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NEAR EAST/AFRICA DIVISION
OFFICE OF REPORTS AND ESTIMATES
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

WORKING PAPER

MAR 15 1950

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

For Week Ending
15 March 1950

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Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, Egypt, [REDACTED] Cyrenaica, 6
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NEAR EAST/AFRICA INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

GREECE

Thunder on the right: The prospective centrist coalition led by the 63-year old Republican revolutionary hero, General Plastiras, is encountering bitter opposition from rightist circles. The three center leaders, Venizelos, Papandreou, and Plastiras--who appear assured of the support of some 55-60 percent of the 250 members of the new Parliament--have agreed on a moderate program which specifically recognizes the constitutional position of the Crown and promises a continuation of a firm pro-Western and anti-Communist policy. These guarantees, however, have not allayed rightist, and specifically Palace, distaste for Plastiras, whom King Paul sees as a traditional foe of monarchy, a potential Communist appeaser, and a rival for the strong-man role the King has envisaged for Marshal Papagos. The Palace has already made an unsuccessful attempt to enlist US support in thwarting the formation of the centrist bloc. The King may still try to delay the appointment of a Plastiras Government until just before the convening of Parliament on 30 March in the hope that the delay might weaken the coalition materially, thus necessitating new elections in which Papagos could participate.

The centrist leaders, who seem prepared to work in harmony on important national policies, could expect adequate initial support from Parliament. Their coalition, however, would probably become increasingly subject to undercutting, not only from the right wing which, led by the plurality Populists, will control some 30-35 percent of the Chamber, but also from the Communists, who will probably be able to influence about 10 percent of the new deputies, including perhaps a small but significant fraction of Plastiras' own backing. In their attempts to frustrate and divide the coalition, the opposition may be able to take advantage of external pressures on the government. The wage-price issue, which might well furnish the government's first real test in view of the recent sharp rise in inflationary tendencies, provides a particularly good opportunity for a joint onslaught on the government by the right wing, which dominates the top trade union leadership and the Communists, who are currently attempting to encourage labor unrest. The failure of a centrist government under this or any other of the numerous post-election stresses would almost certainly leave Greece without any other viable governmental combination within the present Parliament. New elections would then be an imminent probability, this time under a majority system of voting so that a "strong" government could more easily be formed.

TURKEY

Coalition rumors: Current rumors of an impending coalition of the opposition Democratic Party (DP) and the ruling People's Republican Party (PRP) probably deserve little credence, at least for the present. Some grounds for a possible regrouping of Turkey's two major parties does exist. Democratic leader Celal Bayar, for example, probably feels a certain sense of frustration over occasional defections by some of his more active supporters, who accuse him of arbitrary leadership and lack of anti-government vigor, and over the adeptness with which the PRP moderates have enacted and taken the credit for legislation the DP has demanded; he might well feel more comfortable ensconced in the cabinet alongside Deputy Prime Minister Erim and other PRP moderates than with some of the more fiery gentlemen in his own group. As for the PRP, there is even less in common between the moderate wing and such diehards as ex-Premier Peker than between Bayar and the malcontents who have been dropping out of the DP; a coalition of the moderate elements in both parties might make good political sense. Nevertheless, the factors militating against a coalition appear thus far to be compelling. With the elections now expected to take place in May, Bayar would hesitate at this late date to risk the almost certain loss of much of the DP support he has built up, while the PRP moderates, mindful of the advantages of having a smoothly operating political machine at their disposal, may well be more inclined to party regularity than ever. Perhaps all concerned may prefer to wait and see how the elections go before deciding on the advantages or otherwise of any possible re-alignments.

LEBANON

The assault on Riad Sulh: The unsuccessful attempt on the life of Prime Minister Riad Sulh made on 8 March can probably be taken as symptomatic of the general dissatisfaction with the government, even though the motives of the would-be assassin have not been definitely established as political. Opposition to corruption and dictatorial methods of the entrenched Lebanese Government has been increasing, and various elements have unsuccessfully advocated a general political house-cleaning and the holding of new elections. The inability of the various anti-government splinter forces to form a united front has left the opposition particularly ineffective, however. Although Sulh's assailant is reportedly a member of an illegal organization, the Syrian Popular Party, members of other groups may also be tempted to resort to violence. The Lebanese Government's expected efforts to tighten anti-opposition controls will probably only make the political pot boil more violently.

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Anti-Ethiopian group disintegrating: Recent wholesale defections from the (anti-Ethiopian) Eritrean Independence Bloc leave the organized independence movement at a fraction of its former strength. In part, the falling away of pro-independence elements reflects a growing realization that the Italians, who are backing the independence movement, would eventually dominate an independent Eritrea--an idea as distasteful to nationalists as union with Ethiopia. The defections, however, mainly represent a belief that some sort of union with Ethiopia is now inevitable; the majority of the Independence Bloc have decided to jump on the Unionist bandwagon, hoping to salvage some concessions from Ethiopia through a compromise plan. Representatives of the new Liberal Unionist Party, composed of Copts and Moslems who split from the pro-independence Liberal Progressives, have already been in Addis Ababa for several weeks reportedly securing concessions from the Ethiopian Government; they are said to have agreed on something similar to the US federation plan suggested during the last General Assembly.

Although the majority of Eritreans appear to favor a loose form of federation with Ethiopia as a workable compromise plan, the UN Commission of Inquiry appears to be too violently split to come out with a unanimous recommendation to that effect; the Guatemalan and Pakistani representatives favor independence, and the Norwegian, South African, and Burmese representatives favor some form of union with Ethiopia. In any event, however, it will be up to the GA to make the final decision, and a great deal of pressure can be brought to bear between 15 June, when the Commission must deliver its findings, and September, when the GA meets. Despite the Commission's possible split recommendations, a compromise favorable to Ethiopia is still likely to be reached in the GA.

IRAN

Razmara and the premiership: The spreading belief of many Iranians--that their country's economic woes call for stronger leadership than can be found among the shopworn group of politicians who have thus far rotated in office--was strikingly illustrated when 35 members of the Majlis recently called on Chief of Staff Razmara to urge him to seek the premiership. General Razmara, who has recently been proclaiming that drastic economic, social, and administrative reform is the only alternative to revolution, gave the deputies a non-committal reply despite his previous assertion that he could bring order out of chaos within six months; in view of the reported

opposition of the Shah to his candidacy in January, when he indicated his availability to head the government, it is unlikely that Razmara will make any direct attempts to seek the premiership. Indeed, there is considerable question as to how he fits into the political picture: despite his reformist statements, his most bitter opponents are the liberal elements of the Dr. Mossadeq group, and his present support may well come from conservative members of the ruling class more interested in checking the current disintegration in Iran than in carrying through the long-range reforms Razmara has advocated. Nevertheless, demands for a "strong man" will undoubtedly increase unless something drastic is done to improve Iran's economic lot, and (as Razmara may well hope) the course of events may eventually lead the Shah to bring his chief of staff to power.

INDIA - PAKISTAN

Nehru under fire: Prime Minister Nehru's conduct of India's affairs is evidently encountering strong opposition from both within and without the government. Recent reports indicate that Deputy Prime Minister Patel, supported by a majority of the cabinet, has become sharply critical of several major aspects of current Indian policy, reportedly charging that Nehru has: (1) tossed away the potentated benefits of closer ties with the US and UK in the unrealistic hope that India might achieve lasting friendship with Communist China and the USSR as well; (2) failed to make a sufficiently determined effort to come to terms with Pakistan; and (3) frightened away foreign and domestic investors with the spectre of socialism at a time when India has urgent need of private investments above and beyond the funds the government itself can obtain. Meanwhile, Nehru is being pressed to take a more belligerent attitude toward Pakistan by extremist anti-Moslem elements, notably in West Bengal and among the Sikh and Punjabi refugees.

These outcroppings of opposition to Nehru do not presage his fall from power. Patel's group, despite the sweeping nature of its criticisms, has been attempting to persuade the prime minister rather than to displace him, and, in general, Nehru seems assured of remaining the outstanding single influence in the country unless some catastrophic development completely discredits the Indian Government. Nevertheless, this double attack on his policies has undoubtedly shaken a man who had hoped that his leadership would be accepted not only within India but throughout Asia. His current mood is apparently one of frustration and

Indecision: although he privately concedes Patel's contention that India has no real friends he stubbornly refuses to change his foreign policy, and although he asserts that capital has nothing to fear from his government he fails to support legislation which would make those assurances convincing.

That a powerful group in the cabinet favors a more realistic policy--a view which evidently stems from the sober fears of the business community about continuing political and economic tension--gives promise that a more stable and more pro-Western India may eventually emerge. Until and unless Nehru can be persuaded to come to terms with Patel's groups, however, the present intra-governmental dissention will dissipate the energies of India's leaders and will make the government more vulnerable than ever to pressure from those who oppose any compromise with Pakistan.

The Bengal situation: Excitement over the situation in Bengal, currently the focal point of tension between India and Pakistan, seems to be decreasing for the moment. India, which at one point appeared to be seriously considering the stationing of troops so that they could easily be sent across the border to protect East Bengal Hindus, has sent some additional troops into the Calcutta area but appears thoroughly aware of the grave military and international consequences which an invasion of Pakistan would entail. Pakistan, for its part, realizes that it would have little chance of winning the war which would ensue.

The two Bengals, however, remain a source of almost certain disturbance. Over population, the existence of large religious minorities in both provinces, and the effects of economic warfare on their inter-dependent economies provide a strong basis for social unrest; in addition, the Bengalis are a people noted for a volatile temperament and a predisposition toward violence. Thus far the persecution of Hindus has apparently been more widespread than the maltreatment of their Moslem counterparts across the border, and resentment is strongest among the West Bengal Hindus. The principal danger, consequently, is that new anti-Hindus outbreaks in East Pakistan may not only provoke new retaliations in West Bengal but also enable the Bengali leaders and various reactionary Hindu groups to bring strong pressure for intervention on the part of the Indian Government. There are a number of West Bengali groups with irridentist aims in East Bengal which would welcome such an opportunity to press for action, and it is even possible that some of their members might act as agents provocateurs.

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NOTED IN BRIEF

The Turkish Legation in Sofia has just been handed a strongly worded Bulgarian note in which the Turks are reportedly denounced for their alleged failure to safeguard Bulgarian representatives in Turkey and for their generally "scandalous attitude" in the matter. Obviously, it will be difficult for the Turkish Government to continue in its current attitude of forbearance toward Bulgaria; the language of the note leaves the distinct impression that the Bulgarian Government is aiming, if not at a total break in diplomatic relations, at least at the recall of Turkey's representatives in Bulgaria. In order to avoid obliging the Bulgarians, however, the wily Turks might temporize by once again suggesting that differences between the two countries be referred to the International Court of Justice for adjudication.

In according de jure recognition to Israel, the Turkish Government undoubtedly hopes to promote peace and stability in the Near and Middle East. The Turks are realistic enough to realize that their Arab neighbors will not promptly follow Turkey's lead. However, Iran has just decided on de facto recognition of Israel, and the Turks may well expect that other states of primarily Moslem population may follow suit.

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Tension in the Jewish community of Iraq may ease if the Regent signs a pending bill which legalizes emigration, on condition that nationality is forfeited and no more than 50 dinars (\$140) is withdrawn by any emigre. The prospect of thus starting life afresh in Israel will probably not appeal to the more settled majority of the Jewish community, particularly since the government has recently relaxed a regulation prohibiting Jews from disposing of property valued at over 2,000 dinars (\$5,600). Nevertheless, the bill does provide a way for malcontents to depart without resort to deception and bribery, and the effect on the morale of the Jewish community in general should be a salutary one.

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Poor Iraqi-Egyptian relations--more the rule than the exception since the war--have again been underscored by two recent incidents. When Iraq prevented a "Misr" plane from continuing from Cairo to Tehran, Egypt retaliated by grounding an Iraq civil plane. Last week the Egyptian Foreign Minister raised another issue when he stated that Egyptian school teachers would soon be withdrawn from Iraq, ostensibly because Egypt needs their services, but actually because Egypt is displeased with Iraq's foreign policy. Behind these incidents, stands a long-term rivalry for power in the Arab area. At the Arab League meeting in Cairo last fall Egypt proposed a general "collective security pact," mainly to thwart the development of an enlarged Hashimite kingdom in which Iraq would be the dominant influence. Iraq in turn, was eager for the replacement of the Egyptian Secretary-General of the Arab League, Azzam Pasha, and the establishment of an entente involving the Fertile Crescent nations alone. The recent fall in Baghdad of the Jawdat Government, whose relations with Egypt were on a fairly cordial basis, and the subsequent formation of a pro-Nuri Cabinet terminated a brief honeymoon. It is unlikely that any firm friendship can be developed between the two countries, however, as long as basic rivalries remain unresolved.

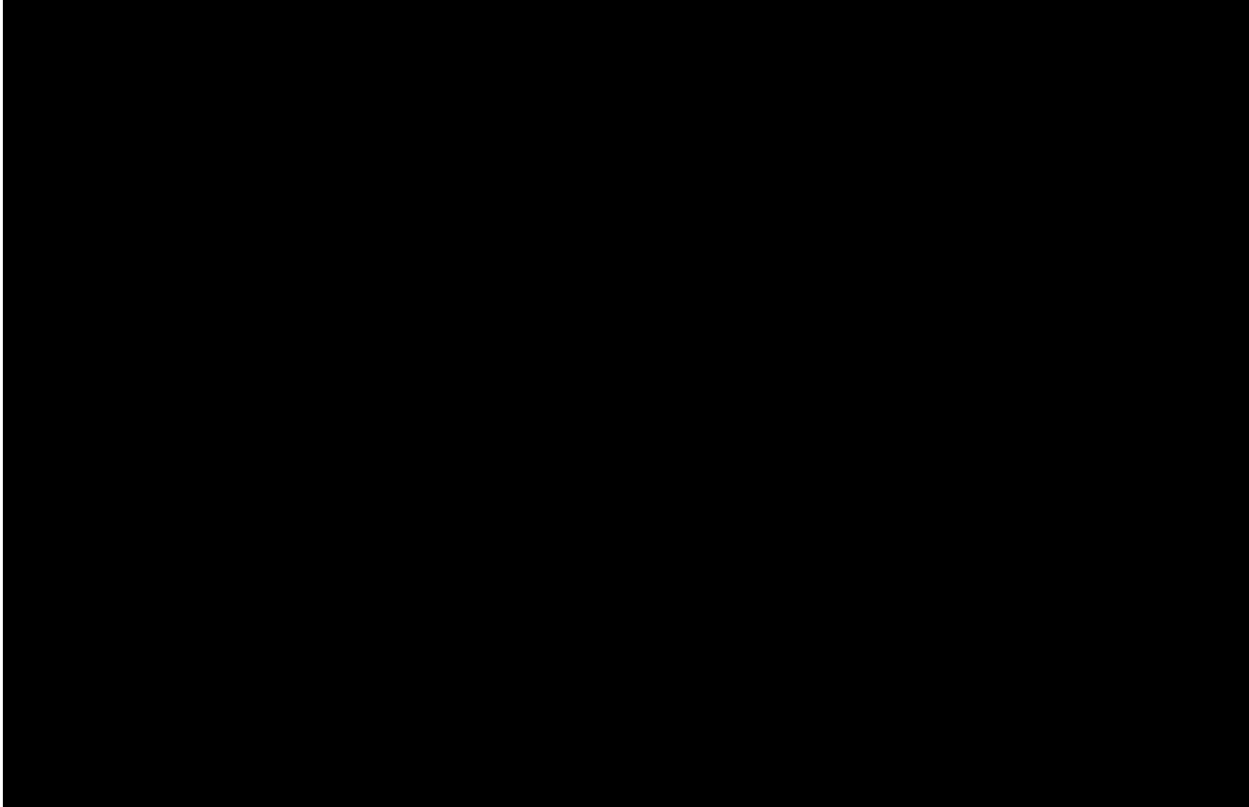
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Prime Minister Omar Mansour Kehnla of Cyrenaica has resigned following charges by the advisory Cyrenaican National Council that he was guilty of repressive actions and "old style" (i.e., Turkish) methods. The Emir plans to wait for the new National Assembly to nominate a new prime minister, following the elections scheduled for 20-25 March. It is difficult to see how the Assembly can be elected and meet by its scheduled date of 28 March, however, in view of the complete lack of electoral machinery and a modern communications system. As a result, Cyrenaica may be without a prime minister for longer than the Emir expects.

US policy toward Iran was recently attacked during a Majlis debate on the program of the Saed Government. Deputy Ashtiani Zadeh, an ex-Qavamist, accused Premier Saed of placing Iran in an antagonistic position toward the USSR by surrendering Iranian independence to the US without receiving a single concession. He also expressed the views of a number of Majlis members who wish to stop the radio Teheran relay of VOA, by

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accusing the US broadcasting unit of attempting to create disorder in Iran.

Increased pro-Soviet activity has been noted in several areas of Iran. Martial law has been established in the Gurgan area (adjoining Turkmen SSR), where a group of fifty Persians and Turkmen has been arrested on charges of espionage and subversive activities. At Shahi in the Caspian Province of Mazandaran eight Tudeh agitators have been arrested. In Khorassan, the US Consulate at Meshed reports that an increase in leftist activity has been marked by the appearance of several leftist newspapers and of a new Soviet-sponsored party (HIZB-AZADKHAH, party of freedom lovers). A well-placed US observer visiting Ahwaz, seat of Iran's oil industry and an important transportation center, reports that Communist influence is also spreading there.

Suspicion of US participation in African affairs was evidenced at the inter-governmental African Transportation Conference recently concluded in Paris. Delegates from the states having African dependencies showed an unwillingness to discuss ECA suggestions for a comprehensive survey of transportation needs in Africa south of the Sahara, apparently in the belief that acceptance of an ECA proposal for such a survey would be used by political opponents as evidence that the US is dictating in the affairs of their overseas territories.