

*Iran, Duncan's only with Shah*

DOC #99

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE

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SECT 01 OF 27612  
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Date: MAY 24 2016

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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1147  
INFO RUDTC/AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE 5426  
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MILITARY ADDRESSEES HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

~~E.O. 11652: GDS~~

TAGS: PGOV PINS ELAB IR  
SUBJ: AUDIENCE WITH SHAH, OCT 24

1. WHEN I TOOK DEPSEC DEFENSE DUNCAN TO CALL ON SHAH MORNING OCT 24, IT WAS CLEAR THAT THE IMPERIAL ATTENTION WAS SERIOUSLY DISTRACTED FROM ANY DISCUSSION OF MILITARY PROCUREMENT MATTERS. SHAH LET TOUFANIAN DO MOST OF THE TALKING AND THEN BROUGHT AUDIENCE TO AN END IN LESS THAN THIRTY MINUTES. HOWEVER, HE ASKED ME TO STAY BEHIND.

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*W* OSA Hist, Sec/Def Call, Oct 78

15-m-0301

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2. TO MY SURPRISE, WE WERE THEN JOINED BY BRITISH AMBASSADOR (WHO LATER TOLD ME HE HAD BEEN SUMMONED QUITE UNEXPECTEDLY). SHAH SAID HE WISHED REVIEW CURRENT SITUATION WITH THE TWO OF US AND WOULD VALUE OUR CANDID ADVICE.

3. WE THEN WENT THROUGH A TWO HOUR SESSION WHICH LOOKED AT ALL THE MAJOR PROBLEMS CURRENTLY FACING IRAN AND EXAMINED SEVERAL OPTIONS FOR DEALING WITH THEM. THE ONLY INTERRUPTIONS WERE THREE TELEPHONE CALLS TO THE SHAH REPORTING INCIDENTS IN QOM AND AHMAZ.

4. IT SEEMS THAT THE PRIMARY STIMULUS FOR THIS UNUSUAL MEETING WAS THE CONTINUING STRIKE AT NIOC PRODUCTION AND REFINING FACILITIES IN AHMAZ AND ABADAN. SHAH SAID THAT HUSHANG ANSARY, WHO WAS STILL IN AHMAZ, HAD BEEN "IMPRISONED" NIGHT OF OCT 23 BY CLERICAL STAFF OF OSCO AND HAD "ESCAPED" ONLY BY RUNNING OUT A BACK DOOR WHEN HE HAD GONE TO TAKE A TELEPHONE CALL. HE SAID TECHNICIANS AND LABORERS WERE PREPARED TO RETURN TO WORK, BUT CLERICAL STAFF WAS PROLONGING THE STRIKE BY INSISTING ON "POLITICAL" RATHER THAN ECONOMIC DEMANDS. HE SAID STRIKE LEADERS WERE YOUNG, JUNIOR "CLERKS" WHO HAD ARROGATED CONTROL OF THE ACTION TO THEMSELVES. HE CLAIMED THERE WAS ALREADY A 600,000 BARREL LOSS OF NIOC PRODUCTION OCTOBER 23.

5. BEYOND THIS SITUATION, HE SAID HE WAS CONCERNED BY RIOTS IN HAMADAN, UNREST AT THE UNIVERSITIES, AND THE CONSTANT STREET DEMONSTRATIONS BY SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS. THE REPORTS FROM QOM WHICH CAME IN WHILE WE TALKED TOLD OF "SNIPER FIRE" FROM THE TOPS OF BUILDINGS WHICH HAD ALREADY WOUNDED THREE OR FOUR SOLDIERS.

6. FACED WITH ALL THIS, SHAH SAID HE WAS REVIEWING SEVERAL OPTIONS. ONE WAS TO INSTALL A MILITARY GOVT. HE PERSONALLY FELT THIS WAS A NON-STARTER. THE MILITARY COULD NOT EVEN BEGIN TO RUN THE OIL INDUSTRY. IF THEY TRIED, EVERYTHING ELSE WOULD SHUT DOWN AND THEY WOULD HAVE TO TRY TO RUN THE WHOLE NATION. AT BEST, A "MILITARY SOLUTION" WOULD BE A VERY SHORT-TERM FIX.

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7. ANOTHER OPTION, HE SAID, WOULD BE TO TRY A COALITION GOVT. HE HAD NO RPT NO CONFIDENCE SUCH A MEASURE WOULD SUCCEED. FIRST, HE DID NOT KNOW HOW "LOYAL" SUCH A COALITION WOULD BE. SECOND, HE HAD NO ASSURANCES ABOUT THEIR COMPETENCE. BUT, SUCH A MOVE MIGHT HAVE PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS WHICH WOULD CALM DOWN THE CURRENT "FRENZY." HE ASKED FOR OUR VIEWS.

8. BRITISH AMBASSADOR AND I, IN MUTUALLY REINFORCING STATEMENTS, SAID THE FOLLOWING:

(A) WE DID NOT RPT NOT SEE THE SITUATION QUITE AS DARKLY AS THE SHAH. ALTHOUGH THERE WERE DISRUPTIONS, LIFE WAS GOING ON MORE OR LESS NORMALLY IN MOST OF THE COUNTRY. PEOPLE WERE AT WORK, SERVICES CONTINUED, SHOPS WERE OPEN, ETC. WE ADMITTED THAT THE NIOC STRIKE AND THE INDISCIPLINE AMONG SCHOOL CHILDREN WERE TROUBLING, BUT NOT NECESSARILY FATAL.

(B) WE AGREED THAT A "MILITARY SOLUTION" IS A NON-STARTER. IT WOULD MERELY CREATE WORSE PRESSURES, WHICH  
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SECT 02 OF 27612

ACTION

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FM AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1148

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MIGHT LEAD TO A REAL EXPLOSION.

(C) WE HAD VERY LITTLE BASIS ON WHICH TO JUDGE THE COMPETENCE OR LOYALTY OF THOSE WHO MIGHT ENTER A "COALITION" GOVT. WE NOTED SOME POLITICIANS WERE CONSULTING IN PARIS WITH KHOMEINI. HOWEVER, LATTER SEEMED TO BE ADAMANTLY ANTI-SHAH. WHILE IT MIGHT BE ADVISABLE TO BRING SOME OPPOSITION MEMBERS INTO CURRENT GOVT IF THEY WOULD AGREE, WE THOUGHT THAT DISMISSAL OF GOVT AT THIS STAGE WOULD BE FURTHER DESTABILIZING.

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(D) WHAT SEEMED MOST NECESSARY AT CURRENT STAGE WAS APPEARANCE OF POSITIVE, PROGRAMMED ACTION BY GOVT. PUBLIC PERCEPTION OF GOVT CURRENTLY WAS ONE OF DRIFT AND PASSIVITY. GOVT NEEDED TO PROPOSE AND ANNOUNCE SOME SOUND AND POSITIVE STEPS SO THAT IT COULD LEAD RATHER THAN FOLLOW.

(E) AS FAR AS NIOC STRIKE WAS CONCERNED, WE DOUBTED GOVT WOULD BE WISE TO CAPITULATE ON "POLITICAL" DEMANDS (PRIMARY DEMAND IS LIFTING OF MARTIAL LAW NATIONWIDE). IF A STRIKE DID FORCE OIL INDUSTRY TO SHUT DOWN FOR ANWHILE, IT NEED NOT BE FATAL. IN FACT, IT MIGHT BRING SOME PEOPLE TO THEIR SENSES BY FORCING THE REALIZATION THAT ALL THESE DISRUPTIONS COULD REALLY BEGIN TO HURT THOSE WHO WERE CARRYING THEM OUT.

9. SHAH, WHO WAS SOBER, BUT NOT DEPRESSED, THROUGHOUT THIS CONVERSATION, THANKED US FOR OUR VIEWS AND FOR OUR REACTION TO HIS VIEWS. HE SAID HE WOULD WORK WITH HIS PEOPLE TO SOLVE THE IMMEDIATE ISSUES AND HOPED HE COULD CALL US IN AGAIN "WITHIN A FEW DAYS" FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS.

10. COMMENT: IT WOULD SEEM, FROM THIS MEETING, THAT SHAH REALLY FEELS HIMSELF WITHOUT ANY CLEAR PLAN FOR THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. IT WOULD ALSO APPEAR THAT HE FEELS HIMSELF WITHOUT RELIABLE IRANIAN ADVISERS FROM WHOM HE CAN GET OBJECTIVE REACTIONS. I BELIEVE THE MILITARY, WHO WOULD LIKE TO TAKE OVER IN THEIR OWN WAY, ARE DELIBERATELY FEEDING HIM THE DARKEST POSSIBLE VIEWS OF THE CURRENT SITUATION. HIS FEAR OF AN NIOC SHUTDOWN REFLECTS HIS "CONSPIRACY" VIEW OF COMMUNIST INTENTIONS. I HAVE ASKED THE OSCO REPRESENTATIVE TO GET AN OBJECTIVE APPRAISAL OF THE STRIKE SITUATION IN AHWAZ AND GIVE ME A BRIEFING OCTOBER 25. I WILL REPORT THE RESULTS OF THAT COVERSATION IMMEDIATELY.

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