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X. WHAT WAS LEARNED FROM THE OPERATION \*

Two elements lending support to the operation seemed unable to meet the sudden demand for utmost speed and accomplishment. These were Communications and the Psychological Warfare (PW) Senior Staff. Many individual communications officers--at Headquarters, Nicosia, and Tehran--worked many extra hours and displayed commendable zeal and initiative in dealing with a great volume of traffic. Between 14 May and 1 September a total of 990 TPAJAX messages entered or left Headquarters. The unsatisfactory phase of communications was the three-way link between Headquarters, Nicosia, and Tehran by which MECA facilities were made available for almost simultaneous transmission from any one of the three stations named to the other two. Until near the end of the period of the operation, there was considerable delay in Tehran messages destined for Nicosia and for those in the opposite direction. It may also be suggested that transmission time was not as rapid as had been hoped. Very few "operational immediate" messages were originated by any of the three stations, but when Tehran sent such a message it took from three to four hours to get to Headquarters measured from the time the enciphered message was filed for transmission until the deciphered

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\*For a military critique of the operation, see Appendix E.

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message reached the branch desk.

In July support was sought from the PW Staff. Both the branch and higher levels were anxious to have certain items, including the texts of news articles, commentaries and editorials, appear in papers in this country. The texts themselves were prepared by NE/4 Branch on themes agreed upon by Headquarters and the station. It was planned to cable summaries of such planted material to the station for distribution to the friendly local press and, hence, to backstop the active propaganda campaign against Mossadeq. This support was not forthcoming. It appeared to the branch as if the staff lacked contacts capable of placing material so that the American publisher was unwitting as to its source, as well as being able to see that no changes in theme or emphasis were made. In contrast to this relatively ineffective venture, 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. Recognizing the fact that the Agency is not able to employ such a channel as just described, it does appear that some improvement of capabilities might be desirable. Either those contacts used to secure the unwitting publication of material should be expanded and improved, or else there should be a provision made for

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passing material directly to cleared editors and owners of press media.

Throughout the course of the operation, members of the Agency were in touch with members of SIS in Washington, Nicosia, London, and--incidentally--Cairo. In all but one of these places, we were on their home ground and, hence, in a position to penetrate their organization, particularly with regard to building up personal histories of its personnel. The apparent fact that this organization was quite ready to act as the junior partner in this operation has been covered in an earlier paragraph, as has the indication that individual SIS officers made a definite effort to win the friendship and confidence of their contacts. The existence of friction between SIS headquarters and the station at Nicosia was also of interest to us. However, of greatest interest from an operational point of view was the very limited number of personnel engaged in Middle East operations. At Nicosia there were only two officers and two typists to deal both with Iran and with several other countries of the Middle East. At London headquarters no individual was exclusively concerned with Iran, and the one specialist in the field appeared to be spread out over the Middle and Far East. This shortage of personnel was directly reflected in a number of ways

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which seemed quite surprising at first glance. An example of this is the fact that the representative in Washington had to spend a good part of his time in enciphering and deciphering. The character of this limited personnel was also of interest for we were informed that all the old colonial hands and all the veterans of the India Office had been dispensed with. Certainly the two Nicosia officers who were dealing with the Agency were both young and had a very sound foundation. The one in charge has had six years in the country and is extremely fluent in the language, while the younger, still a probationer, also knows the language well.

Other lessons learned from the operation relate to Headquarters and station capacities for planning, and to the capabilities of the local agents to execute general and specific directives. First, we may make a brief critique of Headquarters planning.

As had been pointed out in some detail in earlier pages, the operational plan grew directly from a series of basic assumptions, established by CIA in collaboration with SIS. In briefest review, the principal assumptions were:

1. The Shah could be persuaded to take desired action if all-out pressure were applied.
2. Assurance that the Shah was behind him would

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both cause Zahedi to act and would win him the support of many officers in key positions.

3. Forced with a choice between following the orders of the Shah and those of Mossadeq, the rank and file of the army and its officers would obey the Shah.

These assumptions, whether presented as such within the operational plan, or discussed in some unwitting survey of the current situation, were challenged. The American Ambassador and the State Department desk officer for Iran, as well as the Chief of GTI office at State, insisted that assumption number one above was completely unsound. Ambassador Henderson stated that the premise that the Shah would cooperate actively was fallacious.

The station at one point expressed a similar opinion in these words: "It (is) unrealistic (to) expect Shah (to) sponsor a coup supported by army." The Office of Intelligence and Research of the State Department, in a special study, dated 29 July 1953 and entitled "Estimate of the likelihood and possible consequences of Mossadeq's removal as Prime Minister," indicated a positive belief that the opposition to Mossadeq was weak, lacked a plan, and was composed of heterogeneous elements incapable of unified action. How was it that the Headquarters planners could

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be so at odds with every other well informed opinion? This was because the plan had of necessity to avoid acceptance of the status quo and could take a bolder stand because it was based upon the principle of strong, positive action to make the assumptions come true. It should be noted that during the conversations at Beirut and in the later exchange of messages, representatives of the field station accepted the assumptions to which they had objected earlier. Thus, as the time for action approached, complete harmony prevailed.

Not only did the basic assumptions stand their test, but other factors of the plan which had been determined by a detailed estimate of the psychology of the Persians, as discussed at Nicosia and Beirut, worked out about as anticipated. Specifically, it had been realized that not all the Persians involved in the plan would take the action required of them, that even those who took it might not follow through exactly as required and, therefore, that the operational aspect of the plan called for repetitive efforts on the targets. This analysis was correct. That the initial military aspect went astray may be charged directly to the Persians who at the very end refused to continue to accept the guidance which the station felt was so essential.

With regard to the fact that the military aspect of



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the plan was balanced, or complemented, by action designed to result in publicly expressed hostility to the government of Mossadeq, it was in this field that those in charge of executing the plan had to deviate the most from its details. The plan placed emphasis upon a program for a massive bast, or political sanctuary movement, against the government; but it was found impossible to bring this into being because of the dissolution of the Majlis and because the most influential religious leaders were not willing to make the commitments required of them. This unwillingness of the leaders had been foreseen by the planners, but they had been assured by the principal agents of SIS that these leaders would take whatever action was required of them. Failing in this respect, public hostility was fanned in a number of other ways, some suggested by the station to its agents and others thought up by agents. This activity has been covered in the earlier pages dealing with events in Tehran, and here it is necessary to repeat only one conclusion concerning what was learned during the operation as to the influence of the press in Iran. It must be admitted that in the years and months of working with a subsidized press and its venal (or patriotic) journalists in Tehran, the station was still not sure whether it was achieving results comparable to the sums so spent. In July

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and early August every segment of the press with which we or the United Kingdom had working relations went all out against Mossadeq. As judged by the public reactions on the days following 16 August, there can be no doubt whatsoever that this campaign had reached a very large audience and had directly influenced their thinking in a most positive way. A separate analysis of this press operation should be made to serve as basic guidance in mounting future campaigns.

The operation was a time of testing for the US principal agents and for those of the station agents who were committed to the effort. All these agents did a superb job. It is easy to say that they did such a good job because they were not merely carrying out orders but were heart and soul in favor of the operation. This is true, but the fact must not be overlooked that in recruiting these individuals over a considerable period of time the station wittingly selected people whose basic ideologies were in accord with US policy toward Iran and the USSR. This factor should not be overlooked in future recruitment in Iran. A word should be said about the fact that the high caliber of the agents was reflected in their performances. In one of the most critical periods station principal agents [REDACTED] were out of touch with the station, but on their own initiative took actions



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of just the type the station would have assigned to them.

The performance of the indigenous agents is just one factor in the demonstration of the values received from long-term station planning. Another such factor of real importance was the capability of the station to produce indigenous documents on short order, documents which stood serious scrutiny shortly after they had been manufactured. This program had been long under development.

The operation did reveal a need for the development of other long-term assets. Important in this field is the procurement of safehouses, at least two of which should be kept completely uncontaminated until time of real emergency. While the executors of the plan made brilliant use of the grounds of the Embassy and of houses occupied by US personnel, this effort could have been nullified by a careful watch of the Embassy by agents of the government.

Among the other long-term assets which the station feels should be developed are independent printing and reproduction facilities. The station believes that these facilities should be within the Embassy. This matter is now under discussion as it would appear that the movement of supplies into the Embassy and the removal of the finished products for distribution would create a serious security problem.

The major role in the execution of the operational plan was assumed by US assets. This does not mean, however, that the operation could have been carried through without the active cooperation of the United Kingdom and their assets. For one thing, it would have been impossible to get the Shah to move had he not been finally convinced that both the US and the UK were ready to support him. For another, had not the UK assets been cut in on the operation, they would either have exposed whatever they learned about it to the government or tried actively to see that it failed. The lesson here is clear. As in the larger world picture, US-UK interests and activities must be coordinated. A great deal is to be gained by direct coordination in special fields of activity once both parties have recognized that their aims are really identical.

A final subject of interest concerns the security problem connected with such an operation. From the moment the project got underway, the NEA Division made a serious effort to put special security measures into effect; within the NEA Division and even within the NE/4 Branch the rule of "need to know" came into effect. However, by the time the operation had been concluded, a considerable number of people--British and Americans--were aware of what was going on. From the viewpoint of NE/4 Branch,

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which has listed all the individuals whom it knows were aware of the project and its purpose, the number was excessive--it totaled 89. How many others were told by people without the NE/4 Branch being aware of this, there is no way of knowing. It is true that the knowledge that there was direct US-UK collaboration on the project was kept to a more restricted number. It is, however, suggested that in the future when an operation of similar magnitude and sensitivity is contemplated a special security officer be brought into the operation at its inception and be given the responsibility for keeping track of exactly who knows what about the project.

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