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9 March 1953

THE IRANIAN SITUATION

The crisis brought about by the Shah's decision on 28 February to resist Prime Minister Mossadeq's efforts to force him to leave Tehran has resulted in a struggle between the Prime Minister and an anti-Mossadeq coalition of army, court and religious leaders headed by the fanatical Majlis president, Mullah Kashani. The Shah decided to remain after he was approached by secular and religious leaders and after crowds demonstrated outside his palace. He has remained inactive, however, and has given no further encouragement to those elements which supported him.

After four days of turmoil, during which, in addition to his National Front following, the Tudeh and the small fascist Pan-Iran and Sumka Parties backed Mossadeq, the Prime Minister appears to have regained control of the police, the army elements in Tehran, and the radio. He has arrested some of the demonstrators, notably some 65 retired army officers as well as a few officers on active duty.

There are, however, some military leaders in Tehran, both in the army and the air force, who apparently continue to oppose Mossadeq and extend support to the Shah. Army units stationed outside the capital have not become involved in the struggle and there is no evidence available as to where their loyalty would lie if the present situation were enlarged. At present, they may be expected to take orders from the newly appointed chief of staff, General Riahi, who is controlled by the Prime Minister.

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IRANIAN MILITARY STRENGTH AND DISPOSITION:

A. Strength:

Army	125,000
Navy	2,125
Air Force	5,300
Gendarmerie	<u>20,000</u>
Total --	152,425

B. Disposition:

Tehran and vicinity	8 Brigades -- 30,000 -- 40,000
Azerbaijan	2 Divisions -- 15,000 -- 20,000
Central and South Iran	2 Divisions -- 15,000 -- 20,000
Southeast Iran	1 Division -- 5,000 -- 10,000
Northeast frontier	1 Division -- 5,000 -- 10,000
Iraqi frontier	2 Divisions and 2 Brigades -- 25,000 -- 30,000

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Mossadeq's return to full control is currently blocked by Kashani's order to his followers to boycott parliament. Nine deputies have reportedly sworn to oppose Mossadeq. By not attending they can prevent a quorum and block a vote of confidence in the Prime Minister. Kashani's maneuver may induce the Prime Minister to carry out his threat of appealing directly to the people. Although the mullah wishes to become prime minister, at this point it appears more likely that he is seeking a compromise rather than a clear-cut victory over Mossadeq.

Kashani's record of venality suggests that any government he might head would tend to place self-interest above that of country. He has consistently followed a policy of extreme nationalism which is antagonistic toward the United States.

Firm action by the Shah might give him control of the situation. He is, however, unwilling to move directly against Mossadeq. The Shah, according to Minister of Court Ala, has considered National deputy Hossein Makki as a possible compromise candidate for the premiership, but Makki reportedly does not believe the time is opportune. He was at one time a close supporter of Mossadeq; at present, he is hostile to him. Demagogic Makki, without experience and basically anti-foreign, would make a poor substitute for Mossadeq.

Social reform is long overdue in Iran. In the absence of a strong conservative government, Mossadeq appears at present to represent the chief barrier to Communist control, even though Tudeh support for the Prime Minister indicates that the Communists consider that his return to power will best promote their objectives.

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If the Prime Minister wins the current struggle, he will re-double his efforts to secure complete control of the army. He will continue his efforts to reduce further the Shah's powers, and to eliminate the political influence of the monarchy. He may also be expected to apply himself to limit the powers of Kashani and the clergy and to continue the government's tribal disarmament program.

His victory would take Iran one step further along its present revolutionary road. The Prime Minister's growing tendency toward autocratic government, however, suggests that he is beginning to realize that many of his contemplated reforms cannot be carried out unless he resorts to authoritarian measures. Despite his conviction that Iranian politicians are sufficiently mature to govern democratic processes, his victory may also prove to be a step toward the establishment of a new dictatorship.

Ambassador Henderson in Tehran reports that there appears to be extensive preparation of charges that the embassy was responsible for the Shah's decision not to leave the country. The development of such accusations may foreshadow an anti-American campaign.

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Comment on Tudeh position in current Iranian situation:

Current Tudeh attempts to exploit the confused situation in Iran suggest that the Communists are not ready for an all-out assault on the government, but believe that Mossadeq's continuation in power will best serve their interest in what they regard as a maturing "revolutionary situation."

On 28 February the Tudeh press came out for a united front of pro-Mossadeq elements. This was followed by repeated attempts during subsequent days to obtain the Prime Minister's consent to Tudeh collaboration.

Concurrently the Tudeh, in line with its desire to overthrow the dynasty and to remove American influence from Iran, unsuccessfully tried to turn the demonstrations in Tehran against the United States and the Shah.

The diverse nature and conflicting interest of the forces opposing Mossadeq would undermine any government brought to power by his defeat and would presumably present the Tudeh with a new chance to further its aim of obtaining control of the government.

Hard-core Tudeh strength in Iran is conservatively estimated at about 10,000, of which possibly 4000 are in Tehran. Its adherents and supporters are many times that number and vary with the political situation.

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SOVIET MILITARY DISPOSITION NEAR THE IRANIAN BORDERS

West of the Caspian:

Army	220,000
Security	55,000
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	275,000

East of the Caspian:

Army	about	100,000
Security	"	20,000
		<hr/>
		120,000

AIR:

Southern USSR:

Total Aircraft	1,540
Jet Fighters	820
Jet Bombers	---
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	2,360

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