

VIII. "THE SHAH IS VICTORIOUS"

While on the 18th only [REDACTED] had published the imperial firman naming Zahedi as Prime Minister, on 19 August, as soon as the city was awake, early risers could see photostats or type-set copies of the firman in the papers Setareh Islam, Asia Javanan, Aram, Mard-i-Asia, Mellat-i-Ma and the Journal de Tehran. The first four of these papers, and Shahed and Dad in addition, ran an alleged interview with Zahedi which stressed that his government was the only legal one in existence--an interview that had been fabricated by [REDACTED]. Somewhat later in the morning the first of many thousand broadsheets which carried a photostatic copy of the firman and the text of the Zahedi statement appeared on the streets. Although each of these newspapers had a normal circulation of restricted size, the news they carried was undoubtedly flashed through the city by word of mouth, for before 0900 hours pro-Shah groups were assembling in the bazaar area. Members of these groups had not only made their personal choice between Mossadeq and the Shah, but they were stirred up by the Tudeh activity of the preceding day and were ready to move. They needed only leadership.

Even before the day had dawned [REDACTED] having been informed that a pro-Shah statement by the

S E C R E T

ranking religious leader, Ayatollah Borujerdi, might be forthcoming during the day, had made definite preparations to utilize any such statement. [redacted] and two of their most energetic sub-agents, [redacted] were down at the bazaar section with a jeep and trucks ready to set out for Qazvin. Their plan was to print broadsheets at this town some 85 miles west of Tehran should it appear that the Mossadeq government had increased its attempted stranglehold on the urban press. As soon as they noticed that the pro-Shah groups were gathering, [redacted] [redacted] rushed to supply the needed leadership. [redacted] accompanied one group in its progress toward the Majlis, and on the way incited them to set fire to the offices of Bakhtar-i-Emruz, the semi-official paper owned by Minister of Foreign Affairs Fatemi, which on the 17th and 18th had printed most bitter and scurrilous attacks on the person of the Shah. About the same time [redacted] led other elements toward the offices of the Tudeh papers Shahbaz, Be⁵zuye Ayandeh, and Javanan-i-Democrat, all of which were thoroughly sacked.

The news that something quite startling was happening spread at great speed throughout the city. Just when it reached Mossadeq, who was meeting with members of his cabinet, is not known. By 0900 hours the station did have

S E C R E T

this news, and by 1000 hours word had come in that both the Bakhtar-i-Emruz office and the headquarters of the Iran Party had been ransacked. Also about 1000 hours contact was established with the Rashidian brothers who seemed full of glee. Their instructions, as well as orders directed to [REDACTED] were now to attempt to swing the security forces to the side of the demonstrators and to encourage action for the capture of Radio Tehran. To what extent the resulting activity stemmed from the specific efforts of all our agents will never be known, although many more details of the excitement of the day may slowly come to light.

Fairly early in the morning Colonel [REDACTED] one of those involved in the staff planning, appeared in the square before the Majlis with a tank which he had secured from the Second Battalion of the Second Armored Brigade, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Lt. Col. [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and Captain [REDACTED] were on hand and were joined by two trucks from the same battalion, while members of the disbanded Imperial Guard seized trucks and drove through the streets. By 1015 hours there were pro-Shah truckloads of military personnel at all the main squares.

While small groups had penetrated to the north of the city by 0930 hours, the really large groups, armed

S E C R E T

with sticks and stones, came from south Tehran and merged as they reached Sepah Square in their progress north toward the center of the city. There the troops held in readiness fired hundreds of shots over the heads of the crowd, but apparently were not willing to fire at these partisans of the Shah. As a result the crowds were able to fan out toward key points. Just up Lalezar, a main shopping street, the Saadi theater, long sponsored by the Tudeh Party, was burned. The surging crowds of men, women, and children were shouting, "Shah piruz ast," (The Shah is victorious). Determined as they seemed, a gay holiday atmosphere prevailed, and it was as if exterior pressures had been released so that the true sentiments of the people showed through. The crowds were not, as in earlier weeks, made up of hoodlums, but included people of all classes--many well dressed--led or encouraged by other civilians. Trucks and busloads of cheering civilians streamed by and when, about noon, five tanks and 20 truckloads of soldiers joined it, the movement took on a somewhat different aspect. As usual, word spread like lightning and in other parts of the city pictures of the Shah were eagerly displayed. Cars went by with headlights burning as a tangible indication of loyalty to the ruler.

At about 1030 hours, General Riahi informed Mossadeq

S E C R E T

that he no longer controlled the army and asked for relief, but Mossadeq visited his office and told him to hold firm. Colonel Montaz was able to assemble only one battalion and disposed that force around Mossadeq's house.

About noon separate elements composing the crowds began to receive direct leadership from the military and police. Those army officers previously alerted to take part in the military operations provided by TPAJAX were now taking separate but proper individual action. By 1300 hours the central headquarters of the telegraph office on Sepah Square had fallen into royalist hands. The AP man filed a cable there shortly after 1300 hours giving a brief report on the fighting. Then fighting moved a few hundred yards away to the police headquarters and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs building just across the wide avenue from it. Defenders of the police station held out until nearly 1600 hours.

Also about noon, Roosevelt went to the houses where Generals Zahedi and [REDACTED] were in hiding. They were both fully informed of the events of the morning and told to wait for instructions. An hour later Carroll and Persian-speaking Major William R. Keyser (Assistant US Military Attache) reported on the military situation. By early afternoon more of the important objectives in the

center of the city, such as the press and propaganda offices, had been taken over by the royalists. With important facilities under control, it was possible to begin the dispatch of streams of telegrams to the provinces urging them to rise in support of the Shah. Even during the greatest heat of the day there was no slackening of activity. Station agent [REDACTED] was still on the streets and, finding a crowd on Firdausi Avenue, urged them to go to military police headquarters and demand the release of Colonel [REDACTED] and General [REDACTED]. This they did. The soldiers on guard put up no resistance. Meanwhile agent General [REDACTED] was touring the city in his car attempting to round up members of the Imperial Guard, soldiers who later took part in the attack on Mossadeq's house. Early in the afternoon the crowds did collect around the approaches to Mossadeq's residence. By this time he had probably already left.

Radio Tehran was a most important target, for its capture not only sealed the success at the capital, but was effective in bringing the provincial cities quickly into line with the new government. During the heat of activity, it broadcast dull discussions of cotton prices, and finally music only. Already at 1030 hours there had been an interruption of its schedule, but it was not until

S E C R E T

early afternoon that people began streaming up the broad avenue toward their goal, some three miles to the north. Buses and trucks bore full loads of civilians, army officers and policemen. Sheer weight of numbers seemed to have overwhelmed the defenders of the radio station, and after a brief struggle in which three deaths were reported, at 1412 hours the station was in royalist hands. At 1420 hours it broadcast the first word of the success of the royalist effort, including a reading of the firman. A stream of eager speakers came to the microphone. Some represented elements upon whom reliance had been placed in TPAJAX planning, while others were quite unknown to the station. Among the former elements were opposition papers [REDACTED] one of [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. Among spontaneous supporters of the Shah to come to the microphone were Colonel Ali Pahlevan and Major Husand Mirzadian: their presence was the proof--no longer required--of the truth of the TPAJAX assumption that the army would rally to the Shah under just such circumstances. For some period of time, Radio Tehran was alternately on and off the air. It may have been finally put into good operating condition by those engineers who, as one speaker said, had come along for just such a purpose. Here, as in so many other phases, chance served the cause

S E C R E T

very well, for, had the original defenders of the radio station managed to damage its facilities, the firm control of the capital might have been delayed.

At the Embassy, station personnel were following the broadcasts of Radio Tehran, and were elated when it suddenly fell into royalist hands. Once again Roosevelt set off toward the hiding place of his valuable charges, meeting them a little before 1600 hours. Told it was time for them to play an active role, both promptly dressed for the occasion. It was agreed that General Zahedi should meet General [REDACTED] at 1630 hours on a certain street corner with a tank, and should proceed with this vehicle to Radio Tehran where Zahedi would speak to the nation. General [REDACTED] was taken from the house by Major [REDACTED] in a jeep; and then along the way, when he spied two Air Force officers, he asked to be let out, saying he would take care of everything. Right on the street these officers greeted him warmly and when he said he would like a tank, they soon rounded one up. Asked if he knew where Zahedi was, he said he did and that he had an appointment to meet him at 1630 hours. His comrades pressured him to make immediate rendezvous with Zahedi, so he directed the tank toward the compound in which the house sheltering Zahedi was situated. Zahedi emerged and the tank set off

S E C R E T

again. At 1725 hours Zahedi spoke over Radio Tehran, and this speech was repeated a little after 2100 hours that evening.

However, Zahedi had been preceded on the air by [REDACTED] [REDACTED] In the dash back from [REDACTED] [REDACTED] car had broken down completely at about the halfway mark, but he was able to get an uncomfortable ride the rest of the way in an oil tank truck. He arrived in Tehran by morning and contacted the station. At the latter's urgent instructions, [REDACTED] sent a telegram to Colonel [REDACTED] which message contained a code phrase* signalling [REDACTED] to lead his division on forced march to Tehran. An interesting sidelight concerning [REDACTED] march to Tehran** occurred en route at Hamadan. The division entered Hamadan just as the local Tudeh Party was holding a large pro-Mossadeq demonstration. [REDACTED] quelled the demonstration in short order. The astonishment of the Tudeh on seeing the [REDACTED] division enter Hamadan was exceeded only by that of the town mayor.

Within Tehran proper the last nests of resistance were being subdued. The Chief of Staff headquarters gave in at

* "Am coming today to see my sick sister."
** The division actually arrived after Tehran was already in Royalist hands.

S E C R E T

the end of the afternoon, and before 1900 hours Mossadeq's house was taken and soon turned into a shambles. Its belongings were dragged out into the street and sold to passersby. Reactions were also being reported from the provinces. At 1450 hours the regional station at Sanandaj in Kurdistan suddenly went off the air. At 1555 hours Radio Tabriz reported the capture of the station itself by forces loyal to the Shah, and stated that all of Azerbaijan was in the hands of the army. As it continued broadcasting, it became apparent that one of the speakers, [REDACTED] and an effective sub-agent of station assets had played an important role in events at Tabriz. By 1800 hours the station at Isfahan was on the air with strong statements in favor of the Shah and Zahedi by such elements as local editors, a member of Baghai's Toiler's Party, religious leaders, and staff officers--all groups which we had hoped would react in this fashion. Not until 2000 hours did the radio station at Kerman proclaim loyalty to the new government. Meshed Radio was not heard from at all, but the religious-minded town turned Loyalist almost immediately after the news of the change had been sent out over Radio Tehran. Known Tudehites were pursued and shops of Tudeh sympathizers looted.

S E C R E T

Colonel [REDACTED] following Zahedi's instructions, and Carroll now closed up the operation. While [REDACTED] had [REDACTED] --at that office-- kept in touch by phone and placed known supporters of TPAJAX in command of all units of the Tehran garrison, seized key military targets, and executed the arrest lists.

As the afternoon drew to its close, Radio Tehran seemed to get down to a less haphazard schedule. From 1800 hours on, it made short announcements of government appointees. At 1845 hours the Associated Press representative and the New York Times man made fairly brief statements on the events of the day, intended for their home offices. Brief government communiques dealt with curfew hours, contained warnings against demonstrations, etc. A general news summary at 2100 hours was followed by a statement from Zahedi, installed in the office of the Chief of Police, and before 2200 hours the station had signed off for the night. The hectic day was over and curfew now in effect. Lives had been lost, but not nearly as many as stated in the white heat of the actual events. The security forces were firmly in control and well prepared to destroy any counter-effort.

How had other interested parties weathered the exciting day? One such must have felt real anguish. This was the

S E C R E T

USSR and its people in Iran. Radio Moscow lagged far behind the rest of the world and did not put out a summary of the day's events at Tehran until 2300 hours GMT. Its Persian program that reached Iran early in the afternoon was built around the text of the earlier Pravda article entitled "The Failure of the American Adventure in Iran," and this program was repeated early in the evening. The same Pravda article was broadcast throughout the late afternoon and early evening from Moscow in English, Arabic, Bulgarian, Polish, Czech and Slovak, German, Dutch, Italian, Portuguese, and Turkish, although by that time nearly everyone of its listeners must have known that this material was no longer applicable.

The other parties to the original plan felt elated, and possibly even self-satisfied. While the reactions of the Shah at Rome are rather beyond the scope of this account, one or two of his remarks are worth citing as they bear upon some of the original assumptions of the TPAJAX plan. He said, "It was my people who have shown me that they were faithful to the monarchy and that two and a half years of false propaganda were not enough," and again, "My country didn't want the Communists and therefore has been faithful to me."

At Nicosia the earliest FBIS intercepts had not been

S E C R E T

translated and distributed until nearly mid-afternoon local time. As word passed from Leavitt to Darbyshire, the latter became so excited that he drove his friend right to his office outside of the town, something he and his associates had always avoided doing in earlier weeks.

Headquarters had its first word of what the day was to bring just before 0900 hours when someone burst in from the hall pouring out what at first seemed to be a bad joke--in view of the depression that still hung on from the day before--the news that Mossadeq was on the way out. Throughout the morning, the afternoon, and until late that night people hurried down the corridors with fresh slips of ticker tape. During the entire day only two TPAJAX cables were received from the station. However, it was a day that should never have ended for it carried with it such a sense of excitement, of satisfaction, and of jubilation that it is doubtful whether any other can come up to it. Our trump card had prevailed and the Shah was victorious.

S E C R E T

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
HISTORIAN'S NOTE	1
SUMMARY	iii
I. PRELIMINARY STEPS	1
II. DRAFTING THE PLAN	5
III. CONSOLIDATING THE OPERATIONAL PLAN	12
IV. THE DECISIONS ARE MADE: ACTIVITY BEGINS	16
V. MOUNTING PRESSURE AGAINST THE SHAH	22
VI. THE FIRST TRY	39
VII. APPARENT FAILURE	44
VIII. "THE SHAH IS VICTORIOUS"	65
IX. REPORT TO LONDON	78
X. WHAT WAS LEARNED FROM THE OPERATION	85

APPENDICES

- A Initial Operational Plan for TPAJAX, as Cabled from Nicosia to Headquarters on 1 June 1953
- B "London" Draft of the TPAJAX Operational Plan
- C Foreign Office Memorandum of 23 July 1953 from British Ambassador Makins to Under Secretary of State Smith
- D Report on Military Planning Aspect of TPAJAX
- E Military Critique - Lessons Learned from TPAJAX re Military Planning Aspects of Coup d'Etat