

Derbyshire tape 1

I was there from the end of '43 to the middle of '47 and from late '49 to '52 when Mossadegh threw us out and broke off relations and I was there again from '63 to '67. During Moassadegh'S time in power they passed a statute which banned anyone with previous experience in Iran who spoke persian from being posted back again to the country...well you'd have thought that having put the Shah back again on his throne it would have been the easiest thing in the world to have said just cancel it, but it was the Swiss ambassador in Tehran who, in his excessive zeal, pointed out to the foreign office that this law was still on the statute book and that several members of Dennis Wright's party who were going back as the initial reestablishment of the embassy, had served in Iran and did speak Persian, John Fernley was allowed to go back because he didn't speak Persian; Morgan Hillier-Fry and I were going back with the first batch and they had to allow someone back and so Dennis went in cold without a Persian speaker on his team -- but that was the foreign office being wishy-washy beyond belief. It should have been a simple matter from the foreign secretary to the foreign minister for Iran. In fact I was booked on the plane and this thing came through about 6 hours before. I went out in 43-47 period first of all as an army officer in SOE .

Colonel Maclean and I were the first to have gone into AsMaijan after the Russians had withdrawn (Colonel NLD) he had been up in Tashkar before the Chinese overran it and he was on his way back home, precisely what he was doing there except stripping gold off his gold belt and marrying one of the local Kashkar's every week or so, I don't know, but he finally got out and came to Hong Kong and then via India and he knew Wayborn quite well and he stayed with one of Waverill's adc's called Charles Rankin and he persuaded the DMI in India to finance his return by road -- India, Afghanistan, Persia, Turkey and that way -- it had to be at a certain time which was winter. He had various exciting episodes on the way - breaking down in Afghanistan. Charles Rankin was then being recalled to the bar and he had to be back by a certain date and I met up with them in Meshed in Eastern Iran where I had gone off for the weekend to take a diplomatic bag because there was no reliable postal service -- and he said well why don't you join me -- I said I would have to find out if the ambassador would let me go -- he said fine I'll come down to Tehran. His car kept breaking down, eventually we got it all repaired and finally set off. I was given 5 weeks in which to do this and off we set and we went to the Caspian and chuntered all the way up to the coast and Russian border and we got that damn car to within about 200 yards of the pass and we couldn't move because of the snow. So we had to turn around and come all the way back-- this was 10 days after we had left and it went on like that. We had been assured by the Turkish military attache in Tehran that if we could get to Tabrise and then go over the Turkish border that even if we got stuck we could put the car on the train and go to Ankarra. We finally got to Tabrise and struggled to the border in terrible snow conditions and on the border which is a no man's land the Persian post is on one side and then there is a mile of no man's land which you cross before you come to the Turkish post. We left Iran and

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our passports were stamped accordingly and we got to the Turkish post with 6 feet of snow on the road which would never be moved until the spring. So then back we had to go but then the Persians wouldn't let us in again because we didn't have an entry visa. We were arrested and taken down to the governor --and the governor wrote in my passport that he personally authorised us to enter Iran even though we did not have a visa and this is because of snow on the road. We came back to Tabrise. We drove to Mahabad and decided to try and go down the Ronduse gorge which links that part of Persian kurdistan with northern Iraq and then get up into Turkey that way, ; well the Persians were always very suspicious people, particularly the military --we were staying in Mahabad with the commanding officer of the Persian troops , he asked what we were proposing to do and we explained...now that is surprising, he said, I don't suppose that by any chance you realize we and the Iraqui's are going to have for the first time a joint offensive one from the Iraqui side and one from the Persian side to squeeze Mustafan and Basani out. He told us that the gorge was controlled by the Basanis. He said that he did have aliaison officer in touch with the Basanis, I would let him take you down the gorge but only about 20 kilometres, and when we got down the gorge we ran slap into the main Ba sani party...asking us what we were doing and they said they would take us down and sure enough 10 kilometres on 6 feet of snow again so we had to come back all the way to Tambrise and all the way back to Kasween.

L of snow

Was the purpose of the journey to get to England for you?

No, but Maclean was. At that stage I was not officially in intelligence.

(At this point Derbyshire is explained the focus of the programme and the dates and events)

Wot
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You realise that When Rasman was assassinated he was attending a memorial service of another cabinet colleague of his who had also been assassinated ... and at the time he had in his pocket the first 50/50 agreement and he was waiting to choose the moment to present it. That would have changed our whole dealings in the Middle East. At that stage I was not in the embassy in Tehran: I was vice-consul in Meshed when Raşan was assassinated --the Shah could have nominated anyone according to the constitution but instead let it be known that he'd take the feelings of the Mangelase and that brought Mossadegh about. I would have thought that he would have almost certainly have chosen someone else..

L Majlis?

Why did we no longer have an influence over the Shah's choice?

Don't forget that it was not only ourselves -- it was the Russians as well and immediately after the Americans were very new to the game and certainly we would have hoped to have had more influence. The Shah was a very young man when he was

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put on the throne and he was knocked around from pillar to post between Britian and Russia and he was always listening to the last person in and that was often the advice he took

Were you seeing him in that period of early 1950-51?

YES but more on a social basis because I was young...we were in touch with him, and I particularly was in touch with the Persians who were influential with him -- Ernst Perron, people like that terrible man...

Could the Shah no longer ignore opinion in theMajlis ?

NO

He didn't know what to do. He thought he'd take the easy way out and ask them to give him an expression of their will about because they couldn't agree on anybody else It then became clear that Mossadegh was an ardent nationalist and xenophobic to boot -- one of the things that he did of course was to close all the consulates in Eastern and Northern Iran -- the only ones that remained open were the consulate general inAchwaz Khoramshah from Abadan. He also nationalised the Soviet-Persian fisheries

~~I haven't got a copy of Monty's book with me) --~~

~~Anthony Eden sent out ^{Robert} Zaehner.~~

~~(The relevant pages of the book are talked about...)~~

~~I had shared a house with ^{Zaehner} in Tehran for 3 1/2 years, between~~

NB for Tiddalstr 43 and 44

Were you under Zaehner's orders?

I was responsible to Monty. When Mossadegh broke off relations and we all left and drove across to Iraq and then eventually to Beirut and Monty took on another post in London and I took over from him running the Persian station in exile from Cyprus.

Your presumably had a lot of contacts and friends in Persia and amongst them were the Rashidian brothers....how quickly did Zaehner start marshalling:...

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Shepherd tried and failed to get the Shah to sign the document.

Meanwhile as we move toward the break in relations then they started thinking in terms of a possible coup..

In terms of 1951, the Shah wouldn't sack Mossadegh but it wasn't until '52 that there was an attempt with Quavam...

Also, remember

Mossadegh had in his government a member of the Tudeh party, and the Russians were hoping to keep Mossadegh in power.... this was a potential problem and I had to keep an eye on. The Tudeh party had been proscribed after the attempt on the Shah's life in 1949 and it was still proscribed that Mossadegh should introduce a member of the Tudeh, communist party into his cabinet. (I'd have have to look his name up.)

What was the name of the civil servant that you used; there was a man who used to attend cabinet meetings because his minister had resigned or was not there in about '52, '53?

(He doesn't remember. It is agreed that they will draw up a list of points for him to think about)

Division of labour. What was your specific job in '51, '52?

Telling Sam what to say to the Rashidian and keeping informed in general terms on the political situation, not only on the Rashidian but dozens of others. And working with Zaehner on what needed to be done.

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[REDACTED]

and so we went on to Cyprus , we had issued the Rashidians with radio setstwo of them were arrested at one stage, the third one jumped over the back wall and he was the one who stayed at large right to the end. His first name was Ceyphulla; he is the one who had a house over here but in fact they maintained the family suite at Grosvenor House practically until they died. They were an extraordinary bunch of brothers because none of them really spoke English except Ceyfella did a bit towards the end but after all this was over in that if they had dealings with the West, (he did speak some English) and therefore was the relations man, his older brother who was a merchant and a commercially minded chap— he owned and ran cinemas and bought films— his name was Qudratullah and the third was Asa dullah -- he was the political end of the trio -- it was he who knew and dealt with the Shah . They were late 30s or early 40s . They were fascinated by the idea of politics altogether and intrigued by being in contact with the British and delighted to take our money for something which they believed in themselves. They felt Mossadegh was very much a threat (and their father had been earlier on in the century had been a well known respected figure and took refuge in the embassy). They had always been brought up by the old man believing the British were very good.. they also believed in English education all of their children went to school in England , the girls in the Isle of Wight....

tape ends

tape 2

this is one of the other sons? No this was the sister's son. He eventually became a qualified pilot and a senior captain in Iran air, but he did all his training here. The Rashidian brothers saw in Mossadegh a direct threat to Iran, they wanted Iran totally independent of Russia and they said give him two years and you will have a Tudeh government in Iran. I really do believe it because Mossadegh was a fairly weak character after all; he had no real understanding of international politics and once you get highly trained members of the communist party in it doesn't take long..

Rashidians ✓

use for Davam ✓

Derbyshire tape 2

because we didn't realize even then the importance that oil was going to play — the major role in the Middle East during the 50s, 60s and 70s. Let me take you back a little because it may be of interest to talk about nationalisation. As early as 1947 I (and Basil Bumley) moved a great deal in Persian circles in a way that other members of the embassy didn't: what is said politely in English at a cocktail party to an ambassador is very different from what emerges with a group of young people. It was clear that there was considerable feeling against the AIOC — we mounted what you might call a clandestine Gallup poll: we wrote it, we framed the questions it showed us that the Persians thought they had a raw deal; they were bitterly resentful of the way they were being treated by the AIOC because as you probably know, the AIOC were to many ex-patriots who called anyone west of Calais a wog and to them Iranians were wogs. The fact that they had just as qualified engineers and chemists as the AIOC was irrelevant: the Persians were not allowed to be members of the 'Club' — which of course was the British club — you didn't mix! Brits and Persians kept separate and they were treated as inferior citizens and of course they had the feeling that they were being screwed the whole time and quite rightly too and from about 1920 onwards. We showed this to London and the ambassador, John LeRougetelle and he took one look and said, 'Oil, oil, dear boy, that's for the commercial department ..' and he refused to read any further and so that is roughly the reception it got when it was in London, what are you muttering about oil. Of course they were totally wrong as it proved 4 years later. This is the sort of thing that you won't find in any book, I don't think BP would admit that now. Peter Avery wasn't aware of that Gallup poll but he felt it was coming.

when?

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Was the oil company aware of what you and Zaehner were doing?

No. Immediately after the war, although there were intelligence, that is army officers in Iran, they made it clear through the embassy in Tehran that they regarded themselves as the experts on the oil producing areas and they were perfectly able to look after their own security etc. and therefore SIS were never allowed to operate on the oil company areas until it became very obvious that something was going to happen in Abadan and it was nationalisation and the problem arose were we or were we not going to take Abadan. It was when Mossadegh said he was going to nationalise Persian oil... and the AIOC turned desperately to us and asked for intelligence and what the intentions of the Persians are. And again, it was virtually a hopeless task, but it was I ^{who} was sent the Khoramshah trying to build up in 5 weeks what we had been trying to build up and been denied for 7 years. This was a straightforward intelligence operation: my purpose was to find out what the Persians intended to do and what strength they were on the ground. I had an introduction to the then commander-in-chief of the Persian forces on the ground in Abadan and I called on him officially as the new vice consul. I put it to him that I really didn't want to see a bloodbath in Abadan, it would be better to know what we should avoid etc in terms of the forces at his disposal and how he dispersed them etc. and he fell for it, and oddly enough

he was a distant relative of Dr Mossadegh's: he told me exactly where his troops were and what their communications were and by that time we had the cruiser and warships out there

Story of getting Persian Army details

did see this?

Derbyshire tape 2

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and of course she had her guns open range across the refinery. The tanks were there in the day but they were never there at night: between dusk and dawn they parked in a straight line hub to hub...I was on board the Urius every day and everything that he was telling me was checking out from our cracking of the Persian code and why we didn't go in to me will always remain a mystery. That was the 5 weeks that I had because it was then or never. The commander wanted to avoid shedding Persian blood just as we wanted to avoid shedding British blood. That cost HMG the princely sum of 2lbs of Lipton tea because he couldn't get it in Persia and I got it for him and that is precisely what I paid him.

Eric Drake who was then general manager in Abadan, he is on record as saying to the cabinet virtually what you said -- you can walk in there and why don't you. Must have been a political decision.

Of course. Zaehner had left by then. I think he left in September. He left because it hadn't worked and the negotiations had broken down, the Americans had got out, Harriman had left, the refinery had closed ddown.

What was the next stage? Did you stay down in Khoranshah? It can't have been September, it must have been June.No September '51

I was due to come on leave that summer. After the Khroamshah episode I came on leave but even then I was very uneasy about the situation and I took the precaution of getting a return visa before I left. I was in the South of France and a week before returning to Tehran, call from London. The foreign office had invited a group of Persian journalists to visit England officially and a great program drawn up by Central Office of Information, for touring, mining, industry, new towns, usual razzle dazzle. But they had forgotten that not a single one spoke English and they had nobody available. I spent a month with them. The idea was that they should return to Tehran and write up Britain in their tin-pot newspapers. On the final day of their tour, we had a farewell lunch and at 5 o'clock that day Mossadegh broke off relations with Great Britain. This was '52.



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(brief discussion about Khavan incident, Eden's trust in Julian Amery ...didn't work)

When did you first start wooing General Zahedi?

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Acoup is necessarily predicated on the use of armed force. It had to be somebody who was loyal to the Shah who commanded a certain respect amongst his fellow officers....the army was a bit of joke and all they had done was virtually tribal skirmishes but they had never fought a battle. Zahedi was suitable as a candidate because he had good standing in the army we knew the Shah trusted him,...

Unfortunately the head of SIS at the time, Genral Sinclair knew about as much of the middle east as a 10 year old (far more interested in cricket anyway). Henderson only knew that we wanted to get rid of Mossadegh but he didn't know hwat means we were going to use, what people etc.

Mossadegh's breaking off of relations --suspect conspiracy?
Arrested Rashidians and would have arrested Zahedi...

He avoided arrest and I was involved in protecting him as he moved from hous to house in Tehran. (story then about American cars and Rashidians then in jail when telegram arrived for their car and was sent back saying they were in jail but would pick it up in 2½ months)

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be sufficient support for it ~~with~~ from London or the States. He lost interest. He left in the summer after the Khavan incident. Once he left that was it, he was an academic not a man of action.

✓
tape ends continuing discussion of Roosevelt

tape 3

Mossadegh rejected the last and final offer for mediation by the Americans.

The whole of his book is slanted as though the operation was totally carried out by the Americans and that the Shah recognised this. I wasn't allowed to go back immediately when we picked up relations again because Americans were trying to cash in very quickly and trying to establish a special relationship with the Shah. The Shah, as you know is a very complex character: he clearly looked to America as the main supplier of arms, of modern weapons, aircraft but he had a sneaking regard for what you might call British intelligence rather more than for the American CIA who were always bungling things. In the 50s when he was reorganising the infamous Savak ^{Secret Police} he turned to us rather than the Americans: it was then that the special relationship began and developed to such a stage that I was seeing him regularly once a fortnight in the 60s.

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INIS was 14th July and everyone was away from Paris, all our friends and the meeting wasn't until about 16th: I had dozens of friends but they were all away fro the weekend, and I rang and rang and so did Steve but there was nobody and so we found ourselves wandering around Paris. We were having a drink on the Champs Elysee and suddenly we were offered some postcards (please note tape is very bad and rather muffled here...) story about selling postcards for 4 times what they paid.

? Allan Dulles meeting Ashraf in Geneva.



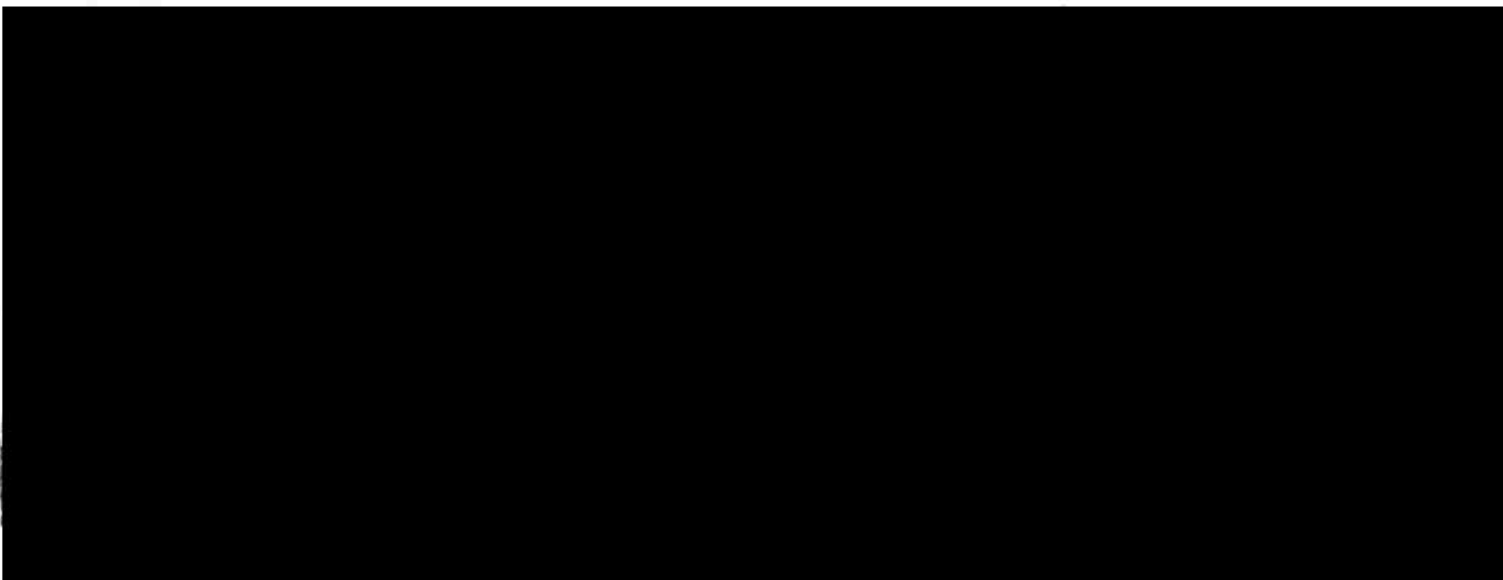
By '53, despite Eden's cold feet, the basic decision was we will go ahead with it as soon as we get the Americans in.

What happened in the talks between MI6 and the CIA -- were you actually involved?

Yes. Washington, Cyprus, Rome, London. Immediately after I had been told to reestablish contact and this must have been in about March. Then the 'Americans came in with John Waller and Donald ~~Wilbur~~ who had a certain background knowledge of Iran not because he was a member of the CIA.

No

You weren't of the impression that there were people within the CIA that did have doubts?



No

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In order to try and get the Rashidians involved to try and save the day -- would you say they did save the day?

Yes

Ardeshir

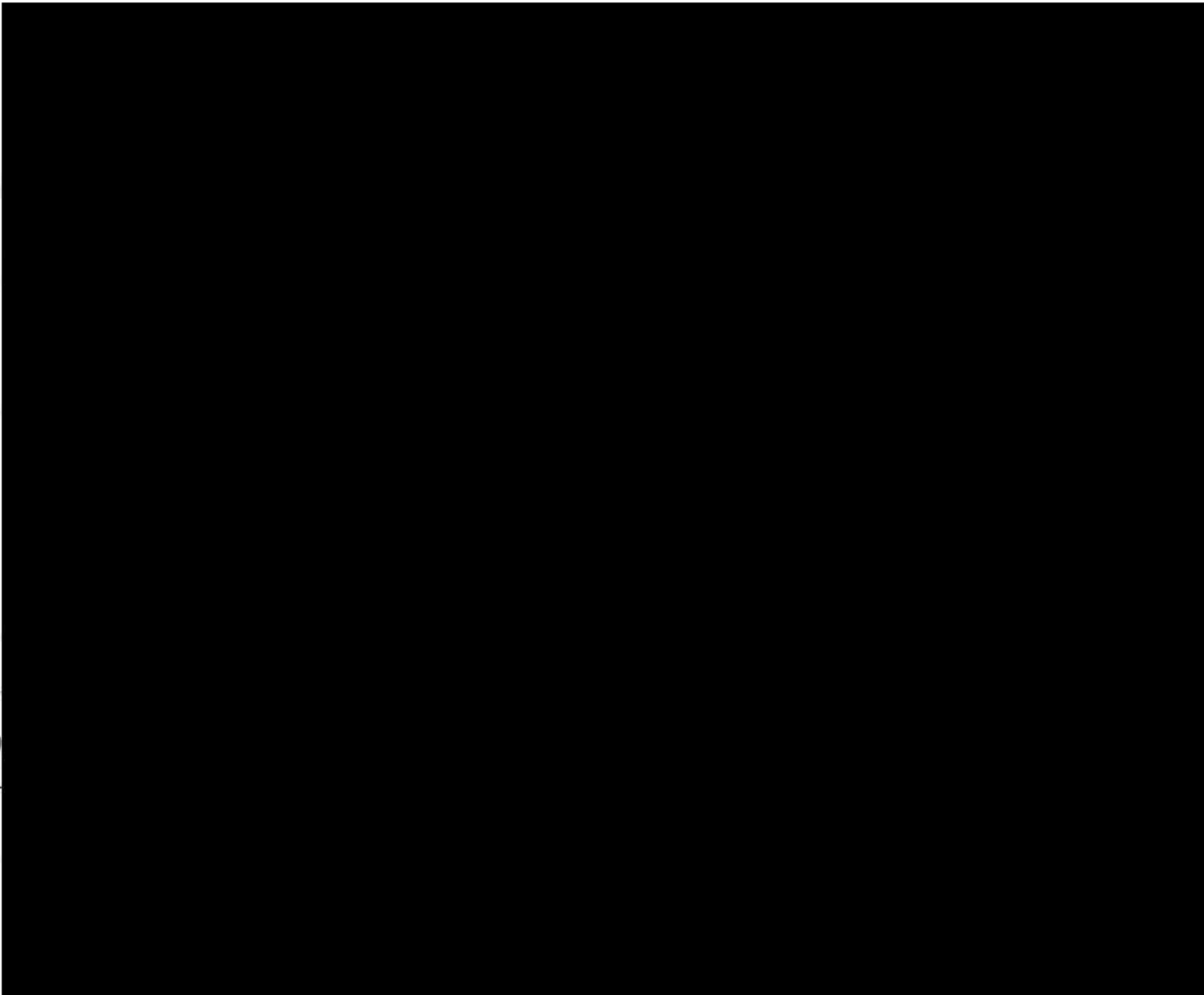
The role of/Zahedi and Farzanegan who went over to the different units?

They were to go to A Kermansha and Isfahan to get them to advance on the capitol

George Carol - CIA rebel rouser ?

That's the word. His line was 'I'd just hang the bastards' he was all for doing wild and peculiar things very wild indeed. He was the CIA's paramilitary expert, commando type and he didn't speak Persian.

How important were the journalists?



✓

Derbyshire tape 3

outcome

No

[REDACTED] Over oil: it is quite true that the Americans wanted a special position over Iranian oil -- it was clear the AIOC could never get back to what they had as more or less exclusive. Oil was discussed but not so much in political terms. tape stops comes back

KASHANI?

I think he was bought by us. I never got to the bottom of that but one didn't enquire when it had been successful. But he didn't play a role much in this. It is difficult to explain the Persian attitude to religion, as you've seen with Khomeni, the Shah grossly underestimated the religious influence in Iran, but equally so did Mossadegh (he was not by any means a religious man)

there is a thing in Iran which in Persian literally means the house of strength where they do all sorts of extraordinary athletic exercises with chains etc to the chanting of the Koran by highly trained drummer. These are the tough boys and Kashani controlled some....you could use them as street mob with the blessing of a Kashani then the more the merrier

Were we considering Kashani as a replacement for Mossadegh?

As I said I think he was bought but how far it would take him.

The letters from Middleton to Eden and foreign office: several of them say, we need to launch a coup d'etat quite soon, particularly after the Khavan thing...

YOU don't think it was the election of Eisenhower which provided the turning point but it was something in around February...

Definitely.

Timing of the operation itself. What were you waiting for?

Very simple. Signature of the Shah.

Demonstration July 21st -- important turning point because the Tudeh demonstration was far larger than the nationalist

Americans saw the danger more clearly. But they had already decided by then. Timing was solely affected by the signature of the Shah.

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Had it been even 10 days or a fortnight earlier -- Kim was there in Tehran trying to persuade him to sign -- it might have succeeded. With every passing day, word got around and word got to Mossadegh so he was ready. (I was only 29 but I had spent more or less 10 years in Iran) I think what would have happened is that you would have had Mossadegh with the country going into economic decline and promising the earth and not being able to deliver -- gradually weakening on the political pressures on the Tudeh party., egged on by the Russians, who would have certainly pressed for total abolition of proscription and then more pressure to have more members, more portfolios in the cabinet than to the Tudeh party, then eventually a takeover. Then Russia would have achieved what she always wanted: access to the ports on the gulf. The failure wasn't immediately apparent. The Russians had burnt their fingers once and they didn't want to do it quite so quickly because it was a definite failure in Azerbaijan. Stalin had just died, leadership was uncertain. (I wrote up the whole thing from beginning to end and that is definitely on file -- that's what you want but I can't lay my hands on it)---I think I could persuade them to let me see it -- officials can see their own papers)

Were the negotiations that took place in '52 essentially face-saving for the British?

D. had the man
Yes. They would have wanted to oust Mossadegh regardless of whether he would have signed an agreement favorable to the British -- eventually they would have been forced to have considered getting rid of him to prevent a Russian takeover. I am convinced that was on the cards.

Was the embargo on oil sales that was going on important in rallying the opposition?

As the economic situation worsened, the better it was for us-- it was easier for us because people began to realise that promises were empty.

If a settlement had meant starting up the oil industry again, it would not have necessarily been what you wanted

No I think we were better off getting rid of him.

The fact that these ideas were accepted by the government meant that they weren't really interested in a settlement -- Eden said so in his memoirs

They had to go through the motions, but I think they would have given him a fair chance of making that settlement stick but they would have still reserved judgement on the internal position of Mossadegh even after an agreement for strategic reasons.

How much were they to do with keeping the Americans on our side?

tape ends
tape 4

Derbyshire
tape 4

We were not getting on very well with Khavan at the time who was then Prime minister. Someone dreamt up the idea that it would be a good thing to have a free independent Persian radio broadcasting to Iran. Zaehner and I were commissioned to go to Jerusalem and using the facilities of ~~the~~ to run a free station, we got this set up and more or less ready to go on the air -- there was fighting in Jerusalem. Eventually Sharkeladar moved from Jerusalem to Cyprus where they went on being the most popular radio station in the Middle East until Suez. That was the end because it had no credibility and Nasser set up his rival station.

One person who was a senior officer in the Palestine police and eventually became a member of SIS is now retired was John Briance. He was in Iran too

Wasn't there an army officer captured with a load of membership lists of the Tudeh party in 1954?

Yes. That was when the great executions took place. People had not realised how deeply Tudeh had infiltrated the party. Had we known how much they had infiltrated it would have been all the more reason to mount it as quickly as possible (the coup)-- we knew that if they could infiltrate into the cabinet and into the army then you've got no control. With the situation of chaos in internal Russia meant that had they wanted to the Russians really couldn't have exploited the situation. They did not want to risk yet another failure following Azerbaijan -- we were lucky. It had to work then or never. The policy makers view was affected once they got American support -- everyone was in agreement that the sooner the better get it over and done with. But it was perhaps a calculated risk.

Was there no opposition to the idea of a coup (in Britain that you were aware of)?

Until we lost the oil very few people thought about it politically -- certainly didn't strike the general public.

Mossadegh's popularity.

A certain notoriety not popularity. It's like Sadat, man of the year' visiting Jerusalem -- that didn't make him a terribly popular figure.

Why were we able to do this successfully in Iran and yet it would not have succeeded in Egypt -- was it because of the calibre of the man like Nasser compared with Moassadegh? What are the factors?

No we knew there were plots going on against Farouk. It is the difference between the Iranian and the Egyptian character. The constitutional position which the Shah had was not occupied by anyone else; Nasser was a dictator who ousted Farouk -- nobody was sorry to see him go

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