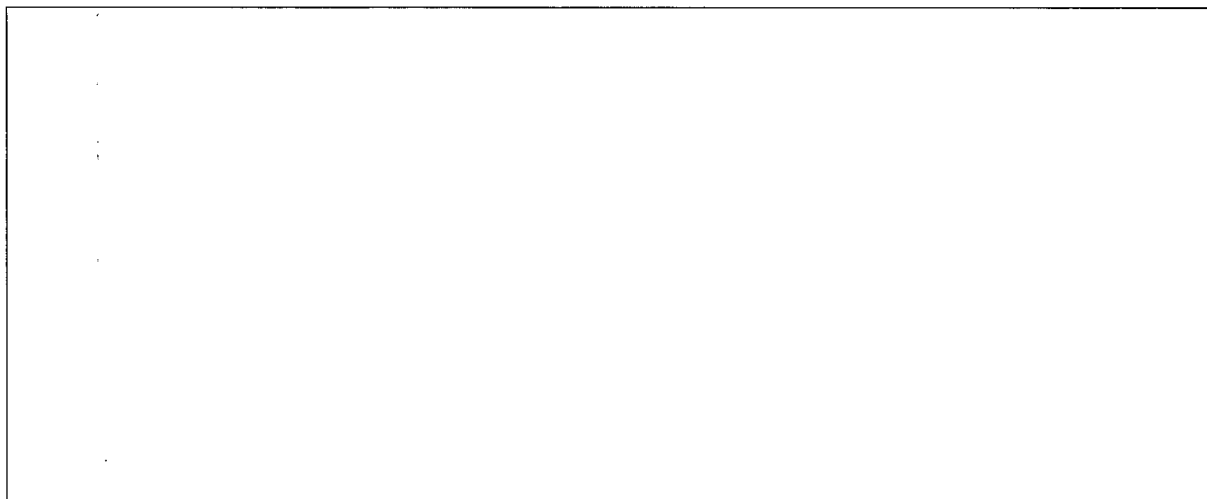
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While the coup organization was being pulled together, Mosadeq had been keeping the political pot boiling. His supporters had held a massive demonstration on 21 July to mark the second anniversary of the riots that ousted Qavam and brought Mosadeq in as Premier; Tudeh participation in the demonstration had been heavy, pointing up Mosadeq's increasing reliance on Communist supporters. Of the crowd of more than 50,000 demonstrators estimated to have met in Majlis Square, Tudeh members and sympathizers probably outnumbered followers of the National Front by ten to one. During the first week in August, Mosadeq carried out a national referendum on dissolving the Majlis that was passed by an enormous majority, despite the insistence of opposition deputies that such a referendum was illegal. [redacted] attempted unsuccessfully to persuade anti-Mosadeq deputies to resist his efforts to oust them by taking religious sanctuary, or bast, in the Majlis building. Mosadeq's reasons for wanting a new Majlis were obvious; his National Front had lost much of its cohesion since he had quarrelled with Kashani, Baghai, Makki,<sup>38</sup> Kashani, an influential mullah and political figure, had been a Mosadeq ally and was the elected Speaker of Majlis; Baghai and Makki were members of the Premier's original nine-man National Front that had swung the Majlis toward nationalization of the oil industry (see Appendix A). in 1951

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and other supporters over his proposed constitutional amendments transferring power from the Shah to the Premier. The National Front, primarily composed of nationalistic rightwingers, was alarmed by Mosadeq's growing reliance on Tudeh, and this became a major issue in the propaganda campaign

[redacted] In an attempt to get across to the Iranian people the changing attitude of the U.S. Government toward Mosadeq, Secretary of State Dulles in his 28 July press conference replied [redacted]

[redacted] on Iran as follows:

The growing activities of the illegal Communist Party in Iran and the toleration of them by the Iranian government has caused our government concern. These developments make it more difficult to grant aid to Iran.

In the early days of August, Roosevelt [redacted] [redacted] compelled to build up the pressure on the Shah. Alterations were made in the original plan with regard to the firmans the Shah was to sign; one was to name Zahedi as Chief of Staff, while the other would declare illegal the referendum dissolving the Majlis.<sup>39</sup> But, getting the actual documents signed was becoming a critical matter. [redacted] saw the Shah on 2 August and left the palace believing he had obtained the Shah's agreement to dismiss Mosadeq and appoint Zahedi as Premier, but when Roosevelt met with the ruler the following day, he had become reluctant to act, saying that he was not an adventurer and could not take chances like one. Roosevelt's argument was that the government could be changed in no other way, and that if the Shah did not join

<sup>39</sup> One of the most rapidly changing facets of the plan was the content of the firmans; in their final format, there were two--one removing Mosadeq as Premier, the other appointing General Zahedi in his place.

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with the army to oust Mosadeq, either a Communist Iran or another Korean-type conflict was inevitable. These alternatives the United States was not prepared to accept.

At this meeting, the Shah asked for direct assurance from President Eisenhower that he approved of the Shah's taking the initiative against Mosadeq, but before this could be passed to Washington, the President fortuitously inserted an item in his speech to the Governors' Conference in Seattle on 4 August<sup>40</sup> to the effect that the United States could not sit idly by and watch Iran fall behind the Iron Curtain. Roosevelt used the coincidence of this speech by telling the Shah that the President's comment on Iran had been made to satisfy him, but the ruler continued to balk. On 8 August, the Shah, still irresolute, told Roosevelt that he would send a message of encouragement to the army officers involved, then go to the palace at Ramsar on the Caspian and let the army act, apparently without his official knowledge. If that action were successful, he would name Zahedi as Premier. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] but the Shah said that while he approved of the planned action, he would not sign any documents. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Under this extreme pressure, the Shah finally agreed to sign the papers, see Zahedi personally, and then leave for Ramsar. The next day he did meet with the general, but the firmans [REDACTED] [REDACTED] were not yet ready to be signed. The Shah went on to Ramsar, after promising to sign the decrees as soon as they were brought to him.

<sup>40</sup> As reported in The New York Times for 5 August 1953.

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Roosevelt [redacted] then altered the plan one final time by deciding that one firman should dismiss Mosadeq from the Premier's post and the other name Zahedi as his successor. [redacted]

[redacted]

#### E. The First Attempt -- and Failure

The Shah's decrees were now in the hands of the coup group, and the next step was to implement the military action plan as soon as possible.

[redacted]

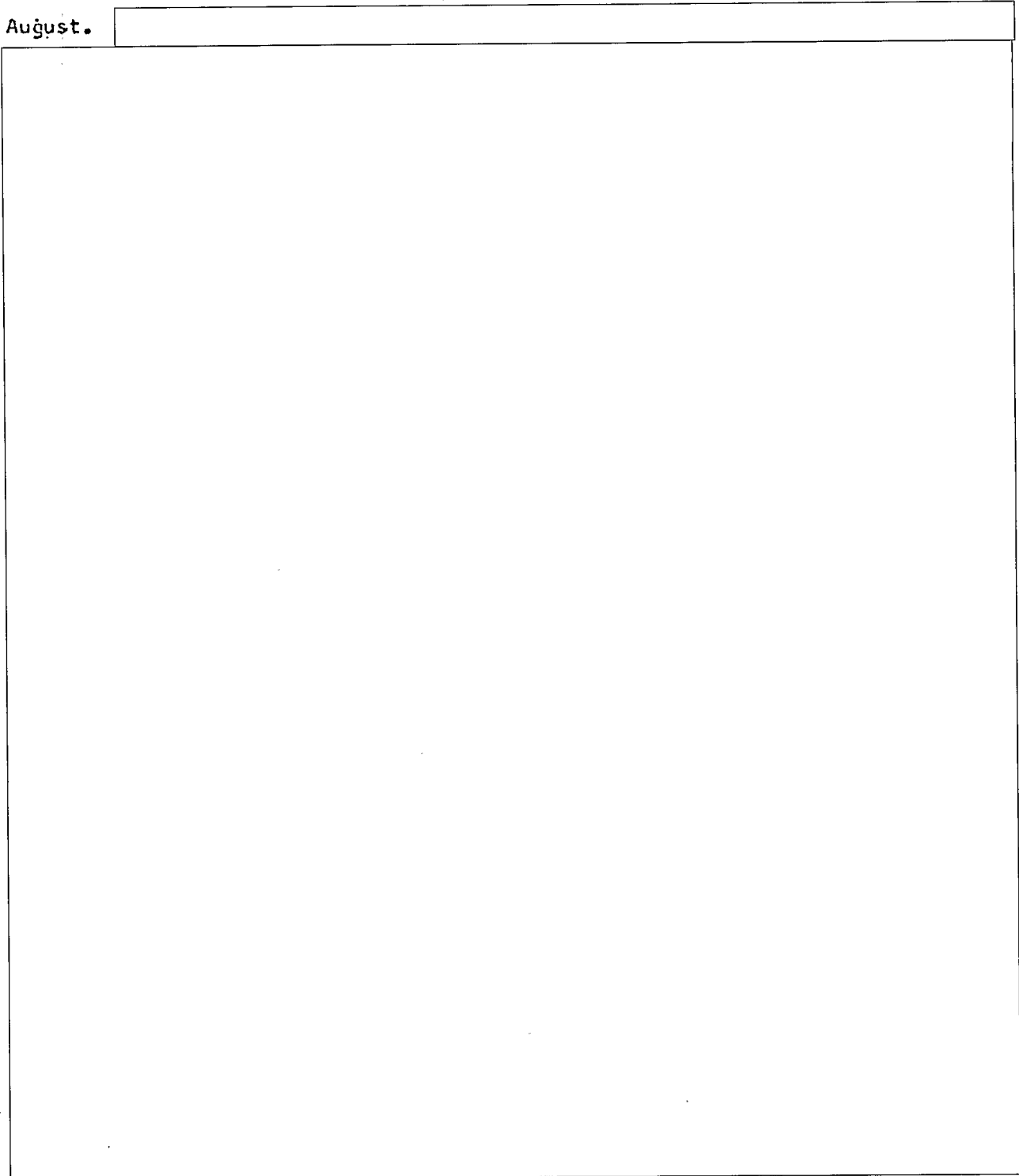
One point seems clear, although the exact details are missing--the initial coup attempt was betrayed. Rumors of a coup to be staged by the army had been in the air for some time, and the Iranians' desultory view of security and their tendency to be talkative were notorious, but according

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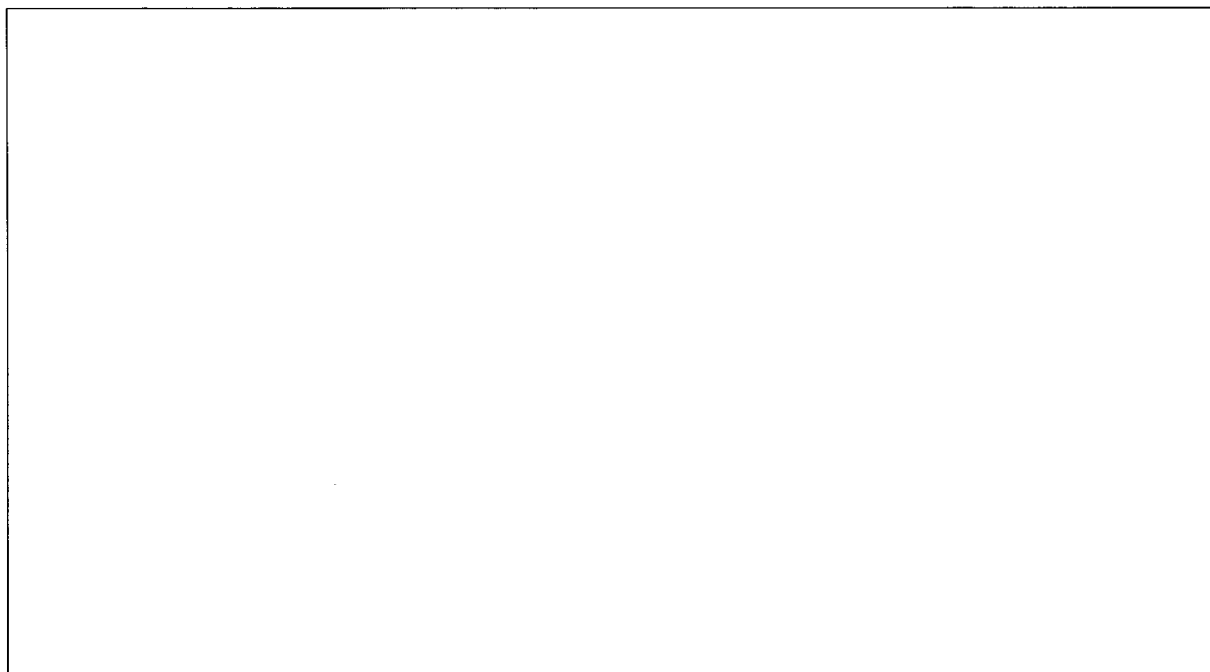
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to Roosevelt, it was probably  chief of the secret police,  
who told Chief of Staff Riahi that the coup was coming the night of 15  
August.

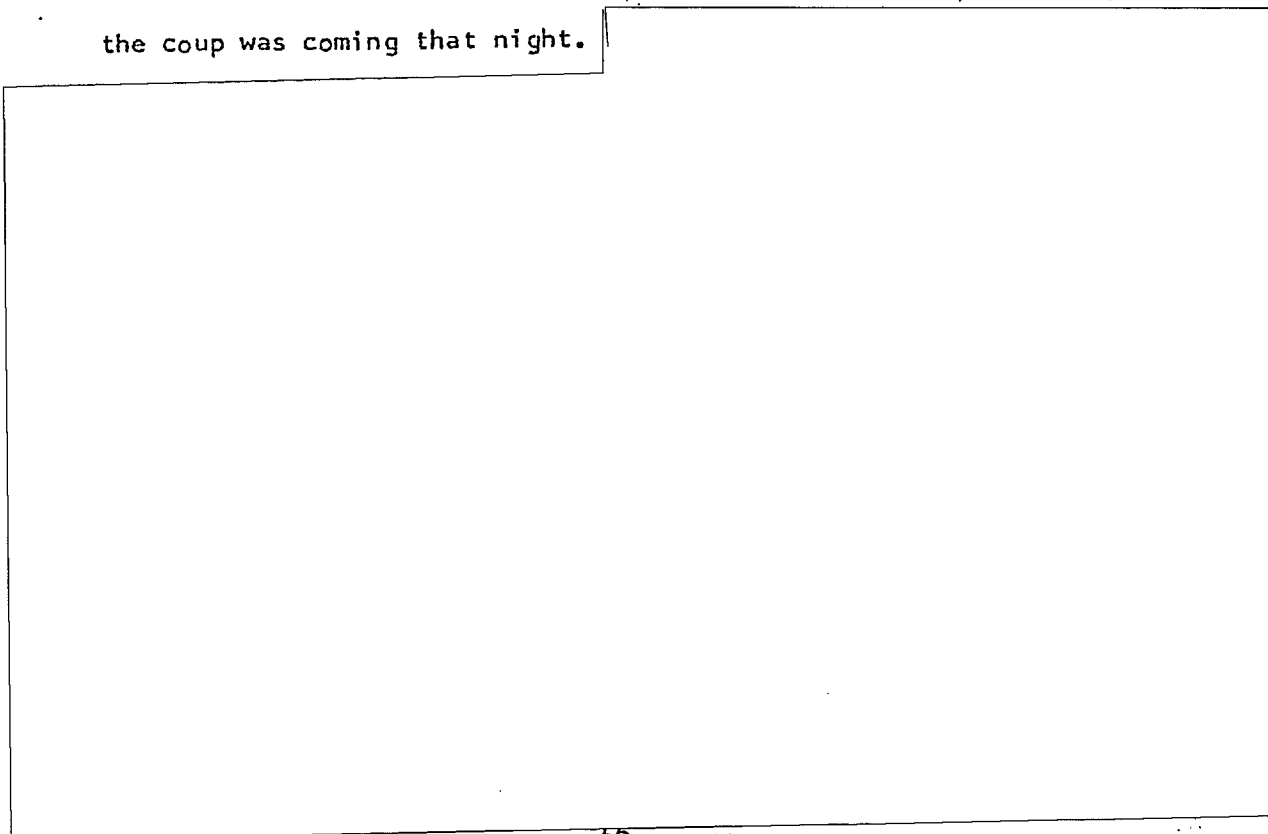


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What happened to the other coup officers with assigned missions? A number of them heard the news that the coup was blown and so did nothing. Others were frustrated by the precautions General Riahi took when he learned the coup was coming that night.

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The first coup attempt--a conventional military takeover, reinforced by the Shah's signed orders--had taken less than 12 hours, from Saturday night, 15 August, until early in the morning of Sunday the 16th. As the chronology of TPAJAX<sup>41</sup> shows, the next three days were filled with confusion. Mosadeq's forces believed that they had crushed the thing they most feared--an army takeover on behalf of the Shah. Their reaction was to mop up on their remaining enemies and to exploit their victory to the fullest. Monday and Tuesday, the 17th and 18th, the Tudeh Party seized the spotlight, rioting and demonstrating in the streets in a wild outburst of antimonarchical feeling, while Roosevelt and his men waited their chance to reverse things. The second, and winning, phase of the operation was not to come until Wednesday, the 19th.

#### F. Turning Defeat Around

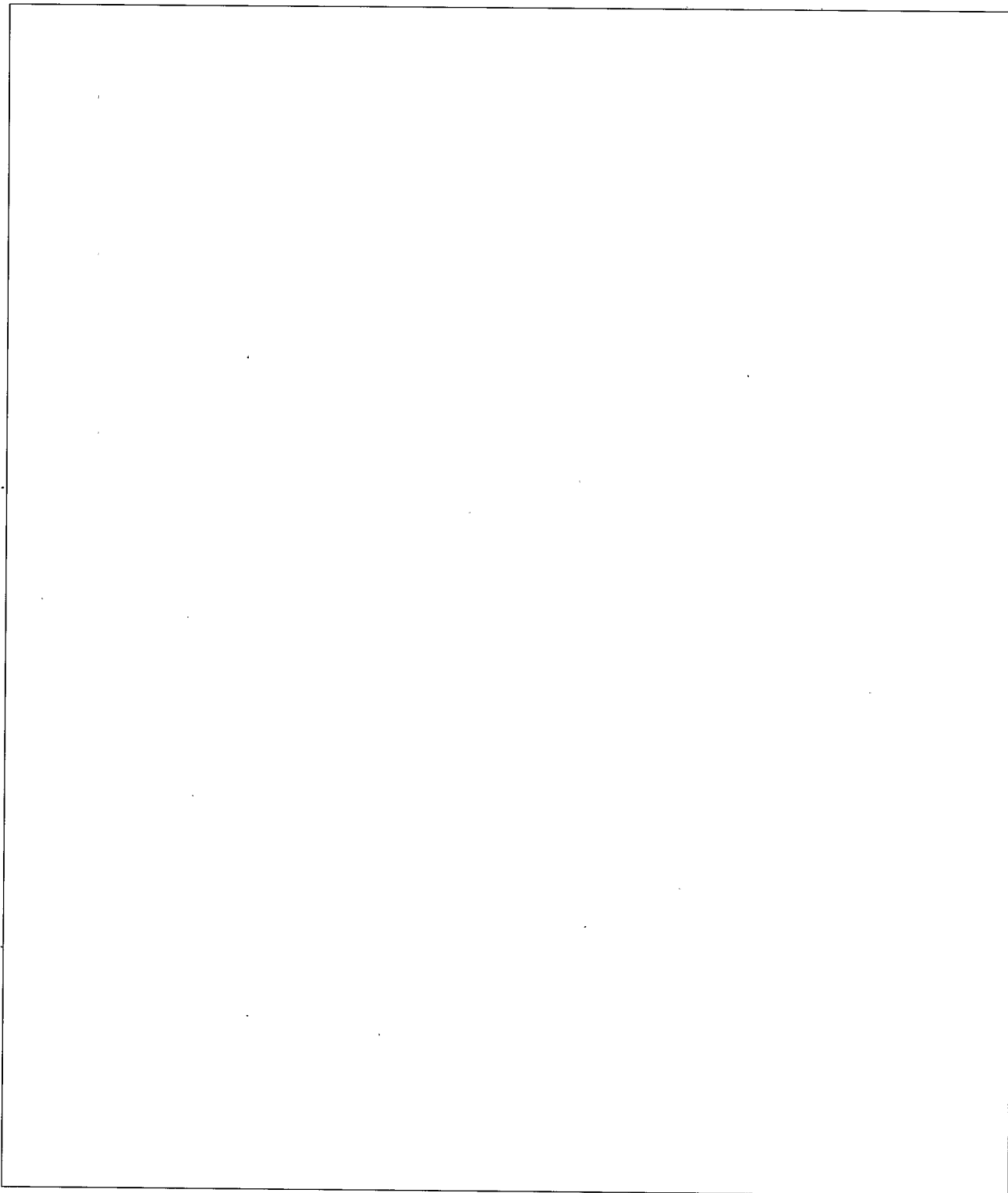
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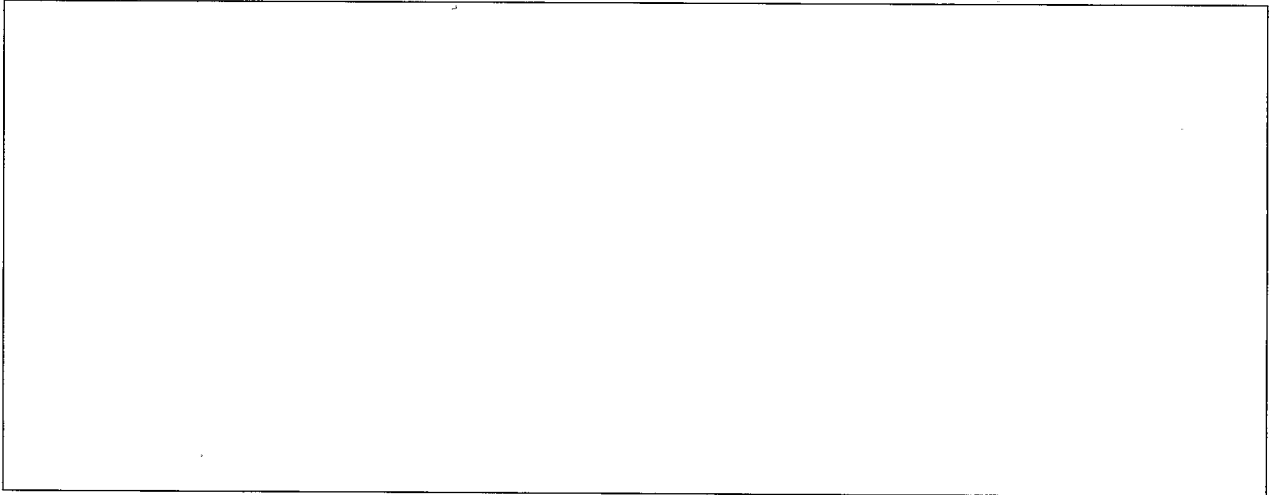
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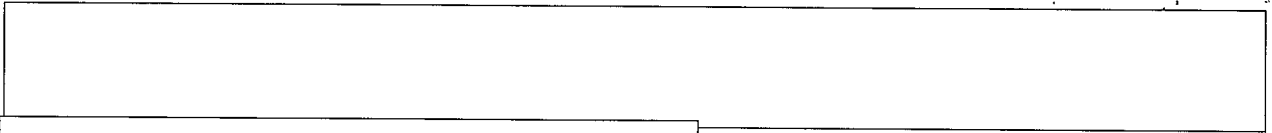
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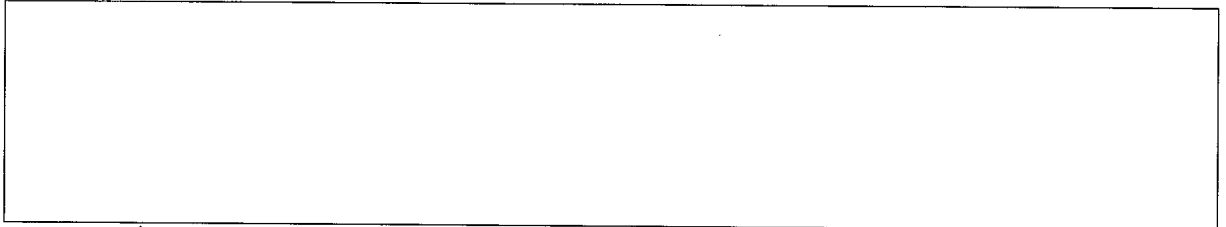
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At noon on 16 August, Radio Tehran broadcast a statement from Mosadeq dissolving the 17th Majlis and promising early elections for the next Majlis. Later that afternoon, the Station learned from the radio that the Shah had flown to Baghdad. As Roosevelt said when he returned to Headquarters after the coup: "He just took off. He never communicated with us at all--just took off." The immediate Station reaction was to try to arrange for the Shah to broadcast to his people from Baghdad as soon as possible. Headquarters was asked to have the Department of State, through the U.S. Ambassador in Iraq, press the Shah to take an aggressive stand about the events in Tehran. State, however, was firmly opposed to any U.S. effort to contact the Shah 



 The next day, Monday the 17th, the Shah did make a number of statements that were broadcast over the Baghdad

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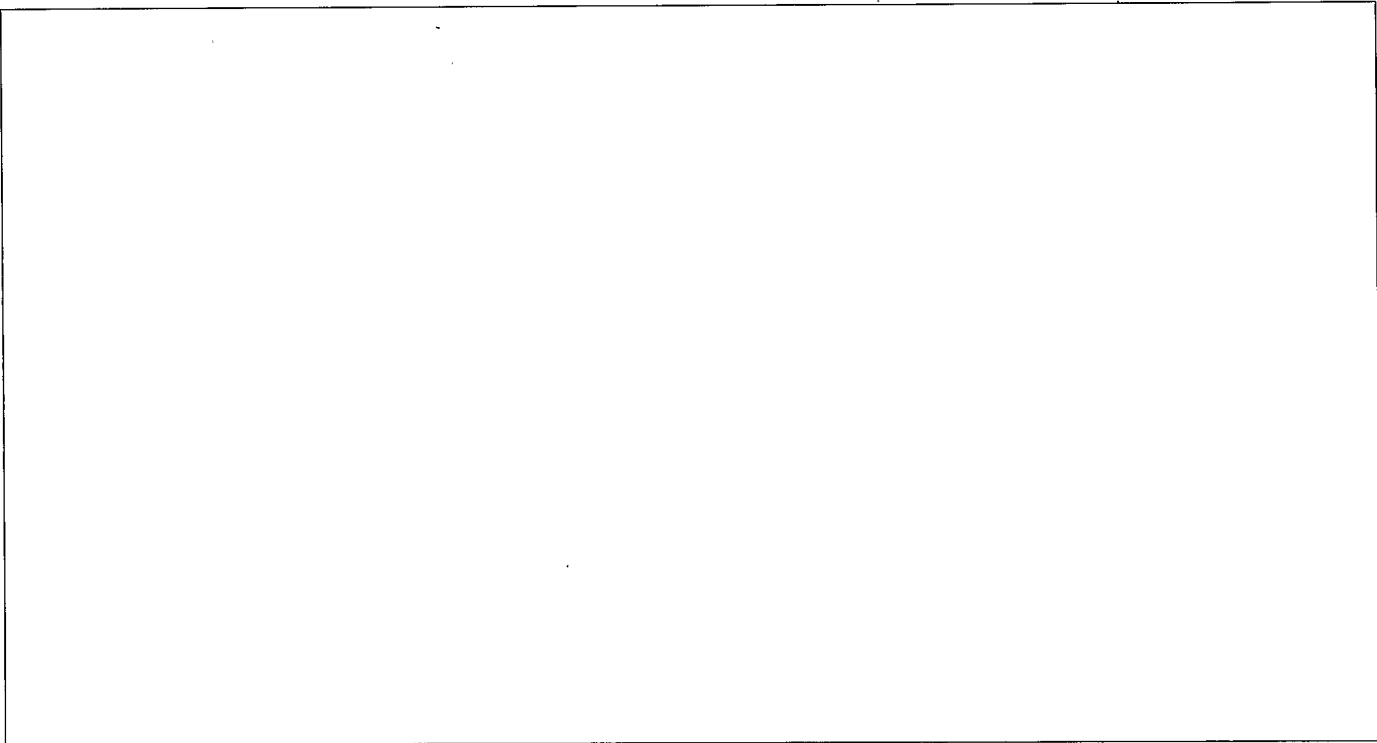
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radio, insisting that he had not abdicated, that he was confident of the loyalty to him of the Iranian people, and that he had indeed dismissed Premier Mosadeq and appointed Zahedi under his constitutional prerogatives. On his own initiative, U.S. Ambassador to Iraq Burton Berry had seen the Shah on Sunday night, the 16th, and had suggested some ideas for the forthcoming statement that by happy coincidence were very much in line with Station thinking.

Foreign Minister Fatemi, who had been released at dawn on the 16th along with the rest of the handful of prisoners taken in the coup attempt, held a press conference at 1400 that afternoon in which he implicated the Court and blamed the Imperial Guard for planning the coup. He said that his own views would be found in an editorial in his paper, Bakhtar Emruz, which was also read over Radio Tehran at 1730--it was a long, inflammatory, and savage attack on the Shah and his dead father. Its broadcast and subsequent printing was credited with doing much to stir up the Tudeh-led anti-Shah mobs that raged through Tehran on 17 and 18 August. At the same time, the violence of its tone and language aroused much public sympathy for the Shah. Fatemi spoke again at 1930 to the crowds massed in Majlis Square, as did a number of pro-Mosadeq Majlis deputies. The Shah was sharply attacked by every speaker; there were insistent demands for his abdication, and the people were told for the first time that he had left the country.

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On Monday the 17th, Radio Tehran began broadcasting lists of those involved in the coup attempt [redacted]

[redacted]

Rumors that these officers were were to be hanged on a large gallows reportedly being constructed were widely circulated. Fatemi continued to rail against the Shah in Bakhtar Emruz, and his editorial on the 17th said, in part: "O traitor Shah, you shameless person, you have completed the criminal history of the Pahlavi reign. The people want to drag you from behind your desk to the gallows." By mid-morning, Tudeh-led mobs were in the streets of Tehran, tearing down statues of the Shah and Reza Shah, defiling them, and dragging them through the streets. When Ambassador Henderson arrived from Beirut, as scheduled, he drove back to the Embassy past the empty pedestals of the royal statues of which only the broken bronze boots remained.

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Roosevelt had hoped that it would be possible to emphasize the religious aspects of the demonstration to be held the 19th, but if this was to be done, the mullahs wanted to hold it on Friday, 21 August, which was a religious festival day. For a number of reasons, not the least of which was the widespread rumor that the arrested officers were to be hung on the 20th, the operation could not be held off the two extra days the religious leaders wanted.

<sup>44</sup> Richard Cottam, in Nationalism in Iran, University of Pittsburgh Press, 1964, described (p.37) the bazaar mob in some detail, as follows: "Along with the mullahs and frequently closely allied with them are the professional mob leaders. These men typically center their activities in a varzeshgah (athletic club). There are many varieties of varzeshgahan, some of them respectable clubs which not only serve as centers for athletes but also for other valuable group activities. But the varseshgahan of the mob leaders are centers for athletic young toughs known as chaqu keshan, who can be hired for for any kind of corrupt or terroristic activity....when a sizable political demonstration is desired, the mob leaders purchase the participation of large numbers of unskilled laborers. In 1952 observers claim to have seen workers demonstrating for the Communists, for the royalists, and for the Mosadeqist National Front on successive days."

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In Washington, the Department of State and Headquarters had gotten the bad news. On the 16th Roosevelt had sent two messages to tell Headquarters that the first attempt had failed [redacted] [redacted] He did not furnish a great deal of detail on just how bad things were, since he was well aware that the reaction would be to cut the losses, get everyone out, and scrub the show. His requests for State Department help in getting Ambassador Berry in Baghdad to instruct the Shah on what to say in his speech there were, as noted earlier, turned down. State indicated that in the absence of any satisfactory indication of possible success of the coup, the United States wished to avoid assuming responsibility for urging statements on the Shah beyond those

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he himself was disposed to make.

Tuesday, the 18th, became a day of waiting. The Shah and Queen Soroya flew to Rome from Baghdad that morning; when he arrived at 1500, he made additional statements to the press but did not issue a call to action by the forces supporting him. In Tehran, bands of Tudehites still roamed the streets, and a mob sacked the headquarters of the Pan-Iran Party [redacted] [redacted], and small Tudeh and National Front mobs fought each other. The secret police attempted to prevent the publication of opposition newspapers, but a number of them, including Dad and Shahed, were able to get on the streets with replicas of the Shah's firmans. The Tudeh Party newspaper blamed the coup attempt on Anglo-American intrigue and called for a democratic republic to replace

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the monarchy. Mosadeq's spokesmen on Radio Tehran announced that a 100,000-rial reward would be paid for information on the whereabouts of General Zahedi and that all demonstrations were banned. General Riahi addressed a meeting of all senior officers of the Tehran garrison at the lecture hall of the Military School and told them in very strong terms that they should remain loyal to the government.

Despite the ban on demonstrations, there was continued fighting in the streets on the evening of 18 August [redacted]

[redacted]

Mosadeq's security forces were sent out to clear the streets, and their operations took on a strong anti-Tudeh tone as they beat up demonstrators and forced them to shout pro-Shah slogans. Belatedly realizing what was happening, Tudeh leaders went out into the streets to try to talk the demonstrators into going home, but the excesses of two days of anti-Shah rioting had already done their damage.

[redacted]

No definitive results came from the attempt to persuade the leading Shia cleric in Qom to declare a holy war against the agents of communism, although the pro-Shah newspapers had been prepared to exploit the story, if possible. [redacted]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] There were strong indications of a resurgence of support for the Shah, bolstered by the propaganda efforts of Station agents. Tudeh violence and demands for a republic were putting the continued life of the monarchy into the hands of the army and of the people of Tehran.

The ultimate choice was to be theirs, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Early on the morning of the 19th, pro-Shah groups began to gather in the bazaar area in south Tehran. Many of the people assembling were undoubtedly those that Kashani was paying 200 tomans (2,000 rials, or about \$26.65 at the exchange rate of 75 rials to the dollar) a head to be in the streets, but there were also many others who had been stirred up by Tudeh actions and who were looking for leadership. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

As the various groups of demonstrators moved northward out of south Tehran,<sup>45</sup> they merged as they reached Sepah Square, where they met the troops sent to turn them back. The soldiers fired hundreds of shots over

<sup>45</sup> The map of Tehran included as Appendix G shows the area through which the demonstration moved and its targets.

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their heads, but whether the order to fire into the crowd was never given or was ignored, they did not shoot into the mob. Sensing that the army was with them, the demonstrators not only began to move faster but took on a festive, holiday atmosphere. [redacted] it had become a mob wholly different from any seen before in Tehran; it was full of well-dressed, white-collar people, carrying pictures of the Shah and shouting, "Zindebah, Shah!" (Long live the Shah!). Then, the troops began to join in the demonstration. [redacted]

[redacted]

Troops from the Imperial Guard, which had been disbanded after its involvement in the 15 August coup attempt, had gathered, and truckloads of soldiers began driving through the streets, shouting and waving pictures of the Shah. Drivers kept their lights on, as they had been asked to do as a sign they supported the Shah.

By mid-morning, after the demonstrators had reached Sepah Square and fanned out into the center of the city, General Riahi reported to Mosadeq that he no longer controlled the army, but the Premier told him to hold firm. Mosadeq's house, a prime target of the demonstrators, was being defended by Colonel Montaz' battalion.

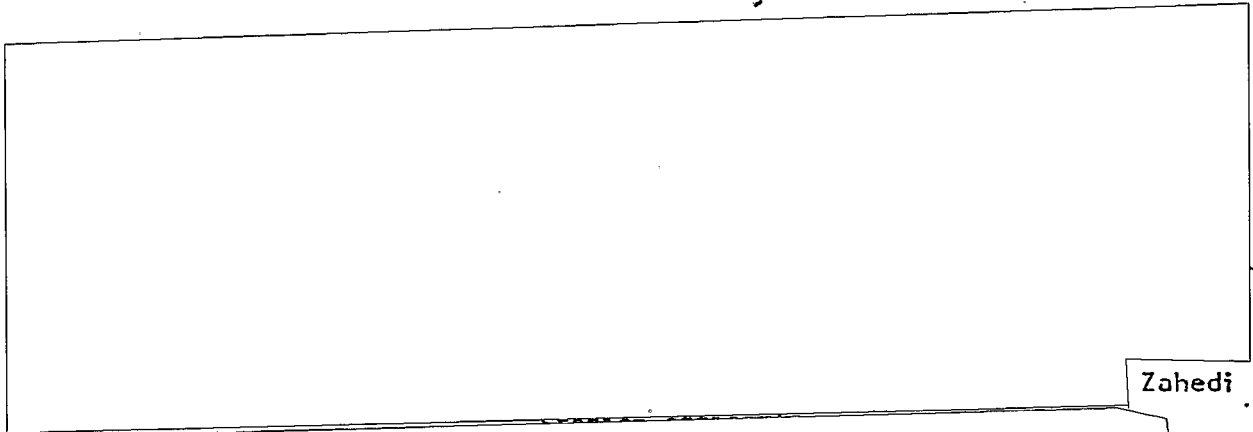
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Radio Tehran was a key target, since it would not only be able to broadcast the news of the success of the Shah's forces in the capital but would also help convince the provinces to join in supporting the Zahedi government. It was important, also, to get it in unsabotaged condition, ready to broadcast. During the morning hours on the 19th it had been broadcasting cotton prices, then switched to recorded music uninterrupted by news bulletins. Shortly before 1430, it suddenly went off the air, apparently as the pro-Shah troops and demonstrators took control of the building in a short, sharp struggle. When it resumed broadcasting, after a short period of "technical difficulties," all that could be heard was a confused babble of happy voices.

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Zahedi

was

taken

to Radio Tehran, where he made his speech. In it he promised to restore the rule of law, individual freedom, and freedom of assembly, and he added some popular items such as raising wages, cutting the cost of living, providing free medical treatment, and building more roads. The speech was recorded and broadcast again that night.



Although the Kermanshah division did not reach the capital until after the excitement was over, they had entered Hamadan enroute just as the Tudeh Party there was staging a large pro-Mosadeq demonstration, which Bakhtiar's troopers ended in short order. In the wake of the coup, Zahedi named Bakhtiar as military governor of Tehran, where he enforced martial law and was instrumental in the year that followed in removing hundreds of Tudeh members and sympathizers from the army officer corps.<sup>46</sup>

Mosadeq's forces put up more than token resistance at Staff Headquarters and at the Premier's house, but they were quickly overwhelmed. Newspaper

<sup>46</sup> This experience led to Bakhtiar eventually being appointed in 1956 as the first chief of Iran's newly formed counterintelligence organization, SAVAK (Sazeman-e Etala'at va Amnyat-e Keshvar).

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accounts of the coup, in particular Kenneth Love's dispatch to The New York Times, which was based on local newspaper accounts, grossly exaggerated the casualties. Love's story//said that more than 300 people were killed or wounded, that Mosadeq's house was stormed by Sherman tanks which in turn were battered by shells from loyalist tanks, and that Colonel Montaz, who led the defenders at the Premier's house, was "torn to pieces" by the mob. "Torn to pieces" was a favorite of Love's; he used it to describe what happened to Foreign Minister Fatemi in his newspaper office. In fact, however, casualties of the coup were relatively light considering the number of people involved; the official toll was 43 dead and 35 wounded, and neither Montaz nor Fatemi was even scratched, let alone dismembered. And Mosadeq, whom the journalists variously described as slipping up a ladder and over his back wall in his pajamas or lying weeping in bed (also in pajamas) when the troops burst in, was not even in his house when it was attacked. He had gone next door and taken temporary refuge with U.S. Point Four chief William Warne, who was somewhat embarrassed to have a deposed Premier on his hands, even for a brief period. Over the next few days, Mosadeq and other senior officials of his government turned themselves in or were arrested.

News that began to trickle in from the provinces after Zahedi's broadcast on Wednesday afternoon was uniformly good. Radio Tabriz reported that Azarbaijan was in the hands of the army, while the station at Isfahan came on the air at 1300 with strong statements in support of Zahedi and the Shah. Kerman proclaimed its loyalty to the new government at 2000, and Meshed, though not immediately heard from, had changed sides as soon as it heard the news from Radio Tehran. TPAJAX's final details were wrapped up  loyal officers were placed in command of all units of the Tehran garrison, the seizure of key military targets was completed, and the arrest lists were carried out. The nation was under martial law, a curfew was put into

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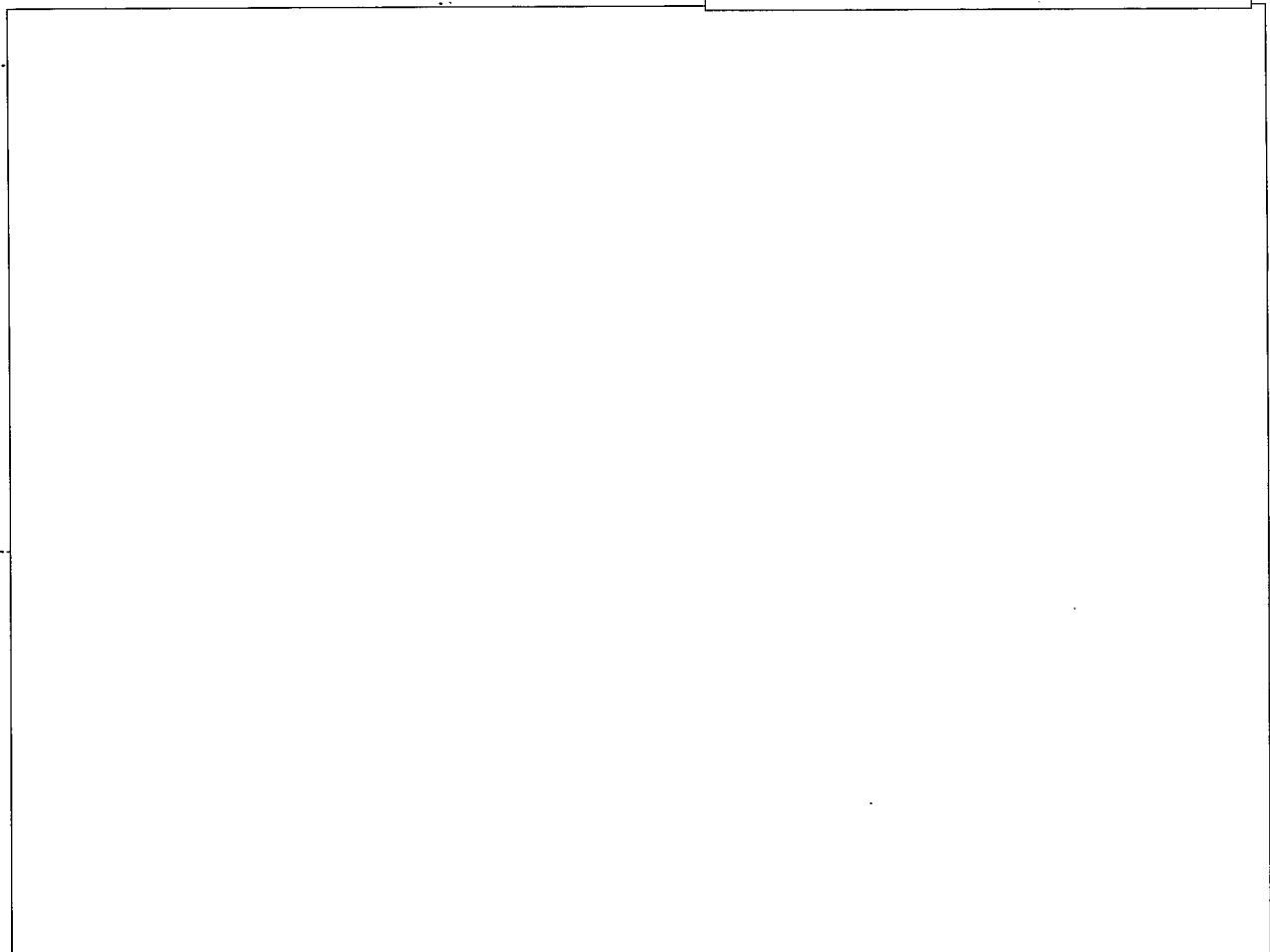
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effect, and at 2200, Radio Tehran signed off for the night.

In Rome, the Shah was preparing to return to Iran in triumph on 22 August. In a formal statement, he said: "It was my people who have shown me that they were faithful to the monarchy and that 2½ years of false propaganda...my country did not want the Communists and therefore has been faithful to me."

#### IV. The Aftermath of Victory

A successful TPAJAX left behind a good deal of debris   
to clean up, plus not a few complications.



Roosevelt himself left Iran shortly after the coup.

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[REDACTED]

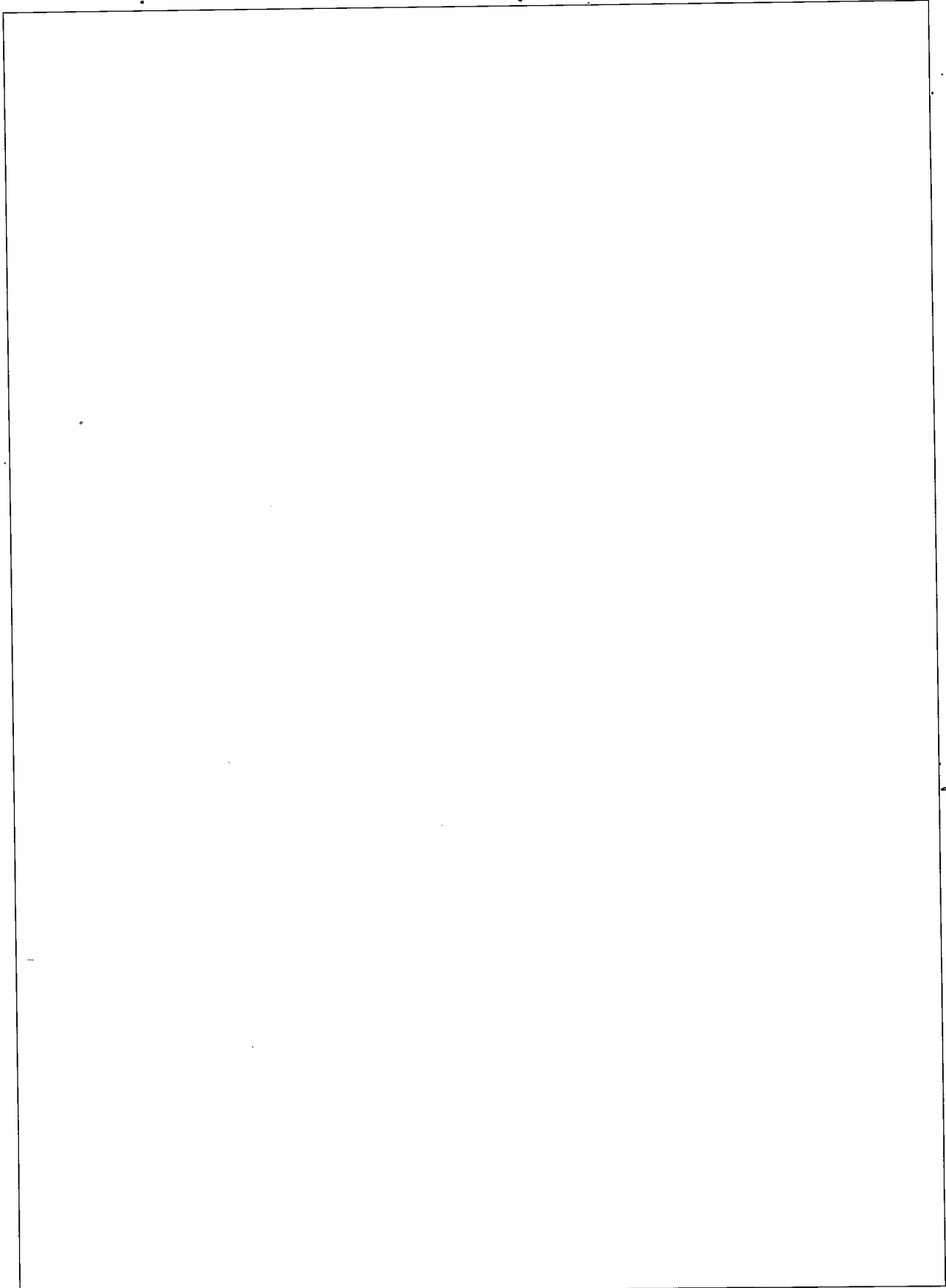
[REDACTED] They were curious, of course, as to why there had been so little reporting [REDACTED] from Roosevelt during the three days after the failure of the first attempt to overthrow Mosadeq. Roosevelt explained frankly and at length that if he and his men had reported what they were doing, [REDACTED] Washington would have thought they were crazy and told them to stop at once. Further, had they reported in detail the reasons why they felt justified in taking the actions they were taking, they would have had no time to carry them out. Therefore, their course was to act, while reporting as little as possible and assuming that they have very little more to lose and everything to win. Everyone recognized, of course, that if the outcome had been different, a substantially different attitude toward Roosevelt's decision and actions might have emerged in many quarters. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

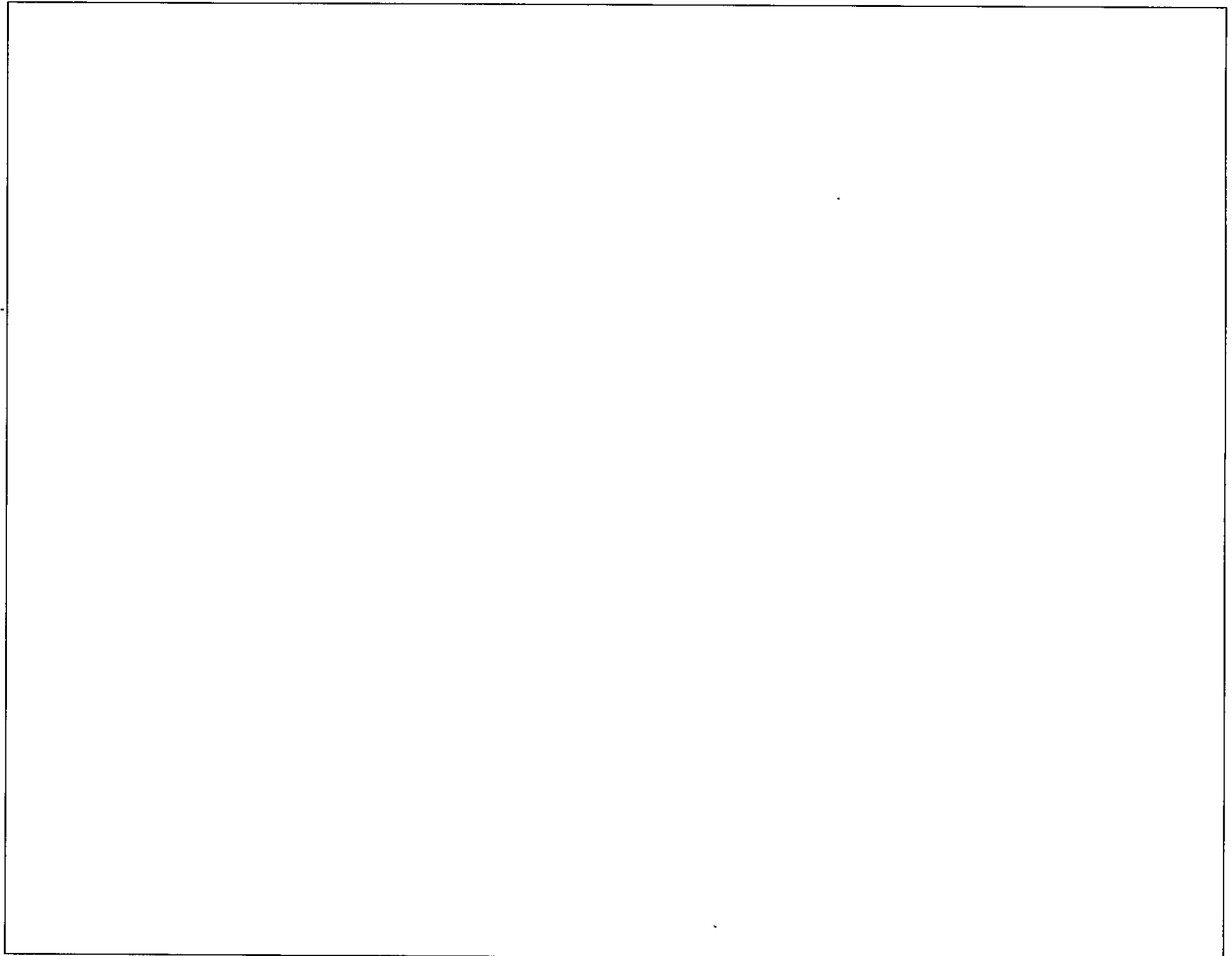
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The Qashqai had disliked Mosadeq, of course, because of his reliance on the Tudeh, but they also retained a deep-seated animosity toward the Shah, whose father had brutally pacified the tribe. When the vote of the tribal council was taken, it was by a very narrow margin in favor of peaceful acceptance of Zahedi, despite the sentiments of Khosrow and the other Qashqai khans for armed rebellion.

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It was feared that in the confusion of the coup the tribesmen might try to take advantage of the situation by a revolt against the new government. While the army might have been able to put down such a revolt in short order, the situation could have enhanced Tudeh's chances to stage a countercoup.

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[REDACTED]

After Zahedi was securely in control, several of the other tribes volunteered to take steps to control the Qashai themselves if necessary rather than have the army sent in after them. Despite their anti-Shah feelings, however, the Qashqai<sup>had</sup> accepted the coup with as good grace as they could muster.

As in every fight, there were losers. Both Mohammad Mosadeq and Brig. Gen. Taqi Riahi were indicted under Article 317 of the Military Criminal Procedure, which states:

Anyone who devises a plot with a view to either overthrowing the foundation of the State, or the succession of the Monarch, or instigates the people to arm themselves against the power of the Monarchy shall be sentenced to death.

The verdict of the Military Court of First Instance and of the Military Court of Revision against the two accused was guilty, and the

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punishment was set at three years of solitary imprisonment for Mosadeq and three years of imprisonment with hard labor for General Riahi.<sup>49</sup>

As for the other key figures in the coup, General Zahedi served as Premier until April 1955, when he left Tehran for medical treatment in West Germany. His relationship with the Shah whose throne he had helped to save was a stormy one; they quarrelled in February 1954 regarding the elections, and Zahedi angrily objected to what he termed the Shah's "childish vacillation" over official appointments. He and the Shah were also at odds over General Batmangelich, whom Zahedi wished to dismiss from the post of army Chief of Staff.<sup>50</sup> In general, the Shah resented any attempt by Zahedi to take credit for the coup. In his opinion, he was the primary motivating factor and Zahedi was only his chosen instrument. He had appointed Zahedi as a strong man who could do the job that had to be done; but, once Zahedi had done it, the Shah reverted to the monarch's traditional dislike and fear of a strong man. The general's son, Ardeshir, fared better; he married Princess Shanaz, the Shah's daughter by his first marriage in November 1956 (they were later divorced), and he is currently serving as Iranian Ambassador to the United States.

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<sup>49</sup> A summary of the court proceedings and the verdicts is included as Appendix F.

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Col. Abbas Farzanegan 

was promoted to brigadier general and became Deputy Minister of Posts, Telephone, and Telegraph before taking over as Minister in April 1954. He retired from the army when the Zahedi government fell a year later, moving to the United States until 1958 when he again returned to Iran. He served briefly as governor of Isfahan and then occupied a series of ambassadorial posts that included Kuwait, Norway, and the Netherlands.

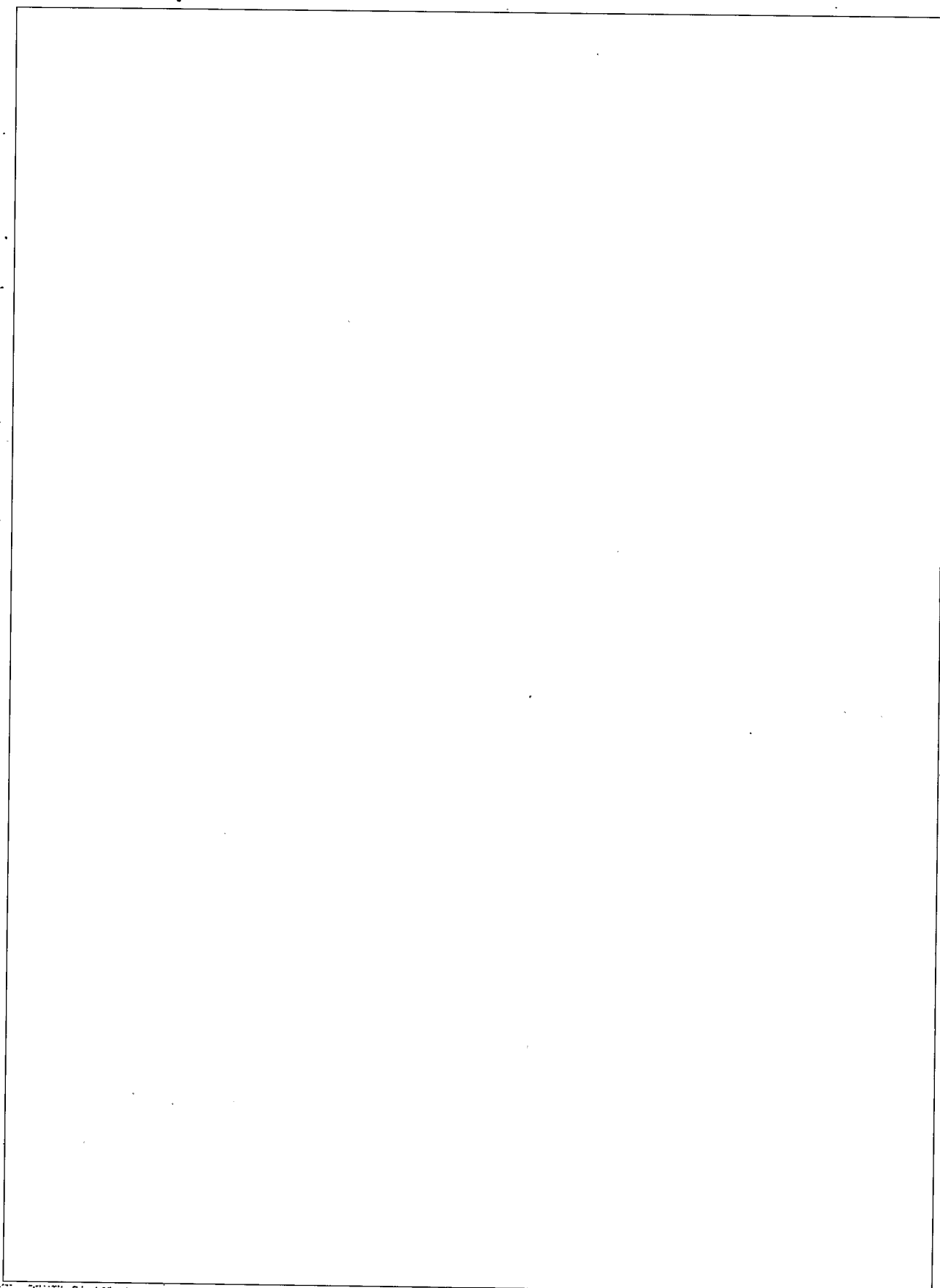
Col. Nematollah Nasiri, the Imperial Guard commander, was also promoted to brigadier general for his loyal service during the coup.

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[REDACTED]

Looking back on TPAJAX after 21 years, the crucial moments obviously were in those [REDACTED] four long days when the operation hung in the balance, shifting toward disaster but ready to swing toward victory if the right breaks came. As it turned out, Roosevelt was fortunate enough to get at least two very important breaks. The first, lay in the fact that the Tudeh demonstrations of 17 and 18 August went much too far. They degenerated into vicious anti-Shah riots, and the acts of violence and desecration turned a great many people against Mosadeq and his allies. Alarmed by the open threats to the monarchy and disturbed by the Tudeh clamor for a socialist republic, the people and the army rallied to the pro-Shah demonstrators [REDACTED] [REDACTED] on the morning of the 19th. The second break came though the tactical mistakes made by Mosadeq's followers; his Chief of Staff, General Riahi, had almost the whole story of the upcoming military coup attempt by late afternoon on 15 August, hours before the action started. All he had to <sup>do</sup> was to order the police and military security forces to start arresting officers suspected of being involved in the plot, and the coup would never have started. [REDACTED]

The failure

of Iranian security in general was part of this break. [REDACTED]

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[redacted] Riahi had some evidence of U.S.

involvement [redacted]

[redacted], yet his police and military allowed American cars to come and go at will, unstopped and unsearched.

#### V. The Long View of the Covert Action in Iran

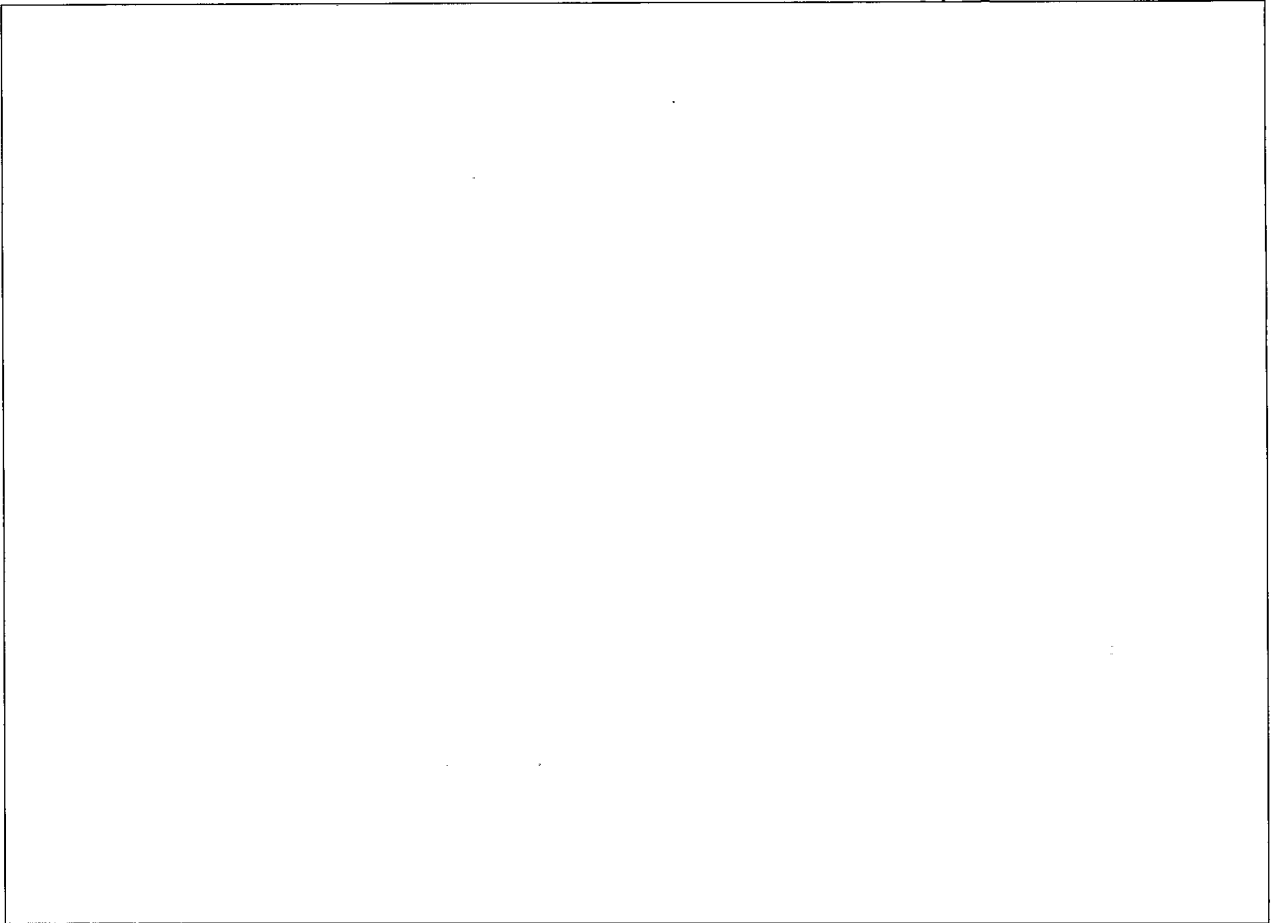
The long-term impact of TPAJAX did not, as Churchill hoped, enable the West to turn things around in the Middle East; over the years since 1953, Western influence in that region has steadily declined. But the course of Iranian history was clearly changed by the events of 19 August. While by no means a dedicated Western ally, Iran retains its fear of the Soviets, and the enormous wealth that it has gained from the increased value of oil in the 1970's has been used and is still being used to build strong military forces not only for self-defense but to support Iranian aspirations for dominance in the Persian Gulf as well. But, a powerful army, a modern air force, and well-equipped navy cannot be built in a vacuum. Changes in the country's social and economic structure to improve national health and educational levels were necessary to provide adequate manpower for these forces. The Shah's program to modernize his country has also made land reform one of its key programs; by 1963 the Crown Lands had been sold to the peasants living on them, and by 1971 the government claimed that the task of redistributing the land owned by the wealthy elite was complete. There is little question as to who is running Iran, of course; the Shah has a monopoly of political power, and although parliamentary elections and procedures may furnish the window-dressing of democratic government, it is the Shah alone who determines national policy. The success of the White Revolution--that is, reform and change directed from the top--has solidified the foundations

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of the throne that seemed so shaky and insecure in the violent days  
of 1952 and 1953.



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