

# **The Wilber Report**

### KEY of Terms and People for the Wilber Report

- **Nicosia** = the capital of Cyprus, an island nation in the Mediterranean Sea near Turkey and a key headquarters for CIA operatives during Operation Ajax
- **SIS** = British “Secret Intelligence Service” (more commonly known as MI6, “Military Intelligences, Section 6”)
- **Ambassador Henderson** = Loy Henderson (1892-1986), US Ambassador to Iran at the time of Operation Ajax
- **Firman** = royal decree by the Shah
- **Majlis** = Iranian parliament
- **Borujerdi** = Ayatollah Seyyed Hossein Borujerdi, Iran’s main religious leader
- **Bazaar** = key marketplace(s) throughout Tehran and the country’s urban areas infamous for their political activities, rumors, etc.
- **Tudeh** = “the masses,” the name of Iran’s communist party, a traditionally strong party in Iranian politics often banned (but allowed to operate by Mossadeq), the Tudeh drew much of its support from working and lower class Iranians; in the capital Tehran its main base of support was in the southern part of the city, the poorest district of Tehran
- **Black Propaganda/black leaflets** = false information and material that purports to be from a source on one side of a conflict but is actually from the opposing side. It is typically used to vilify, embarrass or misrepresent the enemy (sometimes referred to as “grey propaganda”)
- **Iron Curtain** = Soviet communist sphere of influence or control during the Cold War
- **“Republican move”** = a reference to getting rid of the Iranian monarchy and creating a modern Representative state in its place (as a historical note, the founder of the Pahlavi dynasty, Reza Shah Khan, the Shah’s father ousted from power in 1941, had considered doing away with the Iranian monarchy and establishing the country as a Republic in the early 1920s when he overthrew Iran’s previous royal family, the Qajar dynasty, and assumed power; he changed his mind however and had himself declared Shah, or monarch, in 1925)
- **National Front(ists)** = the party (and its members) led by Mohammad Mossadeq
- **Station political action assets** = Iranian agents hired by and working with the CIA to whip up crowds of protesters (many of them paid) to come out in support of the Shah
- **The “Agency”** = The US CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)

- **Rashidian brothers** = Three brothers, Sayfolah, Ghodratolah, and Asadoolah Rashidian, who were strong supporters of Great Britain and key Iranian players in the coup referenced numerous times in the Wilber report. The following information about them comes from the memoir of General Hossein Fardoust (1917-1987), published in 1978 (translated from Farsi by Armen Victorian), *The 1953 Coup in Iran: an Iranian Insider's View*: "Their father, Habibolah, was a British agent. Later all his sons became British agents. They were quite wealthy and owned several premises in Teheran. These brothers openly worked for the British. Amongst them, the youngest one, Asadolah, had close relationships with the royal family. He was particularly close to [Princess] Ashraf [the Shah's sister]. He had an immense influence on the corporations in Teheran. Later he established the Corporation Bank....The Rashidians' role in the coup was the mobilization of the small businessmen, bazaar people and the civilians in demonstrations to support the monarchy. They managed to mobilize a mob of 5 to 6 thousand people. They found a female leader called Malakh Eatezadi. She tied her *chadour* [Islamic veil worn by women] around her waist and stood on a jeep to deliver slogans. Her group started off from Naderi Street and moved towards Mossadeq's house. The other group were the athletes from the Taj Club who were mobilized by Lieutenant General Khosrovani. The officers of the units which were disarmed in the previous coup attempt, also joined the mob."
- **Persians** = Iranians; the term "Persian" is also often used to refer to Farsi, the main language spoken in Iran
- **Rial** = Iranian currency

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APPENDIX A

Initial Operational Plan for TPAJAX  
as Cabled from Nicosia to Headquarters  
on 1 June 1953

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SUMMARY OF PRELIMINARY PLAN PREPARED BY  
SIS AND CIA REPRESENTATIVES IN CYPRUS

I. Preliminary Action

A. Interim Financing of Opposition

1. CIA will supply \$35,000 to Zahedi.
2. SIS will supply \$25,000 to Zahedi.
3. SIS indigenous channels Iran will be used to supply above funds to Zahedi.
4. CIA will attempt subsidize key military leaders if this necessary.

B. Acquisition Shah Cooperation

1. Stage 1: Convince the Shah that UK and US have joint aim and remove pathological fear of British intrigues against him.
  - a. Ambassador Henderson call on the Shah to assure him of US-UK common aid and British supporting him not Mossadeq.
  - b. Henderson to say to the Shah that special US representative will soon be introduced to him for presentation joint US-UK plan.
2. Stage 2: Special US representative will visit the Shah and present following:

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a. Presentation to the Shah

- (1) Both governments consider oil question secondary.
- (2) Major issue is to maintain independence Iran and keep from the Soviet orbit. To do this Mossadeq must be removed.
- (3) Present dynasty best bulwark national sovereignty.
- (4) While Mossadeq in power no aid for Iran from United States.
- (5) Mossadeq must go.
- (6) US-UK financial aid will be forthcoming to successor government.
- (7) Acceptable oil settlement will be offered but successor government will not be rushed into it.

b. Demands on the Shah

- (1) You must take leadership in overthrow Mossadeq.
- (2) If not, you bear responsibility for collapse of country.

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- (3) If not, Shah's dynasty will fall and US-UK backing of you will cease.
- (4) Who do you want to head successor government? (Try and maneuver Shah into naming Zahedi.)
- (5) Warning not to discuss approach.
- (6) Plan of operation with Zahedi will be discussed with you.

II. Arrangement with Zahedi

- A. After agreement with Shah per above, inform Zahedi he chosen to head successor government with US-UK support.
- B. Agree on specific plan for action and timetable for action. There are two ways to put Zahedi in office.
  1. Quasi-legally, whereby the Shah names Zahedi Prime Minister by royal firman.
  2. Military coup.

Quasi-legal method to be tried first. If successful at least part of machinery for military coup will be brought into action. If it fails, military coup will follow in matter of hours.

III. Relations with Majlis

Important for quasi-legal effort. To prepare for such effort deputies must be purchased.

- A. Basic aim is to secure 41 votes against Mossadeq and assure quorum for quasi-legal move by being able to depend on 53 deputies in Majlis. (SIS considers 20 deputies now not controlled must be purchased.)
- B. Approach to deputies to be done by SIS indigenous agent group. CIA will backstop where necessary by pressures on Majlis deputies and will provide part of the funds.

IV. Relations with Religious Leaders

Religious leaders should:

- A. Spread word of their disapproval Mossadeq.
- B. As required, stage political demonstrations under religious cover.
- C. Reinforce backbone of the Shah.
- D. Make strong assurances over radio and in mosques after coup that new government faithful Moslem principles.



Possibly as quid pro quo prominent cleric Borujerdi would be offered ministry without portfolio or consider implementing neglected article constitution providing body five ✓ mullas (religious leaders) to pass on orthodoxy of legislation.

E.

should be encouraged to threaten direct action against pro-Mossadeq deputies.

V. Relations with Bazaar

Bazaar contacts to be used to spread anti-government rumors and possibly close bazaar as anti-government expression.

VI. Tudeh

Zahedi must expect violent reaction from Tudeh and be prepared to meet with superior violence.

- A. Arrest at least 100 Party and Front Group leaders.
- B. Seal off South Tehran to prevent influx Tudeh demonstrations.

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- C. Via black leaflets direct Tudeh members not to take any action.

VII. Press and Propaganda Program

- A. Prior coup intensify anti-Mossadeq propaganda.
- B. Zahedi should quickly appoint effective chief of government press and propaganda who will:
  1. Brief all foreign correspondents.
  2. Release advance prepared US and UK official statements.
  3. Make maximum use Radio Tehran.

VIII. Relations with Tribes

- A. Coup will provoke no action from Bakhtiari, Lurs, Kurds, Baluchi, Zolfaghari, Mamassani, Boer Ahmadi, and Khamseh tribal groups.
- B. Major problem is neutralization of Qashqa'i tribal leaders.

IX. Mechanics of Quasi-Legal Overthrow

- A. At this moment the view with most favor is the so-called \_\_\_\_\_ plan" - whereby mass demonstrators seek religious refuge

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in Majlis grounds. Elements available to religious leaders would be joined by those supplied by bazaar merchants, up to 4,000 supplied by SIS controlled group, and additional elements supplied through CIA.

B. Would be widely publicized that this refuge movement on basis two grounds popular dissatisfaction with Mossadeq government as follows:

1. Ground one that Mossadeq government basically anti-religious as most clearly demonstrated ties between Mossadeq and Tudeh; and Mossadeq and USSR. Just prior to movement CIA would give widest publicity to all fabricated documents proving secret agreement between Mossadeq and Tudeh.
2. Ground two that Mossadeq is leading the country into complete economic collapse through his unsympathetic dictatorship. Just prior to movement CIA would give widest publicity to the evidence of illegally issued paper money. CIA might have capability to print masses excellent imitation currency which would be overprinted by this message.

CS Historical Paper  
No. 208

CLANDESTINE SERVICE HISTORY

OVERTHROW OF PREMIER MOSSADEQ OF IRAN

November 1952-August 1953

Date written : March 1954  
Date published: October 1968  
Written by : Dr. Donald N  
Wilber

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SUMMARY

By the end of 1952, it had become clear that the Mossadeq government in Iran was incapable of reaching an oil settlement with interested Western countries; was reaching a dangerous and advanced stage of illegal, deficit financing; was disregarding the Iranian constitution in prolonging Premier Mohammed Mossadeq's tenure of office; was motivated mainly by Mossadeq's desire for personal power; was governed by irresponsible policies based on emotion; had weakened the Shah and the Iranian Army to a dangerous degree; and had cooperated closely with the Tudeh (Communist) Party of Iran. In view of these factors, it was estimated that Iran was in real danger of falling behind the Iron Curtain; if that happened it would mean a victory for the Soviets in the Cold War and a major setback for the West in the Middle East. No remedial action other than the covert action plan set forth below could be found to improve the existing state of affairs.

It was the aim of the TPAJAX project to cause the fall of the Mossadeq government; to reestablish the prestige and power of the Shah; and to replace the Mossadeq government with one which would govern Iran according to

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constructive policies. Specifically, the aim was to bring to power a government which would reach an equitable oil settlement, enabling Iran to become economically sound and financially solvent, and which would vigorously prosecute the dangerously strong Communist Party.

Once it had been determined definitely that it was not in American interests for the Mossadeq government to remain in power and CIA had been so informed by the Secretary of State in March 1953, CIA began drafting a plan whereby the aims stated above could be realized through covert action. An estimate entitled "Factors Involved in the Overthrow of Mossadeq" was completed on 16 April 1953. It was here determined that an overthrow of Mossadeq was possible through covert operations. In April it was determined that CIA should conduct the envisioned operation jointly with the British Secret Intelligence Service (SIS). By the end of April, it was decided that CIA and SIS officers would draw up a plan on Cyprus which would be submitted to CIA and SIS Headquarters, and to the Department of State and the Foreign Office for final approval. On 3 June 1953, US Ambassador Loy Wesley Henderson arrived in the United States where he was fully consulted with regard to the objective and aims, as stated above, as well as CIA's intentions to design covert means of achieving

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the objective and aims.

The plan was completed by 10 June 1953 at which time Mr. Kermit Roosevelt, Chief of the Near East and Africa Division, CIA (who carried with him the views of the Department of State, CIA, and Ambassador Henderson); Mr. Roger Goiran, CIA Chief of Station, Iran; and two CIA planning officers met in Beirut to consider the plan. With minor changes the operational proposal was submitted to the SIS in London on 14 June 1953.

On 19 June 1953, the final operational plan, agreed upon by Mr. Roosevelt for CIA and by British Intelligence in London, was submitted in Washington to the Department of State; to Mr. Allen W. Dulles, Director of CIA; and to Ambassador Henderson for approval. Simultaneously, it was submitted to the British Foreign Office by SIS for approval. The Department of State wanted to be assured of two things before it would grant approval of the plan:

1. that the United States Government could provide adequate grant aid to a successor Iranian Government so that such a government could be sustained until an oil settlement was reached;
2. that the British Government would signify in writing, to the satisfaction of the Department

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of State, its intention to reach an early oil settlement with a successor Iranian Government in a spirit of good will and equity.

The Department of State satisfied itself on both of these scores.

In mid-July 1953, the Department of State and the British Foreign Office granted authorization for the implementation of the TPAJAX project, and the Director of CIA obtained the approval of the President of the United States. The SIS, with the concurrence of the CIA Director and Ambassador Henderson, proposed that Mr. Roosevelt assume field command in Tehran of the final phases of the operation. It was determined by the Department of State that it would be advisable for Ambassador Henderson to postpone his return to Iran, from Washington consultation, until the operation had been concluded. Arrangements were made jointly with SIS whereby operational liaison would be conducted on Cyprus where a CIA officer would be temporarily stationed, and support liaison would be conducted in Washington. Rapid three-way communications were arranged through CIA facilities between Tehran, Cyprus, and Washington. The time set for the operation was mid-August.

In Iran, CIA and SIS propaganda assets were to conduct



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an increasingly intensified propaganda effort through the press, handbills, and the Tehran clergy in a campaign designed to weaken the Mossadeq government in any way possible. In the United States, high-ranking US officials were to make official statements which would shatter any hopes held by Premier Mossadeq that American economic aid would be forthcoming, and disabuse the Iranian public of the Mossadeq myth that the United States supported his regime.

General Fazlollah Zahedi, former member of Mossadeq's cabinet, was chosen as the most suitable successor to the Premier since he stood out as the only person of stature who had consistently been openly in opposition to Mossadeq and who claimed any significant following. Zahedi was to be approached by CIA and be told of our operation and its aim of installing him as the new prime minister. He was to name a military secretariat with which CIA would conclude a detailed staff plan of action.

From the outset, the cooperation of the Shah was considered to be an essential part of the plan. His cooperation was necessary to assure the action required of the Tehran military garrisons, and to legalize the succession of a new prime minister. Since the Shah had shown himself to be a man of indecision, it was determined that pressure

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on him to cooperate would take the following forms:

1. The Shah's dynamic and forceful twin sister, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi, was to come from Europe to urge the Shah to dismiss Mossadeq. She would say she had been in contact with US and UK officials who had requested her to do so.

2. Arrangements were made for a visit to Iran by General H. Norman Schwarzkopf, former head of the US Gendarme Mission, whom the Shah liked and respected. Schwarzkopf was to explain the proposed project and get from the Shah signed firmans (royal decrees) dismissing Mossadeq, appointing Zahedi, and calling on the Army to remain loyal to the Crown.

3. The principal indigenous British agent, whose bona fides had been established with the Shah, was to reinforce Schwarzkopf's message and assure the Shah that this was a joint US-UK action.

4. Failing results from the above, Mr. Roosevelt, representing the President of the United States, would urge the Shah to sign the above-mentioned firmans. When received, the firmans would be released by CIA to Zahedi on the day called for

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in the plan. On D-Day, the Shah was to be at some location outside of Tehran so that Zahedi, armed with the royal firmans and with military support, could take over the government without danger of the Shah's reversing his stand, and to avoid any attempt on the Shah's life.

Through agents in the Tehran military, CIA was to ensure, to the degree possible, Tehran Army cooperation in support of the Shah-appointed new prime minister.

The following public statements made in the United States had tremendous impact on Iran and Mossadeq, and contributed greatly to Mossadeq's downfall:

1. The publication, on 9 July 1953, of President Eisenhower's 29 June 1953 letter to Premier Mossadeq made it clear that increased aid would not be forthcoming to Iran.
2. The Secretary of State's press conference of 28 July 1953 stated that "... 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."
3. The President's Seattle speech at the Governors' convention, in which he stated that the United States

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would not sit by and see Asian countries fall behind the Iron Curtain, had definite effect.

In cooperation with the Department of State, CIA had several articles planted in major American newspapers and magazines which, when reproduced in Iran, had the desired psychological effect in Iran and contributed to the war of nerves against Mossadeq.

After considerable pressure from Princess Ashraf and General Schwarzkopf, and after several meetings with Mr. Roosevelt, the Shah finally signed the required firmands on 15 August 1953. Action was set for 16 August. However, owing to a security leak in the Iranian military, the chief of the Shah's bodyguard, assigned to seize Mossadeq with the help of two truckloads of pro-Shah soldiers, was overwhelmed by superior armed forces still loyal to Mossadeq. The balance of the military plan was thus frustrated for that day. Upon hearing that the plan had misfired, the Shah flew to Baghdad. This was an act of prudence and had been at least partially foreseen in the plan. Zahedi remained in hiding in CIA custody. With his key officers, he eluded Mossadeq's security forces which were seeking to apprehend the major opposition elements.

Early in the afternoon of 17 August 1953, Ambassador

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Henderson returned to Tehran. General Zahedi, through a CIA-arranged secret press conference and through CIA covert printing facilities, announced to Iran that he was legally prime minister and that Mossadeq had staged an illegal coup against him. CIA agent assets disseminated a large quantity of photographs of the firmans, appointing Zahedi prime minister and dismissing Mossadeq. This had tremendous impact on the people of Tehran who had already been shocked and angered when they realized that the Shah had been forced to leave Iran because of Mossadeq's actions. US Ambassador Burton Y. Berry, in Baghdad, contacted the Shah and stated that he had confidence that the Shah would return soon to Iran despite the apparent adverse situation at that time. Contact was also established with the Shah in Rome after he had flown there from Baghdad. Mr. Roosevelt and the station consistently reported that Mossadeq's apparent victory was misleading; that there were very concrete signs that the Army was still loyal to the Shah; and that a favorable reversal of the situation was possible. The station further urged both the British Foreign Office and the Department of State to make a maximum effort to persuade the Shah to make public statements encouraging the Army and populace to reject Mossadeq and to accept Zahedi as prime minister.

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On 19 August 1953, a pro-Shah demonstration, originating in the bazaar area, took on overwhelming proportions. The demonstration appeared to start partially spontaneously, revealing the fundamental prestige of the Shah and the public alarm at the undisguised republican move being started by the Communists as well as by certain National Frontists. Station political action assets also contributed to the beginnings of the pro-Shah demonstrations. The Army very soon joined the pro-Shah movement and by noon of that day it was clear that Tehran, as well as certain provincial areas, were controlled by pro-Shah street groups and Army units. The situation was such that the above-mentioned military plan could then be implemented. At the station's signal, Zahedi came out of hiding to lead the movement. He first broadcast over Radio Tehran and announced that the government was his. The General Staff offices were then seized, Mossadeq's home was gutted, and pro-Mossadeq politicians and officers arrested. By the end of 19 August, the country was in the hands of the new Premier, Zahedi, and members of the Mossadeq government were either in hiding or were incarcerated.

The Shah returned shortly to Iran where he was given a rousing popular reception. The Shah was deeply moved by the fact that his people and Army had revolted in the

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face of adversity against a vindictive Mossadeq and a Communist Party riding the crest of temporary victory and clearly planning to declare Iran a republic. The Shah felt for the first time that he had the mandate of his people, and he returned determined to regain firm control of the Army.

In order to give Zahedi badly needed immediate financial assistance so that month-end payrolls could be met before the United States could provide large scale grant aid, CIA covertly made available \$5,000,000 within two days of Zahedi's assumption of power.

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I. PRELIMINARY STEPS

Representatives of British Intelligence met with Near East and Africa (NEA) Division representatives in Washington during November and December 1952 for the purpose of discussing joint war and staybehind plans in Iran. In attendance for British Intelligence were Mr. Christopher Montague Woodhouse, recently Chief of Station for British Intelligence in Tehran; Mr. Samuel Falle of the British Intelligence station in Tehran; and Mr. John Bruce Lockhart, SIS Washington representative. In attendance for NEA Division were Mr. Kermit Roosevelt, Chief of Division, Mr. John H. Leavitt, Chief of Iran Branch; Mr. John W. Pendleton, Deputy Chief of Division; and Mr. James A. Darling, Chief of NEA Paramilitary Staff.

Although it was not on the previously agreed agenda of the meeting, British Intelligence representatives brought up the proposition of a joint political action to remove Prime Minister Mossadeq. The NEA Division had not intended to discuss this question at all and was unprepared to do so. The meeting concluded without any decision being made and with the NEA Division committing itself only to study in more detail the political action proposals advanced by British Intelligence.

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In March 1953 a telegram was received from the Tehran Station which stated that General [REDACTED] had contacted the assistant military attache and had requested Ambassador Henderson's views as to whether or not the US Government was interested in covertly supporting an Iranian military effort to oust Premier Mossadeq. A meeting was held in the Embassy at which Headquarters personnel, then in the field, and station personnel were in attendance. A cautiously worded reply was drafted at Headquarters and its substance delivered to General [REDACTED]. The reply did not commit the United States in any way but was mildly encouraging and revealed some US interest in the idea.

On the basis of the [REDACTED] overture and other clear signs that determined opposition to Mossadeq was taking shape, and in view of the totally destructive and reckless attitude of the government of Prime Minister Mossadeq, General Walter Bedell Smith, Under Secretary of State, determined that the US Government could no longer approve of the Mossadeq government and would prefer a successor government in which there would be no National Frontists. The change in policy was communicated to CIA, and the NEA Division was informed that it was authorized to consider operations which would contribute to the fall of the Mossadeq government. The Department of State and CIA

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jointly informed Ambassador Henderson and the Chief of Station, Roger Goiran, of the new policy and of the operational authorization. The Director, on 4 April 1953, approved a budget of \$1,000,000 which could be used by the Tehran Station in any way that would bring about the fall of Mossadeq. Full authority was given to Ambassador Henderson and the Chief of Station enabling any part or all of the \$1,000,000 to be used without further authority, as long as the Ambassador and the station concurred.

On 16 April 1953 a comprehensive study entitled: "Factors Involved in the Overthrow of Mossadeq" was completed. The Study indicated that a Shah-General Zahedi combination, supported by CIA local assets and financial backing, would have a good chance of overthrowing Mossadeq, particularly if this combination should be able to get the largest mobs in the streets and if a sizeable portion of the Tehran garrison refused to carry out Mossadeq's orders.

Subsequent contact was made with General [REDACTED]. Although his motives appeared serious, it soon became apparent that he had no concrete plan and was in fact in no position to take action against Mossadeq.

General Zahedi, who at one time was a member of Mossadeq's cabinet, stood out as the only major personality in undisguised opposition to Mossadeq. For this reason

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he attracted to himself a considerable following. The Tehran Station, in April 1953, reestablished covert contact with Zahedi through Commander Eric Pollard, the US Naval Attache. In order to make the covert liaison with Zahedi more effective and reliable, and also for security reasons, Zahedi's son, Ardeshir Zahedi, was selected as the means of contact with General Zahedi in June 1953. After 21 July 1953, contact with General Zahedi was made directly.

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II. DRAFTING THE PLAN

Near the end of April 1953 Dr. Donald N. Wilber, covert consultant to NEA, was selected by the Division to go to Nicosia and, in close collaboration with SIS, draw up a plan for the overthrow of Mossadeq. The assumption by Headquarters was that the planners would come up with a project which they could conscientiously recommend.

The discussions were begun at Nicosia on 13 May 1953 between Wilber and SIS Officer Norman Matthew Darbyshire. Occasionally Mr. H. John Collins, Chief of SIS station at Nicosia, was also present. Mr. Darbyshire, who was in charge of SIS's Iran branch, had been in Iran for several years and was fluent in the language. Discussions were concluded on 30 May 1953, and the completed draft of a recommended operational plan was cabled by Dr. Wilber to Headquarters on 1 June.

The opening meetings consisted of a review of all the important personalities on the political scene in Iran with a view toward determining whether General Zahedi, the most prominent politician in opposition to Mossadeq, was in fact the sole figure worthy of support and, if so, what individuals and elements should be enlisted in his support. It soon became apparent that Dr. Wilber and

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Mr. Darbyshire held quite similar views of Iranian personalities and had made very similar estimates of the factors involved in the Iranian political scene. There was no friction or marked difference of opinion during the discussions. It also quickly became apparent that the SIS was perfectly content to follow whatever lead was taken by the Agency. It seemed obvious to Wilber that the British were very pleased at having obtained the active cooperation of the Agency and were determined to do nothing which might jeopardize US participation. At the same time there was a faint note of envy expressed over the fact that the Agency was better equipped in the way of funds, personnel, and facilities than was SIS.

Wilber reported the preliminary conversations concerning a three-way channel, set up for this occasion, which was designed to insure immediate relay between Washington, Nicosia, and Tehran. That is, a message originating at any one of these places would be sent by the most expeditious route to the other two. This route was the Middle East Communications Authority (MECA) link, the relay station a few miles outside of Nicosia.\*

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\*Unfortunately, communications between Nicosia and Tehran were not as rapid as was hoped during this period in which more than 45 cables were exchanged.

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Discussions at Nicosia moved on to a disclosure of assets by both parties. Those by SIS were centered upon the contacts of the Rashidian brothers in such fields as the armed forces, the Majlis (Iranian Parliament), religious leaders, the press, street gangs, politicians, and other influential figures. When this material was relayed from Nicosia, the Tehran Station commented that it was their belief that these assets had been far overstated and oversold. In reply it was pointed out that SIS was as aware as we of the weaknesses of the Rashidians, but that one of the strongest points in their favor was their avowed willingness to risk their possessions and their lives in an attempt against Mossadeq. In the critical days of August 1953 the Rashidians did display such a willingness. SIS disclosures were followed by those of Dr. Wilber for CIA. Prior to Wilber's departure a discussion was held at Headquarters to determine which of the station assets should be disclosed to the SIS in return for promised disclosures by the SIS of the assets which they were prepared to put into an operational plan. It was agreed at Headquarters that the identities of the vitally important principal agents of the Tehran Station, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] would not be disclosed. Since the SIS had been

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informed during the November 1952 meetings referred to above that CIA had two major principal agents in Iran, it was necessary to offer two such in place of [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. This was done, naming a station agent and a sub-agent\*\* of [REDACTED] to these important posts. To the best of our knowledge [REDACTED] were not uncovered by the Rashidian brothers or any other SIS agents during the course of this operation.

The continuing conversations at Nicosia were reflected by outgoing cables requesting, principally from the Tehran Station, information which would be helpful in drafting the operational plan.

Discussions now narrowed down to a series of basic assumptions which were stressed both in the draft plan and in its final form. It was determined that the details of the operational plan should be included within a framework of such basic assumptions as these: that Zahedi alone of potential candidates had the vigor and courage to make him worthy of support; that the Shah must be brought into the operation; that the Shah would act only with great reluctance but that he could be forced to do so; that if the

[REDACTED]

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issue was clear-cut the armed forces would follow the Shah rather than Mossadeq; that the operation must, if possible, be made to appear legal or quasi-legal instead of an outright coup; that public opinion must be fanned to fever pitch against Mossadeq in the period just preceding the execution of the overthrow operation; that the military aspect would be successful only if the station were able to review the plan with the Iranians chosen by Zahedi to execute it; that immediate precautions must be taken by the new government to meet a strong reaction by the Tudeh Party. Some of these assumptions were presented in cables sent off before the draft plan was completed. The reactions from the Tehran Station and Headquarters did not always express agreement with the ideas of the planners. The station expressed its feeling that the Shah would not act decisively against Mossadeq, while Headquarters wondered whether we should not support some other individual and whether the Persians themselves might not take the lead in action designed to overthrow Mossadeq. It was, however, agreed that the station should begin at once with its new policy of attacking the government of Mossadeq through grey propaganda. The station relayed this line to its own agents and passed it on to the Rashidian brothers of SIS. The CIA Art Group, a section of the PP Staff Advisory Panel, was



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asked to prepare a considerable number of anti-Mossadeq cartoons.

The meetings were interrupted for several days when one of the Rashidian brothers managed to get permission to leave Iran\*--not at all an easy matter during the Mossadeq period--and went to Geneva where he was met by SIS officer Norman Darbyshire. He not only briefed Darbyshire on the current situation but was able to give comprehensive answers to a number of specific questions. It should be noted that the SIS station at Nicosia had been in tri-weekly wireless contact with the Rashidian brothers at Tehran, employing the best of the British trained staybehind operators. This contact, in Persian, was naturally limited in time, and even more limited after we passed word to Darbyshire on his return from Geneva that the Iranian armed forces were now in possession of directional finders supplied under WAAG.

Mr. George A. Carroll (FI Deputy Tehran, Designate) arrived at Nicosia on 29 May, in time to pass along reactions

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\*It is interesting to note that Rashidian obtained his exit visa to leave Iran and his reentry permit from no less a supporter of Mossadeq than Foreign Minister Hoseyn Fatemi. This lends some evidence to long held CIA views that Fatemi was from time to time susceptible to British overtures and was trying to keep a hand in with the opposition and British in the event Mossadeq fell. He was certainly aware of Rashidian's agent status with the British.

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and suggestions from Headquarters, prior to the completion of the draft plan. As stated, this draft was cabled to Headquarters on 1 June 1953. (See Appendix A for a typed transcript of the cable.)

While Nicosia proved to be a handy point of contact with the British and a fairly good communications intersection point, it did have certain disadvantages. It was remote from the headquarters of either agency and, even worse, the SIS station files were extremely inadequate so that any information on personalities, especially members of the Iranian armed forces, had to be obtained by querying the Tehran Station and Headquarters.

Once the draft plan had been cabled, it was agreed with SIS that their copy would be hand-carried to London where the viewpoint of the SIS headquarters would be incorporated prior to 15 June. In the meantime, as had been agreed with Headquarters, the Agency would conduct a searching scrutiny of the plan at Beirut, and then bring these results to London for amalgamation with the draft as reworked by SIS at London. Carroll remained a few days after the completion of the draft to begin work on the military aspect of the plan. He also returned to Nicosia for a few additional days after the close of the Beirut meetings for this purpose. It must be noted that Miss Helen E. Morgan, CIA representative at Nicosia, gave strong support to the CIA personnel who worked at Nicosia.

**Additional Interesting tidbits from the Wilber Report:**

From **Chapter IV** “The Decisions Are Made: Activity Begins” (pp. 18-19)—Information on the official approval of the plan:

“The following approvals of the operational plan were obtained on the dates indicated:

Director of CIA	- 11 July 1953
Director of SIS [British Intelligence]	- 1 July 1953
[British] Foreign Secretary	- 1 July 1953
[US] Secretary of State	- 11 July 1953
[British] Prime Minister	- 1 July 1953
[US] President	- 11 July 1953

Pending final approval or disapproval of the operational plan, the station was carrying forward activities already authorized toward the achievement of the goal. In addition to the general authorization of April enabling the Tehran station to spend up to \$1,000,000 in covert activity in support of Zahedi, the station on May 20 was specifically authorized to spend one million rials a week (rate of 90 rials to the US dollar) in purchasing the cooperation of members of the Iranian Majlis [parliament].”

Propaganda (p. 21): “Dr. Donald Wilbur was charged throughout the operation with the propaganda aspects of the plan and worked closely with the CIA Art Group in the preparation of propaganda material.”

From **Chapter V** “Mounting Pressure Against the Shah” (p. 37)—Stirring up religious leaders with “black propaganda”: “CIA agents gave serious attention to alarming the religious leaders at Tehran by issuing black propaganda in the name of the Tudeh [communist] Party, threatening these leaders with savage punishment if they opposed Mossadeq. Threatening phone calls were also made to them, in the name of the Tudeh, and one of several planned sham bombings of the houses of these leaders was carried out.”

CIA Money for Zahedi’s new government (p. 38): “On August 14 [1953] the station cabled that upon the conclusion of TPAJAX [Operation Ajax] the Zahedi government, in view of the empty treasury of the country, would be in urgent need of funds. The sum of \$5,000,000 was suggested, and CIA was asked to produce this amount almost within hours after the conclusion of the operation.”

From **Chapter VII** “Apparent Failure” (p. 47)—Apparently the communist also had spies: “It should be noted that the Tudeh appeared to be at least as well posted on the coup plans as the [Iranian] government—how is not known.”

Fabricating interviews and Hiding Iranians involved in the coup (p. 50): CIA station agents in Tehran after the initial failure of the planned coup “composed a fabricated interview with Zahedi, and had it printed on [August] 17<sup>th</sup>, along with a copy of the *firman* [the Shah’s order dismissing Mossadeq as Prime Minister and replacing him with Zahedi]. In this instance, as in a number of others, the high-level agents of the station demonstrated a most satisfying ability to go

ahead on their own and do just the right thing. During the day the station was securing the persons of key individuals [in support of the Shah and the coup] and sending them to safety. Some were concealed in the house of a station clerk in the Embassy compound and some in the houses of US personnel of the station outside the compound.”

Rejoicing in soldiers beating up pro-Mossadeq demonstrators (p. 52): “At the [CIA] station [in Tehran] personnel entered on another day [the 18<sup>th</sup>] after a second sleepless night, some real encouragement came from word that, in breaking up Tudeh [communist party] groups the night before, the soldiers had beaten them with rifle butts and made them shout, ‘Long Live the Shah!’”

Planning for a “great” pro-Shah demonstration (p. 57): As the tide began to turn the CIA station agents made plans “in the field of political action ... to build up a great demonstration on Wednesday [August 19<sup>th</sup>] on the theme that it was time for loyal army officers and soldiers and the people to rally to the support of religion and the throne.”

More “black propaganda”—organizing gangs to pretend they were communists and have them loot and riot in the city (p. 63): To help turn the Iranian people against the Tudeh [communist party] of Iran, the CIA organized what Wilbur refers to as a “campaign of alleged Tudeh terrorism.” Specifically, on the evening of August 18<sup>th</sup>, CIA liaisons had organized “gangs of alleged Tudehites on the streets with orders to loot and smash shops on Lalezar and Ameriah streets whenever possible, and to make it clear that this was the Tudeh in action.” It was, of course, actually the CIA in action and the plan was to thereby discredit the Tudeh in the eyes of the Iranian people.

From **Chapter X** “What Was Learned From the Operation”—Planting CIA propaganda within the US (p. 86): “the Iran desk of the State Department was able to place a CIA study in *Newsweek*, using the normal channel of desk officer to journalist.” The report further complain, however, that the CIA does not have its own, direct conduit to journalists, a problem he says they should address in future operations.