

PERSONAL AND CONFIDENTIAL



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

15 October 1985

*From the Secretary of State*

COPIES

*Dear Julia*

Thank you for your letter dated 3 October about the visit of former Iranian Ambassador and Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi.

It is very good of you to let me have an account of your conversation with Zahedi. The point you make about the need to keep the closest possible watch on political developments in Iran is well taken and is an area to which we give close attention.

On the question of officials or John Houston meeting Zahedi, I am sure you will appreciate that the greatest amount of care has to be exercised when deciding whether to approve meetings with members of opposition groups or prominent figures from the Shah's government. I considered the possibility of a meeting with Zahedi carefully. But as you say in your letter, Zahedi was in London principally for an American social event, and I did not wish the current Iranian regime to misunderstand the implications of a meeting with him.

I shall continue to consider carefully on a case by case basis the merits of meetings with Iranian opposition leaders. Your own contact with the leading figures is a valuable one and I appreciate your keeping me in touch with developments.

/I am

The Rt Hon Julian Amery MP

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I am sending a copy of this letter to the Prime  
Minister.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'G. Howe', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned to the right of the typed name.

GEOFFREY HOWE

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From: The Rt. Hon. Julian Amery, MP



CDP to see  
✓

*With Compliments*

CDP  
7/12.

Copy letter, self-explanatory.

A handwritten signature in cursive, appearing to read "P. Stacey", enclosed within a large, hand-drawn oval.

Private Secretary  
3/10/85

HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON, SW1A 0AA

FROM: THE RT. HON. JULIAN AMERY, M.P.

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3rd October 1985

Ardeshir Zahedi has been here over the weekend. He came for the dinner given by U.S. Ambassador Price to celebrate Senator Tower's 60th birthday.

While over here Ardeshir has seen a number of old friends. My only serious talk with him, however, was at lunch on Monday. His main point then was that the Khomeini regime could not continue for long and would hardly outlast the Ayatollah himself. The crucial question was: What was to succeed Khomeini, a pro-Soviet or a pro-Western regime? The essential elements of the next regime could only come from inside the country. But, if correctly identified, they could be encouraged and supported from outside. The Soviets with their geographical situation along Iran's northern border and in Afghanistan, were obviously better placed than the West to intervene. The top layer of the old Tudeh party had been neutralised but there was almost certainly a second layer developing. Some of the junior ranks in the army and the secret police had been sent for training in Communist countries. What was the West doing to identify possible pro-Western forces, and if appropriate, give them necessary encouragement?

Ardeshir had no specific proposals to make or, at any rate, chose not to make them. This is hardly surprising. He realises, of course, that we want to keep our contacts with the present regime in Teheran and that we still have considerable business interests there. In the circumstances he could hardly be expected to say very much more without some sign of recognition.

I was given to understand that no senior official, let alone a Minister, would be authorised to meet him, even on a purely social basis, and this seems to have applied even to your Central Office aide Huston. All this is in rather marked contrast to the young Shah's visit some months back when John Leahy came to see him in my house and Ian Gow gave a dinner party for him at the Cavalry Club with the Prime Minister's approval.

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Prime Minister's approval. .../.

Perhaps I'm being old fashioned, but Ardeshir Zahedi has been such an old and experienced friend of so many of us, both when he was Foreign Minister and later Ambassador here, that it does seem rather odd that no-one from the Government side should have wanted to sound him out and acknowledge his existence, however informally. I don't want to exaggerate the importance of personal relations and loyalties in Foreign Policy, but they can be a significant element and one which, in my experience, we have usually been careful to cultivate, however discreetly.

Forgive this paragraph of criticism. The important thing is the point Ardeshir made, i.e. to identify such pro-Western forces as may exist in Iran and to see whether we could or should support them against the day that the present regime falters or fails.

✓ I am copying this letter to No. 10.

Julian Amery

The Rt. Hon. Sir Geoffrey Howe, QC., MP.