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

WORKING PAPER

APR 26 1950

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DOCUMENT NO. 16
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CLASS. CHANGED TO: TS S C
NEXT REVIEW DATE: _____
AUTH: HR 70-2
DATE 20 Nov 79 REVIEWER: 0085

NEAR EAST/AFRICA DIVISION

Vol. V No. 16

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

For Week Ending
26 April 1950

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NEAR EAST/AFRICA INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

TURKEY

Soviets eye the Straits again: The USSR, after a relatively long official silence, has once again precipitated a verbal clash with Turkey over the status of the Straits, this time through an article in Red Fleet, organ of the Soviet Navy. The current debate follows familiar lines. The Red Fleet article advanced the old Soviet thesis that the statutes governing the Turkish Straits should be revised (i.e., in favor of the Black Sea Powers). The Turkish reply, delivered appropriately through the semi-official Ankara daily, Ulus, reaffirmed the Turkish view that revision of the Montreux Convention of 1936 should only be undertaken in accordance with the terms of that agreement. Whatever the Soviets may have had in mind when they revived the explosive Straits issue, there is no reason to suppose that the Turks can be shifted from their inflexible resolve to oppose the sort of control which the Soviets seek to impose. The Turkish Government will, on the contrary, maintain the position on revision which it officially announced in 1948, namely: that Turkey is perfectly willing to participate in an international revisionary conference (to include the US, not a signatory of the 1936 Convention), but will not even enter into any discussions which indicate the possibility of such sacrifice of Turkish sovereignty as the reiterated Soviet demands clearly imply.

ARAB STATES

Anti-US feeling: The current recrudescence of anti-American feeling in the Arab states stems from the widespread Arab belief that the US is rearming Israel and bringing pressure on the Arabs to make peace with the Israelis. This animosity indicates once again the extreme sensitivity of the Arabs on the question of a Palestine settlement and their obstinacy in the face of UN, US, and UK attempts to encourage peace negotiations. Although responsible Arab officials may deplore such chauvinism, they dare not go counter to it. The Syrian Government has unofficially tried to play down the public statement of Minister of National Economy Dawalibi that the Arabs would rather seek Soviet support than submit to US pressure, but the government has not publicly dissociated itself from the statement. The Syrian press reaction was generally sympathetic to Dawalibi's point of view, while the Moslem Brotherhood papers, which have previously suggested a Soviet alliance, fully endorsed it. The bombing of the American Legations in Beirut and Damascus last week was almost certainly designed by Arab extremists to give point to the

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general feeling which Dawalibi's statement had aroused. Meanwhile in Cairo, Al-Ahram, the most influential and least inflammatory of Arab newspapers, vigorously attacked the US for its official "bare-faced support of Israel" at a time when the attitude of the Egyptian public and press toward the US had been sensitized by the derogatory article about King Farouk in Life.

Although the Dawalibi threat of Arab alignment with the USSR is probably an extremist gesture, it, as well as the other recent signs of anti-US feeling, indicates at least a temporary revival of Arab bitterness and exasperation toward US policy which not only seriously reduces US prestige but also creates conditions readily exploitable by the Communists. It will complicate the work of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency For Palestine Refugees, at least in Syria, when operations begin on 1 May.

GROUP

Yemen in the World Today: The recent eight-day visit of US Ambassador Childs to Taiz, the first official US visit to Yemen since the accession of Imam Ahmed in 1948, disclosed a notable weakening of the apprehensiveness with which Yemen has hitherto eyed the prospect of closer contacts with the outside world. The Imam formally requested Point Four aid for an overall development program, which he hopes to finance by obtaining a US loan; the program would include technical studies by American experts in such fields as medicine, agriculture and geology, the modernization of the port of Hodeida and the Hodeida-Sana road, and the establishment of an American-Yemeni joint stock company to undertake the electrification of Sana and improve the capital's water supply. Meanwhile, the Imam, although he remains non-committal regarding the establishment of a US Legation in Yemen, has intimated a desire to establish some form of diplomatic representation in the US.

Yemen's slow withdrawal from the ultra-isolationist policy it has traditionally followed, particularly in relation to the non-Arab world, is undoubtedly being hastened by the Imam's recognition of the material rewards which adoption of a more hospitable attitude towards foreign enterprise has brought to neighboring states of the Arabian Peninsula. Any program undertaken by the US in the kingdom, however, would necessarily be slow, and it is doubtful whether the schemes envisaged by the Yemeni government would find either easy or early fruition. The Imam's bid for US assistance cannot but help increase the concern which some Britishers feel over

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growing US influence in the Arabian Peninsula, while other Arab states would perhaps prefer that Yemen did not extend a friendly welcome at this time to a country they regard as pro-Zionist. Yemen, however, is a sovereign state relatively isolated from the more vociferous Arab world and little affected by public opinion, Arab or otherwise, and thus remains in a position to choose its own friends.

IRAN

Soviets blame US for Iran's troubles: Soviet propagandists have recently laid particular stress on anti-US themes in their broadcasts to Iran. While Soviet broadcasts have continued to attack the Pahlavi regime and have severely attacked the present Mansur Cabinet, they have mainly taken the line that the US pulls the strings and is thus really to blame for Iran's current economic and political instability. In support of this theme, the Soviets continue to charge that the US is attempting to develop Iran into an anti-Soviet military base, to eliminate the UK's influence, and to penetrate the country economically through such devices as the Seven-Year Development Program.

The USSR's current anti-US propaganda drive comes at a more auspicious time for the Soviets than have previous efforts. Sorely beset with major economic difficulties and apparently unable to rescue themselves because of financial and political weakness, the Iranians have begun to express grave concern over alleged US failure to render timely and substantial assistance; two leading figures, Chief of Staff Nazmara and Director of the Bank Melli Ebtahaj, have even talked of a decline in US influence. While the mere export of words will not suffice to draw Iran toward the USSR, the present Soviet propaganda line may have some effect on US prestige. Until conditions in Iran are improved, efforts to combat Soviet propaganda of this type will be exceedingly difficult.

INDIA

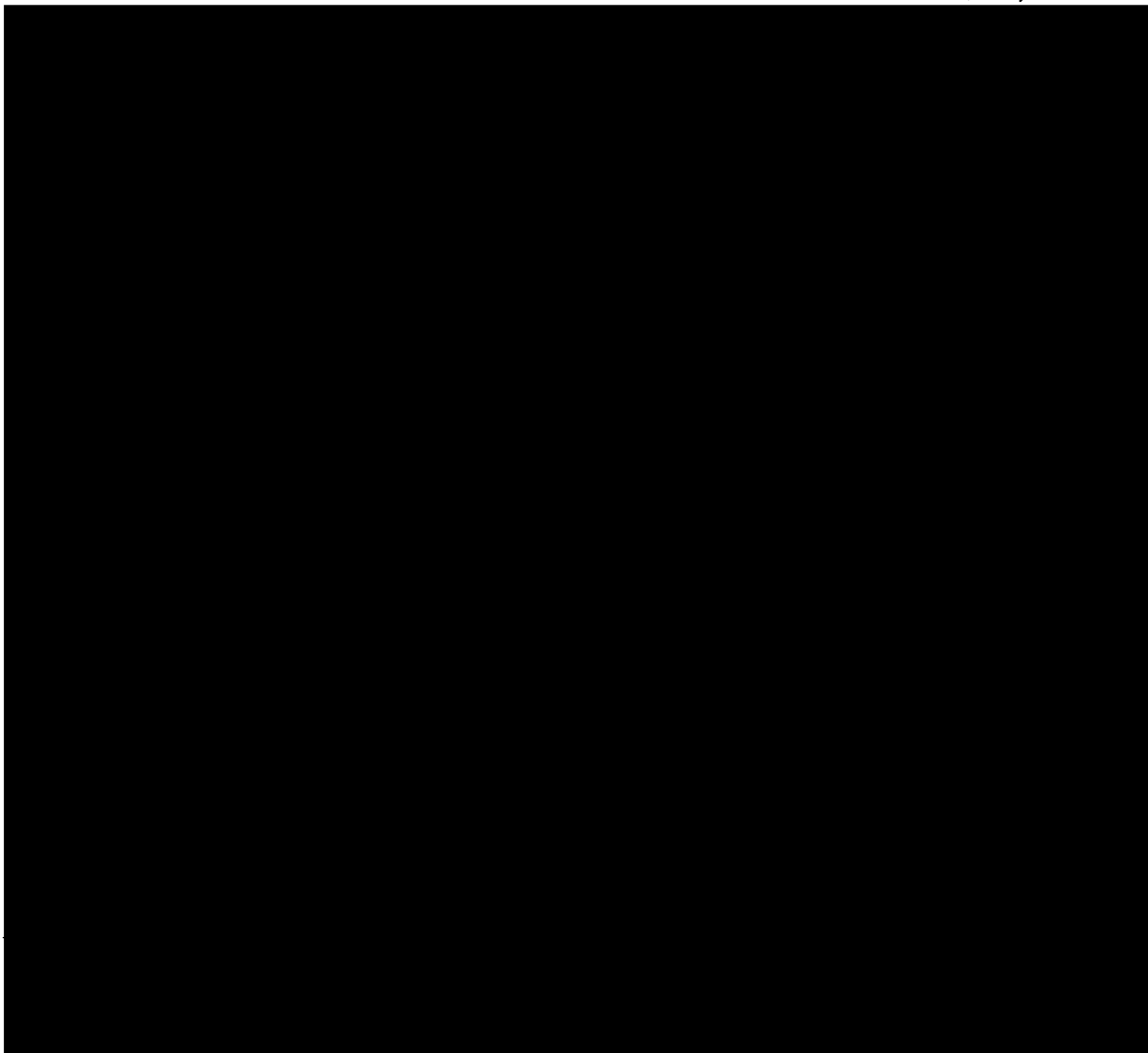
Unfriendliness toward the US: Indian friendship for the US, which developed markedly during 1948 and early 1949, appears to be giving way to dislike and resentment. This change in

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NOTED IN BRIEF

Ilia Kaisarovich Tavadze will replace Minister Daniel Solod as Soviet Minister to Syria and Lebanon. Solod, first Soviet Minister to the post, has served since 1944. Tavadze served as First Secretary to Paris from 1947 to 1949, and is reported to have been connected with the MVD.

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For the first time since the Tudeh Party resurgence began last fall, Iranian authorities report they have actually apprehended some cell leaders. While the seizure of a few local leaders is unlikely to have a telling effect on the party, these arrests, made in the major industrial centers of Tehran and Abadan, indicate that this policy, whose efforts have heretofore netted only the errand boys, are now beginning to penetrate the organization proper. Since the Tudeh Party's underground cellular organization provides a high degree of security against wholesale rupture of its activity, Iranian police still face a formidable task. Nevertheless, the revelation that Tudeh's barriers are not impregnable must be regarded as promising.

The recently announced Indo-Pakistani trade agreement is not sufficiently comprehensive to assure a material easing of Indian and Pakistani economic difficulties. The agreement provides only for the exchange of certain essential commodities such as jute products, steel, cotton textiles, and mustard oil in return for 800,000 bales of Pakistani jute; the major problems affecting the two countries through the cessation of trade in Pakistani wheat and cotton and in Indian coal remain untouched. The principal result of the agreement will be its salutary effect on the Bengal situation through the supply of enough jute to keep the Calcutta mills in operation for the next six months. The GOI's reported unwillingness to broaden the scope of the agreement indicates that India is by no means yet prepared to undertake a general settlement of its difficulties with Pakistan.

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