

Documents Related To The 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran

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Foreword

This is a collection of documents related to the 1953 Coup D'etat in Iran.

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1 US Embassy : The assesment of Dr. Mossadeq's tiral (1953/11/13)

Source

You may obtain the original of these documents from the US National Archives
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Electronic copy was posted to iran-news@neda.com on August 19, 1998 by
"rbajoghli@juno.com (Rahim Bajoghli)"

Document

Minutes

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TRIAL OF DR. MUSADDIQ

1. Mr. Wilson of U.S. Embassy has given us a most useful assessment of the trial so far , as reported by Mr. Handerson.
2. Although at the outset the prosecutor had maintained a high standard in his initial address and the president of the Court had handled Musaddiq with wit and tact during the first two days, the proceedings had had generated after November 10 when it appear that there had been a decision to allow Musaddiq to hold the floor almost indefinitely whether or not his remarks had any relevance to the proceedings. Musaddiq 's tactics had thus given him a large measure of control over the character of that trial and no effective steps had been taken to counter the effective of his declaration that this was a political trial in which he must be allowed to discuss political subjects. The Court officials, who had started by trying to construct SERIOUS CASE had tended increasingly to rely on DEMAGOGUERY. little order is apparently being kept in the court, photographers move about constantly and in the pauses journalists and other observers are allowed to talk with the number of the Court , the Prosecution and the Defence.
3. The U. S. Embassy in Tehran consider that Musaddiq's trial with all the publicity could be a SERIOUS BLUNDER. The extensive press coverage with photographs is capable of arousing public opinion in his favour. The trial they think is allowing him to assume the status of fully- fledged opponent of the Government and may rebound greatly to his advantage.
4. It appears that General Zahidi is conscious of this and told Mr. Henderson on November 11 that he had no control over the trial, which is being held under military auspices and thus is the responsibility of the Chief-of-Staff and in the last analysis the Shah. One of the Shah's Private Secretaries has told a member of the U.S. Embassy that he had argued unsuccessfully with the Shah to persuade him to change his mind and adopt a secret and speedy court martial procedure.

C. T. Gandy.

November 13, 1953.

2 Brithish Embassy : FEELINGS IN PERSIA TOWARDS THE BRITISH (1954/2/13)

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Document

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EP 1051/12 PERSIA
February
16, 1954
Section 2

FEELINGS IN PERSIA TOWARDS THE BRITISH

Mr. Wright to Mr. Eden. (Received February 16)
(No. 10. Confidential) Tehran,
February 13, 1954.

Sir;

In my despatch No. 9 of 12th of February I endeavoured to assess political developments in Persia in recent months. I now have the honour to submit my impressions of feelings in Persia toward the British. I am very conscious that it is hazardous to do this at the best of times and my very short experience here makes it even more so, but it should, I think, be attempted at this time. THE COMPLICATED WAYS OF THE PERSIAN MIND DO NOT MAKE THE TASK ANY EASIER.

2. While we cannot hope to re-establish friendly relation on a firm

basis until the oil questions is settled, PROGRESS TOWARDS A SETTLEMENT WILL DEPEND PARTLY ON OUR ABILITY TO RESTORE BELIEF IN OUR GOODWILL. The first task obviously, is to gain the confidence of Persian Government. In this we have, I think, some success. I am told that the Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs have, following our acceptance of THE CONSORTIUM IDEA, BEEN AGREEABLY IMPRESS BY HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENTS APPROACH TO OIL QUESTION ; and that they are pleased with the Embassy's director behaviour; such as our refusal to entertain intriguers; and with Her Majesty's Government's willingness not to insist on the introduction of senior staff with previous Persian experience, a point on which I find them still somewhat sensitive.

3. Against this must be set a certain coolness on the part of the Shah, Nettled by my refusal to negotiate with his emissaries behind his Government's back he refuse to see me until two nights ago when he gave a reception to celebrate the anniversary of his wedding , from which it would have been difficult to exclude me. In the event he showed himself agreeable and friendly. I hope to have made some progress towards convincing him of our good will in the course of a conversation on which I am reporting separately.

4. Although articulated opinion in the western sense does not exist here, public emotions, stimulated by Dr. Musaddiq, have found expression in recent years more readily and more continuously than before. The nationalist hysteria of the last two years will not easily be forgotten, nor will its predominantly anti-British focus. Outward appearances are misleading. The press is becoming increasingly cordial, but it is rarely a reliable guide and certainly not under the present government's censorship, in direct though it is. In the first few weeks the natural caution of all but a few persians made them reluctant to meet us, but many, including members of government, are now adapting a more forthcoming attitude. some of these are genuinely frindly, the others only professedly so. even those who are reputedly anglophobe have been studiously polite. I have received only one threatening letter (unsigned), and we have encountered no hostile demonstration. anti british outbursts have come only from professional haters such as Ayatullah Kashani and Navab Safavi of the Fidayan-i-Islam.

5. The superficial impression, therefore is that anti-British feeling in Persia is no deep-rooted or widespread and might be regarded merely as a relic of Dr. Musaddiq's propaganda. On the other hand, some frienfly and informed observers maintain that most Persians distrust us and many actively dislike us. This view is expressed too often and too convincingly to be ignoredd. Its components consider that apart from the

fantastics, our most determined enemies are to be found among the younger educated Persians of what elsewhere would be the middle classes. These may not have amounted to much in the past, except as trouble-makers, but their influence is bound to be felt increasingly. AMONGST THE MASS OF THE PEOPLE, WHICH IS NOT CAPABLE OF ANY BUT THE RUDER PROCESSES OF POLITICAL THOUGHT, DR. MUSADDIQ'S ACTION AGAINST THE ANGLO-IRANIAN OIL COMPANY (A.I.O.C) AND THE EMBASSY REGARD AS THE NATIONAL VICTORY. THIS THE IS A FACT WHICH WE SHOULD NOT FORGET. Our return and the resumption of talks on oil are bound to revive their suspicions which, given the opportunity, could once again be fanned into active dislike.

6. Criticism of the British is based on the often distant past. There exists a genuine belief that the British in recent decades have failed to comprehend the true interests of Persia and have at times behaved as if Persian feelings could, in the last analysis, be disregarded. The 1907 Anglo-Russian Agreement and Lord Curzon's 1919 Treaty will, for many years to come, remain at the back of the Persian mind, the one as proof of our duplicity, and the other of our disregard of Persia's susceptibilities. Specific charges levelled at us are:

(a) interference by the company and by British authorities in Persia's internal affairs;

(b) the " three voices " of British policy in Persia, those of the company, the previous Government of India and the Government of the United Kingdom in that order of importance

(c) the " colonial " treatment of Persians by the British in general and the A.I.O.C. in particular.

As regards criticism (a) many Persians are firmly convinced that the embassy and the company had and used the power to make and break past Persian Governments and to influence Government appointments even at the lowest level. Criticism (b) is less easy to apply to the present day, though fears are expressed that the A.I.O.C. Will, as they put it, continue to dictate to Her Majesty's Government. It explains the Persian Government's

reluctance to re admit " old Persian hands " since they fear that such people cannot help but be contaminated by the past. It is also sometimes argued that the United Kingdom, which has so many social and political achievements to its credit in its own country and elsewhere, has rarely if ever in recent years shown its true self in British policy towards Persia; (c) is the criticism most often voiced and the most difficult to refute. Episodes

such as the refusal of the then British Club in Tehran to admit Persians, even as visitors, until the late Shah forced them to do so by legislation have left their mark, A further example, which I have heard quoted by Persians who knew Abadan in the A.I.O.C. days, was the existence of social barriers between the British and the Persian employees. The facilities provided for the Persians were often excellent but it is the discrimination, in contrast to the equality with which many of them were treated as students in England, which is remembered.

7. The situation is complicated by a continuing and widespread belief in our mystical and all-pervading powers. For example, I have received a letter from an editor asking me to ensure his election to the Majlis for Khorramshahr " or any other district which I may deem convenient." I am told that, whatever I might reply, the gentleman in question would probably lay his electoral success or failure at our door. This attitude helps to explain certain curious Persian theories such as that there is a British Tudeh Party distinct from the Soviet-inspired party (a belief recently expressed to an American journalist by the Minister of Court, Mr. Husain Ala), and that Dr. Mussadiq is a British agent.

8. Xenophobia, corruption, intrigue, agitation and a strong inferiority complex are at the root of the Persians' suspicion of all foreigners. Indeed, they find it very difficult to trust each other. Given their character, it is only natural that they should distrust particularly those countries which have long been closely connected with their own. As I have said above, we have no direct evidence that anti-British feeling in this country is still serious. But the secondhand evidence seems to me convincing, and I have no doubt that it will take much patient work to impress the Persians with our good faith. Some, of course, will never be persuaded.

9. Persuasion will not be easy. The Persians must have someone to blame for their own shortcomings, and we seem to have become well established as one of the principal whipping-boys. The Russians, who probably share this role with us, are nearer and more frightening, and fear in Persia is a great inducer of outward respect.

10. In present circumstances there is little positive action which we can take to influence opinion. It is encouraging that the Government appear to be making genuine efforts to depict us favourably, But a reasonable oil settlement will do more than any words, provided that its benefits soon become apparent in readily tangible form throughout the country. It is also, I believe, incumbent on this embassy to make a great effort to broaden its contacts with the university, the young

intellectuals, and the growing middle classes of the country.

11. I am sending copies of this despatch to Her Majesty's Representatives at Washington and at the B.M.E.O., Fayid, and Beirut.

I have, &c.
DENIS A. H. WRIGHT.