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**Mark J. Gasiorowski**

## THE QARANI AFFAIR AND IRANIAN POLITICS

On 27 February 1958, General Valiollah Qarani, commander of the Iranian army's intelligence staff (G-2), was arrested on charges of engaging in political activity, a practice that was forbidden at the time for all Iranian government employees. Dozens of other Iranians from a variety of political persuasions were also arrested or interrogated by the security forces in connection with Qarani's arrest. In a brief flurry of newspaper stories and official statements, it was alleged that Qarani and his collaborators had been conspiring with an unnamed foreign power—generally understood to be the United States—against the Shah's regime. Qarani was tried in the summer of 1958 and given a three-year prison term. He remained on the margins of Iranian political life until 1979, when he served briefly as chief of staff of the Iranian armed forces in the first postrevolutionary government. He was assassinated in April 1979 by the mysterious Islamic terrorist group Forqan.

Although Qarani's political activities in the late 1950s never came to fruition, they are important because they demonstrate that opposition to the Shah's regime was very widespread at this critical time and that the Shah's relations with the United States were more ambiguous than is commonly thought. Moreover, the Qarani affair had a considerable impact on Iranian politics, inadvertently weakening a potentially important opposition faction, seriously disrupting U.S.–Iranian relations, and, together with a series of related events that occurred in the following years, leading the Shah to strengthen his security apparatus and carry out an extensive reform program.

This article undertakes a comprehensive assessment of the Qarani affair.<sup>1</sup> Although many of the people involved in the affair are now dead and much of the documentary record remains unavailable, enough material exists to provide a general outline of Qarani's activities and draw some interesting conclusions about their implications for Iranian politics.<sup>2</sup>

### THE POLITICAL CONTEXT OF THE QARANI AFFAIR

The Qarani affair occurred at a critical juncture in Iranian politics. Since the royalist coup d'état of August 1953 the Shah had managed to weaken or destroy all of the organizations and factions that had posed a threat to his regime. In doing so,

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however, he had alienated most politically active Iranians, creating growing unrest and leaving his regime without any real base of support. The United States had fomented the 1953 coup and had subsequently given the Shah large amounts of economic and security assistance, but some U.S. officials had become alarmed about the Shah's lack of support and began to encourage him to carry out appropriate reforms. In response to these pressures, the Shah in 1957 began to permit a limited amount of competitive political activity to occur. By early 1958 it was still unclear what the outcome of these various activities would be.

The most important political organization in Iran before Qarani's arrest was the National Front (*Jabha-yi Milli*). Established in October 1949 and led by a charismatic lawyer and politician named Mohammad Mosaddeq, the National Front was a coalition of political parties and factions that advocated greater political pluralism, social and economic reforms, and the nationalization of Iran's oil industry, which was controlled by the British-owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company. The National Front quickly became very popular among Iran's rapidly growing modern middle class and other urban elements, leading the Shah to appoint Mosaddeq prime minister in April 1951. Mosaddeq remained in office for twenty-eight turbulent months, clashing continuously with the British government, the traditional upper class, and with the Shah, whose power was threatened by the National Front's efforts to promote political pluralism.

Mosaddeq was finally overthrown in the CIA-led 1953 coup,<sup>3</sup> an event that severely weakened the National Front. Shortly after the coup, a successor organization known as the National Resistance Movement (*Nahzat-i muqavvamat-i milli*) was founded by several National Front leaders and a group of progressive Islamic intellectuals and bazaar figures. The National Resistance Movement advocated reforms similar to those pursued by the National Front and appealed to similar elements of society. However, the harsh repression that followed the 1953 coup forced it to operate clandestinely, severely limiting its ability to mobilize popular support. In September 1957 the security forces arrested some seventy members and sympathizers of the National Resistance Movement, including all of its leaders, incapacitating it for several years.<sup>4</sup>

The other major political organization in Iran before Qarani's arrest was the pro-Soviet Tudeh (Masses) party, which had been established in 1941 and quickly developed a large base of support. The Tudeh's popularity had fallen sharply in the late 1940s, and it was further weakened by the harsh repression of the postcoup period and the destruction in 1954 of a large network it had established in the armed forces. After the arrest of its intelligence chief Khosrow Ruzbeh in 1957, the Tudeh remained dormant until the late 1970s.<sup>5</sup>

The Shah also faced growing opposition in this period from the traditional upper class, which had strongly supported him against Mosaddeq in the early 1950s. After the 1953 coup the Shah had aligned himself with this class for several years, placing many of its members in top positions, permitting corruption to flourish, and putting off many reforms it opposed. However, beginning with the dismissal of Prime Minister Fazlollah Zahedi (Mosaddeq's successor) in April 1955, the Shah became increasingly divorced from this class. By the late 1950s they lived in uneasy coexistence: Prime Minister Manouchehr Eqlal (who held office from

April 1957 until September 1960) and many other top officials were strongly supported by this class, but the Shah's growing autonomy left many of its members increasingly disillusioned.

Lacking a strong base of support, and with popular unrest growing, the Shah relied essentially on his security forces to remain in power. The most important component of the security forces remained the army, but the National Police, the Gendarmerie, and SAVAK, Iran's newly established intelligence agency, were also critical pillars of the Shah's regime.<sup>6</sup>

Knowing that the security forces were vital to his survival, the Shah made every effort to increase the loyalty of the officer corps. After the 1953 coup he had dismissed all high-ranking officers known to be affiliated with the National Front, the Tudeh party, and other opposition organizations. He placed in top command positions only officers who had proven their loyalty to him—especially those who had participated in the 1953 coup—and he further cultivated their loyalty by allowing them to engage in corrupt practices. He also promoted rivalries among his top security officials to discourage them from working together against him and to prevent any of them from becoming too powerful. Most senior officers in the security forces were therefore loyal to the Shah, mainly because their careers and opportunities for personal enrichment depended on his approval.<sup>7</sup>

The most powerful member of the security forces at this time was General Teimur Bakhtiar, the ambitious and corrupt head of SAVAK. Bakhtiar was respected widely among the traditional upper class and by many American and British officials, including, notably, the Tehran CIA station chief. Two other powerful, ambitious members of the security forces were General Haj-Ali Kia, who headed the intelligence branch of the armed forces' general staff (J-2), and General Mehdi Qoli Alavi-Moqadam, head of the National Police. Kia and Alavi-Moqadam were also notoriously corrupt and closely associated with the traditional upper class; and Kia was well known to be very close to the British embassy, especially to Shahpour Reporter, a British intelligence (MI-6) agent with close ties to the Shah and to many members of the traditional upper class. Bakhtiar, Kia, Alavi-Moqadam, and Qarani had become bitter rivals by early 1958, watching each other very carefully and trying whenever possible to discredit each other in the eyes of the Shah. Despite their personal ambition, Bakhtiar, Kia, and Alavi-Moqadam remained loyal to the Shah during this period, as did most other top security officials.<sup>8</sup>

Unlike their senior colleagues, many junior officers felt little loyalty to the Shah. Many had been strongly influenced by the National Front, the Tudeh party, and other opposition organizations and were becoming increasingly frustrated with the rampant corruption and the Shah's failure to carry out reforms. These junior officers were therefore more sympathetic to the opposition than their superiors. Although junior officers had little authority, they were critical to the success of any opposition movement because they were in direct command of the enlisted men who would be called upon to support or suppress opposition activity. Discontent among junior officers therefore constituted a significant threat to the Shah's regime at this time.<sup>9</sup>

Iran's security forces were becoming increasingly effective, due mainly to the extensive U.S. aid they had received since the 1953 coup. The United States also gave large amounts of economic aid to Iran at this time and had helped negotiate an oil

agreement in 1954 that provided Iran with large amounts of oil revenue, factors that generated rapid economic growth and thus helped contain popular unrest. This aid left the Shah highly dependent on the United States and enabled U.S. policy makers to exert considerable—although certainly not unlimited—influence over him.<sup>10</sup>

After the post-Mosaddeq regime had been consolidated, the United States began to use its influence over the Shah to encourage him to carry out reforms. Many U.S. officials feared that corruption, inequality, and lack of political freedom would create growing unrest that might lead to the overthrow of the Shah and the establishment of a neutralist or even pro-Soviet regime—changes that would be disastrous for U.S. interests. They therefore began gently to encourage the Shah to implement political and socioeconomic reforms that would reduce unrest. U.S. embassy political officers and CIA officers also maintained close contact in this period with a wide variety of opposition figures to monitor popular unrest and assess the various opposition organizations and factions. As a result, the Shah grew concerned that the United States might support an opposition faction or even plot against him in the event of a crisis, fears that were entirely unfounded.<sup>11</sup>

Reflecting the growing U.S. concern about popular unrest, an officer in the Tehran CIA station was authorized to carry out limited covert operations that were designed to encourage the Shah to implement reforms. This officer undertook at least two such operations. First he saw to it that articles written by CIA agents aimed at promoting reform were planted in Iranian newspapers. Then he introduced *New York Times* reporter Sam Pope Brewer to several members of the National Resistance Movement and National Front and encouraged him to write an article about unrest in Iran. The article, which appeared in early 1958, charged that repression, corruption, and inequality were widespread and that discontent had become so extensive that it was now “dangerous to [Iran’s] internal security and to the stability of the Middle East.” The CIA officer made certain SAVAK knew he was behind the Brewer affair so the Shah would understand that the United States was serious about promoting reform. Needless to say, the Shah was enraged. He angrily denounced Brewer and opposition figures who “contact foreigners by night,” and he had at least eight opposition members arrested.<sup>12</sup>

Partly because of this pressure, but probably also because he understood how perilous the situation was becoming, the Shah initiated certain political reforms in 1957. He lifted martial law in April and created two official political parties, the progovernment Milliyūn (Nationalist) party and the “opposition” Mardom (Peoples’) party, neither of which enjoyed much popular support. He also relaxed press censorship and permitted certain opposition organizations to operate more freely.<sup>13</sup>

For our purposes, the most important of these opposition organizations was the Azadi (Freedom) party, which was founded in September 1957 by a group of progressive Majlis deputies and civil servants, some of whom had been members of the Tudeh party. The Azadi party advocated wide-ranging political and socioeconomic reforms but was careful not to offend the Shah. It occupied a position in Iran’s political spectrum somewhere between the Mardom party and the National Resistance Movement and appealed mainly to the modern middle class. The leader of the Azadi party was Hassan Arsanjani, a very competent, pragmatic leftist. Arsanjani

and several other Azadi members were associated closely with Ali Amini, a former finance minister than serving as Iran's ambassador to the United States, who had gained a reputation as an honest, reform-oriented technocrat and was greatly admired by U.S. officials. As a result, the Azadi party was generally regarded as a vehicle to advance the political ambitions of Amini. Both Arsanjani and Amini had been close associates of Ahmad Qavam, a longtime opponent of the Shah who had been prime minister several times and was a member of the Qajar royal family, which had been ousted by the Shah's father in 1925. These associations that left the Shah suspicious of Arsanjani, Amini, and the Azadi party. He therefore asked three loyal Majlis deputies to join the party and keep him informed about its activities.<sup>14</sup>

#### QARANI AND IRANIAN POLITICS

Qarani was born in Tehran in 1911 or 1912; his father was an official in Iran's postal service. After secondary school he joined the Iranian army and graduated from the officers' school at the head of his class. He served in two artillery units and was sent to Iran's general staff school in 1943 or 1944, after which he was appointed chief of staff of the army's second division, which was based in Tehran. In 1950 he was promoted to the rank of colonel and appointed garrison commander at Rasht, the capital of Gilan province. In August 1953 he cooperated with the royalist forces against Mosaddeq by organizing anti-Mosaddeq activities in Rasht, leading Mosaddeq's chief of staff General Taqi Riahi to dismiss him briefly from his post. Along with many other officers who had worked against Mosaddeq, Qarani was promoted—to the rank of brigadier general—after the 1953 coup; he also was appointed head of G-2.<sup>15</sup> In this position he was responsible not only for standard military intelligence activities but also, at the Shah's request, for gathering intelligence on domestic political matters. These responsibilities made Qarani one of the most important officers in Iran's security forces and placed him in very close contact with the Shah, who clearly trusted him and held him in high regard. Qarani's position also left him in an excellent position to engage in political intrigue.

Despite his high position, Qarani's political views in the mid-1950s differed considerably from those of the Shah and most other top officials. Although he had supported the royalist coup, he soon became alarmed about the corruption and repression that flourished after the coup and the government's failure to carry out reforms. Prodded by Arsanjani, one of his closest friends, Qarani began to view these problems as a consequence of the continued dominance of the traditional upper class and people like Zahedi, Eqbal, Bakhtiar, Kia, and Alavi-Moqadam. He understood that the Shah was trying to reduce the influence of this class, but he was impatient with the Shah's limited success and concerned that he would merely replace the current regime with a royalist dictatorship. Qarani therefore came to believe that the only way to solve the country's growing problems was to install a government capable of ending traditional upper-class dominance, forcing the Shah to act as a constitutional monarch, and carrying out wide-ranging reforms. Although he favored a more pluralistic political system, the scope of change he envisioned would almost certainly have required a period of autocratic rule. Emphasizing both his progressive political views and his authoritarian tendencies,

close observers of Qarani in this period likened him to Ali Razmara, a reformist military officer who had been prime minister in 1950 and 1951, and to Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser.<sup>16</sup>

Qarani's heterodox political views and rivalries among the top security officials made it unlikely that many of these officials would support him in his political activities. This was especially true of Bakhtiar, Kia, and Alavi-Moqadam, whose animosity toward him later became a serious liability.<sup>17</sup> Nevertheless, Qarani did have a few potential allies among senior security officials, including progressive army officers such as generals Gholam Reza Yavari, Esmail Riahi, and Fereidun Kusheshi and SAVAK deputy director General Hassan Alavi-Kia, a loyal servant of the Shah who did not share Qarani's political views but had been his close friend for many years. Yavari was, in fact, deeply involved in the Qarani affair, and Riahi, Kusheshi, and Alavi-Kia might well have supported Qarani if his activities had progressed further. Qarani had much closer ties with middle-ranking and junior officers, many of whom had similar views and admired him for his honesty, bravery, and modest way of life. Consequently, many of these officers probably would have supported him if his political activities had come closer to fruition.<sup>18</sup>

As a high-ranking officer, Qarani was acquainted with virtually all members of the Iranian political elite, including members of the royal family, top government officials, intellectuals, businessmen, clergymen, and a wide variety of politicians and political intriguers. Many of his closest friends were affiliated with two social organizations he belonged to. The first was the Baradaran (Brothers) group, a fraternal organization founded during the Mosaddeq era by Sayyid Hassan Emami—the influential *imam-i jum'ā* (Friday-prayer leader) of Tehran—to combat Tudeh influence. The Baradaran group included top security officials such as Kusheshi and Alavi-Kia and many other members of the elite and was generally regarded as very pro-British. Because members of the Baradaran group had sworn oaths on the Qurʾān to assist their “brothers” whenever necessary, this organization was potentially very useful to Qarani, despite its conservative character. The second was a *dawra* (informal discussion group) consisting mainly of Majlis deputies and civil servants, including Holaku Rambod, Parviz Khonsari, Nasser Qoli Zolfaqari, Hassan Afshar, Hossein Pirnia, and Mohammad Ali Hedayati. Qarani was also very close to Arsanjani and several other founding members of the Azadi party, although he apparently was not acquainted with Amini at this time. Another close associate of Qarani was Esfandiar Bozorgmehr, a notorious political intriguer who had served as minister of propaganda under prime ministers Razmara and Zahedi and had extensive contacts among the political elite and with U.S. officials.<sup>19</sup>

The one important element of society that Qarani did not have close ties to in the 1950s was the National Resistance Movement and its allies. Although he agreed with them on many matters, he distrusted many of these people and viewed them as misguided idealists. Conversely, although the leaders of the National Resistance Movement recognized that Qarani was progressive and were pleased that such a person held a prominent position, they distrusted him because he had worked against Mosaddeq. Inasmuch as this organization was the only one capable of mobilizing mass support in Iran at this time, Qarani's inability to develop ties with it

was another important liability for him, a point he recognized in the years after his arrest, when he became closely associated with several of its leaders.<sup>20</sup>

#### QARANI'S POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

Qarani apparently decided to begin the political activities that led to his arrest in 1954, when the corrupt and repressive nature of the post-Mosaddeq regime became apparent. His decision to do so probably originated in conversations with Arsanjani, who had similar views and with whom he was intimate enough by this time to risk discussing such matters.<sup>21</sup> Qarani's basic goal was to bring to power a new government that would curtail the power of the traditional upper class, force the Shah to act as a constitutional monarch, and carry out extensive reforms. In seeking to install such a government Qarani worked very closely with Arsanjani and with Bozorgmehr, who was unscrupulous and opportunistic but whose extensive contacts would be extremely useful. The government was to be led by Amini, who had become very prominent by the mid-1950s and whose political views were fairly similar to those of Qarani and Arsanjani. Qarani was to become minister of interior in the new government; Arsanjani was to become deputy prime minister; Bozorgmehr was to become minister of propaganda; and several of their associates were also to receive cabinet posts.<sup>22</sup>

Qarani's efforts to bring a new, reform-oriented government to power seem to have involved five interrelated kinds of activities. First, he and his two collaborators worked assiduously among the political elite to spread their ideas about the need for a new government and cultivate a wide circle of potential supporters who might help them install this government or support it once it had been installed. Second, they established the Azadi party to provide a base of support for the new government. Third, they made repeated approaches to U.S. officials aimed at soliciting U.S. support and increasing U.S. pressure on the Shah to undertake reforms. Fourth, they made contingency plans to foment public disturbances or carry out a coup if necessary to install the new government. Fifth, in his role as a senior intelligence officer, Qarani undertook an elaborate covert operation designed to prevent the Shah from discovering the real purpose of these activities. Although Qarani apparently decided to undertake these activities in 1954, he seems to have made little real progress on them until mid-1956.<sup>23</sup>

The efforts of Qarani and his collaborators to spread their ideas and build a circle of potential supporters consisted mainly of expanding their range of social contacts and politicking with their friends and acquaintances. Qarani did this mainly through the Baradaran group and the many parties and social gatherings he attended; Arsanjani and Bozorgmehr worked through similar channels. To maximize their success they approached people from all points on the political spectrum (except, presumably, the Tudeh party) and all elite occupational groups, including politicians, bureaucrats, military officers, intellectuals, journalists, businessmen, and clergymen. Qarani himself cultivated contacts with a wide variety of influential people, ranging from pillars of the political establishment such as the *imām-i jum'ā* and Abbas Masudi (editor of the newspaper *Ittila'at*) to leaders of



the National Resistance Movement and other opposition organizations, whom he met informally through Ahmad Aramesh and other mutual acquaintances.<sup>24</sup>

Arsanjani's efforts to organize the Azadi party (which was established in the summer of 1957 but had been envisioned much earlier) were an integral part of the Qarani affair. His goal in establishing this organization was to create a mass party capable of mobilizing popular support on behalf of the government he and Qarani were trying to install, articulating and institutionalizing its reform program, and developing a pool of talented, reform-minded people to staff the cabinet and state agencies. Although Arsanjani was its driving force, Qarani also played an important role in establishing the Azadi party, persuading some of his friends to join it and, by some accounts, initially convincing the Shah to sanction it.<sup>25</sup>

Qarani made repeated approaches to U.S. officials in this period, both directly and through Bozorgmehr. These approaches apparently began in October 1956, when Qarani sought out U.S. embassy political officer John Bowling, expressing his frustration with the status quo in Iran and giving Bowling the impression he was seeking U.S. support. He also told Bowling that he was associated with a group of "patriotic officers" who shared his disenchantment and with whom he was exploring ways to bring about change. He had a similar conversation with Bowling in January 1957, and in the following months he made "a flurry" of similar approaches to various U.S. embassy officials.<sup>26</sup> Qarani also sought out and met repeatedly with the CIA officer running the covert operations aimed at promoting reform. He spoke very frankly with this officer, arguing that the United States had put the Shah in power and was therefore obliged to see that he govern in an enlightened manner.<sup>27</sup> As head of G-2, Qarani also met regularly with the CIA station chief, U.S. military attachés, and members of the U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG). He may have discussed his political ideas in these meetings as well.

These direct contacts notwithstanding, Qarani's preferred channel for communicating with U.S. officials about these matters was through Bozorgmehr. Bozorgmehr was one of the CIA's most important paid agents in Iran at this time, running a network of agents that, among other things, included very useful penetrations of the Tudeh party. Because of this connection, Bozorgmehr was in close contact throughout this period not only with a CIA case officer but also with the CIA station chief and other embassy officials.<sup>28</sup> By the fall of 1957 he was providing extensive information to his case officer about his activities with Qarani, including details about their efforts to install a new government, the likely composition of this government, and the names of their accomplices and potential supporters. Bozorgmehr also solicited advice and support from his case officer. Although the case officer carefully avoided saying anything that would constitute explicit encouragement, he apparently gave Bozorgmehr information and advice about prospective accomplices and supporters, and he did not discourage Bozorgmehr and Qarani. Moreover, acting on orders that presumably were made at the highest levels of the U.S. government, the CIA station apparently did not inform the Shah about Qarani's activities, a startling omission in light of the close U.S. relationship with the Shah. In maintaining these contacts, the CIA officers involved knew that Bozorgmehr and Qarani would also certainly interpret them as *de facto* support for their activities.<sup>29</sup>

In making these approaches, Qarani and his collaborators seem to have had three primary motives. First, in giving U.S. officials information that could easily have been passed on to the Shah, they may have been trying to determine whether the United States would allow them to succeed. Second, they may have hoped the United States would not only acquiesce but also assist them, perhaps by giving them information and advice but more likely by pressuring the Shah to accept their prospective government. Third, if the United States would not pressure the Shah on their behalf, they may have hoped U.S. officials would at least increase their fledgling efforts to push the Shah toward reform. Whatever their motives, it is clear that Qarani and his collaborators recognized the preeminent U.S. position in Iran and it is also clear that seeking U.S. acquiescence or support was a major focus of their activities.<sup>30</sup>

Another important focus of these activities was to develop secret networks of trusted allies who could foment public disturbances or participate in a coup if necessary to facilitate the installation of a new government. Qarani and his collaborators apparently established close ties with certain bazaar leaders, clergymen, and academics who could mobilize large crowds of lower-class toughs and students; these crowds could be used to intimidate their opponents, to create the appearance that their activities had extensive popular support, or even to provide the pretext for a coup, tactics that had been used routinely by the National Front and its opponents during the Mosaddeq era. They also apparently established close ties with certain journalists who could provide them with favorable press coverage when needed. Most of these connections were made by Bozorgmehr and Arsanjani, who had many contacts in these segments of society. They were probably assisted by Ali Akhbar Mohtadi, Hossein Qoli Shamlu, Sayyid Jafar Behbehani, and Mohammad Baqer Hejazi, well-known political intriguers with shady reputations whose contacts would have been useful in these efforts.<sup>31</sup>

Qarani himself developed a network within the armed forces—presumably the “patriotic officers” he had mentioned to Bowling. This network consisted of some seventy officers organized into tightly compartmentalized cells, roughly following the organizational model of the Tudeh military network discovered in 1954.<sup>32</sup> Although General Yavari, Admiral Anushirvani (Qarani’s counterintelligence deputy), Gendarmerie Colonel Ordubadi, and a few other senior officers joined this network, most of its members were junior officers from the Tehran garrison. Qarani could have used this network either to undertake a coup or to act against military units that opposed him. This network also provided a pool of reform-minded officers who could lead the security forces under Qarani’s prospective government.<sup>33</sup>

In each of these networks, only certain people at the highest levels knew the real nature of Qarani’s activities; lower-level members typically were not aware of the full scope and purpose of the networks, knowing only that the people with whom they were associated were engaged in some kind of political intrigue. Moreover, Qarani and his allies were simultaneously cultivating potential supporters in the same segments of society. The networks they established were therefore quite amorphous and overlapped considerably with their broader circle of potential supporters.

Qarani knew the Shah would eventually learn about his activities, especially inasmuch as Bakhtiar, Kia, and Alavi-Moqadam would seize any opportunity to

discredit him. Consequently, to conceal the true nature of these activities, he requested permission to undertake a so-called provocation operation designed to identify the Shah's real or potential enemies. Under this covert operation Qarani would act as an agent provocateur by pretending to organize a coup against the Shah in order to attract potential plotters, who would thus be exposed as enemies of the Shah. Qarani did this to provide cover for his own activities: the Shah would dismiss any reports from SAVAK or the other security agencies about his activities, assuming they were merely provocations and not realizing—until it was too late—that he was, in fact, playing a double game. The provocation operation was aimed at uncovering disloyal members of Iran's political establishment, including precisely the sorts of people Qarani was seeking out as allies or potential supporters; it was not aimed at established opposition groups like the National Resistance Movement and the Tudeh party, whose membership was already fairly well known. Because secrets were hard to keep in Iran and because it provided perfect cover for his other political activities, Qarani probably began the provocation operation before these activities had progressed very far.<sup>34</sup>

The activities of Qarani and his collaborators during this period suggest that their underlying plan to install a new government had two or perhaps three main elements. First, in trying to spread their ideas, establish a circle of potential supporters, and secure U.S. assistance, they apparently hoped that pressure from the Iranian elite and U.S. officials would convince the Shah to appoint such a government voluntarily. Second, if this failed, their efforts to develop the capability to foment public disturbances and carry out a coup indicate that they were prepared to use coercive measures if necessary to force the Shah to accept such a government. Third, in making contingency plans for a coup, they probably also considered overthrowing the Shah himself if this became necessary to bring the new government to power.<sup>35</sup>

#### QARANI'S ARREST

In early February 1958, Bozorgmehr flew to Athens via Beirut and met with U.S. Assistant Secretary of State William Rountree, who had become acquainted with him several years earlier while serving in Tehran and was then traveling with Secretary of State John Foster Dulles. Bozorgmehr told Rountree that a very dangerous situation was emerging in Iran as a result of the Shah's autocratic rule and that he and his "collaborators," whom he did not name, wanted to be sure he and Dulles knew this. Bozorgmehr apparently made this trip after consulting with Qarani in order to open a more direct channel of communication to top U.S. officials. SAVAK had evidently learned about Qarani's activities by this time. A SAVAK officer in Beirut who had been told by a local source that Bozorgmehr was in town was instructed to follow him to Athens, where he learned about the meeting with Rountree. Bozorgmehr was arrested when he returned to Iran and interrogated by SAVAK for several days. He was then released but kept under close surveillance.<sup>36</sup>

Bozorgmehr's trip to Athens seems to have persuaded the Shah that Qarani and his allies were a serious threat. After Bozorgmehr's arrest, SAVAK placed Qarani and many of his friends and associates under surveillance and rounded up others

for interrogation. Qarani was finally arrested on 27 February. Bozorgmehr, Moh-tadi, Shamlu, Hejazi, and at least a dozen other civilians and military officers were arrested in the following days, and many more were interrogated. Jafar Behbehani hurriedly left the country, and the *imām-i jum'ā* was threatened with exile. Amini was recalled (and later dismissed) as ambassador to the United States on 4 March, ostensibly because of a speech he had made advocating the redistribution of Middle East oil revenues but really because of his connection to Qarani. The Shah asked his informants in the Azadi party to resign, leading it to collapse, and he forced Yavari to resign from the army. Arsanjani was not arrested until mid-March. Rumors spread through Tehran during this period linking Qarani to people such as the *imām-i jum'ā*, Masudi, Alavi-Kia, Allahyar Saleh, Assadollah Alam, Ibrahim Khajenuri, generals Esmail Riahi, Nematollah Nassiri, and Abbas Farzanehan, and even Prime Minister Eqlbal! Although most of these rumors were baseless, they suggest how large Qarani's circle of potential supporters had become.<sup>37</sup>

Beginning several days before Qarani was arrested, a series of reports appeared in the Iranian press insinuating that the U.S. embassy had been deeply involved with Qarani and his allies. Soon after Bozorgmehr's initial arrest, Iranian government officials orchestrated a press campaign denouncing unnamed "traitorous Iranian[s] who pass false information to foreigners" and linking these Iranians to the Brewer affair, which had been widely attributed to the U.S. embassy by this time. This campaign was apparently undertaken to provide cover for the investigation of Qarani's activities. When Qarani's arrest was announced on 28 February, articles appeared in Tehran newspapers linking him to the U.S. and British embassies. Reports of this sort continued to appear in the following days, including a long article in the 7 March issue of *Tehran Mosavvar* giving a detailed account of a midnight meeting between Bozorgmehr and a third secretary in the U.S. embassy during which Bozorgmehr allegedly described plans that he and his friends had made to install a new, reform-oriented government.<sup>38</sup>

In a related incident, copies of a forged letter purportedly from Secretary of State Dulles to U.S. Ambassador Selden Chapin were mysteriously delivered to all Tehran newspapers and members of the Iranian Senate between 27 February and 1 March. This letter stated that U.S. officials "have never cherished any illusions about the Iranian sovereign's qualifications as a statesman," and described the Shah as a man "who tries to pose as the Cyrus of modern times" but "is about as successful as a politician as he is as a husband," a reference to the Shah's impending divorce from Queen Soraya. The letter was well written but contained a number of technical discrepancies, enabling Chapin to convince the Shah that it was a forgery. Forged letters criticizing the Shah's regime purportedly written by Ayatollah Mohammad Hossein Borujerdi and the brother of the Shah's physician also circulated at this time.<sup>39</sup>

The fraudulent nature of the Dulles letter and persistent denials by U.S. officials that they had supported Qarani seem to have convinced the Shah that someone was trying to poison his relations with the United States. This realization, together with the growing evidence that Qarani's activities had been very serious and had enjoyed wide support, led the Shah to downplay the Qarani affair and allegations about U.S. involvement in it. Beginning on 2 March, SAVAK seized all copies of

the Dulles letter (which was never mentioned in Iranian newspapers) and instructed the press to minimize the importance of the Qarani affair and emphasize that “foreigners” had refused to encourage Qarani. Most of the people arrested in connection with Qarani were released quietly in the following weeks, although Arsanjani was held for a month, Bozorgmehr was held for six months, and Qarani was put on trial in June. The Shah took a number of other steps in the following months to offset the adverse impact of the Qarani affair, releasing several National Resistance Movement leaders from prison, subsidizing an offshoot of the extreme nationalist Pan-Iranist party to distract public opinion, appearing publicly with Amini and the *imām-i jum‘a*, and appointing Parviz Khonsari, Qarani’s close friend, to a top position in the Ministry of Labor. In this period he also established the Pahlavi Foundation, a philanthropic organization; he approved a plan to reorganize the armed forces, reducing the power of the general staff and increasing that of the supreme commander’s staff; he raised officers’ salaries; he had SAVAK continue its investigation of Qarani; and he presumably had everyone associated with Qarani kept under close surveillance.<sup>40</sup>

Qarani was charged under Articles 344 and 330 of the Army Penal Code with interfering in civilian affairs and disobeying orders, allegations that referred to his involvement in political activities and his failure to report these activities to the Shah. After a thorough investigation by SAVAK he was convicted by a military court on 11 June 1958, and given a two-year prison sentence. He appealed his conviction but was found guilty again on 22 July, at which time his sentence was raised to three years and he was dishonorably discharged from the army. Bozorgmehr was forced into exile after he was released from prison, but none of Qarani’s associates were put on trial. The decision not to conduct other trials, as well as Qarani’s relatively light sentence and the fact that he was not charged with plotting a coup, probably reflect the Shah’s desire to downplay the affair.<sup>41</sup>

Qarani served out most or all of his sentence and then quietly was released. While in prison he befriended several National Resistance Movement members and came to believe that they represented the best hope for Iran’s future. After prison he opened a construction business, which was not very successful. Although he initially avoided political activity, he soon began to meet with leaders of the National Resistance Movement and National Front (which had been reestablished in July 1960), including Mehdi Bazargan, Allahyar Saleh, Karim Sanjabi, and ayatollahs Sayyid Mahmoud Taleqani and Sayyid Reza Zanjani. He also befriended Ayatollah Sayyid Hadi Milani, who was close to many National Resistance Movement leaders. As a result of these activities, he was arrested again in early 1964 and given another three-year prison term. He stayed out of politics after his second stint in prison but maintained his friendships with Bazargan and other opposition leaders. Although he did not participate in the 1978–79 revolution, he advised Bazargan on appointments to the postrevolutionary government and was named armed forces chief of staff, mainly on the basis of the reputation he had established in 1958 as a brave, reform-oriented officer. He resigned from this post in early April 1979, apparently because he opposed the Islamic government then being established. He was assassinated a few weeks later by Forqan, who may have thought he was plotting against the Islamic government.<sup>42</sup>

One key question remains unanswered about the Qarani affair: who convinced the Shah that Qarani's plot was genuine? Three plausible answers come to mind.<sup>43</sup> First, Bakhtiar, Kia, Alavi-Moqadam, or some combination of the three may have convinced him. These men were bitter rivals of Qarani and would have used any opportunity to discredit him. Moreover, each headed an agency capable of acquiring information on a complex, secret plot like Qarani's. However, the Shah knew these men were Qarani's rivals; and Qarani had set up a provocation operation that led the Shah to expect reports from them about such a plot. Because the Shah was therefore predisposed to reject any incriminating information about Qarani provided by these men, they could only have convinced him with very strong evidence. Although Bozorgmehr's trip to Athens was certainly suspicious, it did not necessarily link Bozorgmehr to Qarani, and SAVAK must already have known about Qarani's activities. Moreover, the Shah undoubtedly knew about Bozorgmehr's close ties to the U.S. embassy. Reports about the Athens trip and Bozorgmehr's other meetings with U.S. officials were therefore probably not sufficient to incriminate Qarani. While Bakhtiar, Kia, or Alavi-Moqadam might have incriminated him in some other way, no evidence has appeared that they did.

Second, U.S. officials, perhaps working in conjunction with Bakhtiar, Kia, or Alavi-Moqadam, might have convinced the Shah. The United States was firmly committed to preserving the Shah's regime, and U.S. officials may have decided that Qarani's activities were a threat to it. Moreover, the Shah would have found warnings from the United States much more credible than warnings from his own subordinates. However, while U.S. officials certainly wanted to protect the Shah, they also favored the reforms Qarani was promoting and would have been reluctant to jeopardize Amini, Arsanjani, Bozorgmehr's network of agents, and perhaps other Iranians by telling the Shah about Qarani. Furthermore, U.S. officials had been in close contact with Qarani and Bozorgmehr since at least October 1956, knowing they would interpret this contact as *de facto* support and apparently even giving Bozorgmehr information and advice. It is difficult to understand why U.S. officials would have maintained these contacts and then warned the Shah about Qarani, exposing a plot they had permitted to flourish and enabling the Shah to learn about their ties to this plot. Although scenarios can be constructed under which this might have occurred, they are inconsistent and rather farfetched.<sup>44</sup>

A third possibility is that the British convinced the Shah, perhaps in conjunction with Bakhtiar, Kia, or Alavi-Moqadam. British officials also wanted to preserve the Shah's regime, under which Iran remained an important market for British exports and investment. The British did not have strong ties to any of Qarani's close associates, and Qarani represented a clear threat to British allies such as Eqbal, Bakhtiar, Kia, and Alavi-Moqadam and to the traditional upper class in general, many of whom were closely tied to the British. Qarani had also developed a strong mutual antipathy with MI-6 agent Shahpour Reporter. The British had considerable intelligence-gathering capabilities in Iran and definitely knew about Qarani's activities; and the Shah would have found a British warning about Qarani very credible. It is therefore quite plausible that British officials convinced the Shah that Qarani's plot was genuine. In light of their close ties to Bakhtiar, Alavi-Moqadam, and especially Kia, the British may have worked with one or more of these men to expose Qarani,

an explanation offered by many close observers of these events.<sup>45</sup> However, while this explanation is quite plausible, no solid evidence has yet appeared to confirm it.

#### IMPLICATIONS FOR IRANIAN POLITICS

The Qarani affair was one of a series of events in the late 1950s and early 1960s that seriously threatened the Shah's regime. Although not as dramatic as the July 1958 coup in Iraq or the popular uprisings that occurred in Iran in the early 1960s, the Qarani affair was the first of these events and was probably as threatening as any of the others. These events together revealed that serious problems existed in Iran. The Shah responded to them by taking a variety of actions that fundamentally transformed both the nature of his regime and Iranian politics in general. Thus, the Qarani affair is important for what it reveals about Iranian politics of that time and, together with these other events, for its impact on Iranian politics in subsequent years.

The most important revelation to emerge from the Qarani affair was that opposition to the Shah's regime was very widespread and could potentially coalesce under the leadership of a single individual. Most of Qarani's allies were military officers and members of the modern middle class. They were generally competent, pragmatic, and politically moderate, and very few of them had been associated with established opposition organizations such as the National Front and the Tudeh party. Qarani's activities were therefore based on the very segment of society the Shah needed to attract to build a base of support for his regime and staff the state apparatus. It was also clear from Qarani's membership in the Baradaran group, his friendship with many other prominent figures, and the wide variety of people implicated or suspected of conspiring with him that he had many potential supporters among the political elite. Moreover, it seemed likely that the National Resistance Movement and its many sympathizers would at least passively support someone like Qarani against the Shah, as would most other opposition factions. The Qarani affair therefore revealed that the Shah's regime had no real social base of support and that a moderate figure like Qarani—or perhaps Amini or Arsanjani—might well be able to unite most of the opposition.

Another important point revealed by the Qarani affair was that the Shah could no longer rely fully on U.S. support. Even if U.S. officials did actually inform the Shah about the real nature of Qarani's activities, which seems unlikely, they had given *de facto* encouragement to Qarani by maintaining close contact with him through Bozorgmehr. The United States also clearly favored the reforms Qarani was promoting and the people he was associated with, particularly Amini, who now represented a serious threat to the Shah. Furthermore, Qarani's persistent approaches to U.S. officials showed that at least some members of the opposition still viewed the United States as a possible agent for progressive change in Iran. Inasmuch as the United States had played a vital role in overthrowing Mosaddeq and building the foundations of the post-Mosaddeq regime, these revelations must have been very alarming to the Shah and heartening to the opposition.

The Qarani affair also affected Iranian politics in important ways, both by itself and in conjunction with the other momentous events of this period. Its most imme-

diate effect was to demonstrate—but also temporarily to eliminate—the threat to the Shah posed by Amini, Arsanjani, and the Azadi party. These people had not previously constituted an opposition faction; now they represented a viable alternative to the National Resistance Movement and the Tudeh party as a vehicle for opposition activity. This being said, the destruction of Qarani's network was clearly a major blow to this faction, weakening it for several critical years. In particular, the arrest and imprisonment of Qarani himself deprived this faction of a very powerful and energetic leader, and the collapse of the Azadi party deprived it of a vehicle for mobilizing popular support. Although Amini and Arsanjani again challenged the Shah several years later—after he appointed them prime minister and minister of agriculture, respectively—his security apparatus had become much stronger by this time and they conspicuously lacked the base of support a political party could have provided. The setbacks associated with the arrest of Qarani therefore helped the Shah survive this subsequent challenge.

Another important consequence of the Qarani affair was that it weakened the U.S. relationship with the Shah and U.S. influence in Iran in general. The Shah evidently learned a fair amount about the contacts Qarani and Bozorgmehr had maintained with U.S. officials, and he almost certainly knew about Bozorgmehr's prior ties to the CIA. The realization that U.S. officials had maintained contact with Qarani, coming shortly after the Brewer affair and at a time when U.S. pressure for reform was growing, made the Shah very suspicious and led him to reduce his ties to the United States in the following years. He became very wary of Ambassador Chapin, the CIA officer who had run the Brewer operation, and other U.S. officials who advocated reform, making it difficult for them to continue their activities. He also began to pressure U.S. officials to reduce their intelligence-gathering activities in Iran and their contact with the opposition; he soon began to reduce the scope of SAVAK's ties to the CIA and expand its ties to other Western intelligence agencies, especially to Israel's Mossad; and he began a very visible flirtation with the Soviet Union in this period. The arrest of Qarani and his allies also destroyed the network of agents Bozorgmehr had been running for the CIA; it made the Shah very wary of Amini and other U.S. favorites; and it led Arsanjani and probably others to believe that U.S. officials had told the Shah about Qarani and consequently to reduce their contact with these officials. These changes, together with a sharp decline in U.S. military and economic aid, had substantially increased Iran's independence from the United States and reduced U.S. influence in Iran by the mid-1960s.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, the Qarani affair, together with the Iraqi coup and the uprisings of the early 1960s, led the Shah to take a variety of actions aimed at reducing popular unrest and the threat it posed to his regime. He continued to strengthen the security forces, especially SAVAK, which became increasingly effective in this period and assumed the primary responsibility for controlling unrest. The security forces thereafter remained the pillar of the Shah's regime, monitoring and penetrating opposition organizations and suppressing all manifestations of popular protest. The Shah also watched his top security officials much more carefully after the Qarani affair, creating an agency called the Imperial Inspectorate in 1958 to monitor the security apparatus and firing Bakhtiar, Kia, and Alavi-Moqadam in 1961 because they had become too powerful and too corrupt.<sup>47</sup>



At the same time the Shah made a concerted effort to coopt the modern middle class and other disaffected groups. In late 1958 he began a limited but highly visible program of reforms, including an anticorruption campaign and a limited land-reform program. In the early 1960s he appointed Amini, Arsanjani, Aramesh, and other moderate opposition figures to top positions and permitted them to expand these reforms, which became known as the White Revolution. He began to associate himself personally with this reform program and gradually made it the centerpiece of his regime, expanding land reform, increasing the scope of the White Revolution, and establishing the Iran Novin (New Iran) party to provide an institutional basis for these reforms.<sup>48</sup> These activities continued until the early 1970s, when the apparent decline in popular unrest left the Shah little incentive to continue these reforms.

The legacy of the Qarani affair is therefore mixed: although it helped encourage the Shah to carry out wide-ranging reforms, it also weakened Amini, Arsanjani, and their reformist faction for several critical years, enabling the Shah to survive their subsequent challenge. In the years after his arrest, Qarani himself apparently came to realize that his biggest mistake had been to assemble a small, clandestine network that could easily be crushed rather than an open, popular movement like the one led by Mosaddeq and the National Front in the early 1950s.<sup>49</sup> In light of the mixed legacy of the Qarani affair, it is hard to quarrel with this conclusion.

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Brief accounts also appear in Peter Avery, *Modern Iran* (New York: Praeger, 1965), 475; Marvin Zonis, *The Political Elite of Iran* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1971), 54; Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran, Updated Through 1978* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1979), 314–15, 362; Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism* (New York: New York University Press, 1981), 199, 209–10; James A. Bill, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American–Iranian Relations* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 127–28; Husayn Fardust, *Zuhūr va Saqūt-e Salṭanat-i Pahlavi: Khaṭirat-i Husayn Fardust* (Tehran: Itṭilāʿat, 1989), 132–33; and Homa Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1991), 214–15.

<sup>2</sup>This study is based on personal interviews with participants or close observers of the Qarani affair; on U.S. State Department and Defense Department documents from the U.S. National Archives (USNA), Record Group 59, Boxes 3811 and 1814, or obtained by the author under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA); on oral histories prepared by the Harvard University Iranian Oral History Project (IOHP); and on British embassy documents from the Public Records Office (PRO) in London. Several of my interviewees asked that I not reveal their names. Material from the latter four sources is identified below with the notations “USNA,” “FOIA,” “IOHP,” and “PRO.” Documents attributed to “U.S. Embassy” are from the Tehran embassy, except where noted. I have made every effort to corroborate information from these sources. Important information that I could not corroborate independently is either qualified in the text or identified in the notes as the product of a single source.

<sup>3</sup>On Mosaddeq and his overthrow, see Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*; Mark J. Gasiorowski, “The 1953 Coup d’Etat in Iran,” *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 19 (August 1987):261–86; William Roger Louis and James A. Bill, ed., *Musaddiq, Iranian Nationalism, and Oil* (London: I. B. Tauris, 1988); and Fakhreddin Azimi, *Iran: The Crisis of Democracy, 1941–1953* (London: St. Martin’s, 1989).

<sup>4</sup>U.S. Embassy, "Arrests of Nationalists," 24 September 1957 (FOIA); idem, "Further Developments in Recent Arrests of Nationalists," 24 October 1957. On the National Resistance Movement, see idem, "A Survey of the Nationalist Movement in Iran since the Fall of Mosadeq," 8 May 1957 (FOIA); and H. E. Chehabi, *Iranian Politics and Religious Modernism: The Liberation Movement of Iran under the Shah and Khomeini* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup>On the Tudeh, see Sepéhr Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966); and Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1982), chaps. 6–8.

<sup>6</sup>On the security forces and their importance to the Shah's regime, see Mark J. Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah: Building a Client State in Iran* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991), 151–58.

<sup>7</sup>U.S. Embassy, "A Political Analysis of the Iranian Army," 12 February 1957 (FOIA).

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., 12–17; idem, "NIS 33 (Iran), Key Personalities," 14 May 1959, 18 (FOIA); idem, "The Qarani Affair: A Recapitulation," 25 March 1958, 2 (FOIA). Bakhtiar began to plot against the Shah after he was dismissed as head of SAVAK in March 1961. For a fascinating fictionalized account of this plot, see Gérard de Villiers, *SAS Contre CIA* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1965).

<sup>9</sup>U.S. Embassy, "Political Analysis of the Iranian Army," 8–10; idem, "Current Political Situation in Iran and Assessment of Future," 4 September 1958, 5 (FOIA); U.S. Embassy to Secretary of State, Airgram No. G-48, "Role of the Military—Iran," 24 October 1959, 4 (FOIA). The latter document estimates that as much as 20 percent of the entire Iranian officer corps was sympathetic to the National Front or the Tudeh in late 1959 (p. 10).

<sup>10</sup>See Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah*, chap. 4.

<sup>11</sup>This material is based on interviews with many U.S. officials who worked on Iran at this time. For a clear statement of the need to push the Shah toward reform, see U.S. National Security Council, *U.S. Policy toward Iran*, NSC 5821/1, 15 November 1958 (USNA).

<sup>12</sup>*The New York Times*, 2 January 1958, 5, and 25 February 1958, 2. This material is based on a confidential interview with a retired CIA officer who was working in Tehran at the time and followed these events closely. According to this officer, these covert operations were probably not authorized by CIA director Allen Dulles or CIA covert operations chief Richard Helms, who had little interest in promoting reform, but rather by a senior officer in the CIA's Middle East division. On Brewer's cooperation with the CIA at this time, see Said K. Aburish, *Beirut Spy: The St. George Hotel Bar* (London: Bloomsbury, 1989), which says of him: "No longer a great foreign correspondent, Sam had been reduced to a has-been mouthpiece for the CIA" (p. 17).

<sup>13</sup>These organizations included Mozaffar Baqai's Toilers' party, the Pan-Iranist party, and Khalil Maleki's Third Force. See idem, "Meeting of the Toilers' Party," 22 May 1957 (FOIA); idem, "Report on the Formation of a New Party in Iran," 2 March 1958 (FOIA); and idem, "Iranian Government Critics and Opposition Leaders and the Status of the Latter," 8 February 1960 (FOIA).

<sup>14</sup>Idem, "Formation of the Freedom Society of Iran," 3 September 1957 (FOIA); interview with Kazem Jafrudi (Paris, 26 June 1991). The three loyal Majlis deputies were Jafrudi, Mohamad Shahkar, and Man-ouchehr Teimurtash. According to Jafrudi, Arsanjani said nothing in party meetings about his activities with Qarani or anything else that threatened the Shah; he therefore had nothing to report in the one meeting he had with the Shah about the party.

<sup>15</sup>Interview with Holaku Rambod (Nice, France, 29 May 1991); Rambod interview (IOHP).

<sup>16</sup>U.S. Embassy, "Complaints of Two High Ranking Iranian Army Officers," 15 November 1956 (FOIA); idem, "Qarani Affair"; interviews with Rambod and Ahmad Madani (Paris, 6 June 1991). Although Qarani had been acquainted with Razmara, they were not particularly close (interview with Efsandiar Bozorgmehr, London, 21–22 June 1991). According to the CIA officer mentioned in n. 12, Qarani's plot was similar in many ways to Nasser's and a large amount of literature on Nasser was found in Qarani's home when he was arrested.

<sup>17</sup>Qarani apparently wrote a report detailing the corruption of Bakhtiar, Kia, and Alavi-Moqadam, which the Shah then showed to these officers; see Bill, *Eagle and the Lion*, 127. This undoubtedly left these officers thirsting for revenge.

<sup>18</sup>U.S. Embassy to Secretary of State, Airgram No. G-48, 8–9; U.S. Department of the Army, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, C-44, 14 April 1958 (FOIA); "Army Officers Plot," 4 March 1958, FO/371/133009 (PRO); U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 7–8; interviews with Madani and a top SAVAK official from this

period. One top security official whose political views were similar to Qarani's was General Hassan Pakravan, a deputy to Bakhtiar at this time who later headed SAVAK for several years. Qarani and Pakravan were also bitter rivals, however, and therefore were not likely to work together; see U.S. Embassy, "Complaints of Two High Ranking Iranian Army Officers."

<sup>19</sup>"Encloses Notes on Past and Present Political Parties," 16 August 1957, FO/371/127075 (PRO); interviews with Rambod, Jafrudi, and the SAVAK official mentioned in n. 18; letter to the author from Ali Amini, 29 June 1991. Ironically, another one of Qarani's "brothers" in the Baradaran group was Prime Minister Eqbal, the main target of his political activity.

<sup>20</sup>U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 2; interviews with Madani and Hassan Nazih (Paris, 13 June 1991).

<sup>21</sup>Bozorgmehr interview. The idea may well have been broached initially by Arsanjani, who had been opposed to the Shah for many years and probably had more ambition and more strategic vision than Qarani.

<sup>22</sup>Madani, Jafrudi, and Bozorgmehr interviews. Nureddin Alamoti and Shahab Ferdows of the Azadi party and Mohammad Derakhshesh were also to receive cabinet posts, according to Jafrudi. Although all of my informed sources insist that Amini was to become prime minister in the new government, Qarani might have taken this position for himself if he had succeeded. Arsanjani, Bozorgmehr, and Derakhshesh apparently approached Amini with a plan to oust Eqbal, but he refused to participate (Amini letter to the author). My sources generally believed that Qarani and his allies told Amini little or nothing about their activities to protect him in case they were discovered.

<sup>23</sup>This characterization is based on my own assessment of the information I gathered. Most of my interviewees believe Qarani's plan was narrower in scope, involving some of these activities but not others. The secret nature of these activities made it hard for anyone to know their full scope and has made it impossible for me to determine the extent to which they were pursued and their relative importance in the overall plan.

<sup>24</sup>For a good description of Qarani's potential supporters, see U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 2-3. Qarani approached the National Resistance Movement in 1955 and met with Hassan Nazih and several other leaders (Nazih interview). He also maintained contact with Ahmad Madani and other officers who had established secret networks in the armed forces linked to the National Resistance Movement (Madani interview). He even met with Khalil Maleki, leader of the opposition group *Niru-ye Sevvom* (Third Force); see Katouzian, *Political Economy of Modern Iran*, 209. Before Qarani was arrested, the National Resistance Movement apparently sent him a message through Mohammad Nasser Qashqai saying they would not support him (Qashqai interview, IOHP).

<sup>25</sup>Rambod, Jafrudi, and Bozorgmehr interviews.

<sup>26</sup>U.S. Embassy, "Complaints of Two High Ranking Iranian Army Officers"; *idem*, "Recent Conversations with Iranian Politicians—January 9th through January 14th, 1957," 17 January 1957 (FOIA); letter from Fraser Wilkins to Owen T. Jones, 3 March 1958 (USNA). Qarani had spent several months in the United States in 1956 and met with a variety of U.S. officials. Although he probably did not discuss his political activities with these officials, he apparently came to believe that the United States was committed to promoting reform in Iran. When he returned to Iran he therefore pursued his activities with increased vigor. (Rambod and Jafrudi interviews.)

<sup>27</sup>Interview with the CIA officer mentioned in n. 12. According to this source, the CIA officer knew about Qarani's activities but did not discuss them with him because he had not been authorized to do so. Qarani also met with Fraser Wilkins, the second highest ranking member of the U.S. embassy staff, a few months before his arrest. Ambassador Seldon Chapin had sent Wilkins to meet with Qarani, presumably with State Department approval. Qarani told Wilkins very little about his activities, probably because he preferred to communicate with the United States through Bozorgmehr (see n. 28). The Shah later learned about Wilkins's meeting with Qarani and threatened to declare him *persona non grata*. Interview with Wilkins (Washington, 9 July 1985).

<sup>28</sup>Bozorgmehr's CIA ties were described to me in interviews with three retired CIA officers who worked in Iran at this time. According to one of these officers, Bozorgmehr's Tudeh penetrations may have been the source through which the CIA learned the whereabouts of Khosrow Ruzbeh, information that was then given to SAVAK and resulted in Ruzbeh's arrest and execution. Bozorgmehr claims he met regularly in this period with the station chief, another CIA officer, and Ambassador Chapin (Bozorgmehr interview). Qarani probably preferred to communicate with the United States through Bozorgmehr because Bozorgmehr's U.S. connections were very close and because indirect contacts of this sort would have been easier for him to disavow.

<sup>29</sup>Interviews with Bozorgmehr and one of the CIA officers mentioned in n. 28; U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 4. There are several plausible reasons why U.S. officials did not inform the Shah. First, they may have wanted to watch Qarani to learn who he was working with and how likely he was to succeed. Second, they certainly did not want to jeopardize their relationships with Amini, Arsanjani, Bozorgmehr, and perhaps other Qarani associates by telling the Shah. Third, some U.S. officials may actually have wanted Qarani to succeed, or at least to come close enough to scare the Shah into undertaking reforms. I have been unable to determine which, if any, of these explanations were responsible for this decision and who actually made it.

<sup>30</sup>Qarani or Bozorgmehr also approached the British embassy on at least one occasion for "support and guidance"; see "Report on First Quarter of 1958," 22 April 1958, FO/371/133003 (PRO). Their reasons for making this approach are not all clear to me.

<sup>31</sup>The material in this and the next paragraph is based mainly on my interview with Bozorgmehr. For a description of these networks, see U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 3-4. I have not been able to determine what roles Mohtadi, Shamlu, Behbehani, and Hejazi played in this effort. However, most of my interviewees believe they were involved in some way.

<sup>32</sup>On the Tudeh military network, see Farhad Kazemi, "The Military and Politics in Iran: The Uneasy Symbiosis," in *Towards a Modern Iran: Studies in Thought, Politics, and Society*, ed. Elie Kedourie and Sylvia G. Haim (London: Frank Cass, 1980), 217-40; and U.S. Embassy, "Government Anti-Tudeh Campaign," 26 November 1954 (USNA). According to the SAVAK official mentioned in n. 18, Qarani was not involved in breaking up this network. However, as head of G-2 he would have learned a great deal about its organization and activities.

<sup>33</sup>Bozorgmehr and Rambod interviews; U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 3-4.

<sup>34</sup>U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 2; interviews with Madani and the CIA officer mentioned in n. 12. Bozorgmehr knew nothing about the provocation operation, though he concedes Qarani may have kept it from him (Bozorgmehr interview). Qarani may have told the Shah he would target the U.S. embassy and CIA station with this operation to see if they would plot against him. He may even have suggested that the Azadi party could be used in conjunction with this operation to test the loyalty of Arsanjani and his friends. Such actions would have appealed to the Shah and provided excellent cover for Qarani's approaches to U.S. officials and for the Azadi party's activities.

<sup>35</sup>In my interview, Bozorgmehr gave a somewhat different account of the plan. First, certain Majlis deputies who were secretly working with Qarani would try to persuade the Shah to appoint Amini prime minister. If that failed, public disturbances would be staged to force the Shah to appoint Amini or, if he refused, to provide the pretext for a coup to install Amini. Once in power, Amini would try to force the Shah to become a constitutional monarch. If the Shah resisted he would be forced to abdicate. These activities were to occur during the *Nau Ruz* (Iranian New Year) holiday in March 1958. In my view this account underemphasizes Qarani's efforts to obtain U.S. support and overemphasizes his desire actually to oust the Shah.

<sup>36</sup>U.S. Embassy, Athens to Secretary of State, 3 February 1958 (USNA); Bozorgmehr interview; telephone interview with Rountree, 21 October 1991. Rountree and Dulles had stopped in Tehran before going to Athens. Bozorgmehr told me Dulles had tried unsuccessfully to meet with him in Tehran and that his contacts in the U.S. embassy had then suggested that he go to Athens to see Dulles (whom he never actually met). He and Qarani apparently decided to make this approach simply to reinforce their other efforts to obtain U.S. support. The SAVAK officer in Beirut was tipped off by a source in the Greek embassy after Bozorgmehr had stopped in for a visa, according to Bozorgmehr.

<sup>37</sup>U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 7; Bozorgmehr and Jafarudi interviews; U.S. Department of the Army, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 9 March 1958 (FOIA); U.S. Embassy to Secretary of State, Telegram No. 1748, 15 March 1958 (USNA); U.S. Department of the Army, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 23 March 1958 (FOIA); idem, USARMA Tehran to DEPTAR, C-44, 14 April 1958 (FOIA); idem, USARMA Tehran to DEPTAR, C-33, 1 March 1958 (FOIA); idem, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 2 March, 1958 (FOIA); U.S. Embassy, "Role of the Military," 9; U.S. Embassy to Secretary of State, Telegram No. 1664, 2 March 1958 (FOIA); "Army Officers Plot" (PRO). Several of my sources believe Bozorgmehr implicated Qarani, as did British embassy officials; see "Withdrawal of Amini from Washington," 11 March 1958, FO/371/133009 (PRO). Bozorgmehr denied this in my interview with him.

<sup>38</sup>U.S. Embassy to Secretary of State, Telegram No. 1586, 20 March 1958 (USNA); idem, Telegram No. 1664, 2 March 1958 (USNA); letter to the author from a retired CIA officer (regarding the *Tehran Masavvar* article). This article discusses conversations among U.S. embassy officials held inside the

embassy itself. The source of this information must have been an informant working within the embassy, presumably a member of the embassy's Iranian staff who was working for SAVAK. Bozorgmehr's CIA case officer had diplomatic cover in the embassy, but not as a third secretary.

<sup>39</sup>U.S. Embassy to Secretary of State, Telegram No. 1673, 3 March 1958 (USNA); idem, Telegram No. 1702, 8 March 1958 (USNA); U.S. Department of the Army, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 9 March 1958 (FOIA). The text of the forged Dulles letter is in Fraser Wilkins to Owen T. Jones, 3 March 1958 (USNA).

<sup>40</sup>U.S. Department of the Army, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 9 March 1958 (FOIA); U.S. Embassy, "Qarani Affair," 6; U.S. Embassy to Secretary of State, Telegram No. 1726, 13 March 1958; Bozorgmehr interview; U.S. Department of the Army, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 23 March 1958 (FOIA); idem, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 18 May 1958 (FOIA); idem, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 27 April 1958 (FOIA); "Military Attaché's Report on Iranian Army for 1958," 29 January 1959, FO/371/140841 (PRO). Ironically, Qarani himself had promoted the idea of subsidizing the Pan-Iranists' offshoot; see U.S. Embassy, "Government-Sponsored Extreme Nationalist Political Grouping," 26 March 1958 (USNA).

<sup>41</sup>U.S. Department of the Army, USARMA Tehran to DEPTAR, 13 June 1958 (FOIA); idem, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 27 July 1958 (FOIA); IOHP interview with Sadegh Amirazizi (head of the appeals court that tried Qarani). Qarani's defense counsel, General Ismail Shafai, withdrew from the appeals trial, charging that the trial was "phoney and fixed"; see U.S. Department of the Army, SANA Tehran to DEPTAR, 19 July 1958 (USNA). Bozorgmehr moved to Geneva after he was released from prison and was eventually given a position in the Iranian delegation to the United Nations offices there.

<sup>42</sup>Interviews with the CIA officer mentioned in n. 12, Madani, and Nazih; IOHP interviews with Amirazizi, Hassan Alavi-Kia, and Haj-Ali Kia; *Le Monde*, 23–24 February 1964, 2; *Iran Times*, 22 June 1979, 2.

<sup>43</sup>A fourth possibility is that Soviet officials convinced the Shah, as suggested by Katouzian, *Musad-diq and the Struggle for Power*, 215. This explanation seems implausible, mainly because the Shah would have been deeply suspicious of any information of this kind provided by the Soviets.

<sup>44</sup>Two such scenarios come to mind. First, U.S. officials may have decided initially to watch Qarani's activities and then informed the Shah once these activities seemed threatening. Second, the Tehran CIA station chief, who by most accounts had little interest in promoting reform and was very close to Bakhtiar, may have informed the Shah without authority from Washington in the belief that Qarani represented a serious threat to the Shah or to Bakhtiar. Under both of these scenarios it would have been much less damaging to U.S. interests if the Shah had been informed about Qarani much earlier. These arguments notwithstanding, some observers believe U.S. officials did inform the Shah. See, for example, the reminiscences of Peter Avery in an interview with Shusha Guppy, 9–10 February 1985, 11, in the Oral History of Iran Collection of the Foundation for Iranian Studies.

<sup>45</sup>Rambod (IOHP interview), Jafrudi, Madani, Bozorgmehr, and the SAVAK official mentioned in n. 18 (personal interviews) believe the British told the Shah about Qarani and that Kia or Bakhtiar played important roles as well; Amirazizi believes Kia told the Shah (IOHP interview). Bozorgmehr and the SAVAK official both emphasized to me the mutual antipathy between Qarani and Reporter and argued that Reporter himself had informed the Shah. In an IOHP interview made before he died, Kia did not admit that he had exposed Qarani but stated that Qarani should have been executed. For evidence that the British knew about Qarani's activities before he was arrested, see n. 30.

<sup>46</sup>Interviews with the CIA officer mentioned in n. 12 and with several other U.S. officials working on Iran at this time; Gasiorowski, *U.S. Foreign Policy and the Shah*, 118, 120; Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941–1973: A Study of Foreign Policy in Modernizing Nations* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), chap. 12.

<sup>47</sup>On the Imperial Inspectorate see U.S. Embassy, "New 'Critical' Role for Three Official Groups," 19 September 1977 (FOIA).

<sup>48</sup>*The New York Times*, 29 October 1958, 4; Rouhollah K. Ramazani, "Iran's 'White Revolution': A Study in Political Development," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (July 1974): 124–39; U.S. Embassy, "The New Iran Party's First Year," 31 December 1964 (FOIA).

<sup>49</sup>Interview with the CIA officer mentioned in n. 12.