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# Blood, Power, and Hypocrisy: The Murder of Robert Imbrie and American Relations with Pahlavi Iran, 1924

Michael Zirinsky  
*Boise State University*

*Michael P. Zirinsky*

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I'm never looking for trouble, but if it comes I'll welcome it with open arms.  
Robert W. Imbrie, Petrograd, 1918

Imbrie was a personal friend of mine.  
Allen W. Dulles, February 12, 1926

A MURDER OF CONSEQUENCE

On Friday, July 18, 1924, Robert W. Imbrie, United States Consul in Tehran—and personal friend and special agent of Allen W. Dulles, Chief of the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs Division—was brutally killed. Imbrie was beaten to death by a mob led by members of the Muslim clergy and including many members of the Iranian Army. In the weeks preceding July 18, there had been several outbreaks of anti-Bahai violence. Imbrie and Melvin Seymour had gone that morning to investigate a miraculous watering place in central Tehran that figured in the anti-Bahai excitement. According to contemporary accounts, a Bahai had been struck blind after drinking from the source when he refused to make an offering in the name of the Shi'ci saints; his sight miraculously had been restored after he had repented and made the donation.<sup>1</sup>

Imbrie's motive for visiting the shrine (*saqqa-khaneh*) has never been clear. Presumably he was investigating in his capacity as consul. However, he took a camera along to take photographs for the National Geographic Society, and the camera was cited by the Iranian government as a cause of what subsequently occurred. Imbrie seems to have expected trouble. He brought Seymour, an oilfield roughneck who had been imprisoned by the Consulate for repeatedly bludgeoning his foreman, with him as a bodyguard.<sup>2</sup>

After Imbrie had taken photographs of people at the watering place, Imbrie and Seymour were identified as Bahais by a 17-year-old mullah, Sayyid Husain, who accused them of having poisoned the source. The crowd attacked Imbrie, who continued to take pictures, and Seymour, who wielded Imbrie's "shillelagh." (The word was Seymour's; the State Department identified the device as a blackjack.) Unharmed, the Americans momentarily escaped in their carriage.<sup>3</sup>

The mob caught up with them when the carriage was detained by a policeman outside the main barracks of the Pahlavi regiment of the Cossack Brigade, the

most important military force in Iran. Prime Minister Reza Khan Pahlavi was the Cossack commander. Here the crowd was joined by many soldiers, who pulled Imbrie to the street and beat him. Seymour was attacked on the Cossack parade ground. Despite the presence of many police officers—the main Tehran police headquarters was across the street—both Imbrie and Seymour were very seriously injured before they were finally rescued by the police. In explanation of their timidity, police officials later admitted that they were afraid of the Cossacks, who were the real authority in Tehran, and that they were under orders not to interfere in anti-Bahai disturbances. There were about 2,000 rioters.<sup>4</sup>

Imbrie and Seymour were attacked a third time as they lay helpless in a hospital inside the police headquarters. Seymour survived, perhaps because he already looked dead. Mrs. Katherine Gillespie Imbrie preferred to believe that the mob passed him by because his naked body displayed “certain physical appearances [which] gave evidence that Seymour might be a Mohammedan.”<sup>5</sup> Imbrie received fatal blows. None of the more than 130 wounds, caused mostly by stones, sticks, and paving tiles, was alone sufficient to cause death—including the saber cut that flayed Imbrie’s scalp to the bone. His body could not withstand the shock, however, of what the attending physician described as “the most brutal assault that I have ever known.” Conscious to the end, Imbrie expired about 3:00 P.M., about four hours after the attack began.<sup>6</sup>

This murder was instrumental in Reza Khan’s consolidation of power in Iran. In the view of the British Military Attaché, Colonel W. A. K. Fraser, “The event gave him . . . the excuse for declaring martial law and a censorship of the Press. . . . Numerous arrests have been made, chiefly of political opponents of the Prime Minister.”<sup>7</sup> The American view was even stronger. According to Major Sherman Miles, a United States Army General Staff officer sent to Tehran to investigate, the murder was deliberate. Miles concluded that the anti-Bahai rioting in Tehran was intended by the Iranian government to end in the death of a foreigner. Reza Khan wanted a foreigner to die “so that he could declare martial law and check the power of the Mullahs.”<sup>8</sup>

#### IMBRIE’S CAREER

The man who thus died was not an ordinary American diplomat; he was a spy-adventurer. Imbrie had trained for the law at George Washington and Yale Universities, but he had been bored by its practice. After escaping briefly to a Congo expedition in 1911, he joined the French Army as an ambulance driver when the Great War broke out. He served at Verdun and on the Salonika front before leaving in 1917 to join the American Foreign Service as a special consular agent in Petrograd.<sup>9</sup>

In Russia he was loud and violent in defense of American interests. According to a *New York Times* account,<sup>10</sup> he had beaten with his walking stick on the desk of Ouritsky, the Petrograd head of the Cheka (the Soviet secret police). He became a notorious anti-Bolshevik. He distinguished himself by acquiring for the State Department a set of documents, subsequently proven to be forgeries, that purported to demonstrate that the Bolshevik government took orders from

Berlin. After he was expelled from Soviet territory, he went to Viborg, Finland, in March 1919 to establish and operate "a reconnaissance service for investigation in Soviet Russia." He continued until June 1920, leaving after his Finnish cover was blown.<sup>11</sup>

In 1920 the Department sent him to Istanbul, to work with General Wrangel's White Army in the Crimea. Before Imbrie arrived, however, Wrangel had been defeated and Imbrie was forced to remain in Istanbul, where he found little to occupy his time. His requests to be sent back to Finland or to Bessarabia to operate against the Soviets were denied.<sup>12</sup>

Instead, he was assigned in February 1922 to be a special consular agent with the Turkish Nationalist forces in Anatolia. His mission was to establish American diplomatic and commercial influence, and "he succeeded in gaining the confidence and good will of the Angora [Ankara] leaders in an unusual measure," demonstrating "exceptional capacity for dealing with perplexing and perhaps dangerous situations in out of the way places." According to Admiral Colby M. Chester, "Mr. Imbrie did more to secure the success of this enterprise [the Chester Project] than any other official."<sup>13</sup> This success was achieved at the cost of offending grecophiles.

In July 1923 Imbrie was recalled to Washington to answer charges,<sup>14</sup> most notably that he had endangered the life of Louise Bryant, widow of John Reed and wife of William Bullitt, by denouncing her to the Turks as a Bolshevik.<sup>15</sup> After cooling his heels for some time, he was assigned to Tabriz, Iran, to reopen a consulate and to establish an information network on the Soviet Union. Temporarily he was assigned to Tehran, to replace Consul Bernard Gotlieb, who was on home leave.<sup>16</sup> He had barely arrived when he was killed.

The State Department understood that it was gambling when it sent Imbrie to Iran. "Of course in sending a man of Imbrie's rather impetuous disposition to far away countries we are taking a certain risk," wrote Allen Dulles, on September 19, 1923. "The only question is as to whether the advantages to be gained would justify this risk. I am rather inclined to think they would."<sup>17</sup> The gamble failed; Imbrie's impetuosity contributed to his death.<sup>18</sup>

Naturally, in view of his anti-Soviet background, the question of Communist complicity in the attack on Imbrie was raised. Despite accounts that the Bolsheviks had put a \$40,000 (gold) price on his head, the State Department could find no evidence of Bolshevik culpability.<sup>19</sup> All the evidence pointed solely to Iranian responsibility, abetted by Imbrie's bad judgment.

#### UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT REACTION

The official American reaction to Imbrie's murder was very harsh and very concerned to maintain U.S. prestige. The American government insisted on speedy prosecution, and it intervened in the process to ensure that individuals it believed to be guilty were punished. When the United States believed the Iranian court-martial to be whitewashing the military, the American Chargé protested to the Iranian Foreign Minister, and Major Miles tongue-lashed the Iranian Prime

Minister. When the United States believed an Iranian informant to be in danger of reprisal, it intervened in his behalf.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of these efforts, about 20 guilty verdicts were delivered. Three boys were condemned to death: Mortaza (age 19), a Cossack Private; 'Ali Reshti (age 14), a civilian camel driver; and Sayyid Husain (age 17), a mullah who claimed descent from the Prophet. After delaying action until fall, the Iranian government finally executed Mortaza—for breach of military discipline. The government then announced the commutation of 'Ali's and Husain's sentences to life in prison. U.S. protests, including a calculated display of bad temper by Dulles to the Iranian chargé, succeeded in getting the death sentences reinstated. Both boys were shot in the presence of American government representatives. U.S. Chargé Wallace Murray refused pleas for mercy.<sup>21</sup>

In addition to insisting on blood punishment, the United States insisted that Iran pay blood money. Mrs. Imbrie was given \$60,000 in compensation for the loss of her husband. She was not satisfied and for years tried to get additional funds. The State Department believed that \$60,000 was appropriate, given its study of precedents, but Congress relented in 1926 and voted her an additional \$25,000.<sup>22</sup>

Seymour was given \$3,000 in compensation for his injuries, an amount that barely covered his lost wages and transportation costs home. The State Department refused to discuss any liability for his having been endangered by Consul Imbrie while in custody.<sup>23</sup>

The U.S. Government received \$110,000 in payment for some of its expenses in the transport of Imbrie's body to Washington by the U.S.S. *Trenton*, the newest ship in the American fleet. Chargé Murray suggested that this money be used to establish a scholarship fund for Iranian students in the United States, after the model of the Boxer Rebellion indemnity. The State Department announced that this would be done, but the fund was never established.<sup>24</sup>

The United States also insisted that Imbrie's body be treated with full military honors en route out of the country. American authorities accompanied the body to ensure that Iranian Army and civil officials paid proper respects to Imbrie's remains.<sup>25</sup>

At the time this occurred, U.S. officials privately expressed the opinion that Iran was lucky that it had been the American consul who had been killed and not the British consul. British reaction, Americans assumed, would have been much harsher. They seemed to be proved wrong, however, when on October 27, 1924, a British subject named Cox, an "ex-NCO of the Somersets and of the South Persia Rifles, who settled down in Shiraz after his demobilization as a garage proprietor," was killed on the Shiraz-Bushire road by Iranian Gendarmes under circumstances suggesting murder. Britain, concerned with larger questions of security in the oil fields, raised no protest.<sup>26</sup>

#### RECENT IRANIAN HISTORY

Although this episode has mostly faded from Iranian and American consciousness, it appears to have been of importance both in Iranian history and in

the history of American relations with Iran. Imbrie was caught in civil violence whose origins were very old.

Since the Safavid dynasty had transformed Iran into a Shi'ci state in the sixteenth century, Iranian public consciousness had largely identified Iran with Shi'ci Islam.<sup>27</sup> Some Shi'ci theologians saw secular authority as a usurpation from the legitimate authority of the hidden Imam. In Qajar times (since the early nineteenth century) the ulama had gradually put themselves forward as the protectors of the people against the tyranny of the shahs and of other secular authorities. This clerical-civil rivalry, along with hostility toward foreign influence, had been a major component in the development of the Iranian revolutionary movement, notably in the Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892 and in the Constitutional period of 1905-1911. The clergy expressed hostility toward foreign influence, which seemed to dominate the shahs, and they succeeded in mobilizing mass support behind national ideas. The British tobacco monopoly was quashed by Nasir al-Din Shah and a Constitution was accepted by Muzaffar al-Din Shah largely due to clerically supported mass urban demonstrations, against which the government was powerless.<sup>28</sup>

The reality of increasing foreign control could not be countered by Iranian clerical action, and during the First World War, Iran was a battlefield for Turkish, Russian, British, and German forces. After the war only the British remained, and in 1919 London attempted to impose a protectorate. Iranian public opinion was extremely hostile, however, and the Iranian parliament (*Majlis*) refused to ratify the treaty.<sup>29</sup>

#### EARLY IRANIAN-AMERICAN RELATIONS

Other than the Protestant missionaries who had established schools and hospitals a half-century before the United States actually established diplomatic relations with Iran, there was little American interest in Iran before World War II.<sup>30</sup> Iran, however, was interested in relations with America. Since the early nineteenth century, Iranian foreign policy had been dominated by the reality of the imperialist threats from Russia and from Britain, and since the Napoleonic wars Iran had sought to balance the power of these two imperialist rivals by drawing a third great power into the struggle. France, Germany, and the United States have been such third powers.<sup>31</sup>

During the Iranian Constitutional Revolution (1905-1911) there were two private American involvements of consequence. Howard Baskerville, a young Princeton graduate and a teacher in the Presbyterian mission school in Tabriz, martyred himself for the Iranian Constitutional cause, dying in the defense of besieged Tabriz.<sup>32</sup>

On a more substantive level, the Majlis in 1911 hired Morgan Shuster to be Controller General of the Iranian Treasury. Although Shuster was engaged as a private citizen, he had been recommended by the State Department and his mission was therefore regarded as quasi-official by the Iranian revolutionaries. Within a few months Shuster's success at collecting taxes and regularizing the distribution of revenue had (1) alienated large numbers of wealthy Iranians,

(2) given the Majlis hope that it would be able to organize the country financially, and (3) angered the Russians by using an anti-Russian British officer as head of the Treasury Gendarmerie to collect taxes in all of Iran, including the large sphere given to Russia in the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention. Supported by their British allies, the Russians demanded Shuster's resignation. He was forced out of Iran at the end of 1911.<sup>33</sup>

After World War I, the United States again allowed itself to be drawn into Iranian affairs. In 1919, the State Department protested against British efforts to impose a protectorate.<sup>34</sup> Perhaps because this was virtually Iran's only foreign diplomatic support, the Tehran government again turned to America. After Tehran refused the British financial advisors proposed in the abortive 1919 treaty, the Iranian Minister in Washington, Husain Ala, suggested a renewal of the Shuster mission. Shuster himself refused reappointment, but on his advice in 1922 Iran hired Arthur C. Millspaugh, the State Department's petroleum advisor.<sup>35</sup> Millspaugh was officially regarded by the State Department to be a private citizen, but Iran viewed his mission as quasi-official.

#### THE EMERGENCE OF REZA KHAN

In 1921 a coup had brought the pro-British Zia al-Din Tabatabai in as Prime Minister. The military force behind the coup was led by Cossack Colonel Reza Khan from British-occupied Qazvin. Many contemporary observers assumed that Britain, having failed to impose a protectorate, had found another way to dominate the Iranian government, in order to protect Britain's imperial interests in the south.<sup>36</sup>

Although Britain publicly maintained that the coup was not a British affair,<sup>37</sup> it seems to have been.<sup>38</sup> Reza Khan had been personally selected by General Edmund Ironside, commander of British forces in Iran, to command the Cossack Brigade after its Russian officers had been removed by the British. Ironside encouraged Reza to seize control in Tehran, and the details of the affair were planned in coordination with Lieutenant Colonel H. Smyth, the British officer in charge of "the affairs of the Cossack Brigade,"<sup>39</sup> and Walter Alexander Smart, the Oriental Secretary of the British Legation. The British Minister, Herman Cameron Norman, claimed to have had no advance knowledge of the coup. However, Norman had encouraged Smyth to send Reza with a troop of Cossacks to Tehran to replace the 600 unruly Cossacks already there.<sup>40</sup> After the coup, Norman urged his government to support the new regime, which he characterized as being "hailed with utmost satisfaction . . . as the most favourable to British interests which could possibly have arisen."<sup>41</sup> In his diary Ironside observed, "I fancy that everybody thinks that I engineered the *coup d'état*. I suppose I did, strictly speaking."<sup>42</sup>

There is no conclusive proof of higher British involvement, but the events have always encouraged Iranian belief that the British government was responsible for the coup. In this regard it is curious indeed that, within a short time and apparently on the explicit instructions of Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, three of the highest-ranking British officials in Iran—Norman, Councillor of Legation

Reginald Bridgeman, and Military Attaché General W. E. R. Dickson—were all forced to retire. All three men had questioned Curzon's conduct of policy in Iran. Dickson in particular had publicly made known his disapproval of British involvement in the coup. All three men were quickly removed from the scene.<sup>43</sup>

The continuing policy debate over Iran at the Foreign Office and in the Tehran Legation strongly suggests, however, that the British government had no clear policy toward Iran in 1921. Not until Reza had disposed of all significant rivals to power in late 1924 did the Foreign Office decide to deal with him unequivocally.<sup>44</sup>

After the coup, Reza Khan rose to dominate Iran. He became successively Commander of the Armed Forces (Sardar Sepah), Minister of War, Prime Minister (in 1923), and Shah (in 1925). He eliminated rivals from positions of power; Zia and many other early associates were forced into exile, or worse. He suppressed rival military forces: The Gendarmerie was merged with the Cossacks into a new Army, rival nationalist leaders were subdued, and the independence of the tribes was crushed. Reza's dependence on British money was lessened by the engagement of an American financial mission under Arthur C. Millspaugh, which collected taxes, restructured the revenue system, and ensured the regular payment of government personnel.<sup>45</sup>

#### THE MILLSPAUGH MISSION

During the early years of the Millspaugh mission (1922–1927), the United States became deeply involved in Iranian affairs. Millspaugh was arrogant, tactless, and pro-Pahlavi. As a critical Briton observed, “Dr. Millspaugh is, perhaps, no diplomat, nor does his report indicate any latent talent for literature. ‘The Americans have no political purposes whatsoever,’ he says, yet he comes out openly in favor of Sardar Sepah as the only possible ruler of the country.”<sup>46</sup> The American financial advisors nevertheless did regularize the collection of Iranian government revenue, and they did succeed in controlling government expenditure. This was achieved at great cost to Iran, however. In the words of British Chargé Harold Nicolson, “The American Mission, while enriching the Persian Government, have impoverished Persia. The taxation levied is uneconomic; the purchasing power of the country has generally declined.”<sup>47</sup> The success of Millspaugh's advice to the Iranian Treasury was essential to Reza Khan's consolidation of power, and the U.S. thus helped to lay the foundations of the Pahlavi Monarchy.<sup>48</sup>

#### A FAILED REPUBLIC

In his rise to power Reza made one major misstep. In March 1924, attempting to follow the model of Turkey, Reza tried to depose the Qajar dynasty and to create a republic with himself as president. He assumed that, because he had carefully supervised the Majlis elections, the Parliament would vote enabling legislation. Instead, he faced a determined clerical-led opposition: Sayyid Hasan Modarres, who had been imprisoned by Reza at the time of the 1921 coup, led



the resistance in the Majlis, and many mullahs in Tehran led mass demonstrations against the republic. Reza capitulated. He withdrew the legislation from the Majlis, went to Qom to confer with the religious leaders, and announced his agreement that a republic was contrary to Islam.<sup>49</sup>

In the next several months there were many suggestions that Reza had lost his grip and that he would soon be forced from office. The following events stand out:

1. The American-run Treasury took steps to restrict the amount of government revenue Reza Khan could spend on the army. Millspaugh had actually delivered an ultimatum on July 17, 1924. This potentially threatened Reza's monopoly of force within the government.<sup>50</sup>

2. Sheikh Khazal of Khuzistan, a notorious British protégé and the chief military force in the oil-producing province, began to talk of independence. Not only would the independence of "Arabistan" have been a blow to Iranian integrity, it would also have cut off oil revenues just as the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC) was beginning to pay royalties.<sup>51</sup>

3. Attempts faltered to break the British oil monopoly and to gain a massive American loan. A contract with Standard Oil for a concession in the north of Iran was destroyed by APOC insistence on a 50% share of Standard operations in Iran as the price for transit rights across the territory of the British concession (the entire southern two-thirds of the country). A contract with Sinclair Oil Company for a northern concession, which might have marketed Iranian oil through Soviet territory, was stalled in the Majlis. The election of Modarres as chairman of the Majlis Oil Commission suggested that Reza's opponents were in a position to deny him independent sources of revenue.<sup>52</sup>

4. Mass demonstrations led by clergy denouncing the tyranny of the government were permitted in the streets of Tehran, unhindered by the army or the police. "Opinion in diplomatic circles here and among residents of experience is practically unanimous that Sardar Sepah's influence is waning," the British Legation reported on July 1, 1924. After Mir Zadeh Eshqi, an anti-Pahlavi poet and journalist, was murdered, 30,000 mourners (at a time when Tehran had only about 150,000 inhabitants) heard the Prime Minister denounced as "a murderer and assassin and the oppressor of the people."<sup>53</sup> The impotence of the government was noted in the press, and army officers chafed at Reza's weakness.<sup>54</sup>

In an attempt to divert popular opinion from its weakness, the government seems to have encouraged anti-Bahai violence. The Bahai faith, which began in Iran in the mid-nineteenth century, frequently had been the object of popular and governmental attack. Muslims believe the faith to be a heretical break-off from Islam, and consequently Bahais are not accorded the toleration allowed Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. The Bahai faith has also converted many Muslims, which helps to account for the violence of clerical anti-Bahai rhetoric; in Islam apostasy is forbidden and is punishable by death. Bahais also have been associated in the Iranian mind with foreign influence, in part because the Bahais were among the first to adopt Western styles of dress. The faith explicitly encourages scientific innovation. After the Bahai faith spread in the West, especially in America, there were many contacts between Western Bahais and their Iranian coreligionists. Bahais have been very prominent among the Iranian associates of foreigners, including Americans. For all these reasons Iranian

xenophobia has more than once taken the form of anti-Bahai rioting. Such violence was rampant in Tehran in the weeks before Imbrie was killed.<sup>55</sup>

Indeed, Imbrie himself observed and intervened in the rioting. He believed that the government was encouraging the anti-Bahai disturbances as a means of diverting public attention from its failures. In Imbrie's own words, "At every teahouse a Mullah harranged [sic] the crowd. Mobs, fired by oratory and hashish, swarmed through the streets, unhindered by the Police, crying against the Bahaists."<sup>56</sup> When two American Bahai medical missionaries (Susan I. Moody, M.D., and Elizabeth H. Steward, R.N.) drew the attention of the crowds in mid-July, Imbrie requested police protection for them, which was quickly provided.<sup>57</sup> There is no suggestion in the diplomatic record that in so doing he called fatal attention to himself, although a Bahai account now asserts that "any American in Iran was automatically assumed by the populace to be a Bahai."<sup>58</sup> Imbrie's curiosity thus having been piqued, his presence at the *saqqa-khaneh* on the 18th does seem understandable, if reckless.<sup>59</sup>

#### CONSOLIDATION OF PAHLAVI POWER

Reza Khan used Imbrie's death as a pretext to take action that helped him to consolidate his power in Tehran. He immediately declared martial law and arrested his political opponents. Several opposition editors, who had escaped this dragnet because they had previously taken refuge (*bast*) in the Majlis to protest against alleged government complicity in the murder of Eshqi, openly accused Reza of using Imbrie's murder to cover illegal action. They suggested that Reza had plotted for violence against a foreigner so that foreign powers would applaud his subsequent steps to strengthen control.<sup>60</sup> Circumstantial evidence suggests that their accusation may have been well founded, for immediately following Imbrie's murder the Iranian government muzzled the opposition press, stopped street demonstrations, strengthened discipline in the army, and curbed the clergy. Westerners applauded Reza Khan's restoration of order, explicitly rejecting any Islamic alternative to military justice.<sup>61</sup>

Reza also took advantage of Imbrie's murder to bend Millspaugh and the American Treasury officials to his will. As the Imbrie dispute developed, Washington warned Millspaugh that "for the United States and for the Legation it is of paramount importance that adjustment regarding murder of Vice Consul Imbrie should be reached without delay. It is not the wish of the Department that the raising of any other question should become an obstacle to that adjustment."<sup>62</sup> The United States thus implicitly encouraged Reza's dictatorship as a price that had to be paid for a satisfactory settlement of the Imbrie dispute.<sup>63</sup> Following the intervention of the State Department, the American-run Iranian Treasury met Reza's minimum demands.<sup>64</sup>

The northern oil concession stalemate was not broken, however. According to official American sources, the Imbrie murder caused the termination of the Sinclair contract.<sup>65</sup> That may be, but it is also true that the Teapot Dome scandal made it difficult for Sinclair to raise the Iranian loan that was a

condition of the contract, and that the Soviet government was no longer sure that it wanted an American company extracting oil from Iranian territory adjacent to its borders.<sup>66</sup> Furthermore, Iranian resistance to Sinclair's overtures also stiffened, as Reza's "recently increased autocratic methods" raised skepticism in the Majlis "as to whether any advantages would really accrue to the country were a loan to be negotiated."<sup>67</sup> In any case, the U.S. government appeared more interested in asserting its prestige during the Imbrie dispute than in pursuing any specific interests.

With the ending of the Iran-U.S. dispute by the execution of 'Ali and Husain on November 2, 1924, Reza was free to leave the capital city. He had support from the foreign legations, he had secured financing for the army, he had reestablished discipline in the Cossack Brigade, and by executing Sayyid Husain—a mullah—he had demonstrated his domination over the clergy. He left Tehran in early November in order to subdue Sheikh Khazal of Khuzistan. By destroying Khazal's autonomy, in the course of the next months' campaign, he completed the unification of Iran and ensured that his government would get all the APOC royalties.<sup>68</sup>

From his triumph in the south, Reza went on pilgrimage to the Shi'ī shrines at Najaf and Karbala in adjacent Iraq. One of the strengths of the Shi'ī ulama in their rivalry with the Iranian Shahs had always been that, because their leaders resided in Iraq, they were beyond the temporal control of the Iranian government. By making this pilgrimage, Reza emphasized that he had achieved complete control in Iran. By receiving him, the *mujtahids* and the British recognized his authority. Reza Khan consequently returned to Tehran in triumph: His control over Iran was complete, and the Peacock Throne was practically his for the taking.<sup>69</sup>

While the Imbrie affair was not the only critical event in Reza's seizure of total power in Iran, it came at a critical moment in his rise. Reza may well have set in motion some of the forces that led to the fatal events of July 18, 1924; certainly he used the murder to his best advantage.

#### IMBRIE AND AMERICAN INVOLVEMENT IN IRAN

During the years immediately preceding Imbrie's murder there was an expansion of American participation in Iranian affairs. The two abortive American oil concessions in the north of Iran were an important feature of this development. As the voluminous files on this matter in the American diplomatic archives suggest, had either of these proposals come into effect, there might have been a vast increase in American involvement in Iran, comparable, perhaps, to what occurred after the Second World War. There would have been, in any case, an immediate infusion of American money into Iranian government coffers. It is clear that Millspaugh and the U.S. government favored this development, a possibility postponed by Imbrie's death.<sup>70</sup>

Circumstantial evidence suggests that Imbrie's assignment to Iran was a key part of this proposed expansion of American involvement. Assistance to com-

mercial enterprises is a normal consular duty, of course, and Imbrie had assisted in the negotiation of the Chester concession in Turkey. Further, the Sinclair proposal was based on cooperation with the Soviet Union, and Imbrie was a Soviet expert. In addition, Imbrie was on close terms with the Sinclair representative in Tehran, Ralph H. Soper (who some, including Mrs. Imbrie, believed to have been the intended victim of the mob). Finally, the termination of the concession project because of Imbrie's death suggests that his assignment to Iran had been important to the project: no Imbrie, no concession.<sup>71</sup> After 1924, American involvement was sharply reduced, with "American interests in Persia . . . center[ed] largely around the activities of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions."<sup>72</sup>

Imbrie's assignment to Iran also had marked the emergence of an American policy toward Iran that was concerned more with the Soviet Union than with Iran. Clearly Imbrie was a man obsessed by the Bolshevik threat, and the Department of State had sent him to an area bordering the Soviet Union in order to collect information about the Soviets. American policy in Iran, including both the Millspaugh mission and the oil projects, favored the emergence of Reza Khan—in the hope that he would be able to stiffen Iranian resistance to Communist expansion. Secondarily the United States hoped that Reza would be able to safeguard the interests of the United States in Iran and encourage the development of a modern, Western-style economy and society.<sup>73</sup> Motives were mixed, but American observations of Iran were skewed by a world view that increasingly saw events in the context of a great struggle with the Red menace. Imbrie's death temporarily reduced American involvement in Iran, but it did not change a view of the world that was to prevail when the United States next became enmeshed in Iranian affairs.

#### CONCLUSIONS

Despite the nominal harshness of the American response to the Imbrie killing, the United States continued to support Reza Khan's consolidation of power. The United States wanted Iran to recognize its strength and majesty, which had been affronted by the murder of its consul. Only Reza seemed to be in a position to do this. The United States was extraordinarily restrained in its public acceptance of the official Iranian explanations of what had occurred.<sup>74</sup> Notwithstanding an outward show of insistence that justice be done, the State Department in fact seemed most concerned to maintain American prestige (indeed, "justice" seems almost to have been a code word for "prestige" in State Department usage).

The Department demanded that Millspaugh give way in his dispute with Reza over the amount of money available to the army,<sup>75</sup> knowing that this would enable Reza to augment his power. "Whatever justice we obtain must come from him through his military courts," the Legation reasoned.<sup>76</sup> U.S. Chargé Murray was quite clear, after meeting with Modarres, that Reza Khan was the only alternative to fanaticism led by a "senile old man."<sup>77</sup> Suspecting that Reza personally was responsible for the violence that had led to Imbrie's death, as

Major Miles had reported after his investigation, the United States nevertheless approved Reza Khan's "desire to create a disciplined armed force in this country and not to be the commander of a horde of tribesmen."<sup>78</sup> Consequently, the United States acted as if Reza's regime was the best hope for American interests and prestige in Iran and effectively closed its consciousness to any possible Pahlavi complicity in the murder of a representative of the United States government.

The Imbrie affair also accelerated a 1924 United States policy shift in Iran from rivalry with Great Britain toward cooperation. After the war, the United States had opposed much of British policy in Iran, especially the proposed protectorate and the exclusive control of Iranian oil. In return, the British opposed the American oil initiatives. There had been a real Anglo-American rivalry in Iran: The British Legation in Tehran believed that Murray "hardly takes the trouble to conceal his anglophobia."<sup>79</sup> On reflection, British Minister Sir Percy Loraine considered the entire U.S. Legation to be "very nervous of being thought pro-British." Loraine feared that independent American involvement in Iran might give Iran "another fatal chance of playing off one Great Power against another, perhaps even of embroiling them. . . . Anglo-American cooperation might save Persia from herself and from Russia," he continued, but "Anglo-American rivalry destroys [the] last hope of salvation."<sup>80</sup>

After the murder of Imbrie, however, American policy in Iran moved closely into alignment with that of Great Britain. American unwillingness to accept Modarres as a legitimate leader of Iranian opinion, for example, echoed the British judgment: "The Mujtahid Mudarres," wrote British Chargé Esmond Ovey, is "a bigoted and unwashed Sayyid, the Diogenes of the Majlis, who lives in a hovel and ostentatiously refuses money for himself."<sup>81</sup> As British Assistant Undersecretary William G. Tyrrell put it on November 12, 1924, "America is being educated in Eastern matters—which is to the good—especially as regards ourselves."<sup>82</sup> In Iran after 1924, U.S. policy usually deferred to a British lead.

One of the worst-founded conclusions drawn by the United States from the Imbrie affair was the confirmation it perceived for its prejudices about Iran (and other parts of "the Orient"). Iranians were expected to lie. According to Elgin Groseclose, "approbation of deceit permeates Persian literature."<sup>83</sup> James Morier's *Hajji Baba*,<sup>84</sup> which glorified roguish behavior, was a major source for Americans in Iran—it may have been Imbrie's most significant training for his last post. Murray believed that "the Persian is venal. His promises and lip service can be bought for a song."<sup>85</sup> Dulles expressed the belief, in a memorandum for Secretary of State Hughes and Undersecretary Grew on October 18, 1924, that "Morteza's execution was intended more to be a sop to this government than a real effort to execute a guilty person," and therefore he pressed for more executions.<sup>86</sup> It did not matter that 'Ali and Husain were young, according to an unsigned NEA memorandum, because "human life as such is not greatly valued by orientals."<sup>87</sup>

This widely believed cliché is a species of self-fulfilling prophecy. By categorizing the residents of Iran as "orientals" who do not value "human life as such," the men of the State Department were asserting that Iranians were lesser

creatures, fit to be manipulated and brutalized.<sup>88</sup> Such an ethnocentric basis for observing Iran may have seriously skewed American perceptions of reality and provided an unrealistic basis for American foreign policy.

The Imbrie affair also may have seriously skewed Iran's perception of the United States. The American response to Imbrie's murder was intended to make Iran see that the United States of America was powerful and majestic, that the United States insisted on justice, and that justice had to be swift and harsh. As Allen Dulles put it to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on February 12, 1926, "When you are dealing with a government like Persia . . . if you ask them to execute a Moslem for the death of a Christian . . . if they do it, you accomplish more for the prestige of your country than if they paid a million."<sup>89</sup>

What Iran perceived may have been quite different. Despite strong evidence of high-level military involvement in the riot that led to Imbrie's death, the United States did not insist on punishment of high-ranking officers, nor did it distance itself from a prime minister who also had been implicated. Some enlisted men were punished harshly, but incompetent and culpable officers were hardly reprimanded. Some were even promoted. The United States had reason to be critical of Reza, but it chose to see in him the only possible source of "justice." Similarly, the only civilians punished were very young. Of course the United States took care to ensure that both of the condemned boys had passed puberty and that there was no serious reason in Muslim law why they should not be killed.<sup>90</sup> Still, the United States insisted on the shooting of two boys, aged 14 and 17, on the action of a court-martial conducted by officers who had failed to prevent the murder of Imbrie by men under their command. The executions of 'Ali and Husain were just as much sops to U.S. opinion as had been that of Mortaza. Under these circumstances, Iran reasonably could conclude that the United States, although a great power, could be manipulated, and that, despite sanctimonious talk about justice, the United States winked at abuse of power.

Iranian-American relations were relatively quiescent after 1924, until the Second World War again brought the U.S. into Iranian affairs. When the United States and Iran then became vitally concerned with each other, their mutual understandings and misunderstandings—based in part on the Imbrie affair—would form the basis for their subsequent relations. The Imbrie episode alone did not set the pattern for future American relations with Iran, but it sharply illustrates patterns that already existed, patterns that were reinforced in 1924, and that were to be very important after 1941. In its view of Iran, America supported Pahlavi militarism; it refused to see the Shi'ci clergy as legitimate leaders of Iranian national opinion, it was preoccupied by concern with Soviet intentions, and it was increasingly willing to defer to British views and experience. In retrospect, these patterns do not seem to have provided a sound foundation for a healthy American relationship with Iran.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Research for this paper was undertaken with materials preserved by the National Archives and Records Service, Washington, D.C. Among the more important papers are Record Group 59, State Department records pertaining to Iran (records for the period before 1930 are on microfilm; records for the period 1930–1949 are at the National Archives Building, Washington); RG 59, file 123Im1, the personnel record of Robert W. Imbrie; and RG 84, the post records of the Iran Legation and Embassy and of the consulates. Also consulted were the archives of the British Foreign Office (at the Public Record Office, Kew; henceforth FO), the Archives of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (at the Quai d'Orsay; henceforth QO), the records of the Presbyterian mission in Iran (at the Presbyterian Historical Society, Philadelphia), and the papers of Allen W. Dulles (at the Seeley G. Mudd Library, Princeton).

<sup>2</sup>John Oliver LaGorce, Vice President of the National Geographic Society, denied that Imbrie would have caused offense to Iranians, *New York Times*, August 4, 1924. The NGS no longer has any record of the incident. Arthur C. Millspaugh, in *The American Task in Persia* (New York, 1925), pp. 216 and 223, also cites Imbrie's photography as having incited the crowd. Despite much evidence that Iranians loved to be photographed, the collective memory of Americans in Tehran held that Imbrie was killed because he photographed a religious event. In the 1950s, the American Embassy routinely warned Americans not to photograph religious events, citing the Imbrie murder as evidence of what might happen (personal information of the author). Also note that Harold Nicolson, British Councillor of Legation in Tehran, 1925–1927, “had an ineradicable . . . view that Persians resent being photographed,” according to his wife, V. Sackville-West, *Twelve Days* (London, 1928), pp. 99–100. On Seymour, see RG 59, 391.1113—Hall, J. N.

<sup>3</sup>Statement of Melvin Seymour, RG 59, 123Im1, 218; also see FO 371, 10155/E6607, Ovey, Tehran, July 31, 1924; and E6707, Ovey, Tehran, July 19, 1924.

<sup>4</sup>Depositions of witnesses contained in RG 59, 123Im1, 201, 218; FO 371, 10155/E6707, Ovey, Tehran, July 19, 1924.

<sup>5</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 255, letter of Katherine Gillespie Imbrie to Secretary of State Charles Evans Hughes, Tehran, August 14, 1924.

<sup>6</sup>Statement and autopsy report of Dr. Harry P. Packard, July 19–20, 1924, RG 59, 123Im1, 201.

<sup>7</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 290, August 31, 1924.

<sup>8</sup>FO 371, 10146/E7152, Tehran, August 1, 1924; Fraser preferred to believe that Reza's enemies had provoked the incident, but he was clear that there were “among the crowd individuals who had been directly incited to promote attacks on foreigners.”

<sup>9</sup>*New York Times*, July 20, 1924; Robert Whitney Imbrie, *Behind the Wheel of a War Ambulance* (New York, 1918); Katherine Imbrie, “Data Relating to the Assassination of . . . Robert Whitney Imbrie . . .” (N.P., 1939).

<sup>10</sup>September 7, 1924.

<sup>11</sup>RG 59, 125.972, 1–3, 20 (Imbrie's telegrams and dispatches from Viborg); see also RG 59, 861.00, 8852, in which Imbrie called for an external remedy to regenerate Russia, March 29, 1919, Dispatch #3; also see the minutes of Sir L. Oliphant, July 29, 1924, FO 371, 10155/E6504.

<sup>12</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 1–22; the British Government had reason to believe he had done “intelligence work in the Caucasus,” Oliphant, July 29, 1924, E6504.

<sup>13</sup>G. Bie Ravndal, Consul General, Istanbul, June 25, 1923, RG 59, 123Im1, 68; British accounts suggest that Imbrie's assignment was to combat Soviet influence at Ankara (“Mr. Dulles himself seems to regard the Kemal movement as a genuine national revival and therefore deserving of American support,” Geddes, Washington, August 18, 1922, Dispatch #966), and to pave the way for American economic penetration of Anatolia, Sir H. Rumbold, Dispatch 715. Imbrie was instrumental in Admiral Chester's attempts to obtain a concession from the Nationalist Government, RG 59, 123Im1, 121, letter of Colby M. Chester, Rear Admiral United States Navy, Retired, July 22, 1924; Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey, 1914–1924* (Baltimore, 1965), pp. 329–38, 344–48, and passim. John A. DeNovo, *American Interests and Policies in the Middle East, 1900–1939* (Minneapolis, 1963), pp. 210–28.

<sup>14</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 75.

<sup>15</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 70.

<sup>16</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 75b.

<sup>17</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 48; Dulles came to know Imbrie in Istanbul, where Dulles was aide to Admiral Mark Lambert Bristol, U.S. High Commissioner to Turkey. As Director of Central Intelligence (1953–1961), Dulles was instrumental in the coup that overthrew the Iranian Government of Muhammad Mossadeq and established the dictatorship of Muhammad Reza Shah Pahlavi.

<sup>18</sup>As Millsbaugh put it, "Had Major Imbrie been ordinarily discreet, he would not have been the incitement or the object of a mob attack. The mob did not seek him; he went under provocative appearances into a place and into conditions which had the elements of danger," *Task*, p. 223.

<sup>19</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 82, 142. The British government was informed that the Anglo-Persian Oil Company believed that "Mr. Imbrie was murdered at Bolshevik instigation," E6505.

<sup>20</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 157, 173, 183, 208, 249, 257, 264, 284, 315; testimony of Major Miles to the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, February 15, 1926, contained in box #1452.

<sup>21</sup>RG 59, 123IM1, 157, 169, 226, 239, 254, 264, 273, 278, 283, 283a, 291, 297, 306, 319, 332, 373, 396. Murray was Dulles's successor as chief of NEA; he was Ambassador to Iran during 1945–1946. The official U.S. government representative at the execution of Mortaza was the Legation translator, Allahyar Saleh, afterwards an important leader of the Iran Party, "the country's main secular nationalist organization" and a major part of Dr. Mossadeq's National Front; other early leaders of the Iran Party included Mehdi Bazargan and Karim Sanjabi; for this see Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran between Two Revolutions* (Princeton, 1982), pp. 188–92; Saleh was a member of several Mossadeq cabinets, and he was Ambassador to the United States in 1952–1953; his report on the execution is in RG 84, American Legation, Tehran, Confidential Correspondence, 1924–1925, October 2, 1924.

<sup>22</sup>House of Representatives, Report #985, 69th Congress, 1st session; RG 59, 123Im1, 518. Mrs. Imbrie had applied for \$40,000.

<sup>23</sup>RG 59, 391.113 Seymour, Melvin.

<sup>24</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 333, 352; *New York Times*, November 12, 1924. The additional money appropriated for Mrs. Imbrie came from this fund, RG 59, 123Im1, 518.

<sup>25</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 136, 165, 177, 180, 195, 209, 213, 264. The diplomatic archives preserve photographs of the several ceremonies held for the transfer of Imbrie's body to the United States. Imbrie is buried in Arlington National Cemetery; President Coolidge and Secretary of State Hughes attended the funeral, *New York Times*, September 30, 1924.

<sup>26</sup>RG 84, Murray, Tehran, November 6, 1924, Dispatch #726; Murray, Tehran, November 30, 1924, Dispatch #772; report of British Military Attaché Colonel W. A. K. Fraser, Tehran, November 1, 1924, FO 371, 10146/E10258.

<sup>27</sup>See, inter alia, Nikki R. Keddie, *Roots of Revolution* (New Haven, 1981), pp. 1–23; and Shahrough Akhavi, *Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran: Clergy-State Relations in the Pahlavi Period* (Albany, 1980), pp. 1–59.

<sup>28</sup>Keddie, *Roots*, pp. 24–78; Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran, 1785–1906* (Berkeley, 1969); Nikki R. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891–1892* (London, 1966); Michael M. J. Fischer, *Iran from Religious Dispute to Revolution* (Cambridge, 1980), pp. 1–180; Akhavi, *Religion*, pp. 1–59; Nikki R. Keddie, ed., *Religion and Politics in Iran: Shi'ism from Quietism to Revolution* (New Haven, 1983), pp. 1–124.

<sup>29</sup>Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864–1914: A Study in Imperialism* (New Haven, 1968); Christopher Sykes, *Wassmuss: The German Lawrence* (London, 1936); General Hassan Arfa, *Under Five Shahs* (London, 1964); George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran, 1918–1948: A Study in Big Power Rivalry* (Ithaca, 1949); Keddie, *Roots*, pp. 79ff.

<sup>30</sup>The records of this missionary activity are preserved at the Presbyterian Historical Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>31</sup>Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *The Foreign Policy of Iran: A Developing Nation in World Affairs, 1500–1941* (Charlottesville, 1966); Joseph Upton, *The History of Modern Iran: An Interpretation* (Cambridge, 1960); Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain*; W. Morgan Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia* (New York, 1912); Shahram Chubin and Sepehr Zabih, *The Foreign Relations of Iran* (Berkeley, 1974); Lenczowski, *Russia*; Rouhollah K. Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941–1973* (Charlottesville, 1974); Barry Rubin, *Paved with Good Intentions: The American Experience and Iran* (New York, 1980).

<sup>32</sup>On Baskerville, see RG 84, Tabriz Consulate, January 1906–November 1910; Baskerville was shot in the back while advancing toward the anti-Constitutional forces besieging Tabriz. An account of the episode by Rezazadeh Shafaq, one of Baskerville's students who subsequently became a leader



of the Iran Party and a member of the Majlis and of the Senate, is to be found in Ali Pasha Saleh, *Cultural Ties between Iran and the United States* (Tehran, 1976), pp. 311–28.

<sup>33</sup>Edward G. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909* (Cambridge, 1910), pp. 269 and passim; Rubin, *Paved*, pp. 10–11; Shuster, *Strangling*.

<sup>34</sup>*Foreign Relations of the United States*, 1919, Vol. II, pp. 700ff.

<sup>35</sup>Millspaugh, *Task*; *FRUS*, 1927, Vol. III, pp. 523ff.; RG 59, 891.00, 1302; also see RG 59, 891.6363 Standard Oil, 16, a memorandum by A. C. Millspaugh, December 17, 1920, which suggests that Millspaugh was intimately involved in the negotiations for a northern Iranian oil concession in exchange for an American loan.

<sup>36</sup>Keddie, *Roots*, pp. 79–93; Lenczowski, *Russia*; RG 84, Caldwell, Tehran, telegrams, February 22, 1921, and February 26, 1921.

<sup>37</sup>Even J. M. Balfour, whose *Recent Happenings in Persia* (Edinburgh, 1922) was the first British book published about the coup, and who was highly critical of Lord Curzon's policy in Iran, maintained that "the movement was not engineered either by or with the knowledge of the British Legation," p. 218.

<sup>38</sup>See, for example, Richard Ullman, *Anglo-Soviet Relations, 1917–1923*, Vol. III, *The Anglo-Soviet Accord* (Princeton, 1972), pp. 354–69, 383–89; and Lord Ironside, ed., *High Road to Command: The Diaries of Major General Sir Edmund Ironside, 1920–1922* (London, 1972).

<sup>39</sup>Ironside, p. 147.

<sup>40</sup>FO 371, 6403/E4926.

<sup>41</sup>FO 371, 6401/E2883.

<sup>42</sup>Ironside, p. 117.

<sup>43</sup>FO 371, 6427, file 787; FO 371, 10156/E6954; Harold Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase* (London, 1934), p. 144; *Foreign Office List*, 1923, 1926, 1927. Norman was retired at age 54; Bridgeman was 39. Dickson was alleged to be mentally unbalanced, but he was not permitted to remain in service even after his sanity ceased to be questioned. He had breached service etiquette by sharing his knowledge of British involvement in the coup with the American minister. All three men were retired on pensions. See also Emile Lesueur, *Les Anglais en Perse* (Paris, n.d.—accessioned to the British Museum July 29, 1922); Lesueur, a professor in the Law School in Tehran at the time of the coup, specifically cites Smart as the instigator of the coup, pp. 148–53.

<sup>44</sup>FO 371, 9024/E4612 (1923), and 10156/E9418 (1924) and passim. The role played by Sir Percy Loraine, British Minister in Tehran, in encouraging Reza Khan to believe that the British government regarded any action to depose the Qajars as purely an Iranian internal matter that London did not oppose, deserves investigation.

<sup>45</sup>Keddie, *Roots*, pp. 79–112; Donald Wilber, *Riza Shah Pahlavi: The Resurrection and Reconstruction of Iran* (Hicksville, 1975); Millspaugh, *Task*; Richard W. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran*, 2nd ed. (Pittsburgh, 1979).

<sup>46</sup>Ovey, Tehran, June 17, 1924, FO 371, 10128/E5861; on October 23, 1924, Ovey noted (E9753) that "the Americans set out on their quest to reform Persia financially and morally with an unwarranted optimism."

<sup>47</sup>RG 59, 891.51A; *FRUS*, 1927, Vol. III, pp. 547ff.; FO 371, 11498/E3779, Loraine, Tehran, May 25, 1926; E5058, Harold Nicolson, Tehran, August 14, 1926.

<sup>48</sup>This also met the needs of British policy; see FO 371, 11498/E3779, Loraine, Tehran, May 25, 1926, and FO 371, 11499/E6223, Oliphant, FO October 21, 1926, which noted that the success of the Millspaugh mission "might stand us in good stead," and that "Lord Curzon's wish for the success of the mission was brought out with considerable force."

<sup>49</sup>RG 84, Kornfeld, Tehran, March 18, 1924, Dispatch #422; Kornfeld, Tehran, March 23, 1924, Telegram #26; Kornfeld, Tehran, March 28, 1924, Dispatch #434; RG 59, 891.00, 1262, 1268. Mōdarres died in 1938, after having been imprisoned again by Reza Pahlavi in 1929. Iranian nationalist and religious opinion regards him as a martyr of the Pahlavi oppression, Keddie, *Roots*, pp. 93–94.

<sup>50</sup>RG 59, 891.51A, 175, 180, 198; *FRUS*, 1927, Vol. III, pp. 531–35; Peter Avery, *Modern Iran* (New York, 1965), p. 263.

<sup>51</sup>Keddie, *Roots*, p. 91; Cottam, *Nationalism*, pp. 111–14.

<sup>52</sup>Keddie, *Roots*, pp. 89–90; RG 59, 891.6363 Standard Oil, 327, 343, 366; RG 59, 891.00, 1260. Millspaugh reported on December 17, 1920, that "if he could tell the Persian Government that they could obtain a loan from the United States . . . there would be no doubt of the oil concession being

granted as well as other valuable concessions" (memorandum of conversation with the Persian Minister and the Councillor of Legation).

<sup>53</sup>RG 59, 891.00, 1297, Imbrie, Tehran, July 14, 1924; FO 371, 10145/E6283, Ovey, Tehran, July 1, 1924. The British Legation informed Whitehall that the most generally accepted rumor held Reza Khan responsible for the murder of Eshqi, July 18, 1924, FO 371, 10146/E6704.

<sup>54</sup>RG 84, Kornfeld, Tehran, April 22, 1924, Dispatch #466; June 14, 1924, Dispatch #550; June 16, 1924, Dispatch #551; June 29, 1924, Dispatch #575; July 9, 1924, Dispatch #586.

<sup>55</sup>Keddie, *Roots*, pp. 48–52; RG 59, 891.00, 1297, Imbrie, Tehran, July 14, 1924; RG 59, 123Im1, 203, 205. The British believed that "the Americans in Persia are usually looked upon as admirers of the Bahais," FO 371, 10155/E6515. According to diplomatic accounts, the anti-Bahai agitation was attributed both to enemies of the government and to Reza Khan, FO 371, 10146/E6704.

<sup>56</sup>RG 59, 891.00, 1297, Imbrie, Tehran, July 14, 1924, Dispatch #57. One should note the State Department's judgment of Imbrie as a reporter-writer: "His work falls down when it comes to sending in reports. He is not able to put his observations on paper," Dulles, memorandum, September 19, 1923, RG 59, 123G711, 48.

<sup>57</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 251. Susan Moody's obituary is in *Baha'i World*, 6 (1934–1936), 483–86.

<sup>58</sup>Moojan Momen, ed., *The Babi and Baha'i Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford, 1981), p. 462.

<sup>59</sup>Imbrie's decision to visit the site was so sudden that there was "no question of any premeditated assault," Ovey, Tehran, July 29, 1924, FO 371, 10156/E7101.

<sup>60</sup>RG 59, 891.00, 1298; also see the report of Major Miles to the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2, August 31, 1924, on board *Trenton*, RG 59, 123Im1, 290, which accepted this interpretation of the events leading up to Imbrie's murder; and Kornfeld, Tehran, September 29, 1924, RG 59, 891.00, 1229.

<sup>61</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 183, Kornfeld, Tehran, August 13, 1924: "The Prime Minister is a dictator whose power rests on his army. Whatever justice we obtain must come from him through his military courts. The only alternative is the Sheriat courts which in such a case as this would vindicate any Moslem regardless of evidence against him." See also Murray, Tehran, November 2, 1924, RG 59, 123Im1, 333; FO 371, 10156/E8508, Kerman, August 1–15, 1924, lauding the army as standing for law, order, and strong government. Also see Lucien Bonzan, French Minister at Tehran, August 21, 1924, QO, Perse, 18, pp. 223–24. Although British Minister Sir Percy Loraine reported approvingly on January 5, 1925, that Reza was "stronger and more popular than ever," FO 371, 10840/E104, as late as July 31, 1924, Chargé Ovey reported that Reza "had lost power, prestige and popularity." Ovey expected Reza to "essay a coup d'état," but expected "chaos" to result because of Reza's "universal unpopularity and the lessened hold he now has over his army," FO 371, 10146/E7105. Reza Khan, of course, also used the episode to strengthen his control over the army.

<sup>62</sup>Acting Secretary Grew to Kornfeld (for Millspaugh), July 30, 1924, *FRUS*, 1927, Vol. III, pp. 532ff.; on September 18, 1924, Murray "urgently advised Millspaugh to give way in his demands," RG 59, 891.51A, 191T.

<sup>63</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 183, Kornfeld, Tehran, August 13, 1924.

<sup>64</sup>RG 59, 891.51A, 205, Murray, Tehran, October 6, 1924; Murray chose to describe this as "a signal victory for Dr. Millspaugh." British accounts of the American Financial Mission are contained in FO 371, file 110/34 (1924).

<sup>65</sup>RG 59, 891.51, 351T *et seq.* Also see FO 371, file 44/34 (1924). Chargé Ovey reported that the oil question was "overshadowed by . . . the murder of Major Imbrie," September 12, 1924, E6282, to which the Foreign Office noted, "so ends another chapter in this tedious story of the northern oil concession," Mallet, January 1, 1925.

<sup>66</sup>DeNovo *American Interests*, pp. 283–86; Avery, *Modern Iran*, p. 258; Lenczowski, *Russia*, pp. 81–84; British Chargé Ovey believed that Standard Oil "probably instigated the Sinclair Oil scandal" in revenge for Sinclair's role in spoiling the Standard-APOC proposal for a northern oil concession, letter to Sir L. Oliphant, April 7, 1924, FO 371, 10126/E6282.

<sup>67</sup>Ovey, Tehran, September 12, 1924, FO 371, 10126/E6282. The Iranian Government still hoped for some sort of northern contract, however, and opened contacts with a French consortium, Bonzon, Tehran, November 6, 1924, QO, Perse, 50, pp. 87–93. Nothing came of this initiative.

<sup>68</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 380, 433. There had been considerable debate among British officials as to the best course for British policy. On May 5, 1923, Sir Percy Loraine had requested that Whitehall support Reza Khan, arguing that to oppose him meant the "gradual collapse of our position and

influence unless we uphold them and our friends by force." In response to this, on May 9, 1923, G. P. Churchill of the Foreign Office argued that "if Reza Khan cannot be made to see the folly of his present course [attempting to extend central government control over Khuzistan], it is possible for us to exert pressure upon him by withholding that financial assistance without which he will be utterly incapable of maintaining his army," FO 371, 9024/E4612. After the Imbrie murder, Whitehall still hoped that Sheikh Khazal could be maintained. The Foreign Office (Mallet) believed on October 29, 1924, that "If Reza Khan is forced by the U.S. Government to have the other two criminals executed, he will have considerable trouble with the mullahs." Whitehall hoped that "the prospect of strained relations with America will make Reza Khan more ready to agree to our mediation in his quarrel with the Shaikh of Mohammerah," FO 371, 10156/E9418. Events proved this analysis to be wishful thinking, and consequently Britain had little choice but to follow the policy advocated by Sir Percy Loraine, an "attitude of watchful inaction," FO 371, 10840/E278, January 17, 1925.

<sup>69</sup>Wilber, *Riza Shah*, pp. 89ff.; Avery, *Modern Iran*, p. 260; Keddie, *Roots*, p. 91.

<sup>70</sup>RG 59, 891.6363 Standard Oil, 16, Murray, Tehran, September 19, 1924, cited in Yonah Alexander and Allan Nanes, eds., *The United States and Iran: A Diplomatic History* (Frederick, Maryland, 1980), pp. 48ff.; letter of Sir Percy Loraine to Mr. L. Oliphant, December 17, 1923, FO 371, 10125/E544.

<sup>71</sup>"Assassinat du Consul américain et les pétroles persanes," Tehran, n.d., QO, Sér. E. Perse, Pétroles, 1923–1925, #50, pp. 70–72; this unsigned French Legation report suggested that Imbrie was working actively for the Sinclair interests, and that he was killed by those who wanted to prevent the ratification and exploitation of the Sinclair concession.

<sup>72</sup>RG 59, 891.00, 1596, August 28, 1934.

<sup>73</sup>See the letter of Secretary of State Hughes to Dr. Robert E. Speer, Secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., November 11, 1924, NE—123Im1, 317, Presbyterian Historical Society; also see FO 371, 10146/E9753, Ovey, Tehran, October 23, 1924.

<sup>74</sup>QO, Perse, Pétroles, 1923–1925, #50, pp. 70–72; the French wondered at the discipline of the American press, which of course was almost entirely dependent on the State Department for information.

<sup>75</sup>RG 59, 891.51A, 191T, September 18, 1924, and 205, October 6, 1924.

<sup>76</sup>Kornfeld, Tehran, August 13, 1924, RG 59, 123Im1, 183.

<sup>77</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 353, October 16, 1924.

<sup>78</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 290, August 31, 1924; 291, September 3, 1924.

<sup>79</sup>FO 371, 10128/E110, November 26, 1923.

<sup>80</sup>FO 371, 10125/E544, letter of Loraine to Oliphant, December 17, 1923; FO 371, 10144/E1121, February 24, 1924.

<sup>81</sup>FO 371, 10146/E7501, Ovey, Tehran, August 10, 1924.

<sup>82</sup>FO 371, 10128/E9348.

<sup>83</sup>*Introduction to Iran* (New York, 1947), p. 99.

<sup>84</sup>*The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan* (London, 1824, 1923).

<sup>85</sup>RG 59, Tehran, December 13, 1924, Dispatch #787.

<sup>86</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 397.

<sup>87</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 226.

<sup>88</sup>For an important critique of the "orientalist" tradition, see Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York, 1979).

<sup>89</sup>RG 59, 123Im1.

<sup>90</sup>RG 59, 123Im1, 239, 283, 313.