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PRIME MINISTER MOSSADEGH AND AYATULLAH KASHANI FROM UNITY TO ENMITY:  
AS VIEWED FROM THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IN TEHRAN,  
JUNE 1950 - AUGUST 1953



by

WOLFGANG KURT KRESSIN, B.S.  
CAPTAIN, U.S. AIR FORCE

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REPORT

146 pp.

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of  
The University of Texas at Austin  
in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements  
for the Degree of  
MASTER OF ARTS

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

May 1991

## ABSTRACT

This report studies the strains inherent to Iranian secular-religious union as highlighted in the early 1950s by the political relationship between the two top leaders of Iran, Dr Mossadegh and Ayatullah Kashani. The narrative of their relationship begins in June 1950 with their initial unity of purpose, a nationalist, anti-imperialist alliance which overwhelmed all other political forces to take control of the government and British oil concessions in Iran. Western resistance to their government ensued and internal opposition slowly increased. The story continues through stages of economic and political deterioration until Kashani turned on his partner and assisted U.S., British, and the Shah's covert operators in ousting Prime Minister Mossadegh in 1953.

State Department Decimal Files are used to present the American perspective of the political alliance between Dr Mossadegh and Ayatullah Kashani. Other scholarly views are used when the evidence parallels the American view or fills in historical data. By using this methodology, the stages in the rise and fall of Mossadegh's regime are quite discernible and directly contingent on the viability of the Mossadegh-Kashani relationship. In essence, this study is also primarily a comment on American intelligence assessments and the mechanics of intervention in Iranian affairs which analyzed and exploited the differences between the two leaders.

In the run of this narrative/exposition, the force of Shii nationalism is also explained: how it was repopularized in this period, and how Kashani's brand of religious nationalism reacquainted Iran's Shii establishment with their influence over the populace and political affairs. Half by coincidence and half by design, an awakened Shii nationalism was disgraced by Kashani's perfidy and the impact of the CIA-led coup of August 1953, America's "original sin" in the Middle East. America's reputation as "The Great Satan" began.

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## NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION

The system of transliteration used in this report is a modified version of that used by IJMES; the common spelling of names such as Reza and Tehran has been retained with the exception of Mossadegh, which is spelled in the same manner as he spelled it; all diacritical marks for Middle Eastern words have been omitted to facilitate easier reading.

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## INTRODUCTION

### HEAT IN TEHRAN

During an attempt to mediate the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute in 1951, the American negotiator, Averell Harriman, and his translator, Vernon Walters, felt the oppressive summer heat in Tehran. Both men searched for some relief from the 120-degree midday heat and from unfruitful negotiations. They soon discovered that a satisfying solution for both Britain and Iran was as difficult to find as air-conditioning in the capital city. The Prime Minister of Iran, Dr. Muhammad Mossadegh, would not accept the American suggestions for a compromise. But Harriman did not give up easily on his main task.

Harriman recognized that anti-imperialist hardliners close to Mossadegh were pressuring the sixty-nine year old Prime Minister not to compromise on the Iranian nationalization of Iranian oil and the fixed assets of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC). This impasse, Harriman thought, might be broken and pressure on Mossadegh averted by talking with the religious leader who seemed to be the source of some intransigence, Ayatullah Sayyid Abulqasim Kashani. Despite some difficulty, the meeting was arranged. In the meeting Harriman tried to convince Kashani that the nationalization of the oil industry was too radical a step to eliminate British influence in Iran. At one point Kashani told the experienced diplomat that Americans "knew nothing about the British, who were the most evil people in the world." Then the interview deteriorated, according to Walters:

The mullah, looking extremely crafty and stroking his beard,



asked Mr. Harriman, "Mr. Harriman, have you ever heard of Major Embry?" "No," replied Mr. Harriman, shaking his head, "I have never heard of him." "Well," said the mullah, "He was an American who came to Iran in 1911 or 1912. He dabbled in oil, which was none of his business, and aroused the hatred of the people. One day, walking in Tehran, he was shot down in the street, but he was not killed. They took him to the hospital. The enraged mob followed to the hospital, burst into the hospital and butchered him on the operating table." The mullah looked at Mr. Harriman and said, "Do you understand?"

Harriman did not appreciate this implied threat. He sternly refused to be intimidated by Kashani, who still "maintained his rigid position" in the fruitless meeting, which ended on a strange note:

The mullah accused Mossadegh of being pro-British and added ominously, "If Mossadegh yields, his blood will flow like Razmara's [the previous Prime Minister, who was assassinated by a religious fanatic]." And since we all felt that the mullah had something to do with Razmara's death, this was tantamount to a threat against Dr. Mossadegh's life. We were certain that if he made the threat to us, he had also conveyed it to Mossadegh and that this was one of the factors contributing to the old man's reluctance to reach some sort of agreement.<sup>1</sup>

Harriman and Walters were never able to come to terms with the Iranian leaders or the heat. They left Iran later that summer feeling rather despondent.

Almost thirty years later, the years of Mossadegh's government -- the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute and its fruitless negotiations, the eruption of Iranian nationalism and its quick suppression by a royalist, military countercoup with covert, foreign undertones -- seem distant and somewhat puzzling to Western scholars. Even less discernible is the truth behind the Kashani enigma. Scholars who defend Mossadegh and everything he stood for paint the Ayatullah as unruly and as a traitor to Mossadegh's movement. Other writers who are interested in legitimizing clerical rule in Iran treat Kashani as the dominant force in a popular movement that tried to extinguish all foreign influence in Iran. The obscure truth is framed by such views.

Unfortunately, details of Kashani's relationship to Mossadegh, his motives and his intrigues are scant in Western sources and very difficult to acquire in Iran. The primary sources of evidence in understanding his behavior and impact on the Mossadegh government are his many recorded declarations, interviews, and overt activities. Most scholars emphasize the Ayatullah's public announcements, finding good ammunition in his vacillating messages intended for mass consumption. Important patterns of Kashani's overt activities receive less emphasis.

Decimal files of the U.S. State Department provide an overview of the relationship between Kashani and Mossadegh. Intelligence officers in the American embassy in Tehran had the tasks of collecting, recording, analyzing, and reporting information on Iranian power politics, particularly concerning internal political

relationships. They concentrated largely on Kashani's and Mossadegh's overt and covert statements and activities, and they noted the changing pattern of behavior between the two leaders. The Americans wanted to analyze the strengths and vulnerabilities of the main political alliance in Iran so that they could determine ways in which to defend or assert American influence in Iran. By sharing some of the intelligence assessments which have been declassified, we can follow the ups and downs of the Kashani-Mossadegh relationship as seen through contemporaneous American eyes.

The American assessments include cultural prejudices and Cold War mentalities. In the early 1950s a worldwide communist threat seriously challenged the interests of the free world. The Korean War raged, mainland China and Eastern Europe were red, the Vietminh struggled against French imperialism, and Senator McCarthy whipped up hysteria about communist infiltration in the United States. Some American government administrators were also concerned about an apparently deteriorating situation in Iran. The Soviet menace threatened to the immediate north of Iran and the world's largest reserves of oil. Mossadegh claimed to be neutral, but neutrality in this global struggle could be a liability. The Americans believed that Mossadegh's Iran, at best, was not an ideal bulwark against a communist push to the south. The nationalization of Iranian oil locked Mossadegh's regime in a political, legal, and economic struggle against America's main ally, the British. Fruitless negotiations and American mediation, economic blockade led by the

British, and anti-Western reaction by the Iranian government and masses were the salient features of a resulting internal economic and political deterioration in Iran. The Americans saw Mossadegh's regime, at worst, as abetting Iranian communists (the Tudeh Party) and the Soviets, who were waiting for the right time to take advantage of the instability and march in tandem through the streets of Tehran. The American press reinforced this view, consistently describing the Iranian nationalist movement as communist-inspired. The press also portrayed Mossadegh as a dictatorial madman.<sup>2</sup> All of these various mind sets influenced the assessments coming out of Tehran.

Key individuals formed the inside American view of Iranian politics. Chief among them was Loy Henderson, who became the U.S. Ambassador to Iran in September 1951. Henderson was born in Arkansas in 1892, received a law degree from Northwestern University, and began a long, distinguished foreign service career in the 1920s. Robert Kelly, who trained such prominent anti-communists as George Kennan and Charles Bohlen, was Henderson's superior in the Eastern European office in the 1920s. Henderson served in the 1930s in Moscow, where firsthand experience of Stalinism undoubtedly contributed to his enduring anti-communist world view. The Soviets eventually requested that Henderson leave the embassy, because they could not work with him. During the last two years of the Second World War, Henderson served as Envoy to Iraq, where he developed his smooth, personal diplomatic style with the Arabs and the British. He

also developed an affinity for them and valuable future contacts in the Middle East. After the war, when he served in Washington in the Near East division, he angered the Truman administration because he was against the formation of a Zionist state in Palestine. Truman transferred him from Washington to South Asia in 1948, giving the impression that the administration had rid itself of a notorious pro-Arab anti-Semite. The professional exile next served as ambassador to India and Nepal. While in India, the Korean War began, and Henderson leaned on Nehru to support the U.N. effort. He was sent to Iran in September 1951 because of his friendships with Iranian diplomats, his ability to work well with the British, his well-known anti-communist awareness, and his thorough professionalism in the field.<sup>3</sup>

Ambassador Henderson developed an intimate yet slanted understanding of the Kashani-Mossadegh relationship. In addition to the Cold War climate, a strong personal belief that the Soviets were bent on world domination influenced Ambassador Henderson's assessments; Mossadegh's regime either had to be significantly supported to withstand Soviet pressure, or it had to be ousted in favor of a pro-Western Iranian government. He concentrated on discovering and exploiting rifts in the Kashani-Mossadegh strategic alliance to achieve these objectives.

Henderson's predecessor, Henry Grady, was not as personable a diplomat or leader. Grady had been sent to Iran to primarily manage the technical aspects of American aid, which the Iranians never

properly commended. But the Iranians received more sympathy from Grady than from Henderson. He understood and favored their national aspirations. He also did not respect British foreign policy or AIOC's obduracy. An American diplomat who served with both ambassadors said, "Grady must be given credit for taking on the British when he realized they (and we with them) were heading for disaster."<sup>4</sup> He was not so interested in disrupting the links in the Kashani-Mossadegh alliance, as he felt inclined to relay the images of its overwhelming popular strength at a time when the Iranian nationalist crusade against the British was at a fever pitch.

This paper uses the biased evidence of American observers in Iran to present their perspective of the political alliance between Dr. Mossadegh and Ayatullah Kashani. Other scholarly views are used when the evidence parallels the American view or fills in historical data. By using this methodology, the stages in the rise and fall of Mossadegh's regime are quite discernible and directly contingent on the viability of the Kashani-Mossadegh relationship.

The Americans were well aware of the connection between the viability of the Kashani-Mossadegh relationship and the overall strength of the regime. They recognized that Kashani's support of Mossadegh was not deep-seated. Kashani supported only a narrowly-defined component of Mossadegh's mission, the expulsion of foreign influence from Iran. Taking his cues from other opposition circles, he was opposed largely to Mossadegh's methods almost from the start. In the American view, Kashani always was trying to

improve his position where he could impress his notions on Mossadegh and guide the national movement. This political maneuvering often disrupted Mossadegh's plans and policies. Yet the Prime Minister's popularity, stemming from a persona that embodied most of the facets of the struggle against imperialism, dominated the relationship and thwarted Kashani's efforts to garner an opposing national sentiment. Kashani did not succeed in his efforts to win a commanding popular mandate to manage the struggle with different means. On the other hand, Kashani could not be discarded easily. In short, the Americans viewed the Kashani-Mossadegh relationship as inherently weak, based only on an initial mutual interest. The alliance between the two Iranian leaders was faced with the heavy task of steering nationalist Iran through economic and political deterioration, but it collapsed largely due to its own weakness.

Another interesting development of this period was the reemergence of a popular religious nationalism. The Americans recognized that when religious and secular nationalism were truly combined, Mossadegh's movement was too powerful to challenge. Yet when Kashani was sufficiently encouraged by others who were opposed to Mossadegh, he broke from the Prime Minister and the buttressing effect was lost. Mossadegh was then vulnerable to the opposition's final assault which ended in the coup of 19 August 1953.

### Endnotes for the Introduction

<sup>1</sup>Vernon A. Walters, Silent Missions (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company Inc, 1978), 255-256.

<sup>2</sup>William A. Dorman and Mansour Farhang, The U.S. Press and Iran: Foreign Policy and the Journalism of Deference (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1987), 31-62. This work has representative selections from the press which show the press' subjectivity and negative influence on American decision-makers during the Mossadegh years. Another work that has good selections is the essay by James A. Bill, "America, Iran, and the Politics of Intervention, 1951-1953," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 261-295. See also Henry C. Atyeo, "Political Developments in Iran, 1951-1954," Middle Eastern Affairs 5 (Aug-Sep 1954): 249-259, and George Lenczowski, "Iran's Deepening Crisis," Current History 24 (April 1953): 230-236, for two contemporaneous journal accounts which reveal the prevailing journalistic confusion and complicity in the blurring of the distinction between Third World nationalism and communism.

<sup>3</sup>Notes taken from a telephone conversation with Henry Brands, author of Cold Warriors and upcoming study on Loy Henderson. See also Bill, "America, Iran, and the Politics of Intervention," 282-283.

<sup>4</sup>Bill, "America, Iran, and the Politics of Intervention," 283, 268-269.



## CHAPTER ONE

### UNITY OF PURPOSE: AS OF 10 JUNE 1950

Barely three years before the coup, two powerful and popular Iranian leaders began a united struggle against British imperialism. On June 10, 1950, Ayatullah Kashani landed at Tehran-Mehrabad airport after 15 months of exile in Lebanon. A huge, tumultuous crowd greeted the religious leader. Prominent in the fore of the crowd were two very important dignitaries, Dr. Mossadegh and Ayatullah Muhammad Bihbahani, the latter representing the Shii establishment of Iran. Everybody there seemed to sense the implicit formation of a powerful alliance.

A frail, old man embodied the main political power of the anticipated alliance. Dr. Mossadegh, First Deputy for Tehran to the Majlis (136-member lower house of Iran's Parliament), was the popular leader of a small, but vocal coalition of Majlis deputies from Tehran known as the National Front, who represented a broad base of liberal, leftist, bazaari, and religious nationalists. The basis of Mossadegh's appeal was his lifetime pursuit of what also was the National Front's main goals -- a properly observed Constitution and real independence from foreign interference in Iranian affairs. His great success came from this popular acclaim and from his recognition of the power inherent in national and religious prejudices. Leading the National Front, he removed Iranian politics from the closed arena of corrupt, self-centered intrigue into a broad field in which it was possible to exploit the passions and credulity of the Iranian masses.

The American embassy had witnessed the National Front's determination to use indigenous Iranian nationalism to win popular power. It was not the first time this appeal had been used. Reza Shah, after capturing the throne by force in 1925, called for mass support of his nationalist program to give Iran a new position in the modern world. His son, Muhammad Reza Shah, appealed to nationalism in 1946 when Iran regained control of Soviet-dominated Azerbaijan. Majlis deputies often appealed to national pride in their speeches. But the National Front was the first Iranian political organization which deliberately set out to capture popular support in order to gain power. They sought, in nationalism, the force which was needed to break the closed circle of entrenched governing politicians.

First among national aspirations was the Iranian hope to be a sovereign nation. Viewing recent Indian, Pakistani, and Indonesian independence, Iranians felt they were behind the times in Asia. They resented recent centuries of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia, which subjected their country to foreign domination. For the majority of Iranians in 1950, the removal of the British was a necessary part of winning Iran's independence.

Closely tied up with Iranian hopes for independence was their anger at foreign exploitation of Iranian resources, especially at AIOC's control of Iranian oil. Iranians naturally resented the implication that they could not handle their industries themselves, and they hopefully expected greater income from their resources when they would not have to share the profits with outsiders. In close

support of these emotions stood the knowledge that a foreign concessionaire would probably attempt to influence Iran's government.

Mossadegh was perfectly in tune with such Iranian emotions. He specialized in economics at an early age and served as the Minister of Finance in 1921, so his nationalist feelings were based on a solid education in Iran's dependent political economy. He believed that the British controlled Iran's political economy through the AIOC in Khuzistan, abetted by the British embassy in Tehran and a network of provincial consulates which had especially strong influence in Iran's southern provinces. Mossadegh alarmed the British early with anti-imperialist writings such as "Capitulations in Iran". His anti-imperialist activity included such actions as taking bast (using the refuge of a mosque to stage a protest) and radio transmissions from outside Iran to protest the Anglo-Iranian Treaty of 1919.<sup>1</sup> The Iranian people recognized and greatly respected Mossadegh's lifelong struggle against British domination.

Most Iranians believed that the "unseen hand" of foreigners, especially the British, caused the social and economic gaps between them and their rulers. The depressed people of Iran shared the suffering and the slim margin of existence of other Asiatic masses. Even the most casual observer was aware of the great, sordid contrast between their misery and the luxury of their masters, the Shah and entrenched, pro-British, landowning politicians. Mossadegh once described the situation to the U.S. Ambassador, Henry Grady:

There has been in Iran a gap between the government and the

people...This gap, combined with miserable economic conditions, has produced deep discontent...The greatest force in this country is public opinion, and no government can stand which does not close the gap between itself and popular opinion.<sup>2</sup>

The embassy noted Mossadegh's assurances to his people that he understood and would take care of their discontent, for with the National Front, "the shadows which were covering our unhappy country will soon give way to the sun of happiness."<sup>3</sup>

Iran was ready for a social revolution to happen, and National Front propaganda exploited this situation. The speeches of Mossadegh and other National Front deputies always made some reference to present misery and future blessings if Iranians would support the National Front. Through hope of social change, Mossadegh gained a following of liberal and middle-class Iranians who preferred the National Front over communism. Emotional appeals and promises of future prosperity won to Mossadegh great masses of discontented city workers. His oratory of hope for social betterment even stirred country-wide emotions among the many Iranian peasants, who were traditionally suspicious of politicians likened to oppressive tax-collectors and landowners. Mossadegh and his followers turned social discontent to their advantage by focusing national irritations and emotions upon the British, thus reinforcing their campaign.

Mossadegh charted a panacea course for Iran to alleviate social discontent and avoid foreign interference. He would lead Iran in a struggle to obtain control of its resources. Mossadegh's platform

advocated the policy of 'negative equilibrium' -- neutralism and non-alignment in foreign policy and the rescinding of concessions.<sup>4</sup> The trick was to avoid the leverage of compounded concessions, since Iran was subject to the competing designs of both Britain and the Soviet Union. The policy stressed that Iran must avoid short-term material benefits which cost the nation the wealth of its natural resources. This was especially true concerning the nation's oil resources. In accordance with stipulations of the 1933 Agreement, which the National Front claimed was imposed on Iran by the British through Reza Shah, AIOC had only given Iran one-half of what it gave to the British government in taxes over the years.<sup>5</sup> The Russians wanted a similar deal. Soviet pressure almost forced Iran to forfeit some northern provinces in the tense atmosphere at the end of World War II. Most Iranians welcomed a leader who advocated a policy that was to prevent such humiliation and near-destruction caused by Anglo-Russian divisions of Iran.

The Americans were well aware of Mossadegh's record of opposing further concessions which undermined Iranian sovereignty. In December 1944, he successfully sponsored a bill in the Majlis that opposed any concessions while foreign forces occupied Iran. Later he protested the oil concession policy of Prime Minister Ahmad Qavam's government.<sup>6</sup> Qavam dropped his Soviet concession proposal and suggested a renegotiation of the 1933 Agreement. The AIOC sensed the new Iranian mood and compromised with the Iranian government in 1949, as they proposed a supplemental oil agreement. The so-called

Gass-Gulshaiyan Supplemental Agreement promised a fifty percent raise in royalty payments to the Iranian government. This provision was unfortunately far below the requested 50/50 profit sharing formula which could have bolstered a stagnant Iranian economy and addressed Iranian sensibilities.<sup>7</sup> Mossadegh, as head of the Majlis Oil Committee, opposed the political implications of the plan more than the economic issue. What really excited the masses, which in 1950 seemed to grow in enthusiasm, was the National Front's immediate opposition policy to the Gass-Gulshaiyan Supplemental Oil Agreement, in particular, and British influence in Iran, in general. As badly handled, badly publicized oil negotiations focused national attention on the issue, Mossadegh sensed, like a weathervane, the direction in which winds of national sentiment were blowing. He and his colleagues expanded and exploited the emotions on this issue.

Mossadegh's opposition to a series of weak governments in the late 1940s made him a people's champion. The people in Iran were naturally suspicious of the traditional oppression and selfishness of government authority. The National Front played on this emotion with every speech and action. The technique was easy. Every time a government proposal was discussed, the National Front tore it to bits. They denounced one government for not decentralizing power, then they attacked another for trying to decentralize authority. By recognizing the popularity of plain opposition, Mossadegh became a "defender of the Constitution" and won this repute while crippling any progress of the government in power.

The Iranian people were drawn to Mossadegh's heretofore unwavering commitment to these political principles, yet his powerful charisma also attracted them. He was an aristocratic Muslim Iranian, born to wealth, bound to tradition, steeped in classic Persian culture. He was proud to be an Iranian and understood and loved his people. The vices and virtues he demonstrated were not unusual characteristics in Iran. He emphasized those which were most useful to his politics, and their effect sometimes puzzled the Americans.

He was first and foremost a patriot. It is impossible for an Iranian to forget that, in the past 3,000 years, Persia has often been superior politically and culturally to the rest of the world. He turns for comfort in modern times to past martial and intellectual glories. With this introversion comes a national sensitivity to any real or imagined slight of Iranian self-importance. Mossadegh shared and took advantage of this national pride. He would remark, "We must bring to the attention of the whole world the fact that the Iranian nation, conscious of its glorious past history, cannot tolerate any contempt or humiliation."<sup>8</sup>

In addition to Mossadegh's deep patriotism, the Iranians liked his incorruptibility. Many Iranians consider that corruption is the natural state of the human race. They could hardly believe that AIOC could not buy Mossadegh or at least persuade him to modify his political program to some long-term, devious British advantage. By his refusal to be bought, Mossadegh broke the ancient pattern of bribery which had moved previous politics in Iran. For this reason,

he stood apart from the mass lump of venal politicians who plagued the Iranian political scene.

The Americans were really impressed with Mossadegh's eloquent speaking style, which met responsive chords in impassioned Iranian crowds.<sup>9</sup> Punctuated by dramatic flair, sometimes amid tears and fainting spells, his voice ranged from a slow reasonable tone to shrill accusations in every speech. He mixed wit and poetry into debates on most serious questions. He played for emotional reactions from his audience rather than reasoned approval. In one response to his opponents in the Majlis, he began with a gentle tone. He pointed out that he, an old and honorable man, had listened with restraint to everything his opponents had to say. This gave the impression that it was not he but his critics who were irresponsible. He then wove into the tapestry of his speech a thread of reason as though he were a father explaining to a little boy the need to fight for independence in an evil world. Gradually, he brought the color of anti-British feelings into the design, moving from reason to emotion almost imperceptibly so that his listeners felt at the end that he had won a victory over national enemies. He never really answered any criticisms in this speech.<sup>10</sup> Mossadegh's hypnotic oratory was indeed his best political tool.

Mossadegh's old age and obvious infirmities, which he sometimes exaggerated for effect, ironically enhanced his messages. His frailty served to emphasize to the public that he was carrying out his duties despite great personal pain. This act encouraged, and to



some extent symbolized to Iranian minds, national resistance to the British. Mossadegh once commented on his burden of leadership, "I never thought that my health would ever permit me to accept so important a position, but the oil question obligates me to take up this heavy burden."<sup>11</sup> From his bed in pajamas Mossadegh often championed the people's rights, and depended on their sympathy and trust as much as they depended on his leadership.

All in all, by 1950 Mossadegh's charisma and campaign for the protection of constitutional rights, the realization of negative equilibrium, and his brand of oil politics had captured the hearts of many Iranians, who saw in Mossadegh "their own sense of personal and national dignity."<sup>12</sup> The embassy realized he was set up for a moral ascendancy over any government that would continue to subjugate Iranian rights to vested foreign interests.

Yet he needed one more vein in which to tap Iranian emotions. His brand of nationalism was largely secular and lacked a prominent religious advocate. Mossadegh and his partners pressured the government to allow Ayatullah Kashani to return to Iran, as they realized Kashani could be a valuable ally.<sup>13</sup> Kashani had influence over many Iranians who Mossadegh could not reach. A shrewd Western observer, Laurence Paul Elwell-Sutton, made this assessment on the source of Kashani's influence:

Kashani is in the direct line of descent from the great mollahs of Persia -- Jamal ad-Din Afghani, whose follower assassinated Naser ad-Din Shah, the ecclesiastical supporters of the

Constitution in 1906, the mojtaheds who fought to the last against the secularizing policy of Reza Shah. Men like him fell foul, as did Kashani himself, of the British in Iraq... Through him speaks the democracy of Islam, the elimination of bars of class and colour, the fellowship with millions of other Asians and Africans... Like others of his class, he is completely fearless, completely unscrupulous.<sup>14</sup>

Kashani was mainly Mossadegh's tie to the powerful Shiite nationalist tradition in Iran.

Iran's clerics and religious scholars, the ulama, had always been a force to be reckoned with, not only because of their religious authority derived from the doctrine of the Imamate, but also because of their positions of authority in education, law, and the control of awqaf (religious endowments). This gave them an independent power base and set them up to be intermediaries between governments and the people. If governments strayed too far from the Shariah (Islamic precepts) or became very tyrannical, the ulama could protest from the sanctuary of Shiite learning centers in Iraq (Kazemain, Karballa, Najaf and Samarra), or issue takfir (charge a secular politician with heresy if he challenged ulama authority).<sup>15</sup> The ulama were very influential in the 1891-92 Tobacco Movement, which protested foreign concessions, and in the movement for a Constitution in 1906, which aimed at curbing monarchical tyranny in the defense of Islam and the nation.<sup>16</sup> The ulama also pressured Reza Shah into foregoing republicanism and a military conscription of ulama trainees.<sup>17</sup> In

all these events, the ulama had shown a propensity to coordinate with bazaaris (petite bourgeoisie and shopkeepers in urban market areas) and trade merchants, organize mass demonstrations, and appeal to the national-religious sensitivities of many Iranians. This kind of opposing activism and mobilization is what Mossadegh sought from Kashani, but it should be a controlled activism that left most political activity to enlightened secularists.

Kashani's view of activism differed from Mossadegh's view of the ulama's role and from the views of many of the ulama hierarchy who were strict interpreters of the doctrine of the Imamate. For Kashani, religion and politics could not be separated. His education provided the basis for this belief. He had studied under the constitutionalist ulama in Najaf in the early 1900s and "saw his role as guardian of national and Shii interests against British imperialism."<sup>18</sup> Works by Afghani, Abduh (the compatibility of Islam and certain principles of modern government; activism, especially against imperialism), Naini (constitutionalism prevents tyranny and protects Islam and the ulama) and Tahtawi (the compatibility of Islam and nationalism; legislation is good if it conforms to the Shariah) influenced the Ayatullah to activate and politicize against tyranny, whatever its form.<sup>19</sup> Totally anathema in Kashani's thinking was Reza Shah's oppression and defamation of the ulama, as well as his secularization policies which severely curtailed ulama authority in their traditional spheres of influence.

After the fall of Reza Shah in 1941, the Ayatullah chose to

reinvigorate religious-political activism with his populist style. Tumults frequently broke out when he passed through Iranian cities. He was vocal about the sins of oppressive and treacherous Iranian leaders. He was arrested when he protested Prime Minister Qavam's press censorship in 1946. After he was freed, he established close links with the Mujahidin-i-Islam (Warriors of Islam), a small group of Majlis deputies under the nominal leadership of Shams Ud-Din Qanatabadi, Kashani's son-in-law. Another group, the extreme fundamentalist Fidaiyan-i-Islam (Crusaders of Islam), began to support the Ayatullah, especially after he issued a call for volunteers to fight Zionism in Palestine in 1948.<sup>20</sup>

Other ulama, especially the Qom clerics led by Ayatullah Husain Burujirdi, the marja-i-taqlid (considered the most-illuminated and highest ranking Shii cleric by ulama consensus) avoided the growing trend of Shii political activism. They were more concerned with the financial solvency of their madrasahs (religious schools).<sup>21</sup> The new monarch, Muhammad Reza Shah, allowed his father's anti-religious atmosphere to evaporate. The young Shah was still vying for legitimacy, and the Qom clerics were eager to allow him to appease their sentiments and accept them as a bulwark against communism. As a result, the ulama regained control of the awqaf which Reza Shah had sequestered, and they tried to put their financial house in order. The veil was reintroduced to the streets.<sup>22</sup> A passive Shah and passive governments did not obstruct their fatwas (religious edicts) which dealt primarily with religious matters. In early 1948, fifteen

mujtahids (ulama with authority to interpret) issued fatwas which forbade women to enter the bazaars without veils. The weak response of the government was a request from Prime Minister Hakimi to Ayatullah Bihbahani, the leading mujtahid of Tehran, to refrain from illegal demonstration and prevent attacks by zealots.<sup>23</sup>

The 'quietest' ulama did not want this advantageous atmosphere ruined by Kashani, who had a lack of strong kin relations with the senior ulama anyway, and activist groups like the Fidaiyan, who attacked the senior ulama's stewardship of religious affairs. The ulama considered them undisciplined agitators.<sup>24</sup> The boat was rocked in February 1949, after the government claimed that Ayatullah Kashani and the Fidaiyan had a hand in an attempted assassination of the Shah. The government then exiled Kashani to Lebanon to rid the political scene of the unruly, vociferous mullah. Two weeks later, Ayatullah Burujirdi called a 2,000 man conference of ulama in Qom to threaten a Shii form of excommunication to any ulama who dabbled in politics.<sup>25</sup> But Kashani was not the type to avoid politics.

Ayatullah Kashani's major struggle, and what Mossadegh counted on, was his fight against British imperialism. The general nature of Iranian religious fanaticism, which gives a bitter flavor to national xenophobia, partially explains Kashani's predilection. The Shii mullahs foster this emotion out of their ignorance and out of fear that contact with the modern world and outsiders will destroy their power in Iran. This attitude was originally engendered in the years of Safavid rule, when they built a Shii state to stand against

powerful Sunni neighbors. The Persians were politically endangered, so they coupled religious antipathies to their temporal fears. The position of the mullahs as defenders of the nation became ingrained, exalted, and the object of their own first line of defense.

Kashani's own experience with the British, however, was his primary motivation for resisting their influence in Iran. The Ayatullah fought against British forces in Iraq in World War One. He experienced first hand their subjugation of the Shii centers in Iraq, and learned of their cruel treatment of Muslim POWs. The British also killed his father. Kashani was a major activist against the Balfour Declaration (Britain's formal declaration of their support for the establishment of a Zionist home on Muslim soil) and the Anglo-Iranian Treaty of 1919. He led Shii tribes in revolt, and the British finally sentenced him to death in absentia.<sup>26</sup> In World War Two, Kashani worked covertly against the British occupation forces in Iran in a German-assisted network known as the Iranian Nationalist Movement. The British captured and imprisoned Kashani in 1943.<sup>27</sup> The Iranian public certainly knew about and were inspired by his opposition to the British and imperialism.

Kashani explained his reasons for fighting imperialism and tyranny as follows:

Islam is based on unity of all Muslims. The imperialist powers have fostered religious differences to divide the Muslims into competing factions. They have tried to alienate the u'lama from the people, have imposed their culture upon the Muslims and by

attempting to separate religion from politics have tried to undermine the influence of religion and the religious leaders. They have created and supported puppet politicians and have fostered political rivalry among the national leaders of the Muslim world. It has been through these means and policies that they have subjugated us.

But Kashani was beholden to the precepts of Islam, which provided the faithful "with strict orders to fight the foreign yoke of exploitation, [as] it is the primary duty of the Muslims to invest their energies on the expulsion of Western imperialist powers from the Muslim territories with the best method according to historical circumstances."<sup>28</sup>

This call reflected a primary goal of Mossadegh and the National Front. They were not particularly devout. Superficial aspects of religion appeared in Mossadegh's name and in his references to Allah in almost every speech. But the political advantage Mossadegh was to find in Islam was to show in the upcoming close alliance with Ayatullah Kashani.

The crowd at Kashani's reception on June 10, 1952 had high expectations of this new secular-religious alliance. They drowned out the welcoming speech of a mullah and even managed to carry Kashani's car part of the way to his home. Kashani had the following message read to the crowd: "My dear brothers, as nothing in this world occurs without material causes, don't limit yourself to praying, but unite, devote yourselves to social problems and

self-sacrifice in order not to leave the field free to traitors who, by their passions, their brigandage, and their ambitions will let all the values of this nation be annihilated."<sup>29</sup> The stage was set for a unique partnership which would carry Iran from success to success as long as the two main leaders agreed on the course of action and submerged individual interest to common purpose.



### Endnotes for Chapter One

<sup>1</sup>Farhad Diba, Mossadegh: A Political Biography (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), 14, 20.

<sup>2</sup>University Publications of America, Iran, 1950-1954 (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1985), Embdesp 889, 4 May 1951, Grady to DepState. The remaining citations taken from this collective source will only be noted by the short designation of file number, date, author and addressee.

<sup>3</sup>Embdesp 881, 1 May 1951, Gilmore to DepState.

<sup>4</sup>Fakhreddin Azimi, "The Reconciliation of Politics and Ethics, Nationalism and Democracy: An Overview of the Political Career of Dr Muhammad Musaddiq," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 51.

<sup>5</sup>Ronald W. Ferrier, "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute: A Triangular Relationship," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 171.

<sup>6</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 244; Diba, Mossadegh, 91.

<sup>7</sup>Ronald Ferrier, "The Development of the Iranian Oil Industry," Twentieth-Century Iran, ed. Hossein Amirsadeghi (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1977), 105-106; Julien Bharier, Economic Development in Iran, 1900-1970 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), 156; Ferrier, "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute," 172-174.

<sup>8</sup>Embdesp 308, 4 Sep 1951, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>9</sup>Diba, Mossadegh, 98.

<sup>10</sup>Embtel 2159, 12 Dec 1951, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 2162, 12 Dec 1951, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>11</sup>Embdesp 881, 1 May 1951, Gilmore to DepState.

<sup>12</sup>Diba, Mossadegh, 98.

<sup>13</sup>Mohammad Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, ed. Homa Katouzian, trs. S. H. Amin and H. Katouzian (London: Jebhe National Movement of Iran, 1988), 28.

14L. P. Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975), 195.

15Mohammad Hasan Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama in Twentieth Century Iran with Particular Reference to Ayatullah Haj Sayyid Abul-Qasim Kashani (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), 24.

16Richard W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 139-148.

17Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 54-61.

18Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1980), 61.

19Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 41, 140-141, 146.

20Yann Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic?" tr. Nikki R. Keddie, Religion and Politics in Iran, ed. Nikki R. Keddie, (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983), 108-109.

21Shahrough Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy in Iranian Politics, 1949-1954," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 94; Akhavi, Religion and Politics, 60.

22Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, 150-151.

23Akhavi, Religion and Politics, 63.

24Akhavi, Religion and Politics, 66.

25Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 93.

26Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 127-135.

27Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani," 108.

28Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 159-160.

29Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani," 109-110.

## CHAPTER TWO

### HEYDAY: JUNE 1950 - NOVEMBER 1951

The first year and a half of their unity of effort was the heyday of the Mossadegh-Kashani relationship. In this period they quickly dominated the national political scene, riding the crest of a popular, nationalist, anti-imperialist wave to take hold of the reins of governmental power, intimidate opponents, nationalize the oil industry, and thoroughly cripple British influence in Iran.

Their initial joint action was opposition to the government of Prime Minister Razmara. General Ali Razmara was a strong man who was trying to set himself up like another Reza Shah. The intrigues of this Prime Minister became so intricate within a few months of his rise to power that it would be impossible to follow the many secret channels he maintained to British and Soviet sources of promises and pressure, to learn what liaison he had to various Court and Majlis cliques, or to know the extent of his grandiose ambitions. Razmara's opponents had a field day exciting fear and raising the specter of the 'unseen hand' in Iranian politics. Yet it is a paradox that Mossadegh and Kashani most strenuously opposed the man who first broke Iran's close identification with the West and who focused national attention on the oil dispute with the British. Unfortunately for Razmara, he had focused negative attention on his government's stance on the oil issue, for he became obstinate in trying to get the Majlis to ratify the Supplemental Oil Agreement and other bills which made him appear like a British puppet.

It was the fight against Razmara that brought the National Front most prominently before the public eye and the attention of the embassy. Mossadegh and Kashani turned to their advantage what seemed to be the greatest threat against them. Razmara's reputation of being a strong-handed military man allowed them to champion Majlis and press freedom against a tyranny that was in fact exaggerated. Mossadegh skillfully organized his few colleagues in the Majlis into a unit which had strength of purpose and cooperation. He gained maximum advantage from the source of each man's powers, consolidating and rotating their speaking times in the Majlis, giving maximum exposure to himself. It was this organization, discipline, and common purpose which gave the National Front minority an importance in the Majlis far beyond its actual strength. Before long, the leadership they exhibited was attracting other deputies to their cause. Even the most apathetic deputy gained a sense that Mossadegh and his partners represented a new and vital force which offered a way out of confusion and depression. As the National Front became the most important force in the Majlis, debates became mainly sounding boards for their opposition against Razmara.

Kashani's contributions supported Mossadegh's efforts in the Majlis. Although he never took his seat that he had won in the elections for the 16th Majlis, Kashani was consulted on how to stir his bazaar following in support of National Front policies. He also supported the cause with certain declarations, which Mossadegh read before the Majlis. The declarations of Kashani rebuked the

government for cowardice on the oil issue. One statement reprimanded the Senate (one-half appointed by the Shah) for being a tool of the Shah rather than the people. Another accused Razmara of repressive measures and trying to borrow 30 million from AIOC, which would have impinged more on Iranian sovereignty. He also depicted Razmara's proposal for government decentralization as an imperialist ploy aimed at dividing and weakening Iranian resistance.<sup>1</sup> Although Kashani was a mujtahid (achieving that at Najaf at age 25), his declarations were not fatwas, yet they had similar effect. Embassy reports of this period convey the general impression that Kashani and Mossadegh were jousting with a windmill, but the whole nation thought they were fighting a real one. As a result, Razmara could not implement his plans.

The toughest issue Razmara had to face was the oil issue, in particular the opposition of the National Front and rising public indignation. Yet Mossadegh needed an alternate proposal to kill Razmara's efforts at appeasing the British. Mossadegh's confidant, Husain Fatimi, proposed that they sponsor nationalization of the oil industry and compensation for AIOC.<sup>2</sup> Some National Front deputies treated this idea with scepticism, but by December 1950 it had captured the public's imagination and doubts were erased. Mossadegh's Oil Committee formally rejected the Supplemental Agreement in November, and Razmara shelved the proposal in December to save face.

But momentum for nationalization was threatening to outpace such formal procedures. Kashani, in full recognition of the public mood, issued this fatwa on December 21, 1950:

It is a well-known fact that our country has been suffering from foreign indifference over the last 200 years. The British have controlled our country's wealth, have corrupted our politicians and eliminated our national leaders and patriotic individuals. The AIOC has become a tool of achieving and maintaining British interests in the last fifty years. They have urged their puppets in Iran to violate the Constitution to divide Iran under the disguise of decentralization. They are responsible for our nation's poverty and its backwardness.

The fatwa continued by exhorting Iranians to become "masters of their own country and control its wealth themselves." Kashani proscribed the means which 'historical circumstances' afforded:

Nationalization of the oil industry is the primary step to be taken in this direction. The revenue derived from oil, if controlled by the people of Iran can remedy the prevailing disastrous condition of our country. We must...rid ourselves of foreign domination and take our destiny in our own hands. Hence I declare that struggle to achieve this objective is part of the duty of every Muslim Iranian and the only way to end the poverty and misery of the Iranian nation.<sup>3</sup>

Kashani backed up this declaration with invitations for massive rallies, which made the American embassy nervous. At least two huge rallies were held in Parliament Square, and a demonstration of over 10,000 people was led by Kashani in the Shah mosque in Tehran on January 26, 1951.<sup>4</sup> The British also managed to assist Kashani's

call, as Sir William Fraser of the AIOC stated his company's final position in early January, "There will be no further concessions."<sup>5</sup> The Americans believed this only angered, frustrated, and united the Iranians more.

The national response also had the effect of carrying many of the ulama on a "veritable anti-colonialist crusade."<sup>6</sup> Following the precedent of Hajj Mirza Hasan Shirazi's fatwa against the tobacco regime of 1911, at least seven other leading ulama disregarded the intent of the 1909 Qom edict and issued fatwas which supported nationalization. A senior mujtahid of Qom, Ayatullah Khunsari, responded in February to interrogatories of Tehran bazaaris and issued a commanding fatwa. He cited Prophet Muhammad's hadith which condemned a dead Muslim for emancipating his slaves before his death to leave his family in destitution with no inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Clearly, Iranians had to avoid such a sin and take full responsibility for the stewardship of national resources to ensure the welfare of future generations of Muslim Iranians. Such a fatwa urging nationalization was surely within ulama jurisdiction to defend the Islamic community. Nevertheless, Ayatullah Burujirdi abstained from commenting on nationalization. The actions of the majority of the mujtahids, however, paralleled the public mood and ensured unity. Professor Lambton says, "it was not until the (nationalization) movement was interpreted by the religious classes in terms of Islam that it received wide support."<sup>8</sup> This could easily be the interpretation, but it ignores the impetus given by Mossadegh, the National Front,

and a small band of parliamentary mullahs who backed Mossadegh well before the 'quietist' ulama joined the bandwagon of nationalization. Nevertheless, the actions of Kashani and the leading mujtahids captured the momentum to add the force of religious legitimation to the national movement.

Kashani also brought with him another force -- the fear of political assassination. The Fidaiyan, in full support of Kashani, were also backing nationalization and opposing the government of Razmara. Razmara stubbornly resisted the call to nationalize the oil industry and tried to maneuver into a position that would enable him to present secret, new AIOC proposals which responded to Aramco's 50/50 deal with Saudi Arabia (signed in December 1950).<sup>9</sup> His maneuverings only made him seem more like a British stooge and he was assassinated on March 7, 1951, presumably by a Fidaiyan fanatic. The accused assassin, Khalil Tahmasibi, was very cool in the aftermath: "If I have rendered a humble service, it was for Allah in order to deliver the deprived Muslim people of Iran from foreign seifdom."<sup>10</sup> Kashani praised the killer in jubilation, as Tehran and Western embassies were jittery.

The Fidaiyan certainly had the reputation for assassination, as they were credited with the slayings of Ahmad Kasravi (historian who criticized Shii mullahs), Abdul Husain Hazhir (Minister of Shah's Court who, when he was Prime Minister, was opposed by Kashani) and Muhammad Masud (a journalist who attacked just about everybody, including the Shah and the mullahs). After the shooting of Razmara,



Kashani warned that any new traitors would be struck down. The U.S. embassy noted that the Fidaiyan "under Kashani, while not ostensibly associated with Mossadegh, are working closely towards the same ends. They are creating a reign of terror which is gaining momentum, [as] any member of the government or Majlis who opposes nationalization will be in danger of being liquidated."<sup>11</sup> Kashani kept the atmosphere tense. On 9 March he organized another demonstration (5,000 strong), which was inflammatory and demanded that the British leave Iran altogether. The Fidaiyan threatened the Shah's life if Razmara's assassin was not released in three days, and they also threatened the editor of a pro-government newspaper. "The terrorism is spreading like a creeping paralysis," reported U.S. Ambassador Grady.<sup>12</sup> About a week later, the Fidaiyan struck again, killing the moderate, Dr. Hamid Zanganeh.<sup>13</sup> Whether the Fidaiyan actually accomplished all these murders or whether Kashani had any direct links with any of the killings did not add or detract from their significance. According to a CIA document, the Shah and others opposed to nationalization were paralyzed and bowed to "psychological advantage" of the National Front; no strong government came forward because many "were deterred by fear of personal reprisal and by the sheer difficulty of coping with the question of nationalization."<sup>14</sup>

Husain Ala, a conservative royalist, reluctantly became the new Prime Minister and viewed his tenure as a "period of reconciliation after which a strong man will become Prime Minister."<sup>15</sup> He quickly approached Ayatullahs Kashani and Burujirdi to get a condemnation of

the assassinations, but Kashani claimed he had no knowledge of Fidaiyan violence.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, the embassy received indications that the National Front was distancing themselves from Fidaiyan activity. Husain Fatemi informed Ala that the situation was maybe out of hand, and the National Front would cooperate in discouraging terrorism and working for stability.<sup>17</sup> The National Front clearly had their sights set on the reins of power in a responsible government. The Fidaiyan had already served its purpose. The police were arresting small numbers of the Fidaiyan in a very quiet manner, and the National Front looked the other way.<sup>18</sup>

The climate of terror did not abate as Mossadegh pushed an oil nationalization bill through the Majlis. The Majlis also gave a strong vote of inclination to Mossadegh, after the Shah offered him the post of Prime Minister following Ala's sudden resignation in late April. Mossadegh had averted the Shah's attempt to install the anglophile Sayyid Zia, who also had strong ties with the ulama. The Shah expected Mossadegh to turn down his perfunctory nomination aimed at appeasement, because Mossadegh had refused the office three times in the past. Then the Shah would have to nominate Zia. But much to everybody's surprise, Mossadegh accepted on 28 April, 1951.<sup>19</sup> He never admitted that he excited or directed his nationalization crusade to bring himself to power. On the contrary, he claimed, "Allah only knows that I did not expect to become Prime Minister...I agreed because I realized that if I did not accept charge of the government, all our efforts [to pass the oil nationalization law] and

all the endeavors of the people of Iran would be wasted."<sup>20</sup> Indeed in his first speech to the nation as Prime Minister, he emphasized the oil plank which was to always preoccupy his government: "Thanks to Allah and to the efforts of both houses of the Parliament, the greatest source of national wealth has returned to us."<sup>21</sup> To ensure a permanent nationalization, he took power and the Americans expected he intended to keep it.

Mossadegh then began the arduous process of implementing the 9-point nationalization bill, still assisted by the tense mood of the day. Riots in Abadan (location of AIOC refineries) in April were calmed by a Kashani request for the oil workers to stop agitation, as it would "serve the interest of Great Britain...[for] the British will soon leave Iran and the Iranian government will compensate the worker's losses."<sup>22</sup> Kashani's influence even over leftist agitators punctuated the Fidaiyan threat and the popularity of the architects of nationalization. These forces enabled Mossadegh to overcome slight Majlis resistance to hasten the appointment of an oil board. He accomplished this feat with what the embassy considered was a clever use of histrionics, taking bast in the Majlis after claiming he had discovered a Fidaiyan plot to assassinate him.<sup>23</sup> Thus, the clever Prime Minister was signaling a break with the Fidaiyan, while simultaneously invoking their presence which had served the nationalization movement well.

Mossadegh wanted to distance himself from the Fidaiyan, because he needed responsible government to successfully implement the

nationalization of the oil industry. To do this, Kashani had to break with the Fidaiyan, too. The Fidaiyan were absolutists who demanded a nationwide use of the veil, dismissal of female government employees, compulsory prayers for government employees, a ban on alcohol, amnesty for its members, and complete freedom of action.<sup>24</sup> Because he felt Mossadegh would reject their demand for a share of power, Kashani communicated to a Fidaiyan leader that they should wait for a more appropriate time, as it was more important, in the interest of national unity, to support Mossadegh in the fight against imperialism. Kashani also did not want to share his power with the Fidaiyan and thought their views were "childish, backward and insignificant."<sup>25</sup> Kashani was much more pragmatic and political than the Fidaiyan. He decided to stay with the real power, Mossadegh, and publicly denied any association with the "masked group" who served British interests.<sup>26</sup> This prompted the following declaration from Navvab Safavi, the Fidaiyan leader, in mid-May 1951:

Thus far we have wholeheartedly supported Kashani since he had promised to carry out the will of the Muslims to serve the nation according to Islamic principles. We helped him go to the Majlis and supported him against his enemies. Now he has turned against us and has forgotten his promises. He helps Mossadegh keep our brothers in prison. He has diverted from the straight path. We bitterly denounce him and since he has failed to remember his promises to us, we forget him too.<sup>27</sup>

The formal break between the Fidaiyan and Kashani was the last hurrah

for the Fidaiyan. The American embassy diligently noted the roundup of Fidaiyan leaders, who had made death threats towards Mossadegh and Kashani.<sup>28</sup>

Ayatullah Kashani fared much better than the leaderless Fidaiyan. He had promised the Prime Minister that he would not interfere in political affairs with a declaration to the Majlis: "So that...Dr. Muhammad Mossadegh be completely at liberty in choosing his aides, from the very beginning I am refraining from giving any advice to him and shall abstain from doing so hereafter so that he will not feel constraints in carrying out his responsibilities."<sup>29</sup> Many had their doubts about the sincerity of such a promise. His lifelong struggle against attempts to separate religion and politics, his frequent and recent statements attacking the same, and the fresh memory of the Kashani-Fidaiyan entente must have caused considerable confusion in the minds of those secularists in the National Front who were suspicious of Kashani's intentions. In addition, the difference between Kashani's and Mossadegh's personalities was highly visible. Mossadegh was a secularist of aristocratic bent who "nevertheless aspired to speak for the common people."<sup>30</sup> Kashani, on the other hand, was of lower class origin, and lower echelon ulama assisted him. He spoke to the common people but, at the same time, could not shake his need for self-aggrandizement, as statements in interviews showed. For example, "My rising up in Iran against oppression and misery has caused the entire world of Islam to appreciate our movement."<sup>31</sup> These discontinuities gave hints of future discord.

Despite the inherent and somewhat apparent differences between Mossadegh and Kashani, they resisted reactionary, imperialist pressure in combination during the summer and fall of 1951. During the summer, they battled the British in a strange kind of negotiating process. The Americans, Averell Harriman and Ambassador Grady, also tried to mediate the Anglo-Iranian oil dispute, but they could not convince the two sides to compromise. The British firmly opposed 'expropriation' of their oil company and claimed they would at least consider some form of international arbitration that they thought would favor their stance. Mossadegh wanted to maintain nationalization of the oil while at most paying the British some bilaterally-defined compensation.

The Iranian Prime Minister faced a complex problem. The British were not really interested in compromising with the man who was humiliating them and threatening their imperial position in the Middle East. With American assistance in an oil boycott/blockade, they were perfectly willing to let Mossadegh stew in his own oil.<sup>32</sup> This conviction was backed up with military threats including naval maneuvers in the Persian Gulf and the rumor of impending airborne operations in Abadan. These moves basically ruined any chance of real negotiation. The embassy realized that British jingoism only served to galvanize the country behind Mossadegh. Even Ayatullah Burujirdi proclaimed that, "the country must present a solid front."<sup>33</sup> Moreover, hardliners achieved even more influence over the negotiations. Kashani issued fiery declarations which vowed

Jihad (Muslim militancy in defense of Islam) and a third world war if Britain followed through with military threats.<sup>34</sup> The embassy also heeded a rumor that he communicated with the Soviets in an attempt to ward off British pressure.<sup>35</sup>

In the talks with the Americans, Mossadegh also recognized the necessity to rely on foreign power to protect him from British or Soviet aggression. In a conversation with Ambassador Grady, he said that he appreciated the American mediation and favorable attitude in the oil dispute since he considered it "protection for Iran."<sup>36</sup> Yet he also became very frustrated with the American support of the boycott/blockade and invoked the Soviet threat against them, "If Iran's oil industry collapses and no money comes and disorder and communism follow, it will be your fault entirely," and, "It would be better if all foreign influence were removed."<sup>37</sup> When Mossadegh leaned forward in his bed to tell Ambassador Grady sharply, "We value independence more than economics," he was not only arguing against American advice that Iran should make a settlement with the British in order to preserve oil revenues.<sup>38</sup> He, Kashani, and the nation were expressing a heart-felt, earnest belief that by driving out the British, they would end what they believed to be Iran's semi-colonial status. Nothing would cause nationalist Iran to deviate from that path in the summer of 1951.

Embassy analysts recognized, however, that the nationalization program was not completely accepted by all Iranians. The Shah and entrenched pro-British politicians began to stir near the end of the

summer when they recognized the oil negotiations were headed nowhere. The lack of progress not only foretold economic chaos, it also signified that internal opposition to the National Front may receive support from outside sources. The Shah was feeling for possibilities when he approached the Americans complaining that Kashani was a "dangerous element in Iranian politics" and worried about terrorism's "effect on members of the Parliament."<sup>39</sup> Shortly afterwards, Mossadegh began to face some resistance in the Majlis to his nationalization program. The Prime Minister railed against this opposition in an address to the Majlis on September 9, "British agents are in the Majlis; British agents are in the government; British agents are in the national societies; and British agents are in the Court."<sup>40</sup> Before the Senate on September 5, he implied that British policy and money dominated the Court.<sup>41</sup> Mossadegh was fighting the propensity of the Shah and certain members of his family (primarily Princess Ashraf and the Queen Mother) for intrigue and their natural enmity of strong Prime Ministers. Mossadegh found an antagonist in the Shah and had to move carefully but firmly to prevent effective use of the potent pressure which the Court could have brought to bear on the government and the issues of the day.

Again, Mossadegh used to his advantage what seemed to be a threatening force. The very reason why the Shah had undermined previous Prime Ministers was his fear of being overthrown by a successful strong man. Mossadegh took the problem by the horns and underlined the Shah's own fears, pointing out that, if the Shah



removed him, the forces of nationalism which he represented would in turn throw out the Shah. Mossadegh's reliance on national forces beyond the reach of Court plots effectively cowed the Shah for most of Mossadegh's term.

Mossadegh also had a personal grudge against the Shah. Mossadegh was raised in the Qajar Court (Iran's previous rulers) and had little respect for the upstart Pahlavis. His personal encounters with Reza Shah's tyranny, which included imprisonment, could not be forgotten easily. His long devotion to constitutional reform showed a deep belief that a monarch should have at most a symbolic or ornamental place in Iran's government. The National Front deputies tended to mirror this view, as they had long distrusted Court intrigues and the Shah's tendency to mix, unconstitutionally, in Iranian politics.

So September 1951 was a crucial time for the National Front as they battled external and internal opposition. Kashani rallied popular forces to the cause. As Mossadegh faced internal resistance, the Ayatullah called for a national 'holiday' at the end of the month to show support for an action which he encouraged -- the imminent expulsion of British AIOC technicians.<sup>42</sup> Kashani also railed against the Court's intrigues and collaboration with the British. The embassy was familiar with his long record of anti-Pahlavi attitudes. When he was arrested in 1949 for the attempted assassination of the Shah, the police brutalized him. Kashani showed contempt for the Shah in the openings in his numerous proclamations which omitted the

customary courtesy, "under the auspices of his Imperial Majesty the Shahinshah". The Shah could not stand up to the combined assault of Mossadegh and Kashani. The opposition in the Majlis quieted, the AIOC technicians were expelled, and Princess Ashraf and the Queen Mother left the country.<sup>43</sup>

Having failed in their military threats, in their encouragement of internal opposition to the National Front, and at the negotiation table, the British tried to provoke international opposition with motions for appeal in the UN Security Council and at the International Court in The Hague, Netherlands. Embassy observers witnessed that, in October 1951, even the parliamentary opposition turned to support Mossadegh as he announced that he was going to New York "to defend the rights of the oppressed and tyrannized Iranian people before the Security Council."<sup>44</sup> Mossadegh's departure was pure theater. At the airport, after the dignitaries and a small crowd had arrived, a car drew up some distance from the waiting plane and the limp figure of the Prime Minister was helped by attendants past the crowd. The shrill chanting of the mullahs, the wailing of the crowd, the pathos of the fainting man, who claimed that he would champion his people before the world, were all background to the well-timed moment when the very symbol of Iranian hopes and fears was supported, half-fainting, in the doorway of the aircraft to take a last look upon his people. It was very foolish and unstatesmanlike in American eyes, but in Iranian hearts it was very moving.<sup>45</sup>

While Mossadegh was out of country, Kashani called once again

for massive rallies and prayer sessions in support of the Prime Minister. Even Ayatullah Burujirdi petitioned the Shah to support Mossadegh, and the Shah responded with glowing eulogies.<sup>46</sup> All Majlis members also fell in line. The popular response prompted the new American Ambassador, Loy Henderson, to report that, "religious fanaticism," hardly a "constructive forger for the country's progress," was once again "ready to stir up popular emotions and to assassinate responsible officials"; indeed, anti-British slogans, the oil dispute, and the "movement to drive out the British has gained almost the significance of religious crusade in some quarters."<sup>47</sup> A Western journal summarized that the British motion in the Security Council was a mistake, given the uncertainty of American and Soviet votes; it also "solidified Iranian public opinion, hitherto by no means unanimous, behind Premier Mossadegh and allowed the latter, during his dramatic appearances at the sessions, to make the most of his anti-imperialist and anti-West propaganda."<sup>48</sup> Such visibility and skill in the defense of his nation's interests garnered Time Magazine's "Man of the Year" honors for Mossadegh. The balloon was set to deflate and fizzle.

After his success in New York, Mossadegh travelled to Washington to negotiate for American financial and political aid. Kashani and Qanatabadi were displeased and feared that Mossadegh would compromise Iranian rights with the American government. They let him know that they were against any compensation for the British and would resist re-employment of British technicians, even on an

individual basis.<sup>49</sup> British intelligence smelled the beginnings of a rift that they could exploit. The British told Henderson that, "Iranian nationalism was artificially stimulated rather than deep-seated," as there was a possibility that the Majlis or the Shah would oust Mossadegh if he obtained no agreement in Washington.<sup>50</sup>

In the end, Mossadegh did return empty-handed to Iran. Before he left, he remarked to Vernon Walters: "I return in a much stronger position than if I returned with an agreement which I would have to sell to my fanatics."<sup>51</sup> It is difficult to judge whether Mossadegh's many references to his uncompromising colleagues were genuine or intended to better his bargaining position. Most probably they were both real and tactical. After Mossadegh transited triumphantly through Cairo, Egypt, he came home at the end of November to a country that had seen no oil revenues for several months, with small prospect of seeing any for some time to come. And he had perturbed his closest supporters by flirting with the Americans. Enthusiasm began to wane for those who were never truly committed to Mossadegh. Even Kashani became lukewarm, as events were to prove.

### Endnotes for Chapter Two

<sup>1</sup>Fakhreddin Azimi, Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 230, and Bill and Louis, 94.

<sup>2</sup>Mohammad Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, ed. Homa Katouzian, trs. S. H. Amin and H. Katouzian (London: Jebhe National Movement of Iran, 1988), 32.

<sup>3</sup>Mohammad Hasan Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama in Twentieth Century Iran with Particular Reference to Ayatullah Haj Sayyid Abul-Qasim Kashani (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), 220.

<sup>4</sup>L. P. Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975), 204.

<sup>5</sup>University Publications of America, Iran, 1950-1954 (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1985), Embtel 1454, 3 Jan 1951, Grady to SecState. The remaining citations taken from this collective source will only be noted by the short designation of file number, date, author and addressee.

<sup>6</sup>Yann Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic?" tr. Nikki R. Keddie, Religion and Politics in Iran, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983), 110.

<sup>7</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1980), 64; Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, 204.

<sup>8</sup>A. K. S. Lambton, "Impact of the West on Iran," International Affairs (Jan 1957), 24.

<sup>9</sup>Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc, 1969), 505; George C. McGhee, "Recollections of Dr Muhammad Musaddiq," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 300; Fakhreddin Azimi, "The Reconciliation of Politics and Ethics, Nationalism and Democracy: An Overview of the Political Career of Dr Muhammad Mossadegh," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 54. See also Irvine H. Anderson, "The American Oil Industry and the Fifty-fifty Agreement of 1950," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, 143-163, and his work Aramco, the United States and Saudi Arabia (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1981) for a comprehensive study.

<sup>10</sup>Richard W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 151.

<sup>11</sup>Embte1 2013, 9 Mar 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>12</sup>Embte1 2029, 10 Mar 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>13</sup>Rose Greaves, "1942-1976: The Reign of Muhammad Riza Shah," Twentieth-Century Iran, ed. Hossein Amirsadeghi (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1977), 75.

<sup>14</sup>Yonah Alexander and Allan Nanes, eds., The United States and Iran: A Documentary History (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1980), 226-227.

<sup>15</sup>Embte1 2053, 13 Mar 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>16</sup>Embte1 2053, 13 Mar 1951, Grady to SecState; Embte1 2066, 14 Mar 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>17</sup>Deptel 7355, 20 Mar 1951, Acheson to EmbTehran.

<sup>18</sup>Alexander and Nanes, eds., The United States and Iran, 227.

<sup>19</sup>Embte1 333, 10 Sep 1951, Grady to SecState; Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 264-267.

<sup>20</sup>Embte1 333, 10 Sep 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>21</sup>Embte1 881, 1 May 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>22</sup>Norman Kemp, Abadan: A First Hand Account of the Persian Oil Crisis (London: Allan Wingate, 1953), 80; Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, 212.

<sup>23</sup>Kemp, Abadan, 97-98; Embte1 2815, 16 May 1951, Grady to SecState; Embte1 2833, 17 May 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>24</sup>Azimi, Iran, 260.

<sup>25</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 195-196.

<sup>26</sup>Embte1 2741, 10 May 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>27</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 196-197.

<sup>28</sup>Embte1 2833, 17 May 1951, Grady to SecState; Embte1 3106, 4 Jun 1951, Grady to SecState; Embte1 3201, 11 Jun 1951, Grady to SecState.

<sup>29</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy in Iranian Politics, 1949-1954," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 95.

<sup>30</sup>Akhavi, "Role of the Clergy," 96.

<sup>31</sup>Akhavi, "Role of the Clergy," 96.

<sup>32</sup>Anthony Eden, Full Circle (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Times Publishing Company Ltd, 1960), 215-216, 219-220; Acheson, Present at the Creation, 505-509, 511, 681-682; Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 37-43; William Roger Louis, "Musaddiq and the Dilemmas of British Imperialism," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 238-239; James A. Bill, "America, Iran, and the Politics of Intervention, 1951-1953," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 273; Hugh Gaitskell, The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell, ed. Philip M. Williams (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1983), 261-265. These citations offer the various perspectives of the British position regarding their intransigence in the dispute.

<sup>33</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, vol. 10, Iran, 1951-1954 (Washington D.C.: Department of State Publications, 1989), 186, [Embtel 1215, 30 Sep 1951, Henderson to SecState].

<sup>34</sup>Embtel 2893, 21 May 1951, Grady to SecState; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 228-229.

<sup>35</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations, 153 [Embtel 868, 30 Aug 1951, Grady to SecState].

<sup>36</sup>Embdesp 889, 4 May 1951, Grady to DepState.

<sup>37</sup>Embdesp 1022, 31 May 1951, Grady to DepState; Embdesp 1023, 31 May 1951, Grady to DepState.

<sup>38</sup>Embdesp 1159, 29 Jun 1951, Grady to DepState.

<sup>39</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations, 153, [Embtel 868, 30 Aug 1951, Grady to SecState].

<sup>40</sup>Embdesp 335, 11 Sep 1951, Melburne to DepState.

<sup>41</sup>Embdesp 341, 11 Sep 1951, Melburne to DepState.

<sup>42</sup>Kemp, Abadan, 235.

<sup>43</sup>Embdesp 736, 20 Dec 1951, Richards to DepState.

<sup>44</sup>Embdesp 466, 9 Oct 1951, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Azimi, Iran, 388n; Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, 260.

<sup>47</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations, 239, [Embte1 1478, 22 Oct 1951, Henderson to SecState].

<sup>48</sup>George Lenczowski, "Iran's Deepening Crisis," Current History 24 (Apr 1953), 231.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., 232.

<sup>50</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations, 262, [Embte1 1730, 7 Nov 1951, Henderson to SecState].

<sup>51</sup>Vernon A. Walters, Silent Missions (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company Inc, 1978), 262.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### WANING ENTHUSIASM: DECEMBER 1951 - JUNE 1952

Following Prime Minister Mossadegh's mixed success in the United States in the fall of 1951, dissent ensued in Iran. Mossadegh had defended the nationalization of AIOC at the United Nations in October, when the Security Council could not render any decision in favor of the British company, AIOC. But in late November he failed to bring home from America any solution to the oil dispute. In the following months, the British-inspired oil boycott/blockade remained in effect, and the Iranian economy worsened. In this dismal period when hopes for economic and social improvements steadily diminished, Mossadegh's prestige suffered. Previously-cautious opposition elements, which included the Shah, the army, and royalist members of both the Majlis and Senate, were encouraged to attack his policies. Rising political turmoil also strained his unity with Kashani. The Americans noted that Kashani's enthusiasm for Mossadegh's leadership waned, and his decreasing support paralleled and abetted the rising tide of opposition during the period from December 1951 to June 1952.

Mossadegh returned from the U.S. to a testy Majlis and Senate who were beginning again to question and challenge his oil policy. Mossadegh cleverly linked a vote of confidence for his government to his U.N. success which nobody would contest, and then he managed a parliamentary maneuver allowing immediate elections for the 17th Majlis.<sup>1</sup> But civil unrest was more difficult to manage.

Street riots broke out in Tehran in early December 1951. The

Soviet-directed communist Party of the Iranian Masses (Hisb-i Tudeh-i Iran) initiated the riots. The Tudeh, founded in 1941 during the Soviet invasion of northern Iran, had once been the supreme political force in Iran. Before the Soviets left Azerbaijan in late 1946 and withdrew their protection for them, the Tudeh peaked with 40,000 hardcore members and control of 47 trade unions with 355,000 members, prompting the British ambassador to report that it was the "only coherent political force...strong enough to nip in the bud any opposition."<sup>2</sup> But after the Soviets withdrew, the Tudeh rapidly succumbed to internal squabbles and dwindled. The instability of Mossadegh's regime, however, allowed them to recover and grow. The Tudeh, banned in name in 1949, took advantage of the government's relaxation of police controls and established underground newspapers and front organizations. They derived strength from the economic grievances of the working class and a willingness to represent the grievances through petitions, articles, strikes, protest meetings, and other calls to militant action.<sup>3</sup>

Despite enabling a Tudeh revival, the National Front's government also posed a major obstacle to the Tudeh drive for power. Mossadegh's movement challenged the Iranian communists as the best representative of the oppressed lower and middle classes in the struggle for Iran's political and economic liberation. In addition, there were fundamental differences between the two movements. The Tudeh were committed to the permanent removal of the Shah, rabid anti-Americanism as part of the overall Soviet global strategy, and

opposition to Mossadegh's oil nationalization program, which they viewed as an imperialist conspiracy against the Soviet claim for oil concessions in Iran.<sup>4</sup> Mossadegh, on the other hand, professed he had a supreme duty to protect and improve the institutions of the Iranian Constitution. But what really angered the Tudeh was the Prime Minister's negotiations with the Americans, which they depicted as collaboration with imperialists. The first big clash between the Tudeh and the National Front occurred in July 1951, when Tudeh-led demonstrations during the visit of the American mediator, Averell Harriman, turned violent and were put down by government forces. The Tudeh press also vehemently criticized Mossadegh's trip to the United States and unemployment in the oil fields of Khuzistan, and the Tudeh Party prepared to demonstrate on his return.<sup>5</sup>

The violence of the riots in December 1951 began when Tudeh protesters at Tehran University spilled into the streets, where nationalist counter-demonstrators clashed with them and the police stood by. The riots caused consternation in the Majlis, as deputies shouted down Mossadegh with charges that he was leading the country to ruin. Some fisticuffs even broke out in the chambers.<sup>6</sup> More ominously, the government had to forcibly remove 45 mullahs who had taken bast in a mosque.<sup>7</sup> Newspaper editors even took bast in the Majlis. Despite the recent vote of confidence in the Majlis, the Tudeh flare-up had ignited fears of impending chaos and reduced some confidence in Mossadegh's government.

The Americans were also alarmed at the troubles in December. A

State Department visitor, noting the embassy's pessimism, reported their view that Mossadegh was facing "an extremely fluid situation," and unless Iran received American aid, "the Tudeh party might well be in power within six months."<sup>8</sup> But the Prime Minister refused to give required 'assurances' to Ambassador Henderson that American aid would be used to strengthen Iran's military and economic ability to maintain its independence. Mossadegh told Henderson he was fearful of popular and parliamentary outcries if he made what would be interpreted as a military alliance with the United States.<sup>9</sup> Henderson did not favor this explanation. He chose to believe that the Prime Minister was posturing for more substantial financial aid, as Mossadegh soon remarked that, for the American offer of 23 million dollars aid, he would offer in return "assurances worth only and exactly that sum."<sup>10</sup> Henderson still balked even after the National Front threatened not to renew contracts for U.S. military advisors unless unconditional American 'military' aid was granted.<sup>11</sup> Mossadegh needed help but would not exacerbate a tense situation by conceding to the hesitant Americans potentially explosive pledges. So instead, he advertised and maintained a little distance from them.

Mossadegh still managed to avert a crisis in December, which the embassy may have exaggerated. Mossadegh assured everybody he could handle the communists. In a more dire situation, Iran's 100,000-man army would overmatch the Iranian communists. The Tudeh's support base, the urban working class, was only about ten percent of the total population.<sup>12</sup> The peasantry was passive, tribes followed

only their chiefs, bazaaris opposed unionization, and the ulama loathed the atheistic Tudeh. The only allies of the Tudeh in Iran were young radical intellectuals, professionals, and students. Although the Tudeh was not exposed to persecution under Mossadegh, its support base was too small, isolated, and vulnerable to initiate a revolution that may have brought the Soviets into Iran. But nobody in the U.S. embassy "shared Mossadegh's confidence that he could keep the Tudeh out of the Majlis."<sup>13</sup> The Americans were surprised when Mossadegh quieted the turmoil by the end of January 1952.

The Prime Minister hit back at his opposition in the Majlis by labeling them as British 'tools'. The embassy was amazed by how many Iranians believed this accusation. One deputy explained to Henderson at the height of the crisis in the Majlis, "There sometimes is no barrier between a Persian and his fantasy," notably the belief in the power of the British 'unseen hand'.<sup>14</sup> An auxiliary tactic used by Mossadegh was constraint by terror. When opposition deputies and newspaper editors took bast in the Majlis in December 1951, they made propaganda from this action, but they were really in danger, and many were terrified. Men who looted anti-government newspapers, beat up opposition deputies, and threatened or attacked their families were acting under orders of National Front leaders. The opposition also worried about the wrath of the 'people', crowds organized by Kashani and other National Front deputies. Mossadegh warned that his will would be enforced. He told the Majlis opposition bluntly, "You dare not step outside the Majlis and criticize the National Front."<sup>15</sup>

Mossadegh's best tactic was to evade the issues. He avoided a Majlis censure, which he was supposed to answer on January 22, 1952, with shrewd parliamentary tactics. His counterattack moved along three cleverly coordinated lines. His first aim, which was successful, was to cause the Majlis to dissolve itself, thus avoiding an embarrassing session. Pro-government deputies were told to leave Tehran in such numbers, ostensibly to attend provincial elections, that by January 22 there was no quorum in the Majlis. Simultaneously, Mossadegh ordered British Consulates and Anglo-Iranian institutions to be closed, and he announced he would personally defend Iranian interests at The Hague. The embassy believed he intended, if his strategy of preventing Majlis sessions failed, to force another vote of confidence upon his anti-British actions.<sup>16</sup> Once again, deputies did not dare to wrestle with the issues that underlined Mossadegh's mandate; the censure was cancelled, the tenure of the Majlis ran out, and elections for the 17th Majlis began. The opposition in the streets and in the Majlis had been temporarily stifled and completely vilified, and it never reached the point where it could marshal strength to overthrow Mossadegh. But this outburst of opposition during December 1951 and January 1952 was a turning point in Mossadegh's fortunes and had wounded his prestige. His domestic troubles were far from over. They were only beginning.

Mossadegh had an idealistic view that the process for the 17th Majlis elections should not be constrained by any governmental interference. Although the elections were perhaps the most

representative of any in recent Iranian history, irregularities forced Mossadegh to call them off in late May 1952 after a quorum of 81 seats out of 136 had been reached.<sup>17</sup> During the long election period, Mossadegh claimed there was much royalist rigging in the outlying provinces of Iran, where the army, ever-loyal to a Shah who had raised their status in recent years, was in control of civic affairs. Mossadegh expressed this concern early to Henderson, who worried "that the gulf between [the Prime Minister] and the Shah is widening and that [Mossadegh] may take some step in the not too distant future which will result in open breach between them."<sup>18</sup>

The embassy believed the Shah was both frightened and jealous of Mossadegh's popularity. He could not allow Mossadegh to increase his Majlis leverage, which the Prime Minister could use to erode the Shah's privileges and usurped powers. The Shah once remarked to the CIA provocateur, Kermit Roosevelt, that he was not able to express opposition to Mossadegh and the oil nationalization before 1952 because the National Front was too strong.<sup>19</sup> In fact, Mossadegh's problems with the Majlis and Senate were primarily due to the actions of royalist deputies who began to assert themselves again. And while the army was active during 17th Majlis elections, the Shah was completely passive.<sup>20</sup>

The Shah's minions chose to oppose Mossadegh. The Shah chose to complain privately to Henderson on February 4 through Husain Ala, his Court Minister: "Kashani has not hesitated to resort to terror and chicanery in getting his candidates elected...[and] with his

better organized adherents, might be able to dominate [the Majlis], and Mossadegh might be compelled either to get out of office or to bow to Kashani's desires." Ala had also talked frankly to Mossadegh about the dangers of Kashani's interference, but Mossadegh replied that, although he was "not pleased with everything Kashani was doing, he could not afford to interfere, since he needed Kashani's support just now."<sup>21</sup> Shortly afterwards, reports started to flow in from the provinces attesting to Kashani's widespread interference.

Ala's disclosure and the consular reports were Henderson's first real confirmation that a rift was forming between Mossadegh and Kashani. The Ambassador had suspicions before, when Kashani was "rumored to have joined anti-Mossadegh intrigues" during the Prime Minister's trip to the United States. Henderson also drew the connection that "these signs of questioning Mossadegh's leadership encourage Majlis opposition."<sup>22</sup>

Few scholars note the role Kashani had in the initial weakening of the National Front. Because he often spoke about the importance of maintaining unity in the Front, it is ironic to note that Kashani was the first to breach the faith. National Front secularists accused the Ayatullah, his son, and his entourage of influencing the 17th Majlis elections for their own benefit at the cost of votes which would have favored the Front. Kashani's endorsements and vigorous support ensured a virtual monopoly of Tabriz seats to junior ulama candidates.<sup>23</sup> Mossadegh's closest followers, members of a professional, liberal coalition formerly named the Iran Party,



realized Kashani's perfidy. They editorialized in the Party's paper: "We are in turn threatened by the possibility of military dictatorship and the rule of the clergy."<sup>24</sup> Under pressure from his closest advisors and quite perturbed himself, Mossadegh cancelled the remaining Tabriz elections at the end of March.<sup>25</sup> Mossadegh even publicly blamed some disappointing election results on the "confusion" that the Ayatullah caused.<sup>26</sup> Yet, Mossadegh could not chastise Kashani too severely, much less discard him, because of Kashani's appeal to the lower classes and his ulama network.

Kashani, for his part, could bemoan secularist interference. There are convincing indications that Kashani's mullah candidates would have been frontrunners in Isfahan, Mashad, and Shiraz if Mossadegh had not called off the elections.<sup>27</sup> The Ayatullah was becoming impatient for Islamic government with commensurate political roles for himself and his followers. He once asked Mossadegh to establish a Shariah-run government, but Mossadegh told him to wait until the oil crisis was solved.<sup>28</sup> This sort of answer and the cancelled provincial elections surely did not please the religious leader. He was increasingly voicing his displeasure in private and barely disguising it in public. The editor of Iran-i-Ma, Kashani's mouthpiece, with "great difficulty, dissuaded Kashani from a public statement expressing disagreement with Mossadegh and, by implication, withdrawing his support."<sup>29</sup> The newspaper, nevertheless, defended Kashani, once even suggesting Mossadegh be replaced by "a man who could enlist public confidence."<sup>30</sup> However, when Kashani spoke to

embassy personnel on April 26, 1952, he denied any connection with such a call and "spoke in glowing terms about the accomplishments of Mossadegh, who he fully supported, and maintained that it was in the interest of the U.S. that the National Front remain in power."<sup>31</sup>

Kashani managed, nevertheless, subtle public statements of disagreement with the Prime Minister. He returned to the theme of struggle against those who would attempt to divide religion and politics, as shown in this March 1952 statement:

Islamic doctrines apply to social life, patriotism, administration of justice and opposition to tyranny and despotism. Islam warns its adherents not to submit to a foreign yoke. This is the reason why imperialists try to confuse the minds of people by drawing a distinction between religion and government and politics. In Islam, **religious** leaders are to guide the people in social affairs.(emphasis added)<sup>32</sup>

Kashani's pestering coincided with a resurgence of Fidaiyan activity. Husain Fatemi, Mossadegh's most able colleague, was wounded by the Fidaiyan in early 1952, and his important service to the Prime Minister was lost for a crucial period. Mossadegh became increasingly concerned for his own safety and surrounded himself with guards.<sup>33</sup>

Kashani was turning cold when domestic opposition to Mossadegh was increasing. Economic austerity was beginning to take its toll. Although the financially astute Prime Minister was managing a budget deficit/balance of payments crisis by issuing notes against reserves, floating bonds, taxing luxuries, banning some imports and bartering

trade, Mossadegh's enemies saturated the public with propaganda of impending doom.<sup>34</sup> This was effective because of visible austerity, a lack of public insight, and continuing failure to achieve an agreement in the oil dispute. Mossadegh had declined a World Bank temporary solution (discussed Jan-Mar 1952) to the oil crisis because he suspected it was a British ploy to get Iran to unwittingly legalize an international recognition of AIOC's grievances.<sup>35</sup> The embassy suspected that Kashani also pressured Mossadegh to "maintain his rigidity in the Iranian position."<sup>36</sup> The new conservative British government was perfectly willing to allow the Iranians to "impose economic sanctions on themselves" (assisted by the British-imposed boycott/blockade, of course), had no intention of bargaining with the man who embodied British humiliation in the Middle East, and had persuaded the Americans somewhat of the necessity for joint action.<sup>37</sup> After the NATO conference in February, U.S. aid (except for routine Point IV assistance) was tied to the conclusion of a settlement with the British. The outlook for Iran could certainly be made to appear gloomy.

The dismal political climate was made even more gloomy by continued Tudeh unrest throughout the election period, when a series of minor street clashes between the Tudeh and National Front supporters occurred. The embassy noted Mossadegh's control measures were admirable, as they did not provoke official Soviet anger. Yet he did not use his police to suppress the communists. Fighting communists in the streets seemed fruitless to Henderson, because

communist strength grew as Iran's economic and political chaos deepened.<sup>38</sup> As if by cue, Mossadegh instituted unprecedented martial law in Tehran following a bloody clash between 5,000 Tudeh demonstrators and the police on March 28. Mossadegh told Henderson that such controls were invoked to protect Americans and to head off a desperate Tudeh attempt to "create some incident which would injure relations with the U.S."<sup>39</sup> Henderson was sceptical, but martial law remained in effect for several months. As the government refused to yield, the Tudeh were forced to cancel demonstrations on May Day and in June. Mossadegh also suppressed some of the most virulent Tudeh propaganda publications.<sup>40</sup> Security was restored to the capital city, but at a cost to Mossadegh's original liberalization principles and to his prestige.

Opposition press campaigns increased and the royalist Senate began to agitate. Much publicity was made of the Senate's airing of merchant grievances, in particular, the protests of 90 guild members of the Tehran bazaar, supposedly the National Front stronghold.<sup>41</sup> The Majlis was also unruly, using delaying tactics, absenteeism at parliamentary sessions, and general non-cooperation. The most damaging affront to Mossadegh was the election of Imam Jumih to the Majlis Speakership, the same man who had firmly criticized Mossadegh for returning from the U.S. empty-handed, and who once remarked that Iran was a "three-year old child" that needed British assistance.<sup>42</sup>

The senior ulama were also beginning to question Mossadegh's means. Clerics were especially alarmed when leftists and Mossadegh

supporters tried to silence the anti-government preachings of Muhammad Taqi Falsafi in the Shah Mosque during the month of Ramadan in May 1952. Falsafi barely escaped and the police were criticized for their slow response. Even Ayatullah Burujirdi and Ayatullah Bihbahani's Society of Preachers of Tehran expressed indignation. A telegram from Qom felt the need to defend Falsafi and his "service of...preserving the country's independence and the concerns and the greatness of the monarchy."<sup>43</sup>

Mossadegh felt that most of his troubles were inspired by British agents and the Court. He tried to placate the Shah, the army, and the Americans by accepting in April 1952 the conditional American military aid he had resisted so much in December 1951. Kashani vehemently opposed this move, but to no avail.<sup>44</sup> At this point, there was little warmth left in the relationship between Kashani and Mossadegh.

The level and warmth of Kashani's supporting proclamations for Mossadegh, which had been as high as 5 or 6 per month during 1951, fell off to nothing in 1952.<sup>45</sup> The habitual consultations between Mossadegh and Kashani ceased in April and May 1952, the last months of the election.<sup>46</sup> The question pondered by Henderson was whether Kashani and Mossadegh could maintain their outward unity during the coming months:

No doubt friction results from differences in objectives and clashes of personal ambition. Kashani is clearly unhappy with certain actions Mossadegh, who on his part does not believe in

'mullah approach' to Iran's problems, with the possible exception of those of oil and determination of foreign 'influences'. So great are their differences that, aside from considerations of self interest, only the common objective of keeping the British out of Iran is holding them together. [But because of make-shift financial devices] their split may not occur for several months.<sup>47</sup>

Another embassy assessment concluded that the "outward unity under Mossadegh's leadership will not be easily disrupted...hence, we believe the key to any assessment of Iran's political future lies not so much in the working of 'inexorable' pressures forcing the National Front from office as in the extent the leadership will rise to the challenge through political action in facing these pressures together."<sup>48</sup> But as long as Kashani was taking his cues from the opposition, and vice versa, and "self interest [was a] devisive force rather than an impulsion to continue coalition in its present form," the prospect of Kashani and Mossadegh standing together in the long run seemed pretty bleak.<sup>49</sup>

When Mossadegh called off the elections in mid-May 1952, his political house was in disarray and straining at the seams, although it appeared strong from the outside. Mossadegh had only achieved one slight victory in the past few months. He considered 80% of the new rump Majlis to be beyond the snare of British influence.<sup>50</sup> This was partly because of Kashani's election interference, which stopped many pro-British, pro-Shah candidates from gaining ascendancy in the

provinces which were allowed to complete the elections. Mossadegh could hardly feel beholden to Kashani, however, as the Ayatullah had also hurt the chances of liberal nationalists. Moreover, Kashani was largely to blame for the weakening of the National Front. It started with rumors of Kashani's intrigue while Mossadegh was in America. This encouraged bolder opposition in the Majlis and Senate upon Mossadegh's return, as did a Tudeh resurgence. Events mushroomed to cause the early dismissal of the 16th Majlis and the beginning of chaotic elections for the 17th Majlis. Kashani's interference and disagreements with Mossadegh, a hamstrung economy which did not promise to improve, mounting opposition, and certain detrimental responses by the Prime Minister, all were interdependent factors in a vicious cycle which eroded the National Front's support base and the political survivability of its leadership.

Mossadegh was feeling the stress of trying to hold everything together. He may have been relieved to leave the country at the end of May to defend the Iranian case at The Hague. He certainly was hoping that his trip would be another propaganda coup, but his departure was not a grand ceremony, like when he left to the U.N. the previous autumn. Before he left through the backdoor, Mossadegh visited the Shah in an effort to show an outer unity and in an attempt to temper what the 'mice would do while the cat was away' (so to speak). The meeting was a disappointment, as both leaders could not refrain from making accusations. To Mossadegh's charge that there had been royalist interference in the elections and royal

family intrigue, the Shah angrily responded that, if anyone, Kashani and his entourage "rigged elections and used terror in order to bring about the defeat of candidates whom they particularly disliked."<sup>51</sup> The Prime Minister, recognizing the greatest truth, refrained from further accusations and claimed he did not mean his words to be a personal attack on the Shah. After Mossadegh left, the Shah ordered his Court Minister to determine how the Americans felt about a coup to oust Mossadegh. This meeting clearly shows how Kashani's actions during the previous months had weakened Mossadegh's position relative to the Shah.

The growing rift between the Ayatullah and the Prime Minister also harmed Kashani's political position. Kashani's enemies felt free to criticize his interference in the elections, his sons' abuse of his influence through widespread acceptance of bribes and similar acts which discredited their father, and his declining influence in the bazaar because of his support for certain government taxes.<sup>52</sup> Many newspapers discontinued their support of the Ayatullah. The press helped to discredit Kashani by reporting his virtual looting of AIOC equipment and stores in Abadan. Only one paper, Iran-i-Ma, defended Kashani's sales of AIOC supply stocks, as they reported that this was an elaborate frame by liberal and leftist components of the National Front.<sup>53</sup> The press also denounced Kashani's performance at a Fetr (end of Muslim fasting during the month of Ramadan) prayer meeting, which was held in the Tehran sports stadium in order to show support for Mossadegh upon his return from the Hague on 24 June. Only



1,000 people showed up, and the radio microphone picked up Kashani's disparaging remarks and his stumblings during the prayer in which he had to be repeatedly prompted. As one paper noted, this fiasco "proved to foreign diplomats that the arch demagogue Kashani no longer carries any weight among the people; he fouled up the Fetr prayer and those who watched this fantastic scene roared with laughter."<sup>54</sup> Mullahs resented Kashani for such escapades. One of Kashani's deputies from Tabriz stated that religious deputies in the Majlis did not feel bound to obey Kashani. A former cabinet official told the embassy that, if Kashani's popularity index was 100 six months prior, it had by June fallen to 30.<sup>55</sup>

The embassy and the Court noted Kashani's concern for his declining prestige which accompanied his declining fervor for Mossadegh's leadership. Kashani relayed his listlessness in a secret conversation with Husain Ala on June 26, when the Ayatullah gave "faint praise" for Mossadegh and told Ala that he was willing to consider replacements for the Prime Minister.<sup>56</sup> This was as good a signal as any for those who wished to oust Mossadegh by force.

The British and the Court were already quietly plotting for Mossadegh's removal as a backup to their destabilization efforts. They covertly prepared, with American knowledge, the induction of Ahmad Qavam, Kashani's and Mossadegh's old enemy.<sup>57</sup> Little did they imagine that they were setting up a resurgence of both Mossadegh's and Kashani's power and prestige.

### Endnotes for Chapter Three

<sup>1</sup>B. Shwadran, "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute, 1948-1952," Middle Eastern Affairs 5 (Aug-Sep 1954), 217; Fakhreddin Azimi, Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 272.

<sup>2</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, "The Strengths and Weaknesses of the Labor Movement in Iran, 1941-53," Continuity and Change in Modern Iran, eds. Michael E. Bonine and Nikki Keddie (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1981), 181.

<sup>3</sup>Sepehr Zabih, The Communist Movement in Iran (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1966), 166-176; Homa Katouzian, The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926-1979 (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 145.

<sup>4</sup>Katouzian, Political Economy, 166-167.

<sup>5</sup>Mohammad Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, ed. Homa Katouzian, trs. S. H. Amin and H. Katouzian (London: Jebhe National Movement of Iran, 1988), 36; Sepehr Zabih, The Mossadegh Era (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1982), 30-31.

<sup>6</sup>Rose Greaves, "1941-1976: The Reign of Muhammad Riza Shah," Twentieth-Century Iran, ed. Hossein Amirsadeghi (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1977), 77-78; Shwadran, "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute," 217.

<sup>7</sup>Azimi, Iran, 275.

<sup>8</sup>Ronald W. Ferrier, "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute: A Triangular Relationship," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 188.

<sup>9</sup>University Publications of America, Iran, 1950-1954 (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1985), Embtel 2011, 1 Dec 1951, Henderson to SecState. The remaining citations taken from this collective source will only be noted by the short designation of file number, date, author and addressee.

<sup>10</sup>Embtel 2199, 14 Dec 1951, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>11</sup>Embtel 2693, 18 Jan 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>12</sup>Abrahamian, "Labor Movement," 193.

- <sup>13</sup>Ferrier, "Oil Dispute," 188.
- <sup>14</sup>Embte1 2158, 12 Dec 1951, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>15</sup>Embte1 2162, 12 Dec 1951, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>16</sup>Embte1 2693, 18 Jan 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>17</sup>Henry C. Atyeo, "Political Developments in Iran, 1951-1954," Middle Eastern Affairs 5 (Aug-Sep 1954), 250; Embte1 4511, 22 May 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>18</sup>Embte1 3067, 13 Feb 1952, Henderson to SecState. See also Contel 56, 14 Jan 1952, Burdett to EmbTehran, for a representative sample of Army preparations for the elections in the provinces.
- <sup>19</sup>Kermit Roosevelt, Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc, 1979), 113.
- <sup>20</sup>Embte1 3777, 4 April 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 3077, 7 April 1952, Melbourne to DepState.
- <sup>21</sup>Embte1 2976, 6 Feb 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>22</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, vol. 10, Iran, 1951-1954 (Washington D.C.: Department of State Publications, 1989), 362, [Embdesp 733, 28 Feb 1952, Henderson to UKEmb].
- <sup>23</sup>Richard W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 101, 276; Contel 90, 13 Mar 1952, Burdett to EmbTehran.
- <sup>24</sup>Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, 153-154.
- <sup>25</sup>Embte1 3777, 4 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>26</sup>Azimi, Iran, 276. See also Contel 87, 25 Feb 1952, Burdett to EmbTehran; Embte1 4511, 22 May 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 1294, (illegible date) May 1952, Melbourne to DepState, for Mossadegh's expressions of dissatisfaction and other reactions.
- <sup>27</sup>Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, 101; Contel 15, 11 Feb 1952, ConMashad to EmbTehran; Contel 36, 2 Feb 1952, Burdett to EmbTehran.
- <sup>28</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy in Iranian Politics, 1949-1954," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 97.

- <sup>29</sup>Embte1 4511, 22 May 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>30</sup>Embte1 4138, 26 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState. See also Embdesp 1017, 17 Mar 1952, Melbourne to DepState, for further comments by Iran-i-Ma.
- <sup>31</sup>Embdesp 4138, 26 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>32</sup>Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, 152-153.
- <sup>33</sup>Embte1 4511, 22 May 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>34</sup>Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 48-50. See also Embdesp 1077, 7 Apr 1952, Melbourne to DepState.
- <sup>35</sup>Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 366-367.
- <sup>36</sup>Embdesp 1077, 7 Apr 1952, Melbourne to DepState.
- <sup>37</sup>Hugh Gaitskell, The Diary of Hugh Gaitskell, 1945-1956, ed. Philip M. Williams (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd, 1983), 263; Anthony Eden, Full Circle (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Times Publishing Company Ltd, 1960), 217-219; Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 42-43.
- <sup>38</sup>Embdesp 1077, 7 April 1952, Melbourne to DepState.
- <sup>39</sup>Embte1 3861, 10 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState. For more information on the circumstances surrounding the March 28 riots, see Embte1 3693, 29 Mar 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3720, 1 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3742, 2 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3777, 4 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>40</sup>Embte1 386, 25 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>41</sup>Azimi, Iran, 278-279. See also Embte1 4124, 25 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState, for summary of press criticisms, and Embte1 4138, 26 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState, where even 'timid' papers call for Mossadegh's resignation.
- <sup>42</sup>Embdesp 203, 15 Sep 1952, Melbourne to DepState; Azimi, Iran, 282.
- <sup>43</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1980), 64; Azimi, Iran, 279; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 98.
- <sup>44</sup>Embte1 4138, 26 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState; Department of State, Foreign Relations, 377, [Embte1 4068, 23 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>45</sup>Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 97.

<sup>46</sup>Embte1 4511, 22 May 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>47</sup>Embte1 3865, 10 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>48</sup>Embdesp 1077, 7 Apr 1952, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>49</sup>Embte1 4511, 22 May 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>50</sup>Embte1 3861, 10 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>51</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations, 384, [Embte1 4609, 28 May 1952, Henderson to SecState].

<sup>52</sup>Embte1 4511, 22 May 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>53</sup>Embdesp 1294, (date illegible) Jun 1952, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>54</sup>Embdesp 1371, 28 Jun 1952, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>55</sup>Embdesp 203, 15 Sep 1952, Melbourne to DepState. This document is an excellent summary of internal political events from March 1952 to July 1952.

<sup>56</sup>Embte1 5047, 27 Jun 1952, Henderson to SecState. A partial text is found in Department of State, Foreign Relations, 405.

<sup>57</sup>Mark Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup d'Etat in Iran," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 19 (Aug 1987): 264-265.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RIVALRY: JULY 1952 - NOVEMBER 1952

By the end of June 1952, the internal situation in Iran was far enough destabilized that a showdown between the political powers for the control of Iran was fast approaching. The contenders -- Kashani, Mossadegh, the Shah, and the Tudeh -- grappled in July. The initial struggle left Mossadegh and Kashani in power, but very wary of each other. A serious subsurface rivalry between the two nationalist leaders ensued, intensified over time, and threatened to explode into open enmity by December 1952.

When Mossadegh returned at the end of June, he sensed something was amiss. The Majlis was officially opened, and Mossadegh was faced with the task of reforming his government after he received the nod to resume his duties as Prime Minister. But Mossadegh sensed an increasing confidence of the royalist opposition in the Majlis and decided to confront the Shah on 17 July.<sup>1</sup> He asked the Shah to allow him to supervise the war ministry. The Shah refused, Mossadegh resigned, and the Shah appointed strong-man Qavam (the British/American choice) as Prime Minister. Unfortunately for the Shah and the British, they had chosen the wrong man, and the half-baked plot failed. The Iranian masses rose up on 21 July throughout Iran, chanting "Mossadegh or Death." Bloody street fighting, which resulted in 69-247 dead and 750-2016 wounded, convinced the Shah to reinstate Mossadegh.<sup>2</sup>

The well-known events of 30 Tir, the July 21 uprising, swept

Mossadegh back into office on a popular wave. But the organization and intensity of the 30 Tir uprising can be attributed largely to the ardent response of Kashani to the threat of Qavam's impending rule. When Qavam assumed office he immediately made his first and only address to the nation in which he vowed to end the oil dispute, condemned "cant and duplicity" of religious leaders, railed against leaders who had "strengthened black reaction" in order to combat "red extremists", and vowed to set up "revolutionary tribunals" to punish wrongdoers.<sup>3</sup> The following is an excerpt of that speech which must have really riled Kashani:

I won't tolerate the mullah's intervention in politics. I sincerely respect the true religion of Islam but I shall try to separate religion from politics. Without any exception I shall destroy those individuals who disseminate superstitious ideas...I warn every citizen that the era of opposition and rebellion is over and the time of obedience has begun. God help those who try to sabotage my reform endeavors. The pilot has taken a new course.<sup>4</sup>

In response, Kashani refused any compromise with Qavam, gathered journalists, and vowed to walk in the streets with a shroud to obtain the return of Mossadegh. He also used the mosques, the Parliament building, and loudspeakers to agitate against Qavam. In one fiery communique, he wrote:

Foreigners by the intermediary [of Qavam] are preparing to strike at the bases of religion, of liberty, and of the

country's independence, and to put the Islamic nation back into captivity. The plot to divide religion and politics that was for centuries propagated by the British, which tries to stop the Islamic nation from taking control of its destiny and from fulfilling its religious and social duties, is today the directing line of this ambitious man [Qavam].<sup>5</sup>

His call to the Tudeh also reflected these same ideas, as Kashani invited the "extreme left" to unite with the "extreme right" to "rise to destroy this selfish and irresponsible dictator", and support "Mossadegh because his patriotism, honesty and hatred of foreign powers is well-known"; he punctuated this exhortation with a call to the military, demanding they resist Qavam, too.<sup>6</sup>

Qavam belatedly realized the danger of Kashani and ordered his arrest, but the BBC tipped Kashani with its live coverage, and he avoided capture. Even the Shah was perturbed by the mistakes of Qavam, and denied his help in the end. Later the Shah remarked in an obscure way that "Qavam was an old man, and his health was poor; in fact, he often fell asleep in the middle of meetings of the highest importance...[so] how could I let one of such faltering abilities attempt [strong measures]?"<sup>7</sup> The ulama disliked Qavam, too; they deplored Qavam's past record on Islamic issues and his new promise to extend voting rights to women.<sup>8</sup> But Iranian women did not defend Qavam on 30 Tir, as thousands of people -- Tudeh, Kashani supporters, and classes in between -- swarmed into the streets to sweep Mossadegh back into office. The black reaction and red extremists won the day.



The episode of 30 Tir frightened the Americans. They had not expected Kashani's reaction, but more importantly, they were alarmed that Tudeh rioters were a major force in Mossadegh's reinstatement. For compensation, the Tudeh demanded the expulsion of American advisors and complete freedom for their party.<sup>9</sup> In addition, the Americans worried that the Iranians would react to Ambassador Henderson's last-ditch efforts to prop up Qavam.<sup>10</sup> Henderson asked his superiors in Washington to "not throw up our hands while Iranians rush by in mad and suicidal career like so many million lemmings," and called for "radical changes in policies of both the British and ourselves," like getting an "idea of what kind of terms Britain has in mind for oil **settlement**."<sup>11</sup> (emphasis added) Henderson had not seen this calibre of Iranian resistance and unity for many months, which, along with his concerns about the Tudeh, may explain why he called for an American support of Mossadegh shortly after the explosion of 30 Tir.

Fortunately for the Americans, Mossadegh rapidly restored order. Mossadegh refused to grant the Tudeh their pound of flesh. The rejuvenated National Front vehemently denied that formal working arrangements with the Tudeh had existed during the time of the riots, minimized the importance of the Tudeh contribution, and subsequently resisted every Tudeh effort to gain legal status.<sup>12</sup> Mossadegh could rebuff the Tudeh, because they still could not challenge his power and popularity. Neither could Kashani, as he must have realized the significance of Mossadegh's name used as a rallying cry.

In addition, Mossadegh's position received a tremendous boost when the judgement in favor of Iran was announced from The Hague during 30 Tir. Kashani's only real choice was to support the rebuff of the Tudeh. He told students to refrain from assembling, asked that people not take retribution on the police or military because "the guilty will be punished," and warned Mossadegh through Iran-i-Ma to watch the Tudeh carefully.<sup>13</sup>

Mossadegh took advantage of his new popular power. He received from the Majlis plenary powers, a legal mandate to legislate without having to worry about Majlis interference. He also could afford to be magnanimous to the Shah, whose powers were curbed after the uprising. Mossadegh appointed a few pro-Shah generals to key posts in order to lessen the Shah's alarm and raise the sagging morale of the military. The National Front blamed the British for "forcing" the Shah to appoint Qavam.<sup>14</sup> The Prime Minister also showed conciliation to the Americans. This greatly assisted the embassy's damage control after 30 Tir. The Americans were relieved when a wary Mossadegh showed a willingness to work again with American mediation in the oil dispute. They were also pleased when Mossadegh renewed martial law in August to muzzle any communist interference during the new oil talks.<sup>15</sup> Although the surprising strength of Tudeh militancy during the 30 Tir uprising had shocked American officials, by August members of the Departments of State and Commerce were pushing for increased trade with Iran, as they thought "the nationalist government can continue to maintain order in Iran and resist communist pressure."<sup>16</sup>

Practical considerations caused Mossadegh to not take revenge against the Shah or the Americans. He also snubbed Kashani's ambitions. Despite Kashani's mobilization of popular forces during the July uprising and his cooperation in repulsing the Tudeh afterwards, Kashani did not win a larger share of government. Mossadegh realized that Kashani had merely reacted to Qavam's threat, not followed a deeper sense of commitment to the leader of the national movement. He did not have to concentrate on appeasing Kashani at the expense of good, responsible government. After all, Kashani had been unfriendly, had suffered his own setbacks before the uprising, and was relatively isolated among the ulama. Therefore, when Kashani complained about not being consulted on Mossadegh's governmental appointments shortly after the uprising, Mossadegh responded firmly: "If you want reforms to occur, you are asked to abstain from intervention in political affairs for a time, as no change is possible if the one invested with responsibility has not total freedom of action."<sup>17</sup> Kashani was certainly upset that the Iran Party, which had no mass base, was receiving preferential consideration in many of the new Cabinet appointments. Moreover, the ambitious Ayatullah had to face his utter inefficacy to control matters of government when he could not even prevent the appointment of some of his old enemies.<sup>18</sup> Beside these objections, Kashani was a strong believer in the necessity of having ulama consultation (mashvarah) in the process of modern government.<sup>19</sup>

On the other hand, the Prime Minister was convinced that

enlightened technocrats were needed to carry out his reforms in these crucial times, not the rigid ulama. Henderson believed that Mossadegh's snubbing of Kashani was also motivated by two primary concerns: (1) Mossadegh wanted to show that he had power without Kashani and (2) the Prime Minister had to stop Kashani as he "openly strives for power to the political leadership of the country" and "intends eventually to affect a replacement of Mossadegh."<sup>20</sup> The U.S. Ambassador believed that Mossadegh had enlisted the Shah's cooperation in "frustrating Kashani's aggressive ambitions," as both Mossadegh and Kashani were searching for allies.<sup>21</sup> In fact, the Shah remained subservient to Mossadegh for the remainder of the year.

In the struggle with Kashani for power, Mossadegh had a major setback in early August when the Majlis elected Kashani to the Speakership (Jumih had resigned), confirming a new opposition coalition. Mossadegh received the news in the presence of Henderson, who reported that Mossadegh was "obviously shocked...and did not seek to hide his distress and agitation."<sup>22</sup> Kashani publicly voiced that he would direct the Majlis to cooperate with Mossadegh, and over the next four months, both leaders would publicly maintain that complete harmony existed between them. But in August Kashani already started contesting martial law in the Majlis and made backhanded criticisms of Mossadegh's ministers.<sup>23</sup> The Prime Minister was alerted to the possibility that his recently reinvigorated mandate might not succeed over a Kashani-led Majlis.

Indeed, the Kashani-Mossadegh rivalry was an undercurrent in

the stream of internal political events for the rest of the year. In the late summer and early fall, the two disagreed on whether to have a pan-Islam conference in Iran. Kashani contended that it was important to have an international Muslim gathering in Iran to obtain powerful support in the struggle with the West. Growing sentiment in the Middle East against Britain could be exploited. The Ayatullah had grandiose ideas about the nature of a future pan-Islamic confederation composed of all Muslim countries, sharing a neutral foreign policy vis-à-vis the East and West, one Arabic language, and a 5,000,000 man military force to fight imperialism. His formulation was very similar to the Muslim League proposed by Pakistan.<sup>24</sup>

Mossadegh did not want to start such a project while he was concentrating on the delicate problems of Iran. He contended that Iran did not have the money to finance the venture. Besides, when Kashani put out preliminary feelers to some Muslim states, nobody showed any interest; other countries were preoccupied with their own problems.<sup>25</sup> Mossadegh surely recognized that it was only an attempt by Kashani to garner additional domestic political support for himself. It also probably disturbed Mossadegh that Kashani went over the head of the Foreign Minister, Husain Fatimi. Fatimi, himself, talked to Ayatullah Zanjani (mullah who staunchly supported Mossadegh) who talked to Kashani, requesting he go to Lebanon to give Mossadegh some breathing space.<sup>26</sup> It is not known how Kashani took this request. He did not go to Lebanon, but he did go to Mecca in the late summer for a brief period.

The embassy also knew that Mossadegh was generally irritated with Kashani's freewheeling in the affairs of government. Kashani had an annoying habit of bypassing the government's bureaucracy with letter-of-recommendation passes for his clients. Mossadegh ordered that these letters be ignored. But the Ayatullah committed more than just some minor indiscretions. He sent delegates to the Vienna Peace Conference, working against Mossadegh's neutrality principle. He also showed support for Iraqi nationalism by organizing a large demonstration which had anti-government chants as well as anti-West slogans. This only complicated the delicate relations between the Iranian and Iraqi governments.<sup>27</sup>

Kashani's penchant for indiscretion also hurt Mossadegh's prospects for acquiring U.S. financial aid. He railed against U.S. policy in Iran, once referring to American assistance programs as "godless enterprise", other times saying they were wholly inadequate, in a "stage of words," like "mud against a flood".<sup>28</sup> This unfavorable attitude was expressed directly to Henderson in August 1952:

We do not expect any favor from the US government. All we want is, help Iran in her holy struggle against British imperialism. We will never allow American intervention in our domestic affairs.<sup>29</sup>

The embassy was constantly reminded of Kashani's distrust of the intentions of Americans, who "are like children [doing] everything the British desire."<sup>30</sup> Kashani actively displayed his distrust of

Americans with many public pronouncements, much to the dismay of a Prime Minister who needed American assistance.

Henderson reported early to the State Department that Kashani was a major obstacle to a solution for the oil dispute. In August and September 1952, his opposition was even fiercer to a joint Anglo-American initiative, which started a new outburst of emotion against the United States. According to the embassy, the whole country followed his cue to believe that "the United States was siding with Britain in the oil dispute,...and held that the American offer of a ten million dollar loan included in the proposal was insultingly small."<sup>31</sup> The Iranian press prominently presented Kashani's opposition to the so-called Truman-Churchill proposal.<sup>32</sup> At the same time, the anti-British feeling in Iran was extremely high. Kashani was calling for the immediate expulsion of all the British in Iran, but Henderson believed this was just a ploy to persuade the U.S. to make a better compromise.<sup>33</sup> Yet in October the embassy had to report that Mossadegh had been readily disposed to the Truman-Churchill proposal with "comparitively favorable" terms, but he was "overridden by Kashani."<sup>34</sup> In addition, Mossadegh announced an impending expulsion of the British in mid-October. The Americans believed that Kashani's influence could only increase "as hopes for a profitable solution to the oil problem waned and growing unrest evidenced itself in the face of the uncertain future held out by the Mossadegh government."<sup>35</sup> The history of the chaos which followed previous failures of oil talks underscored this assessment.

Then Henderson must have been surprised when Kashani publicly suggested in press statements in October and November that an American loan for \$100,000,000 and immediate purchase of oil may be acceptable.<sup>36</sup> What is the explanation for this reversal? Perhaps Mossadegh may have been reversing the tables on Kashani, using executive leverage to get Kashani to contribute to, rather than impede, a possible solution to the oil dispute. There is no published American account of their thoughts on this question, but their actions revealed what they were thinking. The Americans were already reacting to Kashani's press releases. The U.S. Secretary of State had already received urgent presidential approval, "subject to his approval of a final plan,...to advance up to a hundred million dollars to Iran against the future delivery of Iranian oil and approve a...program...in which one or more U.S. companies, alone or in conjunction with Anglo-Iranian, would purchase and market Iranian oil."<sup>37</sup> However, these efforts were to no avail in the end. Mossadegh soon faced a retributive and retrenched Kashani, who opposed any deals with the Westerners. The British never retreated from their insistence on compensation for projected losses. Moreover, they were not interested in bargaining with Mossadegh and bided their time until his overthrow.

Dean Acheson, the American Secretary of State who tried for a last-ditch solution in November, believed that Mossadegh should be supported, not undermined. But without a solution to the oil dispute, the U.S. could not effectively assist Iran. So it was a



frustrated Acheson who relayed the Iranian morass to the new Eisenhower administration, which the American voters chose to replace Truman's group in November 1952.

The new guard had different ideas for Iran. President Eisenhower's group were more apt to support their British allies to prevent dire consequences that would result if Mossadegh remained in power. For the British, these consequences were damage to their prestige, influence, and vital commercial interests in the Middle East. For the new American administration, the consequences were already weakening Iran and increasing its vulnerability to Soviet penetration. They were convinced that Mossadegh was the main hindrance to an oil settlement; he was playing a cat and mouse game in the talks, which gave the Americans the impression he was not serious.<sup>38</sup> With no hope of a settlement, a communist takeover in Iran seemed inevitable. Eisenhower's group, which had a mandate to change from Truman's "treadmill" foreign policy and were "eager to improve upon the record of their predecessors and to show that their fresh outlook could significantly enhance the national interest," chose to take the offensive in Iran.<sup>39</sup> The specter of Munich haunted Eisenhower's elite, men like Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, his brother and head of the CIA, Allen Dulles, Undersecretary of State and former head of the CIA, Walter Bedell Smith, the chief of CIA field operations in the Middle East, Kermit Roosevelt, President Eisenhower himself, and an important ally of theirs, Loy Henderson.<sup>40</sup>

As early as January 1952, members of this aggressive group and British intelligence officials were exchanging information that explored the feasibility of a coup to oust Mossadegh.<sup>41</sup> While Truman was still in office, the CIA under Smith actually implemented a destabilization program codenamed BEDAMN, which worked to splinter the National Front.<sup>42</sup> In November of 1952, British intelligence tried to convince American intelligence officials to cooperate in a joint effort aimed at a coup. The British played on American fears by raising the specter of a communist threat to Iran (simultaneously, violent communist-instigated riots took place in Iraq).<sup>43</sup> Later in February 1953, after Eisenhower had assumed office, the British and Americans agreed to work together to replace Mossadegh with an anti-communist strong man, General Fazlullah Zahidi, who was also loyal to the Shah and connected to Kashani.<sup>44</sup>

General Zahidi was a good candidate to manage a coup because he had already been involved in planning for a coup, was courageous, and was seemingly invulnerable to Mossadegh's wrath. Zahidi belonged to a group of disgruntled officers who were 'retired' during Mossadegh's regime. Most of these dismissals occurred after 30 Tir. Any one of 136 incompetent and undisciplined military officers did not like enforced dismissal, nor did the army appreciate the reduction of its revenue by 15 percent. The seeds of future revolt were sown with such measures. Many of these retired officers, continued to meet at the Tehran Officers Club, formed the Committee to Save the Fatherland in secret, and plotted a coup after Mossadegh's victory on 30 Tir.

General Zahidi was instrumental in this planning, and he maintained links with other prominent officers, British SIS agents, prominent ulama (Buruji and Bihbahani included), National Front members who eventually betrayed Mossadegh, and probably Kashani, too.<sup>45</sup> The security in this planning evidently was not adequate, as the government announced on October 13 that a general and three distinguished businessmen (the British contacts) were arrested for "plotting and intriguing with a foreign embassy...in cooperation with General Zahidi and some other persons enjoying parliamentary immunity" (Zahidi was a senator).<sup>46</sup> There are scant indications that Kashani could have been involved already; upon his return from Mecca, he supposedly proposed to Ayatullah Zanjani to replace Mossadegh with Zahidi.<sup>47</sup> Embassy documents do not reveal that they had any knowledge of the coup planning, but they did keep track of meetings between Kashani and Zahidi's people. They noted that, although Kashani had become a "covert rallying point for various elements opposed to the Prime Minister,...the extent to which the Zahidi group had enjoyed the support of, or even the tacit approval of, Kashani...never became clear."<sup>48</sup> The notion of whether the Eisenhower administration later acted on the embassy's suspicions may not be axiomatic, but it probably is a safe assumption.

Whoever was involved, Mossadegh inexplicably did not punish them. The embassy surmised that Mossadegh felt he had already soundly defeated the effort by exposing the participants to public ridicule.<sup>49</sup> In addition, within two weeks of the announcement

Mossadegh responded to the threat with plenary decrees to shorten the Senate's tenure from six to two years (thereby disbanding it), closing the British embassy, and enacting a new public security law which could be used to arrest and prosecute provocateurs for their incitations.

Although the Shah and the royalist opposition instantly acquiesced to Mossadegh's security measures in October 1952, Kashani was not intimidated. He garnered some prestige for the expulsion of the British, which occurred on 1 November. At this point, he had very little left in common with Mossadegh. He showed his anger at the new public security law by writing a letter to Mossadegh and having his deputies attack it in the Majlis. Because this new law provided for prompt and severe punishments of individuals instigating strikes or disorders "in public thoroughfares and bazaars," it was obvious to the embassy and to Kashani at whom this law was aimed.<sup>50</sup> Kashani's protest managed to stir renewed opposition in the Majlis, which had been relatively quiet up to that point.

The Majlis began to complain about the extreme security measures and many new economic and political reform bills decreed by Mossadegh. Husain Fatimi, Mossadegh's most trusted advisor, returned from his long convalescence in early October, and together with Mossadegh and a tight group of Iran Party members, they accelerated Mossadegh's plenary reform decrees. The sheer pace of their legislation was astonishing, eventually totalling 98 bills. Other members of the National Front, including Kashani, could not even

consult Mossadegh, so they alternately complained about the fast pace of reform legislation, charging communism, and the slow pace of reform affectation, charging that Mossadegh's ministers were incompetent.<sup>51</sup> Mossadegh's critics within and without the nationalist movement kept up a running stream of fault-finding during November 1952. The nationalist opposition emphasized such questions as the government's failure to take legal action against Qavam and release the assassin of Razmara, two issues which Mossadegh eventually relented to in mid-November.

The embassy knew that Kashani was the ringleader in this latest bout of criticism against the government. He was upset for being squeezed-out of the decision-making process and felt that Mossadegh was increasingly threatening his political position.<sup>52</sup> Mossadegh, for his part, simply could not trust Kashani. He did not want to incur open enmity with the powerful Ayatullah, so he basically hoped that Kashani would stumble on his own.<sup>53</sup> While Mossadegh waited for Kashani to lose prestige, the opposition and the Ayatullah drew closer together and encouraged each other. It became more and more apparent to the public that Kashani was gradually distancing himself from Mossadegh in November. In response to questions about a rift, Kashani was forced to deny it repeatedly. Finally, at the end of the month, he admitted, "it is nothing serious...it will be taken care of...I cannot say anything further in this regard."<sup>54</sup>

Beyond the assessments of the American embassy, any specific cause for Kashani's eventual open break with Mossadegh cannot be

determined; he never said. Was it the American negotiations?...the bill to nationalize the telephone company (opposed by Kashani)?...a new press law which allowed trial by jury for slander or incitation? ...secular appointments and reforms in the ministries of education, justice and finance, as well as the appointments of an anglophile and an ex-AIOC employee to top management posts in the oil industry?<sup>55</sup> It could be any of these reasons, but probably is all of them, combined with his many past frustrations noted by the embassy. He could not hide his attitude, but remained openly conciliatory towards Mossadegh to avoid the desertion stigma. The rising tide of opposition, however, was encouraging Kashani to break away by the end of November 1952.

Kashani must have realized that the senior ulama were also turning cold to the government, although the embassy documents do not reveal much about such speculation. When Mossadegh first came to power, he appeased the ulama. For example, he appointing trustworthy individuals to important posts, like the elder statesman Baqir Kazimi (Foreign, then Finance Minister) and Mehdi Bazargan, founder of the Islamic Society (Assistant Minister of Education); he banned alcohol sales; he increased taxes to encourage the handicraft trade; he restricted the activity of Kasravi disciples who ridiculed the ulama; he kept the ulama supervisory councils; he submitted an electoral bill that ignored women; he later even freed 28 Fidaiyan members, including Razmara's assassin. However, his latest trend following 30 Tir did not please the ulama. He appointed the anti-clerical Abd

ul-Ali Lufti (who helped Reza Shah rearrange the judicial system) Minister of Justice, Mihdi Azar (professor who was sympathetic to the Tudeh) Minister of Education, while the Iran Party garnered the Ministries of Interior, Agriculture and Transport.<sup>56</sup>

The ulama joined in the chorus which criticized Mossadegh's ministers, and the waste, chaos and oppression of the reformist ministries.<sup>57</sup> The embassy did report extensively how provincial mullahs caused part of the problem by pushing Mossadegh in August 1952 to enact his first major secular reform, a bill to increase the peasants' share of crop proceeds by reducing the landlords' share by twenty percent. Pro-Kashani mullahs had forced Mossadegh's hand by inciting peasant unrest in northwestern Iran. However, when the new law proved at the outset to be a source of more trouble than peace, the ulama and the landlords both criticized it. Kashani blamed the ministers who enacted the law, and suggested other measures to appease the peasants.<sup>58</sup> Kashani also must have annoyed Mossadegh by soliciting petitions and encouraging bazaari guild protests to the government's price controls and telephone company nationalization, even though these actions were aimed against the ministers who proposed these reform measures.

The situation altered somewhat in the fall of 1952, when religious issues were used to attack Mossadegh's government directly. Just prior to the new security law, a religious deputy, Hasan Ali Rashid, made inflammatory anti-government speeches.<sup>59</sup> Tabriz mullahs also joined in the criticism, demanding that the government

cease any Western proclivities, going so far as ordering the faithful to avoid shaving and the wearing of neckties. The mood was enhanced by the anti-British fervor of the day, especially in the provinces, where some believed a religious coup was impending. It must have been awkward for Kashani, despite his pragmatic nature, to order the mullahs to desist and to rebuke them for raising religious issues because "such controversial issues will exhaust our strength and divert our energies from our main goal, that is the liquidation of the enemies of Iran and Islam."<sup>60</sup>

Yet Kashani did not prevent the religious establishment from roundly vilifying municipal female enfranchisement, introduced by the Prime Minister in November.<sup>61</sup> The angry ulama insisted that "the religious laws undoubtedly limited the vote to men", and any change would "encourage political instability, religious decay, and social anarchy."<sup>62</sup> The embassy must have believed that Ayatullah Kashani also was disturbed with Mossadegh's effort to enfranchise women. He did not express his feelings publicly during November, but Kashani had once judged that "women should not have the right to vote... [but should stay home] and attend to their duties of bringing up children".<sup>63</sup>

At the same time of the female voting issue, the government attempted to change the administrator of the Qom shrine. The ulama viewed the Tauliyat Affair (named after the man who the government was trying to replace) as interference in their affairs, a government attempt to obtain shrine awqaf to distribute to secular education.



Ayatullah Burujirdi issued a fatwa which defended Tauliyat's position on the basis that his family had administered the shrine for generations. The event saw sit-ins and the declaration of martial law in Qom. Mossadegh did not back down. According to the perspective of the American embassy, the Prime Minister wanted to spite Kashani, as Kashani had asked Mossadegh to replace Tauliyat with one of his sons. Although Tauliyat bought off Kashani by contributing huge amounts of money to the Ayatullah's 'charities' and promised to provide a full public accounting of the shrine's finances, Mossadegh did not heed Kashani's suggestion that a replacement of Tauliyat was no longer desired or necessary. This was the embarrassing episode that Mossadegh had been waiting for. In fact, he ordered Kashani to publicly mediate between Qom and the Department of Awqaf and the replacement (a Tehran University law professor), and the sit-ins were cancelled.<sup>64</sup> This episode was a mixed victory for Mossadegh. When the professor finally replaced Tauliyat on 7 December, Ayatullah Kashani had been humiliated, but he was also angered and still powerful. Meanwhile, Mossadegh had lost more favor with the ulama.

Ayatullah Kashani probably reached his limit in restrained ambivalence in November 1952. Representing government interests against the ulama certainly did not diminish his consternation, which had been raised by the overall political opposition to Mossadegh's government and the Ayatullah's long-standing frustrations. Because of these pressures, because the British were gone, because he did not

have much influence on Mossadegh at this point, Kashani was certainly inclined to publicly break from Mossadegh's movement by December 1952.

### Endnotes for Chapter Four

<sup>1</sup>Mohammad Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, ed. Homa Katouzian, trs. S. H. Amin and H. Katouzian (London: Jebhe National Movement of Iran, 1988), 297, 340.

<sup>2</sup>University Publications of America, Iran, 1950-1954 (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1985), Embtel 448, 29 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState. The lower end estimates are the Iranian government's official figures, while the upper end estimates were made by responsible Iranian sources and were favored by the embassy.

<sup>3</sup>Fakhreddin Azimi, Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 289; Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 53.

<sup>4</sup>Mohammad Hasan Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama in Twentieth Century Iran with Particular Reference to Ayatullah Haj Sayyid Abul-Qasim Kashani (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), 235.

<sup>5</sup>Yann Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic?" tr. Nikki R. Keddie, Religion and Politics in Iran, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983), 111.

<sup>6</sup>Azimi, Iran, 290; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 238. See also Embtel 259, 19 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 270, 20 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 287, 20 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState, for full texts of Kashani's calls to the military and to the Tudeh.

<sup>7</sup>Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mission for my Country (London: Hutchinson and Company Ltd, 1961), 94.

<sup>8</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 237.

<sup>9</sup>Embtel 286, 20 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 353, 23 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>10</sup>788.00/8-2152, 21 Jul 1952, Byroade memo to the President. See also Embtel 377, 24 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 348, 23 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Richard W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran, (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 100.

<sup>11</sup>Embtel 377, 24 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>12</sup>Embte1 353, 23 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 374, 24 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 382, 25 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 690, 14 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState. These documents are the better summaries on the relationship between the Tudeh and the National Front during and after the July uprising.

<sup>13</sup>Embte1 353, 23 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 382, 25 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 386, 25 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 393, 26 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>14</sup>Azimi, Iran, 303; Embte1 374, 24 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 411, 27 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>15</sup>Embte1 796, 21 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>16</sup>Embte1 752, 7 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>17</sup>Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani," 111.

<sup>18</sup>Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 56-57; Embte1 716, 16 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; 788.00/8-852, 8 Aug 1952, CIA and MI6 Memorandum of Conversation.

<sup>19</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 145.

<sup>20</sup>Embte1 514, 3 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 624, 11 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>21</sup>Embte1 624, 11 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>22</sup>Embte1 715, 16 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; 788.00/8-952, 9 Aug 1952, Byroade to SecState.

<sup>23</sup>Embte1 735, 18 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 737, 18 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 796, 21 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>24</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 148-149.

<sup>25</sup>Embte1 1962, 14 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 249.

<sup>26</sup>Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani," 112-113.

<sup>27</sup>Azimi, Iran, 306-307; Embte1 1962, 14 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>28</sup>Rose Greaves, "1942-1976: The Reign of Muhammad Riza Shah," Twentieth-Century Iran, ed. Hossein Amirsadeghi (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1977), 69; Embdesp 1009, 12 Mar 1952, Melbourne to DepState; Embtel 690, 14 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 702, 15 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 299, 18 Oct 1952, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>29</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 261.

<sup>30</sup>Embtel 287, 20 Jul 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>31</sup>Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>32</sup>Embtel 790, 21 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 805, 22 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>33</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, vol. 10, Iran, 1951-1954 (Washington D.C.: Department of State Publications, 1989), 475, [Embtel 1220, 20 Sep 1952, Henderson to SecState].

<sup>34</sup>Azimi, Iran, 301.

<sup>35</sup>Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>36</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy in Iranian Politics, 1949-1954," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 103; L. P. Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975), 286.

<sup>37</sup>Dean Acheson, Present at the Creation (New York: W. W. Norton and Company Inc, 1969), 683.

<sup>38</sup>Kermit Roosevelt, Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company Inc, 1986), 118; Barry Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 68.

<sup>39</sup>Roosevelt, Countercoup, 126; Mark Hamilton Lytle, The Origins of the Iranian-American Alliance, 1941-1953 (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, 1987), 204.

<sup>40</sup>H. W. Brands, Cold Warriors (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 14, 20, 48, 54-58, 71, 73-76; James A. Bill, "America, Iran, and the Politics of Intervention, 1951-1952," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 281-283. Brands'

work is a concise study of the cold warrior's mindset, a major influence behind the coup. J. F. Dulles was the vocal ideologue of the group who probably felt the most need to appear actively pursuing a different foreign policy direction, but he was also a "closet realist". I don't believe he was ever really convinced of the coup's necessity or chance of success. At times, he was kept out of the planning loop, yet he represented Eisenhower to the British, was the official mouthpiece of overt American policy towards Iran, and was the organizer of a consensus within the administration. A. Dulles, Smith, and Roosevelt were the main enthusiasts, as they were greatly intrigued by possibilities and convinced of the efficacy of covert operations. The intelligent Smith, one of Eisenhower's closest confidants, was the main liaison between the various agencies.

<sup>41</sup>Embte1 2766, 23 Jan 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3558, 15 Feb 1952, Gifford to EmbTehran; Embte1 3865, 10 Apr 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>42</sup>Mark Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup d'Etat in Iran," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 19 (Aug 1987): 268-269.

<sup>43</sup>C. M. Woodhouse, Something Ventured (London: Granada, 1982), 110, 117. See also Roosevelt, Countercoup, 107-116; Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup d'Etat," 170; Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions, 77; George Lenczowski, "Iran's Deepening Crisis," Current History 24 (April 1953): 235.

<sup>44</sup>Roosevelt, Countercoup, 120-124. See also Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup d'Etat," 171.

<sup>45</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 279; Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>46</sup>Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil, 310; Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>47</sup>Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani," 121.

<sup>48</sup>Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState. See also Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup d'Etat," 266. Gasiorowski has better evidence and contends that Kashani "worked...in loose collaboration with Zahidi...in exchange for a role in the selection of post-coup cabinet members." Henderson, "who was noncommittal about Zahidi," met with Zahidi or an emissary on Sept 8, when he was warned of an imminent coup, though details were not disclosed.

<sup>49</sup>Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>50</sup>Embte1 1708, 25 Oct 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 1729, 27 Oct 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 1810, 3 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 1940, 12 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 245.

<sup>51</sup>Embte1 1962, 14 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 1753, 29 Oct 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 379, 15 Nov 1952, Melbourne to DepState; Embdesp 669, 25 Feb 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Farhad Diba, Mossadeqh: A Political Biography (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), 163.

<sup>52</sup>Embte1 1753, 29 Oct 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 1811, 3 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 1842, 4 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>53</sup>Embte1 1962, 14 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>54</sup>Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 103.

<sup>55</sup>Embdesp 379, 15 Nov 1952, Melbourne to DepState; Embdesp 669, 19 Feb 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Azimi, Iran, 294-295, 310.

<sup>56</sup>Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, 275.

<sup>57</sup>Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 101.

<sup>58</sup>Embte1 571, 7 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 642, 12 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 514, 3 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>59</sup>Azimi, Iran, 309.

<sup>60</sup>Embte1 1611, 20 Oct 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 1612, 21 Oct 1952, Henderson to SecState; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 237-238.

<sup>61</sup>Azimi, Iran, 295; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 103.

<sup>62</sup>Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, 276.

<sup>63</sup>Embdesp 1074, 7 Apr 1952, Melbourne to DepState; Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, 276.

<sup>64</sup>Embte1 1878, 6 Nov 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 456, 12 Dec 1952, Melbourne to DepState; Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1980), 70-71.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### OPEN ENMITY: DECEMBER 1952 - AUGUST 1953

In Iranian politics, the aim of the game is absolute power, not power-sharing. The U.S. embassy saw that Mossadegh and Kashani had reached, by December 1952, the limit of their inherently tenuous arrangement. American assessments concluded that each leader was blocking the ultimate designs of the other. Saddled with an ambitious, vociferous mullah, the Prime Minister was not free to solve his nation's difficult economic, political and social problems along secular lines. For his part, the Ayatullah realized that Mossadegh's government was attempting to fence him off politically while still recognizing him as a strong power worthy of careful attention. This squeeze play was intolerable, especially since the government seemed increasingly to favor policies that were set against Kashani's bases of political and religious legitimacy. He reacted by encouraging and pulling closer to Mossadegh's opposition in the Majlis, the Court, and the ulama. As both leaders increasingly constrained each other's room for maneuver, they approached an unavoidable showdown. The resulting open enmity preoccupied them to the end, exposed the government's vulnerability to internal and external intrigue, and caused both men to make responses which were fatal to the realization of their dreams for the Iranian nation.

At the end of November 1952, a series of major disputes between the government and the Majlis seriously disrupted the remaining



superficial harmony which had carried over from the campaign against the British. The opposition in the Majlis, whose number was swelled by disgruntled nationalists, engaged Mossadegh's ministers in a barrage of criticism. The government chose to regard the language used by the interrogating deputies as insulting and demanded apologies. The embassy realized that the dispute was really a manifestation of tension between Prime Minister Mossadegh and Majlis Speaker Kashani. They had a meeting on November 29, when Mossadegh told Kashani to stop meddling in affairs of the Executive. The Ayatullah conveyed his concern of the government's growing tendency to act independently of his and others' advice in questions of patronage, in the drafting of decree legislation, and especially in preventing "collaboration with Americans" on the oil question.<sup>1</sup> The Prime Minister would not compromise, however, as he chose this occasion to reassert his dominance over Kashani and the Majlis. Mossadegh essentially forced from the Majlis another vote of confidence, which took the form of a letter of apology. His sureness in the forceful approach, which certainly cost him political capital, was based on his knowledge that the nationalist deputies would not risk a split in the whole nationalist movement. For the time being at least, there was no one other than Mossadegh with sufficient prestige to hold the movement together. Kashani could not convince anyone otherwise, so he briefly retreated on sick leave.<sup>2</sup>

The embassy believed that Mossadegh's method in obtaining an 'apology' from the Majlis and his tendency to restrict even further

his little circle of associates continued to rankle Kashani and his followers in the Majlis. When, in January 1953, the Prime Minister pushed a bill for electoral reform, the rancor of the power-seekers became malice. They were alarmed by the draft election law's plan for an increase of the total number of Majlis deputies to 172; as the Iranian Constitution required two-thirds of the deputies to be in Tehran for its opening session, the current 68-member Majlis could be paralyzed. Mossadegh did not calm protests when he explained that the law would not be retroactive.<sup>3</sup> In great urgency, Kashani and fifteen other signatories prepared a bill that depicted the draft election law as a step toward dictatorship. Mossadegh reacted to this attack by appealing directly to the people over the radio and vilifying the signatories of Kashani's bill.<sup>4</sup> The speech succeeded in garnering massive support in the streets. Then a cowed Majlis gave Mossadegh an almost unanimous vote of confidence, as the signatories quickly backpedaled, claiming they "drew up the motion to remove any misunderstanding that might exist."<sup>5</sup> Mossadegh resorted increasingly to this sort of public appeal, realizing that the opposition's core of disaffected, self-seeking National Front members had no significant popularity of their own. He worried only about Kashani's influence, but the massive crowds that reacted to the radio appeal must have alleviated concern. Kashani had suffered yet another blow to his prestige. Nevertheless, truer tests of their relative political strengths were yet to come.

Mossadegh lost no time in pressing his advantage. He sent to

the Majlis session of January 8 a request for a further extension of his plenary powers, which were due to expire in a month.<sup>6</sup> Heated debate in the Majlis immediately ensued. The small core of disloyal National Front deputies protested the loudest. After a week of fiery incriminations, the debate started to die as the protesters realized they were not getting any support. Some of them completely reversed themselves and apologized.<sup>7</sup> Then Kashani joined the fray with this announcement to the Majlis:

In view of my religious and national duties, I would like to remind the Majlis and the nation that the constitutional law must be respected and observed by all citizens in this country. Submission to dictatorial governments of any sort is against the Law. Therefore...I declare that the Premier's request is a violation of...the Constitution and its debate is not allowed in the Majlis. In the entire struggle against AIOC we have supported the Premier and will continue to do so, hence no need for the government to hold dictatorial powers. The grant of legislative authority to one man would eventually lead to dictatorship."<sup>8</sup>

This declaration upset and widened the issue, causing considerable tension in Tehran and fist-fights in the Majlis.<sup>9</sup>

Mossadegh's supporters were surprised and noted the irony of Kashani's silence on the same issue six months prior. Still upset years later, Mossadegh recalled in his memoirs this same irony, as Kashani opposed his "request with the argument that it was against

the Constitution, whereas six months earlier he had not put forward the slightest opposition, because the sentiments expressed by the people of Tehran on 21 July, had not yet been forgotten."<sup>10</sup> The Ayatullah was immune to such argument, because, as he said, "if the deputies previously erred (in granting emergency powers) that is no reason to repeat that (error)."<sup>11</sup>

The Ayatullah could not argue away the popularity of Mossadegh. Massive crowds rallied again to Mossadegh's aid, and the Majlis assented to his request in what amounted to be a confidence vote of 59 to 1 with 6 abstentions.<sup>12</sup> To make matters worse for Kashani, the bazaar of Tehran, which the mullah expected to be his stronghold, went on strike in support of the Prime Minister instead. In addition, Mossadegh received a mass of supporting telegrams from all over the country.<sup>13</sup> Kashani's judgement of the peril to the Constitution had backfired, and he suddenly found himself stranded.

Now it was Kashani's turn to proclaim a misunderstanding, saying he did not disagree with the Prime Minister; on the contrary, he wanted only to relay a "simple legal warning purely aimed at preserving the Constitution."<sup>14</sup> His conciliatory gestures were becoming less credible, as they alternated almost daily between expressions of support and condemnation of the Prime Minister. The loyal National Front deputies tried to repair the fracture, but to no avail.

In the embassy's assessments, Kashani had been encouraged by the ferocity of the Majlis' debate which criticized Mossadegh, had

clearly made his move, and had failed. Although he increased the Prime Minister's vulnerability to the Majlis by encouraging disaffection of the faint-hearted, he had not garnered commanding support in the Majlis or with the people. Kashani futilely wrote Mossadegh at the height of the debate, "Your request will prove destructive to our national unity and will prevent us from achieving the sacred goal."<sup>15</sup> Yet this begs the question: where did the blame lie? Mossadegh's rebuttal in his memoirs is logical. He bemoans the impetuosity of Kashani, who broke the unity of the National Front by not consulting the group before he condemned Mossadegh's request for an extension of plenary powers. Furthermore, Mossadegh argues that Kashani was "irrational to oppose a government without having an alternative in mind"; the alternative of selecting someone from the National Front would have caused rivalry and "would certainly have led to a split." Mossadegh concludes his reasoning with axiomatic statements:

Even assuming that they would manage to reach an agreement [on my prospective replacement], the Front deputies did not have majority in the House to be able to elect a government. The formation of my government had been without any precedent or preparation, and had been made possible by the unusual circumstances of the time. Therefore, their only choice would have been to nominate someone with foreign backing."<sup>16</sup>

Mossadegh may have explained the error in Kashani's and other dissidents' thinking, but he hardly explained their sources of

motivation. The power-seekers and American observers could see Mossadegh's control was gradually slipping. Mossadegh won his victories at the expense of vitiating the utility of such weapons as labeling his opponents "pro-British" and confirming the open breach in the nationalist movement. In meeting Kashani's challenges, Mossadegh was expending political capital. His chief gain was the right to manipulate the administration of the government in his own political interest without deference to the Ayatullah. For Kashani, the uncomfortable feeling of riding Mossadegh's train, and having no control, was too much to endure in the end.

Two other events had happened during the Majlis debate in January to make Kashani even more uncomfortable. At the height of the Majlis debate, Mossadegh dismissed Kashani's appointee to Director General of the National Police and replaced him with his own protege, General Afshartus.<sup>17</sup> This may have been a message, or it may have been a reaction to events occurring simultaneously in Qom.

On January 5, Ayatullah Ali Akbar Burqai, had returned to Qom from the Soviet-sponsored Vienna Peace Conference. Severe rioting broke out when his leftist supporters supposedly shouted "Long live Stalin" and hurled insults at supporters of Ayatullah Burujirdi. Supporters of the Qom ulama responded with insults about communism and female suffrage, two hot issues perceived as intentions of the government.<sup>18</sup> Bloody confrontations lasted for a week despite martial law and the government's denials. Security forces were ordered to use rifle fire to control crowds.<sup>19</sup>

During these riots, Burujirdi supposedly phoned Mossadegh to tell him that Qom could not be taken for granted; "Qom, after all, is not like Savah or Damghan", he said, referring to inconsequential provincial towns.<sup>20</sup> A religious deputy in the Majlis had the same sentiments; he argued that the government had neglected Qom, thus allowing the rise of leftist influence and the decay of public morality in the city. He also complained of the government's only solution, the addition of more security forces, which could not arrest the decay in the long run.<sup>21</sup> Burujirdi later thanked Mossadegh after the clashes were quelled, but he undoubtedly viewed Mossadegh's rule with more scepticism after the recent string of troubles. These same considerations probably influenced Kashani's reorientation as well. In general, the U.S. embassy observed that the views and political orientation of the nationalist Ayatullah and the mainstream ulama began to coincide on long-standing religious concerns.

A chief concern of the ulama was the rapidly growing strength of the left, especially the front organizations of the Tudeh party. The ulama were extremely sensitive to a threat which aimed to strip them of their basis of authority and create a wholly secular state in Iran. At first, the Tudeh threat and Mossadegh's reformist tendencies were both minimal. An early CIA estimate reported that the "pro-Soviet Tudeh organization is not believed to be capable of taking advantage of the current tension [March-April 1951] to gain control of the government or even seriously to disrupt the

government's control."<sup>22</sup> Analysts had underestimated the capability of the Tudeh, which they considered to be an "oasis of radicalism in a desert of widespread conservatism."<sup>23</sup> As the Tudeh actively opposed the government's negotiations with Americans and nationalization program, which they treated as an imperialist conspiracy against Soviet claims for Iranian oil concessions, they appeared to deny themselves any vehicle on the road to power. Yet, though the nationalist government never formally lifted a 1949 ban on the party, the Tudeh revived by riding the popular drive to oust the British. The party benefited from the new instability, the government's initial liberalization program, which included relaxed police controls, and the retreat of the Shah and the armed forces from central political activity. By 1952, the Tudeh's strength had grown to 12,000-25,000 clandestine members and 60,000-80,000 sympathizers, and half of these numbers were in Tehran.<sup>24</sup> By 1953, U.S. government agencies were making contingency plans for operations to be used "in the event of a Tudeh coup in Iran."<sup>25</sup> The party had infiltrated the government and the armed forces, could hold rallies involving some 50,000 demonstrators, and could organize massive strikes in industrialized areas.<sup>26</sup> The Tudeh party was the most organized Iranian political group contending for power. As the government's control of Iranian political affairs weakened, the ulama and the Americans, among others, feared that the communists were the sole alternative to Mossadegh.

Fears of communism grew as people assumed a connection between



the revival of the Tudeh and the toleration and increasing public appeals by Mossadegh. One Iranian journalist noted, the "distinction between the direct or indirect responsibility of [Mossadegh's] government [for the rising Tudeh threat] became blurred" in 1953.<sup>27</sup> The Prime Minister actually began to abet Tudeh activity to combat rising foreign and internal opposition to his government. He periodically used Tudeh numbers to bolster pro-government rallies to a point where they ominously outnumbered nationalist demonstrators by a ratio of three to one.<sup>28</sup> He also invoked the communist threat to try to entice American financial aid. These tactics backfired. The Majlis condemned Mossadegh's actions which denied conservative Iranian institutions their traditional role of blocking communism. The U.S. planned covert operations to topple Mossadegh, as his awareness did "not seem to reach the level of realization that there is a measure of reciprocity in a process of exploiting the Party's support and that there is a real danger sooner or later that the tables may be completely turned."<sup>29</sup>

These were the types of perceptions which the Iranian mullahs probably shared and which made the threat appear worse than it actually proved to be. The CIA understood the incompatibility of Iranian leftists and the traditionalist clergy, and worked to blur the government's actual liability for the threat even further.<sup>30</sup> In their search for local allies to stage a coup against Mossadegh, the CIA realized that the mullahs would remain neutral unless the communist threat became obvious, although the British argued that the

clergy was already "willing to work with" them.<sup>31</sup> The cautious but accurate assessment by the CIA was probably largely based on the record of one unpredictable but lucrative target, Ayatullah Kashani.

Although there was some reason to assume that Ayatullah Kashani would work with U.S. intelligence to overthrow Mossadegh, they never trusted him. This mistrust stemmed from his earlier meeting with Averell Harriman, contradictory statements to American TCI officials, inconclusive meetings with Ambassador Henderson, and his overall unpredictable behavior.<sup>32</sup> Moreover, Americans could not determine his real views on communism. He believed in invoking possible Soviet assistance in the struggle against Great Britain, while his internal view of communism accepted the idea of land redistribution and other reforms.<sup>33</sup> Although he shared the ulama's abhorrence of atheistic doctrine, he defended leftist activism when the whole country needed unity to fight imperialism and poverty. He would say, "As the Tudeh Party is fighting against imperialism, they are with us."<sup>34</sup> This statement contradicts a remark like, "The government and the National Front do not entertain any idea of forming a coalition with the Tudeh Party...[as] such a measure would be vigorously opposed by the Muslim people of Iran."<sup>35</sup> The truth of Kashani's fundamental attitude was somewhere in between, as the 30 Tir alliance showed. He apparently looked upon the Tudeh as a source of support in the event of need. Such opportunistic vacillation made the Americans wary of the Ayatullah.

Moreover, the Ayatullah was anti-American because he believed

America and Britain were allied in efforts to defeat the oil nationalization and subjugate Iran. He bitterly opposed Mossadegh's secret negotiations with Henderson (December 1952 - March 1953), because Americans never care for what Iranians "really want, [had] allied themselves with Britain from the beginning and supported the British blockade of Iran...[and] step by step follow the line taken by the British imperialists."<sup>36</sup> Mossadegh blamed Kashani for the final breakdown in the secret talks with Henderson, as he claimed Kashani's opposition had prevented him from accepting a deal that would have required Iran to pay about \$800 million in compensation to AIOC over twenty years.<sup>37</sup> At the same time, the Americans suspected that the Ayatullah generally respected the potential of American money bankrolling aid projects in Iran and his own political program.

Foreign intrigue against Mossadegh was influenced by Kashani's ambivalence towards communism and Americans. None of the mullahs were prime candidates as covert allies; they asked for too much money, tried to bargain, and hedged on their commitments.<sup>38</sup> The anti-American Ayatullah was appealing only in the sense that he, for his own reasons, already was opposing Mossadegh. In this regard, Kashani would at least serve as an unwitting tool of other conspirators.

British and American covert operators mostly relied on the fear of communism to keep the mullahs in line and out of Mossadegh's camp. But while the fear of communism could motivate the ulama's resistance

to Mossadegh's government, Kashani used the establishment fear to further legitimize his already long-standing quarrel with Mossadegh. As the quarrel intensified, the denunciations of Mossadegh's collaboration with communists became severe, as this declaration by one of Kashani's deputies shows:

Now the Iranian people are disappointed with the Prime Minister. He thinks he has no other choice than relying on the communists. We warn him, that if the Tudeh Party succeeds, the Prime Minister's destiny will be like his counterparts in Czechoslovakia and China. They will have no mercy on Mossadegh. And if the nation succeeds to eliminate the Tudeh heretics, it will bury the Prime Minister with his socialist colleagues."<sup>39</sup>

A myriad of complex internal political relationships clearly aided the efforts of the CIA and SIS (British Intelligence, also known as MI6). While they would not actively recruit Kashani, his split with Mossadegh greatly served the needs of covert operators.

Kashani was not the only pole of opposition surrounded by hints of intrigue. A crisis between the government and the Court in February 1953 showed that the Shah was another adversary. Although the Shah had promised to cooperate with Mossadegh following the July uprising, the Prime Minister had been unable to subvert the symbol of the monarchy to his own purposes. The growing tension in recent months caused Mossadegh to ask the Shah to cease all contact with the military and with persons unfriendly to the government and to give up

his control of the Mashad shrine properties and his right to administer the distribution of the proceeds of the shrine and other Crown properties.<sup>40</sup> In response to Mossadegh's threat to denounce him over the radio, the Shah relented, but soon after there were rumors that Mossadegh had "advised" the Shah to leave the country as well.<sup>41</sup> It was not altogether surprising to embassy analysts that the two main Ayatullahs of Tehran, Kashani and Bihbahani, came to the Shah's aid.

Their deteriorating patience with Mossadegh and relatively friendly ties with the Crown partially explain why the clergy sided with the Shah in this political dispute. One of the main participants, Ayatullah Bihbahani, had always favored the Court. He received favor from them in return. He would publicly praise the Shah for his religious observances and regularly met with the Minister of Court. At one point he asked the press to stop writing about him, because he did not like the attention.<sup>42</sup> The British SIS confided to the CIA in November 1952, that Bihbahani would work with them for a price.<sup>43</sup> From then on, Bihbahani actively assisted the Crown's struggle against the government.

Bihbahani's support for the Shah was indicative of the general mood of the senior ulama, although the leading Qom clerics still abstained from any overt support. They had become frightened of a powerful, popular, secular, reforming Prime Minister who had disaffected his main ulama ally. The ulama naturally gravitated much closer to a Shah, who had treated them well and worked in unison with

them against communism and social anarchy. The ulama would respond if they felt the Shah was threatened as well. A speech by a parliamentary mullah, who supported Bihbahani and Burujirdi, echoed the ulama's preference at the beginning of 1953. He told the Majlis that the clergy (the spirit) and nationalist leaders (the body) had saved Iran from imperialism in the past. But he clarified the meaning by arguing that, just as for religion there must be a stable center (the marja-i-taqlid Burujirdi), in the same way "for politics a stable center is necessary -- and that is the monarchy."<sup>44</sup> For the religious establishment in the early 1950s, the Shah was a pillar of nationalism, not Mossadegh.

The senior ulama's preference for the Shah, in addition to Ayatullah Bihbahani's support, probably encouraged the union of Kashani with the Shah's camp. Moreover, the Americans knew Kashani had no other choice. He was rapidly losing any influence he had with Mossadegh's followers and nationalists in the streets. He had also taken actions which set him permanently and dangerously against the Prime Minister. The Ayatullah had encouraged a formal split in the National Front, which divided into a rump National Movement Faction and Kashani's group of prominent nationalists. His group and other deputies, numbering more than half of the Majlis quorum, had frequent planning and policy sessions at his house.<sup>45</sup> Denunciations and intrigue emanated from these informal Majlis sessions. The roguish deputies directly attacked Mossadegh's reforms and condemned the continuing martial law. They railed against the dying, secret oil

talks, which Mossadegh desparately tried to depict as successful and progressive; they labeled Mossadegh and his National Movement Faction as "American stooges."<sup>46</sup> In such a period of increasing tension, Kashani needed allies. So he decided to hitch his vituperative wagon with the Shah and Bihbahani.

The Shah, for his part, recognized the psychological utility of winning Mossadegh's former ally over to his cause. His Minister of Court, Husain Ala, performed the necessary liaisons with Kashani on February 22, when they discussed an anti-Mossadegh scheme.<sup>47</sup> Ala also coordinated the efforts of other opposition deputies, General Zahidi, the American embassy, and British intelligence in related intrigues aimed at replacing Mossadegh with General Zahidi.<sup>48</sup> One of Kashani's tasks was to ensure a cooperative Majlis after Zahidi's accession.<sup>49</sup> The Shah was personally very cautious. He once conveyed to the CIA that he "distrusted the venality of Mullah Kashani."<sup>50</sup> The wary monarch remembered how Kashani had stigmatized his 'lackey' Court in the heyday of nationalization. Even Ala confided to Henderson that, "although at this moment Kashani was giving the Shah full backing, nevertheless Kashani was unscrupulous and will not hesitate to betray the Shah or anyone else if such betrayal would seem to be to his personal advantage."<sup>51</sup> Their alliance was both opportunistic and shaky.

Their schemes started to fall apart when Mossadegh learned of the plotting and arrested General Zahidi on February 25.<sup>52</sup> The Shah was already backing down, but he apparantly agreed to a last

ditch effort involving Kashani and Bihbahani, who organized crowds to protest the Shah's rumored departure. The crisis which then occurred on February 28 was actually a deadly trap set for Mossadegh. The mullahs positioned an agitated crowd to intercept Mossadegh as he left a contrived meeting with the Shah and headed to a bogus meeting with Henderson. This attempt to kill the Prime Minister failed when he left the palace through an unlocked gate in the back. The mob followed him to his house, and was soon joined by Kashani's chagu kishan (hired men, usually led by members of a varzishgah, or athletic club). The crowd was led by a notorious bully, Shaban the Brainless (a famous varzishgah owner and racketeer), who ran a jeep through the gate of Mossadegh's house. The small, but dangerous mob was also augmented by units of the Shah's army, who had brought in some peasants from his lands. Mossadegh luckily escaped again, and the crowd did not press the narrow entryway which was protected by guards armed with rifles. Nationalist mobs then came to his rescue, but it was a couple of days before the city had quieted.<sup>53</sup>

All things considered, the 28 February attempt on the life of Mossadegh was a dress rehearsal for the August 19 coup. Supposedly, the Shah sent Kashani a letter that thanked the Ayatullah for his efforts.<sup>54</sup> This is unlikely since everybody else, including the Ayatullahs, were urgently trying to cover their tracks. Kashani denied any links with the Court and with General Zahidi. He stated that "certain groups" were attempting to "drive a wedge between the Prime Minister, Shah, and Majlis," but he was "still supporting the



struggle begun by Mossadegh against foreigners and supporting the Prime Minister."<sup>55</sup> These statements concerning the events of 28 February did not fool embassy observers, nor did it persuade the British Foreign Office:

It would seem that Kashani, seizing upon the emotions surrounding the departure of the Shah, cleverly managed to couple popular clamour for the Shah remaining, with attacks on Musaddiq. The popular clamour itself was certainly organized by Kashani and was not a spontaneous expression of a loyalty deep-seated or significant enough to stiffen the Shah.<sup>56</sup>

The CIA was surprised by Kashani's "power...both in influencing the Majlis and in quickly marshaling for mob action his fanatical followers," and they believed he was using the Shah.<sup>57</sup> This was helpful for CIA designs, but it was really a pessimistic commentary on Kashani's overall political position relative to what it once was. A month after Kashani's break with Mossadegh, his popular influence was already reduced to organizing small chaqu kishan mobs, aided and abetted by recalcitrant officers and ulama beholden to the Shah.

The most obvious result of the February crisis was that the Mossadegh-Shah dispute was now in the open, and Mossadegh did not feel like he could continue his uneasy tolerance of the monarch. Shortly after the crisis, Fatimi told Henderson that Mossadegh "finally had begun to lose confidence in the Shah's promises and honesty, and he could no longer tolerate the Shah's tendency to try to undermine him whenever opposition to government assumed a certain

degree of strength."<sup>58</sup> Henderson echoed this analysis in his assessments and added:

When a nationalist movement politician such as Kashani who was inherently anti-foreign and who had hitherto supported him also began to turn towards Court, Mossadegh could no longer contain his hatred and contempt for Court. Opposition polarized around Court was becoming too strong.<sup>59</sup>

The buttressing effect of the Kashani-Shah alliance was too much for Mossadegh to ignore. The actions of the mullahs caused the Prime Minister to confront openly the symbol of the monarchy.

The most pressing problem was the necessity for clarifying the relationship between the Court and the government. To this end, a "Committee of Eight" representing the Majlis spent several days negotiating with Mossadegh and the Court. On March 12, the Committee report, approved by Mossadegh and the Shah, was presented to an off-record session of the Majlis. The report declared in effect that the Shah should reign but not rule and that the Constitution made the government alone responsible for the conduct of civil and military affairs.<sup>60</sup>

The report became an emotionally-charged issue as Mossadegh tried to get it ratified in the Majlis during the next three months. Debate revealed considerable dissent in the Majlis. For enraged royalists, this was an attack on the Constitution and was aimed at making Mossadegh unassailable. Charges of 'republicanism' echoed in the hall of the Majlis once more.<sup>61</sup> Contacts between the ulama and

the Court increased. Even Ayatullah Burujirdi announced that he would leave Iran if Mossadegh maintained his pressure on the Shah. The embassy also knew he was "sympathetic" to the Zahidi team.<sup>62</sup> Ayatullah Bihbahani offered to mediate between the Court and the government.<sup>63</sup> The Minister of Court tried to rally support in other political circles.<sup>64</sup> Unfortunately for the supporters of the Shah, they lacked direction and leadership. Most disappointing of all, the Shah, cowed by Mossadegh, did nothing to defend his position. His attitude was "wait and see", because he hoped Mossadegh would blunder himself out of power.<sup>65</sup>

But Mossadegh did not oblige such wishful thinking. He tried to appease the ulama by supporting a bill to ban alcohol. He also promised to look into the possibility of allowing the ulama to control all awqafs. Thinking that danger was past, he released General Zahidi in order to quiet charges of demagoguery. He bribed opponents in the press and Majlis with offers of governmental posts. Finally, he resorted to calling for massive demonstrations of support, which intimidated the supporters of the Shah.<sup>66</sup> Despite the tension and emotion of the issue, the embassy generally saw that the Prime Minister was winning the day.

Kashani was not going to lay down in the face of all this activity. He knew that the dispute between the Shah and Mossadegh was volatile and could be used to develop his own support base. He could also erode the Prime Minister's power by attacking him in a variety of side issues and Mossadegh's hardline responses. The

supporters of the Shah owed much credit to Kashani for the leadership he showed in keeping political pressure on Mossadegh over the next few months. The Americans understood this de facto alliance, and Henderson worked to keep both Kashani and the Shah working towards the same end, if not in unison.

In the absence of any other available tactic, Kashani resorted to eroding Mossadegh's position vis-à-vis the Majlis. He used his Speakership and his position as leader of the opposition deputies to obstruct normal legislative activity and set a different agenda. For the most part, he encouraged criticism of the government for its intimidation and lawlessness. According to statements of the opposition, "contrary to the Constitution," Mossadegh was "creating an atmosphere of fear and intimidation,...has taken over every means of communication,...was secretly exploiting the devotion and sacrifices of the Iranian people for his own advantage,...was impairing the Constitution which is meant to safeguard our country," and overall "was trying to establish a dictatorial government."<sup>67</sup> Sometimes Mossadegh contributed to this perception, as when he had Shaikh Muhammad Tehrani arrested because of the mullah's strong anti-government sermons.<sup>68</sup> But for the most part, Kashani lent credence to these charges by offering the Majlis as bast for any threatened opponent of Mossadegh. Alternately, he encouraged his deputies not to attend Majlis sessions so that they could claim that the government had threatened their lives. At the same time, they denied a quorum for the Majlis, thus paralyzing the ratification of

the Committee of Eight Report. Emphasizing a threat to the Majlis, he protested Mossadegh's appointment of a new Majlis security chief. Ayatullah Kashani thus hypocritically inspired and directed a regular program of obstruction which indicted the government for inhibiting democratic processes in Iran.<sup>69</sup> The embassy followed every step of this program and understood that Kashani essentially expanded the emotions raised by Mossadegh's assault on the Shah.

Kashani also condemned increasing lawlessness in Iran. In this campaign, he was assisted by Mossadegh's call for street rallies, which included Tudeh organizers and violence.<sup>70</sup> The Majlis deputies claimed Mossadegh was in league with the Tudeh and had lost the support of the military.<sup>71</sup> They also highlighted every breakdown in security. Mob violence aimed at the American TCI consulate in Shiraz (which managed the American technical assistance programs) was particularly embarrassing for Mossadegh, who was trying to entice American financial aid. There is strong evidence that the SIS instigated this incident, and a pro-British mullah led it.<sup>72</sup> Foreign covert operators also probably had a hand in another incident that was more damaging to the government. General Afshartus was kidnapped and brutally murdered in a plot to topple the government by systematic demoralization and terror. Mossadegh lost his best policeman. The government implicated many of its opponents in the affair, including Kashani's son, former National Front deputies, and General Zahidi.<sup>73</sup> The Ayatullah made the government's roundup and investigation appear like terror when he enthusiastically gave bast

to General Zahidi in the Majlis.<sup>74</sup> This also sent a definite nonverbal message to the Iranian army -- a message similar to his fatwa of 30 Tir. Kashani was portraying himself as a champion of law and order, a defender of the Constitution. Mossadegh, in Kashani's words, had caused Iranians to be "completely disillusioned, as our original aims have fallen into oblivion giving way to chaos."<sup>75</sup>

The government claimed that Kashani was a "fifth columnist" who served foreign intriguers with his opposition leadership.<sup>76</sup> This was partially true. Henderson and Ala developed plans of action for Kashani, but Kashani thought he was largely conducting his own propaganda campaign at the behest of the Court.<sup>77</sup> When he began to suspect that the Americans were behind the Court's intrigues, he requested a meeting with Henderson to fathom the American attitude. It was a disappointing meeting for both parties, as they fell out in mutual distrust.<sup>78</sup> There can be no doubt, however, that Kashani was now aware that his opposition strategy was serving American interests.

Disregarding his views on foreign interference, the Ayatullah continued to throw his weight behind the filibustering in the Majlis. This activity was not enough to steel the Shah, however, as the timid monarch gave in to Mossadegh in May.<sup>79</sup> This opened the way for the ratification of the Committee of Eight Report. The report was ratified on May 24 by a vote of 54-3, an apparent victory for the Prime Minister and defeat for the opposition.<sup>80</sup> But beneath these public affirmations, Kashani's persistent opposition had eroded

Mossadegh's support in the Majlis. Elwell-Sutton estimates that, "of the 79 deputies [total], probably only 29 were wholly pro-Mossadegh," and the rest "were dubious about the almost dictatorial powers that Mossadegh seemed to be acquiring for himself."<sup>81</sup> Most deputies, however, would not vote against Mossadegh in a public showdown.

Despite some outer appearances, Kashani's opposition had taken its toll since his defection. The Iranian political scene had changed radically. The opposition to Mossadegh's government now included major segments of the original nationalist coalition, active and retired military men, and the ulama. The Shah, if still unwilling to play an active role himself, had revealed he still commanded strong popular loyalties which could be exploited in his name. The security forces had demonstrated during the February 28 demonstration their unreliability as a prop for the government. Because of Kashani's direct manipulations, the Majlis was becoming increasingly difficult to manage; the government was so preoccupied with recurrent threats to its position that it had little time to make even a pretense of fulfilling its promises to carry out a constructive internal program, much less solve the oil issue. Although Kashani could hardly lead a unified opposition, the government was resting on a narrow and narrowing base of support.

Yet Mossadegh was still getting huge popular rallies in support. He called for one such demonstration on 19 June to intimidate an "unrepresentative" Majlis.<sup>82</sup> Kashani denigrated this latest show of force, when he said it only proved the government was

reacting to its weakness in the Majlis because it had no majority support there.<sup>83</sup> He knew perfectly well how exasperated the Prime Minister was. The opposition was paralyzing the Majlis. Mossadegh was seriously considering disbanding the unruly Majlis near the end of June. He declared it his intention with these words:

Yet the Majlis must be capable of initiating beneficial outcomes...it must have a stable majority and minority, one supporting the government and the other guiding it ...(if) the government is compelled to spend all its time on countering the disruptive activities of the opposition, it would by no means be able to accomplish reforms...I must say with utmost regret that this government, which is responsible to the people for the affairs of the country, has no choice but to appeal to the people themselves for a solution of this difficulty and somehow put an end to this unacceptable state of terror.<sup>84</sup>

The Americans realized that the potential disbanding of the Majlis was a serious threat, one that Kashani would be very hard-pressed to handle. The Prime Minister appeared almost unassailable. But Kashani probably did not realize that Mossadegh already had made a fateful error that aligned the Americans decisively against him.

At the end of May, Mossadegh had sent a letter to President Eisenhower requesting a large increase in financial aid. The letter claimed that intrigues of the AIOC, British government, and their Iranian allies were defeating Iranian aspirations. It also had subtle threats of turning his country towards communism if Eisenhower



did not respond positively.<sup>85</sup> In Mossadegh's mind, such posturing was appropriate. In the oil negotiations, he had shown the U.S. his preference for American moral and financial support, and he thought he could suppress the Tudeh when he so desired. Yet he also thought he must goad the Americans at this time with a little negative reinforcement. As he told a reporter for Time magazine, he wanted "action not words from U.S. in the future."<sup>86</sup>

While Eisenhower took the entire month of June to study the letter, Mossadegh gave some meaning to his subtle threats. He held high-profile negotiations with the Soviet ambassador concerning a barter trade agreement and the satisfaction of various mutual claims. The Iranian press was overly optimistic about Mossadegh's ploy. The embassy summarized that, "a number of newspapers of varied political stripe share the fond hope, so characteristically Iranian, that in some way Iran will be able to play the United States and the U.S.S.R. against each other and to profit from their rivalry."<sup>87</sup> On the other hand, the news of potential Iranian-Soviet cooperation reignited vehement charges by Kashani's opposition that Mossadegh was a communist stooge. They predicted that the U.S. would show a firmer attitude towards Mossadegh's government and the questions of an oil settlement and financial aid. This lambasting turned into a threat, which forced Mossadegh to call for the June 19 demonstration that was relatively listless and anti-climatic to its amplified prospect.<sup>88</sup> Mossadegh's political methodology was getting him into trouble.

President Eisenhower already had enough of Mossadegh's game. It

did not matter to him that Mossadegh was only posturing and that the participation of the Tudeh in rallies was "compelled by internal concerns."<sup>89</sup> Eisenhower had a narrow range of input. Not only did he feel, along with the press, that Mossadegh was a dictator and "absolutely mad," he was fed Henderson's most pessimistic assessments and a suggestion that, "politically conscious Iranians... would welcome secret U.S. intervention."<sup>90</sup> Such a notion was reinforced by Henderson's top secret dispatch that introduced General Zahidi's proposed program for Iran; Zahidi promised to take a strong stand against communism, restore order in Iran, and even proposed to end the oil dispute by allowing an international committee to arbitrate.<sup>91</sup> Eisenhower was already well-disposed to the idea of a coup, when he told John Foster Dulles on 18 June to relay instructions to Allen Dulles to "seriously explore" their proposed methods of operation and convene a meeting to solidify a consensus among the chiefs of his intelligence and military establishments.<sup>92</sup> That meeting was held on 25 June, and on 29 June Eisenhower replied to Mossadegh's request with a definite and resounding negative.<sup>93</sup>

Eisenhower's refusal to send aid to Iran sent a shock wave through the country when it was leaked to the public midway through July. Most Iranians had maintained the illusion that Mossadegh would eventually receive American cooperation in solving Iran's economic problems. The middle class and moderate nationalists, Mossadegh's main base of support in Tehran, were literally stunned. The embassy noted that they and a large number of government officials now

hesitated and questioned whether they should continue to support Mossadegh's nationalist movement.<sup>94</sup>

Eisenhower's reply also lit a fire beneath Mossadegh's opposition in the Majlis and in the Court, who were already worried about Mossadegh's threat to disband the Majlis. Kashani then became extremely vituperative towards Mossadegh in his declarations, and events escalated. He and two wealthy landlords financed a sudden surge of anti-Mossadegh newspaper publications. Supposedly his religious charities provided a fund of 3,500,000 rials (enough for 200 issues) for the operation, and a "satchel man" delivered the money to the various editors.<sup>95</sup> Kashani also began to work with the Fidaiyan again.<sup>96</sup>

The Ayatullah was under a lot of pressure at this time, as the election for the Majlis Speakership was approaching. The press forecast that Kashani would lose because of Mossadegh's pressure, and he indeed did lose to Mossadegh's protege. This result was misleading, much like the vote on the Committee of Eight Report, which passed on the votes of those who voted with the government in a showdown because they had nowhere else to go. Moreover, the Majlis wanted to appease Mossadegh so he would not disband them and rule by decree. Kashani must have alienated some voters on election-eve, when he arrogantly asserted that, anyone attempting to establish dictatorship in Iran "will be hanged in accordance with the laws of our country."<sup>97</sup>

After the election, Kashani's deputies issued an immediate

interpellation against the government, claiming the government had used torture during the Afshartus investigation. There were also indications that worse censure was yet to come.<sup>98</sup> Then the Prime Minister resorted to the step he had been aiming at all along, a national referendum to determine the disbanding of the Majlis. The bitter Ayatullah called for a boycott, with Bihbahani also assisting, and the opposition set up camp in Kashani's home. The referendum was an overwhelming victory for Mossadegh and an utter defeat for Kashani -- a 99% vote in favor of disbanding the Majlis.<sup>99</sup>

Mossadegh had obtained a hollow victory, however. Iranians were well aware of irregularities in the referendum process, in particular the separate voting booths and Tudeh tough intimidation at the polling stations.<sup>100</sup> The referendum occurred just days after the largest Tudeh demonstration ever in Tehran. On July 21, 40,000 Tudeh demonstrators eclipsed a smaller nationalist demonstration in the streets.<sup>101</sup> Kashani may have failed in his call for a boycott, but his work had already been done. His influence on Majlis politics over the previous six months was a major factor in creating an increasingly hostile political environment that forced Mossadegh to resort to measures that were anathema to his ideals and counterproductive in the long run. The Ayatullah certainly had stamina, and repeatedly proved his adeptness at the political war of attrition.

Kashani had left Mossadegh with an extremely unstable scene. Pro-Shah army officers who had key security responsibilities brazenly

remained idle when radical xenophobia and lawlessness dramatically increased in the provinces.<sup>102</sup> The Americans were actually pleased with the increased instability. In fact they reinforced the effect of instability with a designed statement by Dulles that threatened to cut off permanently all American aid because of "the toleration of [Tudeh] activities by the Iranian government."<sup>103</sup> Their main design was to encourage the cautious Shah into action, an absolute necessity before the CIA-engineered coup could commence.

Mossadegh could sense the rug being pulled out from under him. As bewildered as his now sidelined supporters, he characterized U.S. actions as "stupid diplomacy since the U.S. had given nothing but promises to Iran," and it was strange that Americans did not realize that it would "cost nothing to refrain from destroying hope."<sup>104</sup>

Meanwhile, a pensive Shah, an outlaw army general, and anxious ulama were waiting for the appropriate moment to spring into action.

### Endnotes for Chapter Five

<sup>1</sup>University Publications of America, Iran, 1950-1954 (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1985), Embtel 2115, 1 Dec 1952, Mattison to SecState; Embtel 2372, 20 Dec 1952, Mattison to SecState. See also Embdesp 379, 15 Nov 1952, Melbourne to DepState, for nature of Majlis criticisms. The remaining citations taken from this collective source will be noted by the short designation of file number, date, author and addressee.

<sup>2</sup>Embtel 2406, 26 Dec 1952, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>3</sup>Embdesp 529, 6 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>4</sup>Fakhreddin Azimi, Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 310-311.

<sup>5</sup>Embtel 2557, 7 Jan 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 2586, 7 Jan 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>6</sup>Embtel 532, 9 Jan 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>7</sup>Azimi, Iran, 311-312.

<sup>8</sup>Mohammad Hasan Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama in Twentieth Century Iran with Particular Reference to Ayatullah Haj Sayyid Abu-Qasim Kashani (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), 252.

<sup>9</sup>George Lenczowski, "Iran's Deepening Crisis," Current History 24 (Apr 1953), 236.

<sup>10</sup>Mohammad Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, ed. Homa Katouzian, trs. S. H. Amin and H. Katouzian (London: Jebhe National Movement of Iran, 1988), 332.

<sup>11</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy in Iranian Politics, 1949-1954," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 105.

<sup>12</sup>B. Shwadran, "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute, 1948-1952," Middle Eastern Affairs 5 (Aug-Sep 1954), 222.

<sup>13</sup>Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 106.

<sup>14</sup>Embtel 2784, 19 Jan 1953, Henderson to SecState; Azimi, Iran, 312.

- <sup>15</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 254.
- <sup>16</sup>Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 333.
- <sup>17</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 250.
- <sup>18</sup>Embtel 2508, 3 Jan 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 2541, 5 Jan 1953, Henderson to SecState.
- <sup>19</sup>Embtel 2542, 5 Jan 1953, Henderson to SecState; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 104; Shahrough Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1980), 65.
- <sup>20</sup>Akhavi, Religion and Politics, 71.
- <sup>21</sup>Ibid., 72.
- <sup>22</sup>Yonah Alexander and Allan Nanes, eds., The United States and Iran: A Documentary History (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1980), 225.
- <sup>23</sup>Ervand Abrahamian, "The Strength and Weaknesses of the Labor Movement in Iran, 1941-1953," Continuity and Change in Modern Iran, eds. Michael E. Bonine and Nikki Keddie (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1981), 193.
- <sup>24</sup>Embdesp 203, 15 Sep 1952, Burdett to DepState; Sepehr Zabih, The Communist Movement in Iran (Berkeley, California: University of California Press, 1966), 176. The lower end estimate is by the U.S. Embassy Tehran. To put these numbers in perspective, it should be noted that the total Iranian population in 1950 was about 19 million.
- <sup>25</sup>Alexander and Nanes, eds., The United States and Iran, 240.
- <sup>26</sup>Embdesp 56, 24 Jul 1953, Cuomo and Melone to DepState; Contel 13, 6 Apr 1953, Buckingham (Isfahan) to EmbTehran; Contel 14, 6 May 1953, Buckingham to EmbTehran; Embdesp 203, 15 Sep 1952, Burdett to SecState; Embtel 3226, 17 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 319-320; Zabih, Communist Movement, 178. See also Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 361, where Mossadegh disputes the 'official' infiltration numbers, which purge trials 'uncovered' after the coup. Also see 370-371, where Mossadegh notes the emptiness of a Tudeh military threat that had no arms, and points out that their readiness had to be extremely low because they did not react at all during the 19 August coup.

<sup>27</sup>Sepehr Zabih, The Mossadegh Era (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1982), 19.

<sup>28</sup>Embdesp 1120, 26 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embdesp 56, 24 Jul 1953, Cuomo and Melone to DepState.

<sup>29</sup>Embdesp 1081, 12 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>30</sup>Mark Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat in Iran," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 19 (Aug 1987), 268-269, 272.

<sup>31</sup>Kermit Roosevelt, Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company Inc, 1967), 91-93, 163-164.

<sup>32</sup>Embte1 690, 14 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 702, 15 Aug 1952, Henderson to SecState; Roosevelt, Countercoup, 164.

<sup>33</sup>Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 101-102.

<sup>34</sup>Embdesp 299, 18 Oct 1952, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>35</sup>Embdesp 343, 1 Nov 1952, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>36</sup>Embdesp 299, 18 Oct 1952, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>37</sup>Azimi, Iran, 301.

<sup>38</sup>Roosevelt, Countercoup, 60, 71.

<sup>39</sup>Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 278.

<sup>40</sup>Embte1 3283, 19 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>41</sup>Embte1 3341, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3358, 24 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 831, 10 Apr 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>42</sup>Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 96.

<sup>43</sup>Roosevelt, Countercoup, 163-164.

<sup>44</sup>Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 106.

<sup>45</sup>Embdesp 641, 13 Feb 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embte1 3017, 3 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3074, 6 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3271, 19 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState.



46Embdesp 698, 27 Feb 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embtel 3003, 3 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3011, 3 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3029, 4 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3271, 19 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState.

47Embtel 3341, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 283; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 109.

48Embtel 3283, 19 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3343, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3354, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3356, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState.

49Embtel 3342, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3344, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState.

50Roosevelt, Countercoup, 113.

51Embtel 3341, 23 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState.

52Embtel 3388, 25 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3427, 27 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3443, 28 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState.

53Embtel 3454, 28 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3463, 28 Feb 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3477, 1 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState; Azimi, Iran, 315; Gerard de Villiers, The Imperial Shah: An Informal Biography, trs. June P. Wilson and Walter B. Michaels (Boston, Massachusetts: Little, Brown and Company, 1976), 174; Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 59-62, 272-278, 343-348; Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi, Mission for My Country (London: Hutchinson and Company Ltd, 1961), 97; Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat," 170; Barry Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 76. Read the Shah's account with extreme scepticism, but his perspective nevertheless provides insight.

54Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 283.

55Embtel 3493, 2 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 3516, 3 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState.

56Azimi, Iran, 316.

57Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, vol. 10, Iran, 1951-1954 (Washington D.C.: Department of State Publications, 1989), 689-690, [CIA Memorandum, 1 Mar 1953, Office of National Estimates to the President].

58Embtel 3654, 11 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>59</sup>Embte1 3627, 10 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>60</sup>Farhad Diba, Mossadegh: A Political Biography (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), 172-174; Shwadran, "The Anglo-Iranian Oil Dispute," 224; Zabih, The Mossadegh Era, 98-101. See also Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 340-343, for his idea of the Constitution.

<sup>61</sup>Embte1 3909, 6 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3944, 8 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 108.

<sup>62</sup>Department of State, Foreign Relations, 691, [Embte1 3853, 31 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState].

<sup>63</sup>Embte1 4000, 12 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4020, 14 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 283.

<sup>64</sup>Embdesp 831, 10 Apr 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embte1 4027, 15 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>65</sup>Embte1 3692, 14 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3899, 4 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>66</sup>Embte1 3971, 10 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4034, 15 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4050, 16 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 109; Department of State, Foreign Relations, 691, [Embte1 3853, 31 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState].

<sup>67</sup>Embdesp 843, 15 Apr 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>68</sup>Embdesp 1040, 3 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Azimi, Iran, 401n.

<sup>69</sup>Embte1 3523, 3 Mar 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3909, 6 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3944, 8 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3971, 10 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4000, 12 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 3975, 13 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4020, 14 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4106, 20 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4218, 27 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4401, 12 May 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4464, 19 May 1953, Henderson to SecState; Azimi, Iran, 317.

<sup>70</sup>Embdesp 897, 15 Apr 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embte1 4034, 15 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4050, 16 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4110, 20 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embte1 4356, 8 May 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>71</sup>Embtele 3943, 8 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embdesp 987, 21 May 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embdesp 1081, 12 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embtele 4658, 16 Jun 1953, Mattison to SecState.

<sup>72</sup>Embtele 4085, 18 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 4102, 20 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>73</sup>Embtele 4134, 21 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 4207, 27 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 4217, 27 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Gasiorowski, 270-271; Katouzian, ed., 63-64.

<sup>74</sup>Embtele 4325, 5 May 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 4333, 6 May 1953, Henderson to SecState; Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 65; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 110.

<sup>75</sup>Embtele 4218, 27 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>76</sup>Embtele 4051, 16 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>77</sup>Embtele 3899, 4 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 3994, 11 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 4027, 15 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState. See also, Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat," 272, where he hints that Kashani was recruited in Operation AJAX to disrupt Majlis activities. There is no real evidence for this.

<sup>78</sup>Embtele 4193, 25 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>79</sup>Embtele 4417, 13 May 1953, Henderson to SecState. See also Embtele 3979, 10 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 5543, 13 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtele 4093, 19 Apr 1953, Henderson to SecState, for Shah's vacillation in the previous month which had everybody perplexed.

<sup>80</sup>L. P. Elwell-Sutton, Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press Publishers, 1975), 312.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid.

<sup>82</sup>Embdesp 1097, 19 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embtele 4684, 19 Jun 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embtele 4688, 19 Jun 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embdesp 1120, 26 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>83</sup>Embdesp 1121, 26 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Azimi, Iran, 322.

<sup>84</sup>Azimi, Iran, 323.

<sup>85</sup>Alexander and Nanes, eds., The United States and Iran, 232-233.

<sup>86</sup>Embtel 4685, 19 Jun 1953, Mattison to SecState.

<sup>87</sup>Embdesp 1099, 20 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embdesp 1114, 25 Jun 53, Melbourne to DepState. See also Embtel 42, 7 Jul 1953, Mattison to SecState, for closest the embassy came to knowing the actual terms of the Iranian-Soviet negotiations. Besides the publicly-known trade quotas, supposedly they were also discussing border adjustments, the rescinding of the 1921 Treaty, and the Soviet return of Iranian gold. Mossadegh played the propaganda angle of these talks, or so it seemed to the Americans.

<sup>88</sup>Embdesp 1120, 26 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>89</sup>Embtel 4699, 20 Jun 1953, Mattison to SecState.

<sup>90</sup>File #7759, 23 May 1953, Memorandum for the President by B. Smith; Dwight D. Eisenhower, Mandate for Change (New York: Doubleday and Company Inc, 1963), 210.

<sup>91</sup>Embdesp 982, 20 May 1953, Henderson to DepState.

<sup>92</sup>University Publications of America, Minutes of Telephone Conversations of John Foster Dulles and of Christian Herter (1953-1961) (Washington D.C.: University Publications of America Inc, 1980), 19 Jun 1953, J. Dulles to A. Dulles.

<sup>93</sup>Alexander and Nanes, eds., The United States and Iran, 234-235; Roosevelt, Countercoup, 1-19.

<sup>94</sup>Condesp 5, 16 Jul 53, Buckingham (Isfahan) to EmbTehran; Embtel 266, 7 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embdesp 87, 6 Aug 1953, Gannet to DepState.

<sup>95</sup>Embdesp 1068, 11 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embtel 4684, 19 Jun 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embtel 4707, 22 Jun 1953, Mattison to SecState.

<sup>96</sup>Embdesp 1063, 10 Jun 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>97</sup>Embtel 9, 1 Jul 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embdesp 15, 3 Jul 1953, Melbourne to DepState.

<sup>98</sup>Embtel 11, 2 Jul 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embdesp 17, 6 Jul 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embtel 91, 14 Jul 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embtel 95, 15 Jul 1953, Mattison to SecState.

<sup>99</sup>Embte1 238, 2 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embte1 239, 2 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embdesp 85, 7 Aug 1953, Melbourne to DepState; Embte1 300, 12 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState; Richard W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 282; Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama, 269; Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 67.

<sup>100</sup>Embte1 243, 3 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState; Cottam, Nationalism, 282; Roosevelt, Countercoup, 152.

<sup>101</sup>Embdesp 56, 24 Jul 1953, Cuomo and Melone to DepState; Embte1 141, 21 Jul 1953, Mattison to SecState.

<sup>102</sup>Condesp 2, 9 Jul 1953, Buckingham to EmbTehran; Condesp 6, 23 Jul 1953, Buckingham to EmbTehran; Condesp 8, 30 Jul 1953, Buckingham to EmbTehran; Condesp 12, 11 Aug 1953, Buckingham to EmbTehran; Condesp 13, 13 Aug 1953, Buckingham to EmbTehran; Condesp 4, 12 Aug 1953, Webster (Mashad) to EmbTehran; Condesp 5, 10 Aug 1953, Webster to EmbTehran.

<sup>103</sup>Alexander and Nanes, eds., The United States and Iran, 250; File #877, 28 Jul 1953, draft by Jernegan; Embte1 217, 31 Jul 1953, Mattison to SecState; University Publications of America, Telephone Conversations of John Foster Dulles, 24 Jul 1953, J. Dulles to A. Dulles; 25 Jul 1953, Frank Wisner to J. Dulles; 30 Jul 1953, A. Dulles to J. Dulles. See also Embte1 319, 14 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState.

<sup>104</sup>Embte1 237, 2 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState.

## CONCLUSION

### COUP D'ETAT

Kashani's opposition had already seriously eroded Mossadegh's political base of support before the coup. Their relationship essentially had played out. Nevertheless, a few highlights of the coup warrant mention.

The first attempt to overthrow the government stumbled in an aborted coup on 16 August. The coup conspirators delayed in its execution. When an army officer delivered a firman (royal order) that dismissed Mossadegh, loyal security forces arrested the officer. Mossadegh had anticipated the coup attempt and had positioned troops in key areas of Tehran.<sup>1</sup>

For the next three days, turmoil and street violence engulfed Tehran. CIA-hired thugs masquerading as Tudeh activists rampaged through the streets in roving bands of up to 200 men. They waved large red flags and sang communist songs. The real Tudeh soon swelled the demonstrations and called for an immediate republic. The bands of real and fake Tudeh threw down statues of the Shah, destroyed pro-Shah shops, desecrated mosques, looted and burned. The majority of Tehran's citizens were appalled. They were frightened of the Tudeh ascendancy and tired of the anarchy that had increased in the last few months of Mossadegh's regime. But they felt powerless to stop it. Finally on the evening of 18 August, Mossadegh ordered his security forces to clear the streets of Tudeh. This is just what the CIA and pro-Shah loyalists had been waiting for.<sup>2</sup>

At 8 AM on 19 August a huge pro-Shah rally exploded out of the bazaar in south Tehran. Consisting of 3,000 chaqu kishan wielding sticks and clubs, they had been mobilized by Ayatullah Bihbahani with CIA dollars (to be known as Bihbahani dollars). The mercenary mob joined other spot demonstrations all over the city and headed towards Mossadegh's residence. The security forces did not interfere, as they were not oriented or inclined to stop pro-Shah rallies. Key regimental commanders and the police chief were actually privy to the plan. The mobs spontaneously grew, as all sorts of festive citizens and soldiers joined in the gathering momentum led by chaqu kishan and mullahs. This explosion simply overwhelmed the surprised security forces loyal to Mossadegh. By the end of the day, the crowds had toppled Mossadegh's government. General Zahidi, who had been hiding in a safehouse, took over the reigns of power. The Shah, who had fled Iran after the aborted coup of 16 August, returned on invitation.<sup>3</sup>

The coup largely succeeded because of the actions of Mossadegh himself, when he ordered the army to clear the streets. The weight of order of battle that was called into the city, as well as the sight of many of these soldiers joining the demonstrators, actually deterred any defense by loyal units and deterred a possible countercoup by Tudeh mobs.

Concerning Kashani's role in the coup, the evidence is not clear. Faghfoory contends Kashani had no role.<sup>4</sup> This is not supported by evidence. Gasiorowski contends that Kashani probably

accepted \$10,000 from the CIA on the morning of August 19 to distribute to the chaqu kishan.<sup>5</sup> And on the other end of the spectrum, Diba argues the possibility that Kashani was a British agent.<sup>6</sup> The explosion of chaqu kishan out of south Tehran certainly seems to have been set off by a rapid infusion of a lot of money, but Kashani probably had only a partial role in mobilization. He did not join the demonstrations until just before noon, when he led one of the groups to protest in front of the Majlis.<sup>7</sup> He certainly was active after events were decided by the end of the day, when he was the main figure making speeches to the crowds.<sup>8</sup> Kashani also supported Zahidi's new government for a time.

Kashani had been reluctant in earlier stages, however. He put off the CIA after the failure of 16 August.<sup>9</sup> This reluctance partially explains why Zahidi and the Shah did not significantly reward Kashani for his contribution to Mossadegh's downfall. A letter written by Kashani to Mossadegh after the first coup attempt could be another indication of why he was not shown any substantial political favor after the successful coup (although he was thanked by General Zahidi and the Shah in person).<sup>10</sup> This is part of the letter, the authenticity of which has been questioned:

Although it has become difficult for me to make myself heard, my religious and national duty as a servant of Islam outweighs my personal feelings. Despite the vexations and the noisy propaganda that you are making [about me], you know better than anyone that my concern is to preserve your government, in which



you yourself seem to have lost interest. From the experience of Qavam's taking power and from your recent obstinacy, I have become certain that you wish, as on the thirtieth of Tir, to abandon the nation and leave as a hero. You did not listen to what I said when I insisted that the referendum not take place, and you insulted me. You had my house stoned; you put my friends and my children in prison; you dissolved the Majlis from fear that it may overthrow you; and now you have left neither Parliament nor a base for the nation. I succeeded with much difficulty in controlling Zahidi in the Majlis, and you adroitly made him leave; he is now on the point of making a coup d'etat.

After giving fair warning, Kashani posed in the letter's conclusion a burning question which blamed Mossadegh for the shattering of their greatest dreams: "Am I mistaken in thinking, as I told you at our last meeting at Dezashib [where we tried to reconcile], and as I also reproached to Henderson, that America helped us take the oil from the British in order to be able now, by appearing generous toward our nation and the world, to tear us from those riches by means of our own hands?"<sup>11</sup>

If it is authentic, this letter is probably a hedge by the exposed and irresolute Ayatullah.<sup>12</sup> The Prime Minister's reply is telling: "I put my trust in the support of the Iranian people. That is all."<sup>13</sup> Not only was Mossadegh already fully aware of the threat of General Zahidi, the Shah, and foreign intriguers, Mossadegh

totally ignored any of Kashani's pretensions. For then, as later, Kashani's perfidy was a political liability. His strength was only in the opposition. It was better to have him off the scene altogether. His and Mossadegh's dreams were extinguished together on August 19, 1953.

The story of the relationship between Ayatullah Kashani and Dr. Mossadegh thus ended on a long, sour note, which finished in crescendo. Their original union was based on a common purpose -- the fight against British imperialism characterized by the oil nationalization policy. Yet the alliance overlaid fundamental personal and political divisions between the activist religious leader and the secularist Prime Minister. Their differences in opinion as to the means to be employed in the struggle gradually surfaced. The stresses of these contentions, the long struggle of attrition with Great Britain, and the Iranian national character, which, according to Professor Abrahamian, "was marred by personal insecurity, distrust, jealousy, paranoia, anarchistic disobedience, intense cynicism, conspicuous individualism, and compulsive factionalism", forced up their differences.<sup>14</sup> In the beginning, the psychological buttressing effect of the union between Kashani and Mossadegh made their program almost irresistible and impressed the Americans. But eventually the embassy discovered cracks in the political alliance, which widened into irreparable enmity and conflict. Open division between Mossadegh and Kashani circularly

encouraged and was abetted by the opposition and their final assault on Mossadegh. In the minds of the Americans, their overthrow of Mossadegh's gravely weakened government was a better occurrence than a highly potential communist takeover.

This story is more than just another example of the strains inherent in Iranian secular-religious union. It explains a period in which Kashani tore down a wall, raised by Reza Shah, that barred the ulama from political affairs. His activity during Mossadegh's regime reacquainted the ulama with their influence over the populace and political affairs. Largely due to Mossadegh's mass appeal, the oil nationalization issue, and the prevailing anti-imperialist mood, Kashani repopularized Shii religious nationalism for a brief period. His perfidy, however, confirmed many suspicions and tainted Shii nationalism after it had run its course in the early 1950s. Because the senior ulama had worked out a quid pro quo with the Shah, the use of religious nationalism as an instrument of opposition faded with Ayatullah Kashani. Shii nationalism would not be a decisive political force in Iran until a later generation.

### Endnotes for the Conclusion

<sup>1</sup>Mark Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat in Iran," International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies 19 (Aug 1987), 273. This is a concise, definitive source for information on the covert operations leading up to the coup. See also Barry Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 83-84.

<sup>2</sup>University Publications of America, Iran, 1950-1954 (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America Inc, 1985), Embtel 362, 17 Aug 1953, Mattison to SecState; Embtel 388, 19 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 392, 19 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 419, 20 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState. The remaining citations taken from this collective source will only be noted by the short designation of file number, date, author and addressee. See also Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat," 273-274; Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions, 84-85; Richard W. Cottam, Nationalism in Iran (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), 229; Ervand Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1982), 280.

<sup>3</sup>Embtel 389, 19 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 398, 19 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 419, 20 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState; Department of State, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-1954, vol. 10, Iran, 1951-1954 (Washington D.C.: Department of State Publications, 1989), 784, [British Memorandum, 2 Sep 1953, "Persia: Political Review of the Recent Crisis"]; Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat," 274-275; Rubin, Paved with Good Intentions, 85-86.

<sup>4</sup>Mohammad Hasan Faghfoory, Role of the Ulama in Twentieth Century Iran with Particular Reference to Ayatullah Haj Sayyid Abul-Qasim Kashani (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1980), 286.

<sup>5</sup>Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat," 274.

<sup>6</sup>Farhad Diba, Mossadegh: A Political Biography (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1986), 166.

<sup>7</sup>Embtel 390, 19 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>8</sup>Embtel 418, 20 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState; Embtel 771, 24 Aug 1953, Henderson to SecState.

<sup>9</sup>Gasiorowski, "The 1953 Coup D'Etat," 274.

<sup>10</sup>Shahrough Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy in Iranian Politics, 1949-1954," Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil, eds. James A. Bill and William Roger Louis (Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1988), 113.

<sup>11</sup>Yann Richard, "Ayatollah Kashani: Precursor of the Islamic Republic," tr. Nikki R. Keddie, Religion and Politics in Iran, ed. Nikki R. Keddie (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1983), 114-115.

<sup>12</sup>Fakhreddin Azimi, Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941-1953 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 332; Mohammad Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, ed. Homa Katouzian, trs. S. H. Amin and H. Katouzian (London: Jebhe National Movement of Iran, 1988), 71; Akhavi, "The Role of the Clergy," 112.

<sup>13</sup>Mossadegh, Musaddiq's Memoirs, 71.

<sup>14</sup>Abrahamian, Iran Between Two Revolutions, 171.

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