
Text I: *New York Times* article on the Trial of Mohammed Mossadegh, Dec. 22, 1953

The text below is a U.S. newspaper's contemporary account of the 1953 trial of Mohammed Mossadegh.

December 22, 1953—In a verdict that required more than an hour to read, the court found Dr. Mossadegh guilty of having ordered the arrest of Brig. Gen. Nematollah Nasiri, commander of the Shah's Imperial Guard, when he sought to deliver the Shah's dismissal order last August. It also declared that the former Premier had illegally imprisoned several government officials following General Nasiri's arrest and had disarmed the Imperial Guard.

Dr. Mossadegh, who also was primarily responsible for nationalization of Iran's oil industry, was found guilty of having ordered telegrams sent to Iranian diplomatic missions abroad instructing them to have nothing to do with the Shah and Queen Soraya, who had fled the country when the dismissal order backfired.

The bill of indictment against the former Premier was sustained by the court. It convicted him of illegally dissolving a rump Majlis after organizing a rigged referendum to obtain popular support in his contest with that lower chamber of Parliament. Dr. Mossadegh also was found guilty of having issued orders to raze statues of the present Shah and the late Riza Shah, as well as having begun preparations to form a regency council to assume the Shah's functions.

Shah in Plea to Court

When the judges returned to the courtroom at 9:25 o'clock this evening Maj. Gen. Nasrollah Moghbeli, the court president, read a letter addressed to the court by the Shah in which the monarch praised "the services rendered by Dr. Mossadegh during his first year as Premier in connection with nationalization of the oil industry which is desired by the whole nation and is confirmed and supported by the monarchy itself." The Shah said he bore the former Premier no personal animus for derogatory actions and remarks Dr. Mossadegh had directed against him.

It was widely believed the court had refused to accede to the prosecutor's demand that Dr. Mossadegh be sentenced to death or at least imprisoned for life as a result of the Shah's intervention. Since the former Premier is more than 60 years of age, it was not thought likely the death penalty would be carried out. However, most persons had expected the defendant would be exiled or imprisoned for life.

When Dr. Mossadegh heard the sentence, he lifted his head and said in a calm voice heavy with sarcasm, “The verdict of this court has increased my historical glories. I am extremely grateful you convicted me. Truly tonight the Iranian nation understood the meaning of constitutionalism.”

Throughout the reading of the judge’s decision the defendant had assumed his habitual slumped posture, leaning heavily on a small school desk used as a defendant’s bar. He wore a shapeless gray overcoat and his face had the quizzical expression that have become Mossadegh trademarks.

Notes:

Texts B and C are from the curriculum unit *Iran Through the Looking Glass: History, Reform, and Revolution*, developed by The Choices for the 21st Century Education Program, Watson Institute for International Studies, Brown University, © 2012, p. 19. Texts D through I are from the Teacher Resource Book for this unit, pp. 23-32.