IX. REPORT TO LONDON

Roosevelt arrived in London the afternoon of 25 August. He had been smuggled out of Tehran in Naval Attache Eric Pollard's plane and picked up by a Military Air Transport Service (MATS) plane (the pilot and crew of which were not aware of his identity) at Bahrein. In London Roosevelt was met by Firth and taken to see Maj. General J. Alexander Sinclair and others in SIS that evening. From the very beginning it was made plain to him that SIS was grateful not only because of the success of the operation per se, but because of the effect its success had already had and would continue to have upon SIS's reputation and relations with its superiors. In turn he expressed gratitude for the fine support the station had received and recognition of the fact that such weaknesses as had existed in the support given us were attributable to the paucity of reporting from Tehran, which had resulted in a justifiable lack of hope both in London and Washington. Roosevelt went to some pains to explain the reason for the lack of reporting. He pointed out that if they had simply reported what they were doing, London and Washington would have thought they were crazy and told them to stop immediately; if they had reported the reasons why they felt justified in taking such action

they would have had no time to take action; accordingly, they followed the third course which was to act, and report practically nothing. This decision was initially made on the assumption that they had very little more to lose by following up the last hopes, and everything to win. As the hours passed, evidence that the action had great hopes of success increased rapidly, but they still had no time or energy to prepare and present the evidence. Sinclair and members of his staff said that they fully understood the situation and were glad that Roosevelt had taken what was in their opinion the best and most constructive decision. We all recognized, however, that if the outcome had been different, a substantially different attitude toward that action might have been found in many quarters. Sinclair commented that it was recognition of the probability that such grave decisions would have to be taken speedily and could only be taken in the field that had led him to request the appointment of a combined theatre commander. He also requested that in Roosevelt's briefing of senior members of the British Foreign Office he should emphasize this aspect of the story. The following days Roosevelt did so, and, without exception, from Churchill through Lord Salisbury all down the line, the decision taken in Tehran was enthusiastically endorsed. (Sir Winston

made reference to Lord Nelson's blind eye.)

On 26 August Roosevelt was shepherded through a round of appointments at the Foreign Office by the Foreign Office representative attached to SIS. He first saw Sir (Reginald) James Bowker (Byroade's British opposite number--responsible for NEA) and two members of his staff, and gave them an account of developments and the psychological climate in Iran, without giving much in the way of operational detail. He got the impression that SIS was glad to take advantage of any opportunity of selling themselves to this level of the Foreign Office. It appeared that their relationships, at least in this area, were neither close nor cordial at this level. Later in the morning he spent an hour alone with the Acting Foreign Secretary, Lord Salisbury. As requested by Sinclair, Roosevelt gave Lord Salisbury the full treatment, and he appeared to be absolutely fascinated. His attitude seemed to be very much more flexible and progressive than that of Bowker. He seemed genuinely anxious to help the new Iranian Government and very conscious of the problems which the relations with the United Kingdom presented to that government. He recognized the importance of immediate short-term economic aid which would produce quick and obvious results, but remarked that perhaps long-range aid could be worked out with an "oil settlement in mind."

Roosevelt reported fully to Salisbury, as he had to Bowker, on the assurances which he had given on behalf of Her Majesty's Government (HMG) to the Shah and Zahedi. Salisbury assured him, as did everyone else, that these statements were justified and properly presented, that the British fully appreciated the necessity of reaching agreement on an oil settlement with the Iran Government as rapidly as possible, and that they were fully prepared to do so.

At 1400 hours Roosevelt was received by the Prime Minister who was in bed at 10 Downing Street. This was a most touching occasion. The Prime Minister seemed to be in bad shape physically. He had great difficulty in hearing; occasional difficulty in articulating; and apparent difficulty in seeing to his left. In spite of this he could not have been more kind personally nor more enthusiastic about the operation. He was good enough to express envy of Roosevelt's role and a wish that he had been "some years" younger and might have served under his command. He repeated the statement that he had already made to Sinclair, that if the success of this operation could be maintained it would be the finest operation since the end of the war. He emphasized his strong feeling that everything possible to help the new government should be

done. Economic aid to Iran should not wait either for the restoration of diplomatic relations with the British or for an oil settlement. He went so far as to proclaim that if it were necessary he, himself, would provide economic aid to Iran before the restoration of diplomatic relations, although he did not explain how this might be accomplished. He commented that the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) had really "fouled things up" in the past few years and that he was determined that they should not be allowed to foul things up any further. Our operation had given us a wonderful and unexpected opportunity which might change the whole picture in the Middle East. In closing he asked Roosevelt to tell the President that he was feeling much better and could "hang on as long as may be necessary." He also asked that Roosevelt write to him after his meeting with the President, and that he keep in touch with him in the future.

The Prime Minister made several references which indicated that he regarded SIS as <u>his</u> service, and that it was very close to his heart. Perhaps due to his physical condition at the time, however, he appeared a bit hazy as to its jurisdiction and the distinction between MI-5 and MI-6. He was definitely hazy on Sinclair and upon the American setup. The initials CIA meant nothing

to him, but he had a vague idea that Roosevelt must be connected in some way with his old friend Bedell Smith.

At the outset Sinclair had said that he thought it might make a better impression if neither he nor any member of his service were present during Roosevelt's reports to other members of HMG, and although he knew that Roosevelt was to see the Prime Minister and the Acting Foreign Secretary, he suggested only one exception to this procedure. He asked if Roosevelt would have any objection to his sitting in on the discussions with Sir William Strang, the Permanent Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. He explained that Strang was the source of his political guidance and such authorizations as were required from the Foreign Office, and said that he was anxious to see the impact of certain portions of this briefing upon Strang. In the course of the conversation it became apparent that the portion of particular interest to Sinclair was the reason why the station had not reported more fully from Tehran between 15 and 19 August. Sinclair is not a demonstrative person, but there was a definite glow emanating from him when Strang with apparent heartiness responded to the explanations, remarking that Roosevelt had done the only possible thing and that in matters of that sort decisions could only be made on the spot. As they came out of

Strang's office, one of Sinclair's staff came up to him in great glee with a folder covered with red ribbons, sealing wax, and other objets d'art. Sinclair told Roosevelt that this represented approval of a project on which they had previously been turned down by the Foreign Office and that this reversal of the Foreign Office was due to the success in Iran.