

DEPARTMENT OF STATE
WASHINGTON



October 28, 1953

AIR MAIL

~~INFORMAL - OFFICIAL~~

~~SECRET SECURITY INFORMATION~~

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

Following the overthrow of the Mosadeq Government, we found ourselves confronted with a completely new situation in the propaganda field, as in almost every other area of US-Iranian relations. I use the word "propaganda" rather than "public relations" or "information" because, despite the general distrust of the word in America, it seems to be the only one which encompasses all U. S. Government efforts to put across a particular point of view at home and abroad.

For the first time since Razmara enunciated a policy of "neutrality" in 1950, it seemed that our propaganda could be directed to open support of the Iranian Government and its anti-communist attitudes. During the past three years we had concentrated here primarily upon preventing the VOA and other information media from playing anything controversial. In face of the opportunities presented by the appearance of the Zahedi Government, we had to throw off our habits of the past, define new propaganda targets, and set in motion a new and effective propaganda campaign. An additional difficulty was presented by the fact that the new Information Agency was, in August, in the throes of reorganization.

Perhaps it would be appropriate here to describe briefly the variety of propaganda agencies in Washington. Most prominent is the new U. S. Information Agency, established as an independent unit to handle U. S. information programs abroad. The Voice of America and the many functions of USIA offices in the field are the tools used by this new agency. Of similar importance is what is known as the P area of the Department of State. This is headed by Assistant Secretary McCardle and concentrates essentially upon domestic propaganda, using as its tools the Department's News Division in dealing with local correspondents, a Historical Division, and offices which deal in the placement of magazine

articles

The Honorable
Loy W. Henderson,
American Ambassador,
Tehran, Iran.

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articles and arrangements for official speaking engagements. Within the geographic bureaus of the Department there are what have come to be known euphoniouly as the "Slant P" offices. They have the arduous responsibility of providing policy guidance to USIA, preparing many official statements and speeches, occasionally furnishing background information to newsmen, seeking outlets for items reported from the field which have a propaganda value, and advising political officers on public affairs matters. In addition, they must be thoroughly familiar with all news events relating to the area and be in close and constant touch with political affairs. This task is being handled in NEA by three officers, one of whom, Mr. Acker, who recently served in Iran as a Cultural Affairs Officer, is responsible for all of Africa and GTI.

Sanger

A somewhat peripheral but extremely important propaganda mechanism is the International Educational Exchange Service in the Department of State which handles Iranians visiting the United States under Government auspices and sends certain American scholars to Iran.

There is also a confidential American agency which is sometimes in a position to provide assistance in the propaganda field. I have arranged an informal relationship here which can be used if propaganda experts desire to have something said or played in Iran which should not be directly related to the U. S. Government.

There are undoubtedly other officers and bureaus interested in the Iranian problem from a propaganda point of view which we have not yet uncovered. We know of an heir to the defunct Psychological Strategy Board, now known as the Operations Coordinating Board, but, so far, it has shown no interest in the Iranian problem. FOA, which is currently going through a crisis of reorganization, has a public relations staff, but, so far, they have not joined in our efforts to coordinate propaganda activities. We hope to develop better liaison soon.

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As you can see, in the final weeks of August it was not easy to develop here any well-constructed, positive propaganda campaign for Iran. I attempted to define for discussion certain "propaganda problems", a paper which Hunt Damon brought with him to Tehran. Then Clary Thompson, now in USIA, joined with me and Tobe Acker to establish an ad hoc "Iran Propaganda Committee" to serve as a forum for ideas and a center of attraction for all persons involved in propaganda activities related to Iran. Clary has been acting as chairman and has done a masterful job in bringing some sense out of chaos and cooperation out of previous misunderstandings. In our weekly meetings we review achievements of the past week, prepare for events of the next week, and discuss general propaganda objectives and the best means to achieve them.

The major difficulty encountered in our meetings has been that of assigning and coordinating action. This does not reflect any unwillingness

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on the part of individual participants but a [jealousy] and lack of flexibility in the various organizations represented at the meetings. For instance, it is recognized that one of the best propaganda tools which USIA can use is a statement by the Secretary himself. However, within formal organizational limitations, USIA officers are not permitted to write the statement, a task which, theoretically, should only be performed by Department officers. This has separated the propaganda expert in USIA from one of his best tools, and places upon the Slant P area the entire responsibility for drafting the statement, selling it to the Secretary, and seeing that maximum use is obtained from it by USIA. Our committee is gradually overcoming this difficulty and is bringing a closer relationship between propaganda officers in the Department and in USIA. The logic of this seems childishly simple, but it has taken us over a month to establish such a procedure.

It was the sense of the committee that a letter should be sent to you describing our deep interest in the propaganda problems arising from the Iranian situation and our current efforts to deal with those problems. I understand that Clary is also writing Mr. Wells. We feel it most important that you and your staff should know of our willingness and growing ability to seek out and take advantage of every possible means of forwarding our propaganda campaign.

We are aware of your interest in the problems of United States public relations in Iran. We hope that any group of officers which may be assembled in Tehran to study propaganda matters and to coordinate the efforts of various agencies will employ our committee here, through correspondence with Clary Thompson, to produce material here which can be most useful to you. We would be happy to forward at your request the minutes of our meetings or any memoranda of ideas submitted for discussion here. We hope for guidance not only as regards large targets for a propaganda campaign, but specifically on the subject of tactical maneuvers in small things. We have the feeling here that we are moving with gathering momentum in the proper direction. We hope that we can be of use to you and Ed Wells and we await with interest any comments and guidance you may wish to offer.

Yours sincerely,

Hereafter, we will send minutes.

John H. Stutesman
John H. Stutesman, Jr.

McCordle + Sanger going to Iran.

Suggested Addition to Letter to Ambassador Henderson

Of course, political policy is still made in the line of command which runs from the desk to the Office Director, to the Assistant Secretary, to the Secretary, and information or propaganda is, after all, based on such political decisions.