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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF CURRENT INTELLIGENCE
17 August 1953

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ASSESSMENT OF THE IRANIAN SITUATION

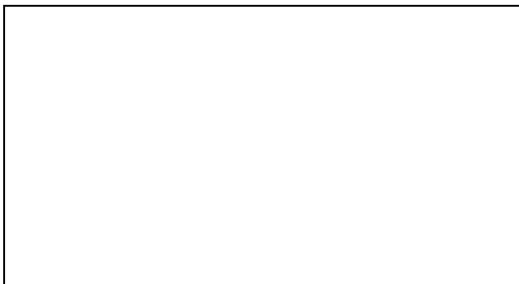
The failure of the Iranian coup attempted by retired General Zahedi and by Colonel Nasari of the imperial guards leaves Prime Minister Mossadeq in a strengthened position, discourages and weakens his divided opposition, and may lead him to attempt to abolish the monarchy. It will make Mossadeq more suspicious of his associates as well as of the Western powers and may make him more arbitrary and difficult to deal with as the internal situation continues to deteriorate.

Mossadeq who received advance notice of the plot now has military control and is in a position to exploit the situation thoroughly. The Tudeh party has already demonstrated in his support and he can generate considerable popular sympathy by presenting this latest maneuver against him as a foreign-inspired plot against the Iranian people. These circumstances may help Mossadeq secure the election of a new and more amenable Majlis.

The prime minister publicly announced on 16 August that new elections would be set after he had amended the electoral law. In view of his success in controlling the recent referendum on the abolition of the present Majlis he may also be successful in controlling the election of new Majlis deputies. It had been assumed in recent days that Mossadeq would have great difficulty in doing this since the conservatives largely control the countryside and Tudeh might elect some of its own representatives and give the prime minister only limited support.

The failure of the Zahedi-Nasari coup, the arrest of other opponents of the prime minister and the suggestion of more drastic action will have widespread repercussions among the various groups and individuals who would like to remove Mossadeq.

Mullah Kashani although a bitter opponent of the prime minister tends to withdraw quickly whenever Mossadeq is in the ascendency. The small opposition groups of the now dismissed Majlis likewise lack courage. The disgruntled



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army officers are not in a position to act as long as the chief of staff and the chain of command remain in Mossadeq's control.

At this point there appears to be no other group or combination which is ready to try to act against the prime minister or which if it did act could anticipate success.

The involvement of the shah, who signed two decrees to remove Mossadeq and to appoint General Zahedi as the next prime minister, poses a serious threat to the monarchy. The shah's flight to Baghdad and the prominent position occupied in the coup by the commander of the imperial guard is an open invitation to Mossadeq to take action against the monarchy. The prime minister has long wished to remove all power from the shah and on occasion has given indications of a desire to remove him. If he does not succeed in enforcing abdication he will manage to strip from him the remaining vestiges of power.

The prime minister who has long been fearful of assassination may now be expected to act more ruthlessly in maintaining himself. He has long been convinced that the British are plotting his removal. The leftish press in Tehran has begun a campaign accusing the United States of implication in the present coup. Mossadeq may come to view America and Britain as joint conspirators.

The prime minister, however, has consistently hoped for American aid and accordingly has not broken with the United States. His past policy may accordingly be continued. He may be expected to break with the United States only if he is convinced that he can get nothing or if he is in need of a new whipping boy in order to generate more popular support.

The Tudeh has already come out against the shah and is charging American involvement. They may be expected to give full support to Mossadeq in his drive to remove or weaken the shah.

Under these conditions the economic and political deterioration of Iran will continue. Mossadeq, forced to lean on the Tudeh, may be expected to retain political control but will probably assume a more dictatorial position and indulge in more chicanery to maintain himself.

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CHRONOLOGY

(Tehran time, which is 8½ hours ahead of EST)

- 13 August Shah signed decree dismissing Mossadeq and appointing General Zahedi prime minister.
- 15 August 2300 Colonel Nasari of the imperial guard arrests Deputy Chief of Staff Kiani.
- 2330 Nasari imprisons Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatemi, Minister of Roads Haqshenas and Deputy Zirakzadeh. Fails to locate Chief of Staff Riahi.
- 16 August 0100 Nasari with armored car and soldiers attempts to seize Prime Minister Mossadeq. Nasari is arrested by Mossadeq's guards.
- 0250 Chief of Staff Riahi orders imperial guards disarmed.
- 0345 Iranian home service announces attempted coup.
- 0500 Fatemi, Haqshenas and Kiani released by Mossadeq's followers.
- 0545 Moscow Home Service, quoting an Iranian Communist newspaper, reports that a palace-inspired coup will be attempted in near future.
- 0600 Extraordinary meeting of the government council is held at Mossadeq's home.
- 0700 First government communique announces smashing of plot.
- 1000 Disarmament of imperial guard is completed.
- 1030 Abol Qasem Amini, Minister of Court, is arrested by Mossadeq.
- 1350 Fatemi holds press conference announcing failure of plot which he says has been suspected for some time.

(The shah and the queen arrive in Baghdad by air early on the morning of the 16th.)
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COMMENT ON THE ATTEMPTED COUP IN IRAN

The failure of the military coup in Tehran and the flight of the shah to Baghdad emphasize Prime Minister Mossadeq's continued mastery of the situation and foreshadow more drastic action on his part to eliminate all opposition. The prime minister can utilize the situation to generate more popular support for himself at a time when he is facing the problem of how to secure the election of a new and more amenable Majlis. While in the past Mossadeq had not been very aggressive in his efforts to remove his enemies, this incident will reinforce his recent tendency to proceed arbitrarily.

The shah's flight, the involvement of the commander of the imperial guards as leader of the coup, and the imperial decrees to remove Mossadeq and appoint General Zahedi prime minister present Mossadeq with the opportunity of reducing the shah's position still further or attempting to eliminate the monarchy altogether.

Late reports state that army units stationed outside the capital are moving toward Tehran. Since the commander-in-chief of the army remains loyal to Mossadeq significant army support for the coup is not anticipated.

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