

The Foreign Policy of the USA and Great Britain Towards Iran During the Years 1951-1953

Michał ALAGIERSKI*

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the United States and Great Britain policy towards Iran between 1951 and 1953 when National Front leader Mohammad Mosaddegh was a Prime Minister. This particular period of Iranian history is directly related to the nationalization of Iranian oil industry carried out by this government at the expense of Great Britain. Important thread of this study is a question of British and American involvement in Iran as the British-Iranian conflict had been rising including diplomatic, economic and finally intelligence effort. It shows also the process of developing factors that influenced it. The paper points out challenges of British-American relations at this stage as well as difficult cooperation plane during the broader context of the Cold War. It finally determines clearness of Central Intelligence role in the Coup ended by overthrow of Iranian nationalists and replaced it by new suitable government for both Anglo-Saxon States.

Keywords: *British embargo on Iranian goods, CIA and SIS cooperation, Department of State policy toward Iran, Imperialism, Intelligence operation TPAJAX, Middle East question, Oil policy, Truman's Doctrine, UN Security Council role, World Bank mediation*

Introduction

The aim of this paper is to present the foreign policy of the United States of America and Great Britain towards Iran during the oil crisis from 1951 to 1953. The first part explains the most vital issues that triggered the advent of the conflict between Iran and Great Britain and the making of first initiatives by the prime minister's Clement Attlee government.

In the second part a process of gradual escalation of American involvement has been presented. The USA has decided to fully support the endangered British interests in lieu of gaining major part of British influences in Iran.

The third part presents the last phase of the crisis, ended by the abolition of the rightist government of Iran as a result of Intelligence mission conducted by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) under the code name TPAJAX.

The studies of policy of the USA and Great Britain towards Iran from 1951 to 1953 through many years have been deprived of any key sources. The first researchers had no access to the intelligence acts of CIA which have had a critical impact on the events of the second wave of the oil crisis after the USA joined the confrontation on the side of the Great Britain.

The CIA documents and any traces of the communication of the American politics with the Intelligence headmasters had been obfuscated. In the official version presented in 1953 after the TPAJAX mission, ended with the abolition of Mohammad Mosaddegh, the American powers, Intelligence services and diplomats linked with the

* *Magister of International Relations, magister of History and Philosophy, michal_alagierski@wp.pl*

operation denied any information suggesting that the USA had been involved in the case. Finally in the 2000 thanks to the actions of *The New York Times* the documents certifying the US involvement in the subversion in Iran had been brought to light.

Before *The New York Times* posted a broad article about the role of the USA and the Great Britain in the TPAJAX mission, it had been described in March 1954 on CIA executive officer Allan Dulles' demand in a 200 page report. It contains a documentary of CIA actions concerning Iran during the oil crisis. Nevertheless, it does not reveal the vital role of the USA in the TPAJAX mission¹.

A lot of the key information regarding the TPAJAX mission is included in the publication by Kermit Roosevelt, the leader of the agent group, who planned and conducted the TPAJAX mission².

In the 90's CIA announced that they are planning to publicize a part of the documents concerning the secret missions, including the documents about the TPAJAX mission. However, in 1998 CIA declined from the previous promise despite urgency insists from the National Security Archive, which wanted the publication of 339 pages of acts concerning the TPAJAX mission, which were in its CIA archives³.

In the April 2000 one of the most acknowledged historians who specializes in the American politics towards Iran, Mark Gasiorowski wrote an article, in which he analyzed all of the publicized documents and confronted them with his own research⁴.

In 2004 Malcolm Byrne, a researcher cooperating with the US National Security Archive, published with Mark Gasiorowski a book containing the results of up to date research about the politics of the United States of America and Great Britain towards Iran from 1951-1953 and which contained the published documents about TPAJAX too⁵.

The exceptional relations between USA and Great Britain are described by Stephen Marsh. According to him, the key to the understanding of American-British cooperation in the Middle East is the oil. Marsh claims that the abolition of Mohammad Mosaddegh resulting from the cooperation of these countries had vitally influenced the contemporary shape of the Middle Eastern politics of the USA and Great Britain⁶.

What significantly contributes to the understanding of the events linked with the oil crisis between 1951 and 1953 is the vision of the events by Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The ruler of Iran conducted his own policy towards Great Britain and the USA. It differed from the vision of Mohammad Mosaddegh. Despite that, the relation between these two extraordinary personalities was good⁷.

¹ National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book no. 28, "The Secret CIA history of the Iran Coup in 1953, <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-index.html>.

² Kermit Roosevelt, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), p. 11.

³ James Risen, 'The CIA history of operation TPAJAX', *The New York Times*, 1954, pp. 12, <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-index.html>.

⁴ Mark Gasiorowski, 'What's New on the Iran 1953 Coup in the New York Times Article', Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, Electronic Briefing Book No.1, 2000, pp. 4.

⁵ Mark Gasiorowski, Malcolm Byrne, *Mohammad Mosaddegh and the 1953 Coup In Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 144.

⁶ Stephen Marsh, *Anglo-American Relations and Cold War Oil in Iran*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 164.

⁷ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, *Mission for my Country*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), p. 237.

Mustafa Elm seems to share an impartial viewpoint of the issues in Iran between 1951 and 1953. In his book he describes particular events but without concentrating on the evaluation of the sides of the conflict. Nevertheless, he mentions many other interesting themes linked with the Prime Minister Mohammad Mosaddegh's politics and the Iran surroundings⁸.

Dean Acheson, the secretary of state in Harry Truman's administration, presents the oil crisis in Iran in foreground of the American global politics. This diplomat co-authored the politics of Washington towards Iran in the first phase of the Iran-British conflict. Together with the President Truman he never supported the vision of the Washington's input in the British plans of Mohammad Mosaddeq's abolition⁹.

The specificity of the Iran's politics, the relations between the representatives of the elites, the acting standards of the particular powers centers in the mutual contacts and the role of the Great Britain and the USA in this complicated scheme are shown by Saperh Zabih¹⁰.

The part of the researchers evaluates negatively the decision about engagement of the USA in the revolt in the Iran. The conducted by CIA mission resulted in joining the USA with this hard to control country. This thesis has been put forward by Stephen Kinzer, who in the TPAJAX mission sees one of the fundamental American problems in the Middle East¹¹.

1. First Period of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi Reign

In order to understand the situation in Iran in 1951-1953 it is crucial to look wider at the issue as an interfering with foreign powers on this country. It is closely connected with European countries colonial policy, especially Great Britain as a first concerned and control Persia.

The subordination of Persia to the United Kingdom began in 1872 when the British entrepreneur Baron Julius de Reuter (later the founder of the Reuters Agency) received a license in almost all key sectors of the economy. Lord Curzon - seen as a supporter of the policies of imperialism and a politician seeking the escalating influence of the Great Britain was confused by the thought of "such a complete transfer of state resources into foreign hands"¹².

In the twenties in Iran there was a change of the ruling dynasty. The Persian army officer, Sardar Sepah came to power by forcing the abdication of the last ruler of the Kadjar dynasty, ruling Persia since 1774. Thanks to the forced submission of most

⁸ Mustafa Elm, *Oil, power, and principle: Iran's oil nationalization and its aftermath*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), p. 93.

⁹ Dean Acheson, *Present at the creation*, (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1969), p. 197.

¹⁰ Sepehr Zabih, *The Mossadegh era: roots of the Iranian revolution*, (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1982), p. 96.

¹¹ Stephen Kinzer, *All the Shah's Men: an American coup and the roots of Middle East terror*, (New York: Hoboken, 2003), p. 114.

¹² George N. Curzon, *Persia and the Persian Question*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Vol 2., 1892), p. 470-471.

political forces in the country and British help in April 1926, he was elevated to the dignity of royalty, as Reza Shah-Pahlavi¹³.

The reign of Reza-Shah lasted fifteen years until the intervention of the Anglo-Soviet troops in August 1941¹⁴. The crown after his abdication has been entrusted to his teenage son Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The new ruler had no other way than to make an alliance with Great Britain, the Soviet Union and the United States. Moreover he also has been forced to announce the democratic elections to the National Assembly¹⁵.

After the Second World War, the Great Britain and the United States broke off the military alliance with the Soviet Union, stating spheres of influence, which divided the world. This also affected relations in Iran. The threat to British interests caused by the activity of Iranian Communists, affiliated as the Tudeh, which Moscow supported, forced London to create a political counterweight to the leftist forces. That is why, contrary to its belief United Kingdom agreed to the consolidation of the national movement in Iran¹⁶. Qualitative change within Iran's right wing led to the creation of modern political parties. Thanks to that a compact right-wing block has been created, which was the core of the latter group, called the National Front. The right wing worked, but firstly compatibly with the interests of the UK¹⁷.

Political struggle against the Communists lasted until 1949, then after a controversial accusation of Tudeh ordering the murder of the Shah, the party was banned and has since worked in the underground. United States, despite keenly interested in the situation in Iran, gave up their interference in the sphere of influence of London¹⁸. The only U.S. project was sending economists and specialists in military and police to Tehran, who were challenged to improve the local finances and identify complex conditions of Iran¹⁹.

a. The Nationalization of the Iranian Oil Industry

In March 1953 Iran faced a historic choice that could realize the dream of obtaining the nation's sovereignty restricted by Britain. Before that, in June 1950 the Iranian government became led by Prime Minister Ali Razmara. Candidate chose Shah, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, who issued a decree without referring the matter to the National Assembly²⁰.

Politicians of the National Front formed at that time, which did not yet have a significant impact on the decisions within state institutions, recognized the ability to quickly benefit from the weaknesses of the government of Ali Razmara. So they focused on the most vital issue, which was preventing getting a favorable oil

¹³ Nikki R. Keddie, *Modern Iran Roots and Results of Revolution*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 52-60.

¹⁴ Nikki R. Keddie, p. 52-60.

¹⁵ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton: Princeton Studies on the Near East, 1982), p. 49-53.

¹⁶ Nikki R. Kaddie, p. 106.

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Ibidem, p. 115

¹⁹ Arthur. Millspaugh, *Americans in Persia*, (Washington: Brooking Institution, 1946), p. 140.

²⁰ Separh Zabih, p. 23.

concession by the British. They relied therefore on the law from 1946 which forbade the government from signing contracts without the agreement of the National Assembly²¹. At that time, the National Front leader Mohammad Mosaddeq was elected a chairman of the parliamentary group who worked on the negotiation with the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC), a tool of economic influence of the UK in Iran. Social attitudes have focused on the person of Prime Minister Ali Razmara, who was blamed for wishing to sign an unfavorable contract. Support of the shah led the prime minister to remain at his post. In this situation on March 7, 1951 there was a coup for the Prime Minister. Killer was associated with a group of Fedayeen who fight with the foreign influences in Iran²².

Hussein Ala became the New Prime Minister. His candidacy was this time put to a vote among the National Assembly. Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was forced to agree to this voting because of the threat of escalating public discontent with the government that favored the interests of the British²³.

Situation in Iran alarmed the British, who feared an increase in the position of the National Assembly, over which they had no control, especially since it has been influenced by society which demanded the resistance against the British influence. London fears forced also the United States to react. Two days after the election of Hussein Ala to Tehran, the American envoy of the U.S. Department of State George McGhee arrived. His task was to orientate himself in the situation and possibly bring party talks between Iran and the led out of balance British. In order to fulfill his task, upon his arrival he met with the British ambassador, Sir Francis Shepherd - a strong opponent of the concessions to the Iranians²⁴.

After meeting with Sheppard, a representative of the United States had a conversation with the Shah. In his memoirs, McGhee points out that Mohammad Reza was in bad shape when an American asked him a question, "does he think that with the support of Washington it is able to prevent the nationalization of the oil industry in Iran," Shah said that, "Washington cannot count at him at this moment, since he is not even able to form a government"²⁵.

It turned out soon that the government of Hussein Ali cannot be maintained. Then the leader of the National Front Mohammad Mosaddeq stepped in the foreground what was a right moment to reveal a desire to stand at the head of the government. 29 April 1951, resigned Mohammad Reza Pahlavi appointed Mossadegh to the position of Prime Minister of Iran. After two days the Shah established on May 1 at the place of AIOC, which lost the license, the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC). The newly established company took over the property of AIOC in exchange for what the British company was to receive a compensation. Then on May 6 a new prime minister appointed a government made up of twelve ministers, among

²¹ Farhad Diba, *Mohammad Mossadegh: A Political Biography*, (London: Routledge Kegan, 1986), p. 114.

²² Nikki R. Kaddie, p. 119.

²³ Ibidem.

²⁴ Ibidem.

²⁵ George C. McGhee, *Envoy to the Middle World: Adventures in Diplomacy*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1983), p. 326.

which were not only the politicians connected with the ruler but also the representatives of the National Front²⁶.

b. The First Attempts to Negotiate after the Nationalization of AIOC

Shortly after the announcement of the nationalization, the U.S. State Department issued a statement in which it acknowledged the rights of Iran and urged Tehran and London to find a compromise solution to the dispute. The British Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed deep concern about the U.S. position and announced that both the Parliament and the public in the UK will not give up the Iranian deposits, which are an important part of the British economy. In an atmosphere of hostility from the British who faced a fact, on the eleventh and twelfth June there was a meeting with representatives of the British delegation and the Iranian government in Teheran²⁷.

At the head of the British mission, stood Basil Jackson - Vice President of AIOC supported by the representative of the British Government, Thomas Gardiner. Both sides did not intend to resign from their positions. Both the AIOC representative and the envoy of the British Prime Minister Clement Attlee took on a sharp tone, regardless of the nature of the negotiation meeting. Attlee wrote on June, 5th to President Truman that "he hoped that the Persian side understands that the adoption of Iranian conditions is practically impossible"²⁸.

In London plans seriously considered sending troops. Supporters of military intervention led by the foreign minister Herbert Morrison, Manny Shinwell- defense minister, Lord of the Admiralty John Fraser and president of the National Bank Sir Georg Bolton argued that the seizure of the Abadan's oil infrastructure will ensure the resume of supplies, while the barren talks with aggressive Mosaddegh weakened the British budget only. Already in May there were two plans: the first more complex divided into two stages with code names Buccaneer and Plan Y assumed to acquire the refinery in Abadan and the area around them by means of the forces of seventy thousand soldiers, the second restricted under the name Midget assumed that Abadan was to be conquered for two weeks, draining huge warehouses containing previously excavated oil and transporting it to another location in the Persian Gulf, controlled by the British²⁹.

President Truman got information about British plans and immediately sent a note to the British government, expressing opposition to the planned intervention. To support the objection, Washington warned against the possibility of an escalation of anti-Western attitudes in the region³⁰.

Impossibility of an agreement between Iran and Britain led Washington to make another mediation attempt. On 15th of July Truman's special envoy Averill Harriman, who in the past was ambassador in London, came to Tehran. The mission

²⁶ George C. McGhee, p. 124.

²⁷ Yonah Alexander, and Allan Nanes, *The United States and Iran: A Documentary History*, (New York: Alethia Books, 1980), p. 208.

²⁸ 'Survey of International Affairs 1951', Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London 1954, pp. 2.

²⁹ Mostafa Elm, p. 156.

³⁰ Herbert Morrison, *An Autobiography by Lord Morrison of Lambeth*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1960), p. 281.

consisted not only of the politicians but also the experts associated with the oil industry. After landing at Tehran airport Harriman realized that in Iran, the reluctance towards the British translates also into anti-Americanism. On the way to the U.S. Embassy Harriman has witnessed demonstrations of hatred towards him inspired by the communist activists. Crowds of Iranians shouted “*death to Harriman*”³¹ during the passing of the delegation. Prime Minister Mosaddegh, who associated hopes to stop the British before the intervention in Iran with American mediation, ordered the pacification of the demonstration against the United States³².

The result of the involvement of the United States was a reluctantly agreement of the Prime Minister Attlee to send another British mission to Iran. On August 4th, 1951 Richard Stokes arrived in Tehran - Lord Guard of the Privy Seal in the British government. Stokes according to the instructions of his government took a hard line what resulted in no progress in the talks nor the situation. Stokes soon moved to Abadan, where by means of the British consulate he tried to put pressure on the actions of officials sent by Mosaddegh to control the refinery. Soon he also was asked to leave Iran³³.

On 22nd of August the British government dissatisfied with a current state of affairs has decided to impose sanctions against Iran. An embargo has been imposed on Iranian exports, the UK blocked Iranian foreign currencies deposited in British banks before. The Americans joined the British embargo and refused to deliver the contracted goods to the port of Abadan. Prime Minister Mosaddegh reacted by means of a radio speech in which he explained the situation and pointed to the Iranians that the guilt of future economic difficulties the country is on the side of the Great Britain³⁴.

2. The Internationalization of the Conflict

The British, in order to stave international criticism off, gave the dispute to adjudication by the United Nations (UN). Americans intervened in this case by recommending to their ambassador in London, Walter Gifford a meeting with Herbert Morrison. Ambassador argued that putting the matter under the UN agenda is not in the interests of the UK. In fact, Washington feared that the part of the responsibility for providing support to London would fall on them. Persistence of Great Britain, however, was decisive in this issue³⁵.

In early October, the United Kingdom made an application to the UN Security Council (UN SC). On October 15th the Prime Minister Mosaddegh came in person to UN headquarters in New York and asked to postpone the date of the arrival to the United States in order to complete the legislative process of the closure of British institutions and expulsion of the British people from the country of Iran. At the third session on October 17th SC decided that the verdict is to be postponed without giving the date of the next debate. It was a clear defeat of Great Britain,

³¹ Rudy Abramson, *The Life of W. Averell Harriman*, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1992), p. 470.

³² Rudy Abramson, p. 471.

³³ Dean Acheson, p. 505.

³⁴ Ibidem, p. 123.

³⁵ Donald N. Willber, *Regime Change in Iran: Overtbrow of Premier Mossadegh*, (Pernik: Amb Komers, 2000), p. 213.

which assumed that the RB will release a resolution forbidding Iran from seizing the assets of AIOC³⁶.

The next day Mosaddegh went to Washington, where he had scheduled his meeting with Dean Acheson and Harry Truman. A visit to the residence of Blair House took place on Oct. 23rd 1951. At the dinner given to the Iranian delegation there were representatives of oil companies and officials of the CIA next to the president³⁷.

During the Mossadegh's journey to the United States, the UK conservatives led by Winston Churchill won the elections and formed a government. The new prime minister intended to prevent the loss of Iranian deposits by Britain. In case of such a behavior of London, Americans had to change their current strategy. The Department of State recognized that a change in the ruling party in the UK, at best, makes an agreement with the government of Mossadegh hard to achieve. Dean Acheson said that "The conservative government of the Great Britain is profitable to us except from the Iranian question"³⁸.

Mohammad Mosaddegh needed to stay in Washington, hoping for financial assistance from the United States. Prime Minister of Iran was waiting for a response to this matter in vain, since as a result of the British pressure, the Americans decided not to grant a loan to Iran³⁹.

After leaving the United States in November Mosaddegh went to Egypt, which at that time was engulfed by a wave of anti-British sentiment. Iranian Prime Minister in this country was regarded as a hero, hailed as "the leading Light of the Middle East"⁴⁰. After returning to Iran, Mosaddegh had to focus on issues related to the domestic politics. In July 1952, after a period of a struggle with the opponents in the center of the Iranian political scene Mosaddegh came to the meeting with Shah to the Saad Abad palace. The meeting took place in an unusual atmosphere⁴¹.

Mosaddegh threatened to give in his resignation. Shah approached him despairingly, but also strongly urged to continue the conversation. Mosaddegh demanded respect for his constitutional powers concerning nominating the commander of the military forces. The office of generals previously appointed by Mohammad Reza posed a threat to the government. After the refusal he resigned from the function of the head of the government:

I cannot perform my duties without being able to decide about the cast of Head of the Ministry of War, which nomination your Majesty does not intend to give up, so I am outing forward my resignation at the same time wishing that the future government will agree to the requests of Your Majesty⁴².

³⁶ Farhad Diba, p. 127–130.

³⁷ Ibidem, p. 131.

³⁸ Dean Acheson, p. 511.

³⁹ Farhad Diba, p. 135.

⁴⁰ Ibidem.

⁴¹ Homa Kotouzian, *Musaddiq's Memoirs, Dr Mohammad Mussadiq, Champion of the Popular Movement of Iran and Former Prime Minister*, (London, I. B. Tauris, 1988), p. 340.

⁴² Farhad Diba, p. 139.

After accepting the resignation of Mosaddegh, Shah offered the function of Prime Minister to Ali Qavam Saltanah. The politician, who two years ago has a reputation of an opponent of the monarch, accepted the nomination. Before that he was respected even by Mosaddegh, who in 1921 served as the government Qavam's Minister of Finance. The decision of the monarch was preceded by the voting in Majlis, which was held at the absence of three hundreds of deputies who opposed to the voting without a prior debate on the issue. Despite all this, the forty other members of the audience voted on the decision to appoint Qavam as the prime minister⁴³.

Following this decision on 20th July 1952 there were crowds on the streets of Tehran who demanded the return of Mosaddegh. These events are known in Iran as the *Thirty-Tir*. On that day under the barrels the population of the capital chanted a slogan "restore Mosaddegh". Soon political parties spurred the ranks of their followers to defend the dismissed prime minister. Shah had to bow under such a power, especially when the police and the army joined the protesters and also the Communists followed the supporters of the return of Mosaddegh⁴⁴.

By the decision of the Shah, Mosaddegh was restored to the position of prime minister just three days after his resignation after the formalities were completed in the National Assembly, where everyone, without exception, voted for his return. Prime Minister did not fail to benefit from the demonstration of support which society has granted him, and he took over as minister of war⁴⁵. Mossadegh's Victory was a serious blow to the United Kingdom. Such a development also worried the United States. In August, Mosaddegh invited A. Jones U.S. – the Oil concerned department representative to Iran to discuss the possibility of restarting the export of Iranian oil. Truman supported the idea without the knowledge of London which met with immediate protest of Churchill. The protest of the British prime minister was a success, and though Jones appeared in Iran, he did not talk about issues relevant to Tehran⁴⁶.

In this case, Washington persuaded the British to accept proposals for a mutual diplomatic initiative. On the 30th of August, 1952, Americans came together with the British deal, called after the names of the initiators- the Truman-Churchill declaration. The proposal contained the loan and the release of Iranian assets frozen in British banks after the nationalization of the AIOC, in return for the annulment of the law on nationalization. The proposal was not accepted because, like the previous one, it gave the control over Iran's oil industry into the hands of organizations that were in fact controlled by Washington and London⁴⁷.

The failure of the next initiative caused the fact that in September another British naval contingent appeared in the Persian Gulf. The units of the Royal Navy were ordered to enforce the British embargo. This was the beginning of a process that led in October 1952 to the closing of the British consulates in Iran by the will of

⁴³ Ibidem.

⁴⁴ Harry Truman Library, 'Acheson Papers', Box 66: Princeton Seminars, 1954, pp. 12.

⁴⁵ Stephen Kinzer, p. 154.

⁴⁶ Mostafa Elm, p. 250–252.

⁴⁷ Farhad Diba, p. 133.

Mossadegh. The economic blockade of Iran, however, did not bring the desired results, so Churchill sent a note to Truman:

Indeed, I do not understand why two good people who only want the good and right things cannot join their forces against the third one, who is doing wrongly⁴⁸.

The result of the combination of the pressure and persuasion used by the British prime minister was Truman's approval on sending a letter with a proposal to Mossadegh. Truman insisted on the Iranian Prime Minister to temporarily return AIOC assets and agree to the arbitration of the World Bank. In return, Iran was to obtain the abolition of the British embargo and a loan of \$ 10 million from U.S. Winston Churchill's diplomatic strategy, however, was merely a smokescreen, because at the same time Great Britain had made preparations for the battle with Mohammad Mosaddegh⁴⁹.

However, not having permission to use the army of Washington, London decided to rely on its Intelligence. The Americans reluctantly watched the British planned operation. D. Acheson put it in the following words:

Churchill and Eden are willing to support the empire by all costs. Eden considers them as only the carpet merchants. We shouldn't give up, and then they should come up to us and like to get into business⁵⁰.

At that time in the USA there were national elections about to happen. The main candidate for the winner seemed to be a republican representative Dwight Eisenhower. The British knew that he was more likely to accept a military solution than Truman, though they were not sure if he was going to support the British plan. Churchill did not intend on waiting until Eisenhower would take control after Truman. The following November the prime minister sent Charles Woodhouse – the leader of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) to Washington. His task was to inform the American Intelligence about the details of the operation called 'Boot'. It aimed at the abolition of Mosaddegh⁵¹.

In December the collaboration of the two Intelligences escalated, though there were no acceptance from Eisenhower who at that time waited for the presidential certification. The same, who two weeks before being nominated to the president, in a conversation with Churchill in the New York doubted in his choice on how to get rid of Mosaddegh. Despite the dissatisfaction of his guest Eisenhower used the same arguments as Truman did, saying that the:

British actions are heading towards infliction of the United States into the argument in Iran and that gives Mosaddegh the reasons for calling us the partners in the process of threatening weak nations⁵².

Despite that fact the action was enrolling just as the London wished it to, because it gained the support of the American highly respected politicians. Walter Bedell Smith was one of them, who was also the leader of the CIA when Truman was

⁴⁸ Ibidem, p. 141.

⁴⁹ Ibidem.

⁵⁰ Dean Acheson, p. 198.

⁵¹ Mostafa Elm, p. 275.

⁵² Ibidem, p. 277.

the president. One of his conversations with Kermit Roosevelt, CIA agent responsible for the preparations to the operation in Iran, clearly states his attitude towards Mosaddegh's case. At that time Smith was believed to have said:

Get down to work and don't worry about the London's reaction. They will support anything we will suggest. I am sure you will come up with something that Foster (The Secretary of State) approves. Ike (Eisenhower) will also agree⁵³.

The inauguration of Eisenhower took place on the 20th of January 1953. Soon the American ambassador in Teheran Loy Henderson got into touch with the Mosaddegh's opponents in the National Front. Moreover, he got acquainted with all of the prominent personalities in Iran, who disagreed on the politics of the government. After many conversations he sent his observations to Washington:

Mosaddegh acts impatiently under the influence of the emotions and he is not aware of his actions. The National Front consists of local inciters and extreme left-wing supporters. Some of its representatives, although not all of them, are religious fanatics. The rest is consisted of left-wing intellectuals who studied abroad and as a result of this they want the democracy in Iran. Nevertheless, they are not aware that this country is not ready for this. After abolition of Mosaddegh the control could be easily turned over to General Zahedi, who is willing to collaborate with us⁵⁴.

In a private conversation with General Firdzollah Zahedi Ambassador Henderson was assured that he is going to take a strong position against the communists. Nevertheless he added that 'there is no possibility that the Iranians will abolish government on their own'⁵⁵.

Churchill wisely waited for the Eisenhower to rethink the case and in the February he sent the British leader of the Intelligence Sir John Sinclair to Washington. His task was to fight off the American doubts and plan the strategy and coordination of the preparations⁵⁶.

Churchill knew that for the sake of the British interests he has to put a continuous pressure on Eisenhower and that is why by the beginning of March he sent the leader of the British diplomacy Anthony Eden to Washington. His clear motivation was to receive a clear agreement from Eisenhower. However he was surprised by the information that America was going to send a delegation of the experts of the oil industry in order to achieve a compromise with Mosaddegh. He was about to get 'ten millions bucks'⁵⁷. Eden subtly convinced Eisenhower that 'it would be better to try an alternative solution rather than bribing'⁵⁸.

At that time Mosaddegh started to be left alone by his old followers. The prominent activist that once helped him gain the power now left him. The most

⁵³ Kermit Roosevelt, *Counter coup. The Struggle for the Control of Iran*, (New York, McGraw-Hill, 1979), p. 116.

⁵⁴ Mostafa Elm, p. 280.

⁵⁵ Henry W. Brands, *Inside the cold war: Loy Henderson and the rise of the American Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 272.

⁵⁶ Stephen Kinzer, p. 157.

⁵⁷ Mostafa Elm, p. 282.

⁵⁸ Stephen Kinzer, p. 158.

significant was the loss of the support from M. Baghai, who led the Iranian Labor Party belonging to the National Front, moreover, the loss of his most important adviser Hussein Makki⁵⁹.

In the 11th of March during the meeting of the National Safety Department the Dulles brothers tried to convince Eisenhower that Mosaddegh is losing his supporters. Eisenhower agreed on that claiming:

From the very beginning I doubted that we could have an agreement with Mosaddegh even if we tried it alone (without the Great Britain involved). I felt, that the whole agreement would not be worth the paper on which it would be written and the precedents could affect the concession that the United States have in the other regions of the world⁶⁰.

The conversation from the 11th of March appeared to be a breakthrough. Since then the plans started to be concrete and three weeks later CIA received a formal assurance, which stated that for the aims of the mission named TPAJAX are going to be supported by 1 million USD. There also was a note saying: 'to be used in any circumstances in order to abolish Mosaddegh'⁶¹.

Because of the deteriorating situation on the 28th of March Mosaddegh decided to send a letter strictly to Eisenhower. He asked the American President to allow him a loan of 25 million USD and an agreement on the selling of the Iranian oil to the American companies⁶².

Eisenhower waited for a month to answer that request but when he did, he suggested that Iran could solve its problems thanks to an agreement with the Great Britain:

Despite the United States and their citizens have a lot of sympathy for Iran it would not be just for the tax payers that the US government would affect its budget for the sake of the help for the Iran as long as the Iran has an access to the benefits from the selling of the oil. As an answer to the presented by you difficulties in your country I hope that the Iranian government can undertake some legal steps in order to avoid the deterioration of the situation⁶³.

When the Iranian Prime Minister waited hopefully for the answer from the Washington, on the 14th of June Allan Dulles was on his way to the White House in order to get the final decision in the case of the TPAJAX mission. The president warned that he does not want to know too much, however on that day he received from the leader of CIA some basic and vital information about the planned operation. The same thing has been done by Churchill in London⁶⁴.

⁵⁹ Fakhreddin Azimi, *The Crisis of Democracy*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989), p. 296.

⁶⁰ Ibidem, 298.

⁶¹ National Security Archive, Electronic Briefing Book no. 28, "The Secret CIA History of the Iran Coup", <http://www.nytimes.com>, pp. 3.

⁶² Stephen Dorril, *Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service*, (London: Free Press, 2002), p. 589.

⁶³ Farhad Diba, p. 145.

⁶⁴ National Security Archive, pp. 6.

Along with the British political actions on Cyprus the planners of SIS and CIA started to work together. The plan of the TPAJAX mission has been ready by the end of May. It consisted of five rudimentary points:

- 1) Secretive agents were about to manipulate the public opinion and change the attitude of the Iranians towards the Mosaddegh to a negative one. These actions which have been supported by 150.000 USD are undertaken in order to evoke a common hostility, disbelief and fear towards the government of Mosaddegh and him himself.
- 2) Just as the Iranian agents would be spreading these lies, hired bandits would attack the religious leaders in such a way that it looked as if it was Mosaddegh's or his followers' initiative.
- 3) At that time General Zahedi would convince or bribe so many army officers as he could so they would be ready to revolve. The general will get 60,000 USD, if not enough this amount may be increased to 135 thousand U.S. dollars, in order to attract "next friends" and "to influence key people".
- 4) A similar effort should be made for the sum of U.S. \$ 11,000 to convince members of Majles.
- 5) In the morning of the "day of revolution" the thousands of paid protesters will begin a massive anti-government march. Majles which is on our side will organize a semi-legal voting in order to abolish Mossadegh. If he would resist, the military troops under the command of Zahedi would arrest him along with those who supported him, then gain control over the military outposts, police, telephone, radio stations and the building of a National Bank⁶⁵.

After being developed the plan was sent to Washington and London. June 25th was a crucial day. A meeting at which the details have been refined was held in the office of Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles. All the more important members of the present administration have been present except for the president, who as usually did not want to know too much about the details of the operation. At the press conference, which took place after the meeting J. F. Dulles explained the course of events to the uninformed journalists:

Recent events in Iran, especially the increase in the activity of the Communist Party operating illegally, which, as is shown by the facts is tolerated by the Iranian government raise our deep concern. These events do not allow the United States to grant aid to Iran as long as the government of this country will tolerate this kind of activity⁶⁶.

3. Operation TPAJAX

In the evening on August 15 Kermit Roosevelt, who led the operation TPAJAX in Iran has sent into action an involved in a conspiracy colonel Nasiri whose mission was to arrest the Prime Minister Mossadegh and his government. That day, the organizers of the coup, however, had no luck, as Nasiri, who arrived at night at home Mossadegh

⁶⁵ Ibidem.

⁶⁶ Stephen Kinzer, p. 165.

had been arrested while trying to give the Prime Minister a decree containing information about his dismissal. Mossadegh's followers who were managed to be stopped by the assassins were, until the next morning, released from custody⁶⁷.

On the August 16th agents, planners and co-participants of the failed coup felt that it was not necessary to abandon the project. The most determined were the main actors Roosevelt and General Zahedi. The key turned out to be perseverance of Roosevelt, what also stimulated F. Zahedi. CIA agent found out that "the Iranian players would consider, especially now his, experience very useful"⁶⁸.

The events of 16 August might affect the Shah, whose signature remained on decrees used by the assassins in action. Therefore, Roosevelt, cabled Allan Dulles from his quarters in Tehran so that he advised the Shah of Iran who has been in his residence by the Caspian Sea to leave Iran and come up with a statement that he has been a victim of a coup. Shah listened to the advice and hurriedly went to Rome⁶⁹.

According to some sources, the Prime Minister Mosaddegh regarded Shah's departure as beneficial because it meant that Pahlavi will no longer be involved in the plot against him. It was a signal that there will not be any next coup attempts inspired from the outside⁷⁰.

In fact, there has been a nervous atmosphere in Mossadegh's office. They wondered whether the monarchy should be retained, and if so, which form should be introduced in the absence of the Shah⁷¹.

After an unsuccessful attempt Roosevelt informed Washington about the failure of the operation. The CIA assumed that the message and the information sent to the intelligence was that "*an attempt was made and failed*"⁷². At the same time, Secretary of State suggested to Eisenhower: "*now you will have to please Mosaddegh even at the risk of irritating British*"⁷³. Since a failed coup the social protests in Tehran began to increase. This time, however, there were voices against government policies. The reason for this development was a difficult economic situation in Iran related to the embargo and undoubtedly the intervention of the U.S. agents and their Iranian partners⁷⁴.

On August 18th Loy Henderson, recalled urgently from holidays in Austria met at the U.S. Embassy in Tehran with Kermit Roosevelt who told him to hold a conversation with Mosaddegh. During the interview, which took place on the same day Henderson accused the prime minister of being responsible for the events of the last two days, which according to his knowledge were caused by the Communists and directed against Shah. He also demanded that the police would not allow any more Communist demonstration. Mosaddegh, frightened of American reaction, ordered the

⁶⁷ Darioush Bayandor, *Iran and the CIA: The Fall of Mosaddeq* (Basingstoke Palgrave MacMillan), p. 97.

⁶⁸ Kermit Roosevelt, p. 67.

⁶⁹ Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, p. 99–101.

⁷⁰ Farhad Diba, p. 151.

⁷¹ Stephen Dorril, p. 594.

⁷² Donald N. Willber, p. 64.

⁷³ Donald Willber, p. 51; Kermit Roosevelt, p. 118.

⁷⁴ Harry Truman Library, Library Oral History Project, 'Interview with Ambassador Henderson', May 12, 1967, www.trumanlibrary.org.

police not to engage into any action, fearing that by pacifying demonstrations he would irate the Americans⁷⁵.

Wednesday August 19 was the decisive day. Processions of demonstrators have turned into riots involving dangerous individuals who ran several thousand crowds. The identity of these 'leaders' is to some extent known, the crowds included members of the weightlifting club 'Tehran'⁷⁶. There was no counter-demonstration that day, as Mossadegh's followers remained in their homes as their leader asked them to. Police begun to join the demonstrators so did the lower-ranked officers that were easy to convince that the Shah is their real supervisor⁷⁷. Tudeh, the only force capable of mobilizing the masses, were at that time in its party's headquarters discussing further actions. It is believed that on this day the orders came not from Moscow⁷⁸. It is known, however, that the leader of Tudeh, Kianouri asked the Prime Minister for the means to arm communist militias, but he refused and expressed himself in this way: "*If I ever arm a political party please God take away my right hand*"⁷⁹.

Increasing in the number crowds began to chant the slogan "Death to Mosaddegh" and then attacked government buildings, offices pro-government publications and the Army General Staff building, taking weapons from there. The procession then returned to the center after the first casualties fell on the ground. Soon as Roosevelt predicted the troops, who had supported Zahedi began to storm the house where Mosaddegh hid. Prime Minister was accompanied by two hundred of his faithful soldiers who by defending themselves for two hours, allowed Mosaddegh to escape⁸⁰.

On August 20th at 7:00 a.m. Mosaddegh surrendered and turned himself in by arriving in the company of soldiers sent after him by Zahedi. The two talked for twenty minutes within the door closed but there were no reports of any tension from behind the door. After that Mosaddegh was placed in a comfortable room on the third floor in the property of Zahedi, who also asked to the residents of the capital to treat the name of Mossadegh and his associates with respect⁸¹.

The world's media have announced the fall of Mossadegh's government. *New York Times* claimed:

On Wednesday around 9 a.m. a group of weightlifters, wrestlers and street artists armed with iron rods and knives, marched towards the city center shouting support for the Shah. It was enough⁸².

After ten days of being in military custody Mosaddegh was ready to defend himself in a trial ordered by the Shah. The indictment was quite strange, as it referred only to the last days of holding the post of the prime minister. It concerned two issues: not obeying the ruler's decree who ordered Mosaddegh to abolish the post and

⁷⁵ Darioush Bayandor, p. 129–130.

⁷⁶ Stephen Kinzer, p. 179.

⁷⁷ Stephen Dorril, p. 593.

⁷⁸ Stephen Kinzer, p. 179.

⁷⁹ Ibidem.

⁸⁰ Farhad Diba, p. 158.

⁸¹ Stephen Kinzer, p. 183.

⁸² Kermit Roosevelt, p. 164.

inciting people to armed appearances. Mosaddegh responded to the allegations as follows:

The only crime I committed what was the nationalization of the Iranian oil industry and the removal of the tools of colonialism off this land and thus the political and economic impact of the most powerful empire on Earth⁸³.

The verdict of the military tribunal, however, was planned ahead. Mosaddegh Saltaneh was sentenced to three years in prison and after that period to a house arrest. He died at his home in 1967⁸⁴.

One of the main actors of those events, Kermit Roosevelt flew to Iran on August 24th on the board of the light aircraft belonging to the U.S. embassy's attaché in Iran and headed through Bahrain to London. The day before Shah, who returned to Iran, met with Roosevelt in the presence of the newly appointed Prime Minister Zahedi. There was time to exchange pleasantries, which Roosevelt began:

"Iran owes nothing to the United States of America". Zahedi said: „We understand. We are grateful and we will always be”⁸⁵.

Conclusions

Solution of the Iranian question was satisfactory for Great Britain at the first place. Although London had to give away considerable part of its influences was finally able to resume exploitation of the oilfields. On a different plane the ended crisis allowed United States to take over substantial part of Iranian economy. All this was possible after restore Shah's Power In Iran as well as establishment of the new government with F. Zahedi as a Prime Minister. Main task for U.S and Britain after crisis was to regulate shares of oil industry. It required normalization of relations with Iran that have been broken at the National Front rolling. Washington undertook conciliation at this matter and on July fifth 1954 oil agreement was signed wherein the distribution of profits was determined 50:50. Iran got half of shares as well as British, American and French companies together. There was also purely strategic profit for U.S as for the first time CIA was able to carry out operation on a large scale to estimate own strength. As for Iran it need to be emphasized that nationalization had a destructive influence on its economy on the other hand was a result of historical process of long time dependency on British Empire therefore was inevitable. Decision made by Mosaddegh and Iranian National Assembly was however beginning of the great turn for Iran and it paid off in 70's during Arab-Israeli conflict when Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was able to dictate oil prices to whole World including United States. It would not being possible without nationalization carried out in 1951.

⁸³ Stephen Kinzer, p. 184.

⁸⁴ Stephen Kinzer, p. 185.

⁸⁵ Kermit Roosevelt, p. 202.

Bibliography

- ABRAHAMIAN, Ervand, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*, (Princeton: Princeton Studies on the Near East, 1982).
- ABRAMSON, Rudy, *The Life of W. Averell Harriman*, (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1992).
- ACHESON, Dean, *Present at the creation*, (New York, W. W. Norton & Co., 1969).
- ALEXANDER, Yonah, Nanes, Allan, *The United States and Iran: A Documentary History*, (New York: Alethia Books, 1980).
- AZIMI, Fakhreddin, *The Crisis of Democracy*, (London: I. B. Tauris, 1989).
- BRANDS, Henry W., *Inside the cold war: Loy Henderson and the rise of the American Empire*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).
- CURZON, George N., 'Persia and the Persian Question', (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Vol. 2., 1892).
- DIBA, Farhad, *Mohammad Mossadiq: A Political Biography*, (London: Routledge Kegan, 1986).
- DORRIL, Stephen, *Inside the Covert World of Her Majesty's Secret Intelligence Service*, (London: Free Press, 2002).
- ELM, Mustafa, *Oil, power, and principle: Iran's oil nationalization and its aftermath*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992).
- GASIOROWSKI, Mark, 'What's New on the Iran 1953 Coup in the New York Times Article', Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, Electronic Briefing Book No.1, 2000.
- GASIOROWSKI, Mark, Byrne, Malkolm, *Mohammad Mosaddegh and the 1953 Coup In Iran*, (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004).
- KADDIE, Nikki R., *Modern Iran Roots and Results of Revolution*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).
- KINZER, Stephen, *All the Shah's Men: an American coup and the roots of Middle East terror*, (New York: Hoboken, 2003).
- KOTOUZIAN, Homa, *Musaddiq's Memoirs, Dr Mohammad Mussadiq, Champion of the Popular Movement of Iran and Former Prime Minister*, (London, I. B. Tauris, 1988).
- MARSH, Stephen, *Anglo-American Relations and Cold War Oil in Iran*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
- MCGHEE, George C., *Envoy to the Middle World: Adventures in Diplomacy*, (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1983).
- MILLSPAUGH, Arthur, *Americans in Persia*, (Washington: Brooking Institution, 1946).
- MORRISON, Herbert, *An Autobiography by Lord Morrison of Lambeth*, (London: Odhams Press Ltd., 1960).
- NATIONAL Security Archive, 'The Secret CIA history of the Iran Coup in 1953', Electronic Briefing Book No. 28, <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-index.html>.
- PAHLAVI, Mohammad Reza, *Mission for my Country*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961).

RISEN, James, 'The CIA history of operation TPAJAX', The New York Times', 1954, <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/mideast/041600iran-cia-index.html>.

ROOSEVELT, Kermit, *Countercoup: The Struggle for the Control of Iran*, (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).

'SURVEY of International Affairs 1951', Oxford University Press for the Royal Institute of International Affairs, London 1954.

TRUMAN Library, 'Acheson Papers', Box 66: Princeton Seminars.

WILLBER, Donald N., *Regime Change in Iran: Overthrow of Premier Mossadegh*, (Pernik: Amb Komers, 2000).

ZABIH, Separh, *The Mossadegh era: roots of the Iranian revolution*, (Chicago: Lake View Press, 1982).