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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

21824

NSS
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2 September 1970

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Henry A. Kissinger

1. I am forwarding herewith a copy of a recent CIA study, Student Unrest Abroad. The Study assays the role of students and the conditions of higher education in some thirty countries and in so doing, strives to place in perspective the relationship of student action and dissidence to other social and political forces in these countries.

2. You may find of particular interest the first section of the Study, "An Overview of Student Unrest," which introduces the ensuing country studies with some observations about the general phenomenon of student dissidence. We have attempted to elaborate, for example, important differences in the patterns of student political action as they occur in the Communist world, the less developed countries and the industrialized non-Communist societies.

3. I intend to keep the matter of world-wide student unrest under periodic review and to bring Student Unrest Abroad up to date upon the development of new evidence and insights.

Rich

Richard Helms
Director

Attachment

Copy 2, No. 0532/70

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PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 21, 2006

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Student Unrest Abroad

August 1970
No. 0532/70

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
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[Omitted here are portions unrelated to Iran.]

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IRAN

General Context

Overt student opposition to the government, as well as other opposition elements, has been almost nonexistent in recent years. The Shah is firmly in control of the government and the country, and dissident activity has been suppressed firmly and quickly by his security forces. In addition, programs for reforms and for rapid economic development which he has pushed have pre-empted many of the issues around which intellectual opposition to the Shah was able to rally. As the economy has boomed and as job opportunities have grown, most of the 40,000 university students have been increasingly concerned with securing their place in the establishment rather than fighting it and seem in most instances unwilling to risk their futures by political activity.

Political activism among University of Tehran students was, until recent years, endemic; there were few years between the early 1950s and 1963 not marked by rioting and often bloody demonstrations. Traditionally, the activists were nationalists, supporters of former Prime Minister Mossadeq, of his National Front, or one of the offshoots of the National Front. The Tudeh (Communist) Party was also heavily involved; Tudeh Party cells were active on the campus for 15 years. A few of the early Tudeh Party leaders were university professors, who retain a shadow party-in-exile in Eastern Europe.

In the past, student demonstrations were almost all antigovernment. The Shah provided a natural target and the demonstrations were for the most part unabashedly political, with little attempt to use genuine student grievances as a pretext.

Present Student Attitudes

Most intellectuals and students apparently feel no sense of identification with the regime and

its development programs, which are decided at the highest levels. Antiestablishment sentiment is probably intensified by the lack of an effective political opposition either in the universities or in the society as a whole. No political organizations are permitted on university campuses, and social organizations--primarily government-sponsored "Youth Houses"--are closely watched by the security forces and their informers. There is virtually no channel for effective communication and no constructive outlet for student energies and talents. Outspoken critics of the government have been expelled and drafted.

A university education is today probably the most important requirement for success in Iran. Despite their dissatisfaction with the political system, therefore, most of Iran's students are unwilling to jeopardize future job security by a confrontation with the police over political ideology. In the past, many university graduates were unable to find jobs and therefore had less to lose. Now, however, many of the brightest graduates are absorbed into a burgeoning bureaucracy as participants in the reform program, and the problem of an unemployed, disgruntled educated class is beginning to fade.

Recent Unrest

In recent years, student demonstrations have been aimed at specific educational and economic grievances and appear to have had few political overtones. Student disorders broke out in Tehran in February 1970 apparently as a spontaneous protest against an increase in bus fares. Large-scale arrests were made, followed by further demonstrations protesting the arrests. Most of the students arrested were subsequently released. Some antigovernment leaflets were distributed, but the disorders appear to have been apolitical in nature. In May, a small group of students in Tehran attacked the Iran-American Society student and academic centers, breaking

windows. The group, which seemed to be protesting US involvement in Iran rather than the government of the Shah, was quickly dispersed.

The largest and most widespread disturbances in recent years broke out in May and June of 1967 and again in January and February of 1968, affecting all eight of Iran's institutions of higher learning. These demonstrations were aimed primarily at pressing complaints about the educational system; the students demanded, among other things, abolition of newly instituted tuition fees, upgrading of degrees, higher university budgets, and better facilities. Most of these demonstrations were followed by others protesting police and security forces' over-reaction and arrests.

Problems in Higher Education

Iran's eight universities are in transition, changing from a system of memorization and learning by rote to a more flexible, creative approach. Conservative, religious-oriented students find this modernization threatening, as do older entrenched professors. Others probably believe that change is not coming fast enough.

The universities have had difficulty in attracting competent and dynamic faculties, despite government efforts to recruit better qualified teachers. At Tabriz, for example, until a reorganization in 1968, the university was dominated by conservative, long-entrenched native Azerbaijanis with questionable qualifications.

Although the apparent student-faculty ratios at Iranian universities are not too bad, these figures are deceptive. At Tehran University, for example, where the ratio was 28 to 1 in 1966, faculty members have been only part-time teachers--medical professors with private practices, economics professors with their own businesses, etc. Some top professors reportedly have not shown up for classes in years. There has been virtually no faculty-student relationship. Professors traditionally deliver

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lectures and depart with little or no exchange with their students. The government now has banned part-time teaching, but it is not known to what extent its ruling has been enforced.

Outside Influences

There is little evidence of off-campus influence on student activism. Security officials, and in some instances university officials, charged that Communists were active in the 1967-68 demonstrations; 20 of the 100 students arrested in the Tehran area in February 1968 were alleged to be pro-Chinese Communist. This was not confirmed. There is some Communist activity, consisting primarily of the circulation of a limited amount of Soviet and Chinese propaganda, but generally its effectiveness has been undercut by rapid economic and social development. A few Tudeh Party cells continue to exist at the University of Tehran, but there is no overt manifestation of their presence, and their covert activities are directed mostly at staying alive.

In universities such as Pahlavi, which are in less urban areas, Muslim religious leaders still have an influence over youth. About 50 religiously conservative Shirazi citizens were arrested following disturbances at Pahlavi in February 1968 on charges of fomenting the strikes.

There is no evidence that student revolts in the US, France, and other countries have influenced the Iranian students, or that Iranian dissidents abroad have had an impact on the local scene.

Government Approach to Student Problems

Iranian officials, from the Shah on down, are aware that the regime has not been accepted by many intellectuals. They are anxious to keep youth satisfied and to encourage students to support and participate in the government. There is no visible

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effort to train youth for political responsibility, however; in fact, the government attempts to keep students from engaging in any political activity.

In the wake of the 1968 demonstrations, the Shah launched a program of reform for higher education. University chancellors were replaced wholesale; an awareness of the need for change was instilled in educators; plans were set forth for producing more graduates in development fields and for increasing technical training; and students were promised a greater voice "within reasonable limits" in university affairs. The government is also attempting to improve and enlarge enrollment, university facilities, and faculties and to establish a more creative and relevant method of instruction. Progress is slow, however, particularly when change is still fought by conservative elements within the academic community.

Political and social pull--being a descendant of one of Iran's "1,000 families"--is still important in the rise to success, but less so than before. More middle-class youth are attending universities, and with the government's increasing emphasis on skill and technical competence, more of them without political connections are now able to get jobs. Of greatest impact, however, has been the increasing availability of government jobs. Both high school and university graduates are employed in large numbers in the Literacy, Health, and Development Corps.

Although the widely publicized educational reform program demonstrates the government's willingness to use the carrot to quiet students, there is little doubt that the stick would be employed without hesitation should student unrest take political shape. There is some evidence, in fact, of a dispute over how to handle restive students between the soft liners in the Education Ministry and hard liners in the security forces.

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Iranian Students Abroad

Iranian officials estimate that some 25,000 to 37,000 Iranians are studying abroad, including 5,000 to 12,000 in the US. Surveys have shown that many of the best do not return home because of better opportunities abroad, while average students are likely to come back. Most of the sizable number of dropouts and failures (only 50 percent of the Iranian "students" in the US are thought to be actually enrolled in schools) get nonprofessional jobs with good pay abroad and do not return to Iran.

A degree from a US or European university is considered far more prestigious than one from an Iranian university, and many youths go to fantastic lengths to study abroad. For example, private enterprises in Iran sell admissions to small, often unaccredited universities in the US to students who are unable to gain admission to better US schools. Poorer students often seek education abroad because they are unable to gain entrance to Iran's universities.

A small but vocal segment of Iranian students abroad (an estimated 500 of those in the US), engage in active anti-Shah activities. They hold meetings, issue sporadic publications, and make grandiose plans, but their major activity is to harass the Shah when he travels. Anti-Shah demonstrations, joined by radical students in the US, Germany, Austria, and England, among other places, have been a major irritant to the Shah. They have strained relations with host governments and have often led to supersecrecy and extremely tight security measures during his trips.

The largest organizations of Iranian students abroad--the Iranian Students Association in the US and the Confederation of Iranian Students in Europe--appear to be a conglomeration of Communist sympathizers, National Front - oriented leftists, middle-of-the-roaders, and religiously oriented rightists.

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They have no ideological cohesiveness; only opposition to the Shah unites them. The leftists, who tend to be more active, almost always assume control but do not necessarily reflect the attitudes of the majority. Most of the funds apparently come from membership dues. Those who are in the forefront of anti-Shah activities are well known to Iranian authorities and most of them find it impossible to return to Iran.

The government is also concerned by the so-called "brain drain" problem. During the past few years, it has initiated a number of steps calculated to lure overseas residents back--draft exemptions, the promise of good jobs in government and private industry, and active recruiting for teaching jobs at Iranian universities. The regime may also be making it more difficult for Iranians to go abroad in the first place.

The Long View

There will probably be no dramatic changes in student attitudes over the next ten years, assuming that the Shah's economic development programs continue to provide challenging employment to increasing numbers of university graduates. It is also unlikely that many Iranian students will risk political activism while economic and social advancement appears possible. Nevertheless, as long as political activity is proscribed--and it is likely to be for as long as the Shah is in power--the regime will probably not win wholehearted student support, and resentment of its authoritarianism, however benevolent, will pervade university life.

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