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**AIRGRAM**

780173-0398

HANDLING	CLASSIFICATION CONFIDENTIAL	MESSAGE REFERENCE NO. A-28
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TO: DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
INFO AMCONSULS ISFAHAN AND TABRIZ (VIA INTERNAL POUCH)

FROM: AMCONSUL SHIRAZ

DATE: 10-30-78  
10:10 PM  
12/01/78

E.O. 11652:  
TAGS:  
SUBJECT:

GDS  
PINS, IR  
OFFICIAL SUPPORT FOR THE SHAH AND ANTI-AMERICAN SENTIMENT

29 REF:

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I met with a group of nine American scholars affiliated with Pahlavi University in Shiraz on October 30 to discuss their concerns about what they reagrd as growing anti-American sentiment at the university and through-out much of Iranian society. There was unanimity that the President's recent declarations of support for the Shah and his government have not had a salutary effect, either in terms of encouraging ultimate political stability or in terms of the safety of American citizens resident in Iran. One political scientist said that he finds the characterization of behavior of law enforcement authorities in confrontations with demonstrators as "restrained" obscene, and is embarrassed to try to explain the meaning of such statements to his students. All present cited numerous examples of personal acquaintances who were encouraged last year by the President's pronouncements regarding human rights, but are now deeply bitter about his support for the Shah whom they regard as the crux of Iran's present political difficulties. They said that the President must be extremely naive not to realize that Shah has no support among his own people, but urged that even if he does believe in the Shah's continued viability, he should not needlessly endanger Americans living in Iran by saying so. Several people mentioned Iranian colleagues and acquaintances otherwise well-disposed toward the United States who have been extremely hostile in recent days as a direct consequence of their sense of betrayal.

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CLEARANCES:

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Shiraz A-28

2.

I countered by expressing my sympathy with their concerns but also pointing out the President's need to be mindful of American national interests in Iran. With regard to the latter, I noted that the President is in the unfortunate position of being damned if he does and damned if he doesn't. Our official relations with Iran are on a government-to-government basis, and for the moment the Shah is the Chief of State and Sharif-Emami the Prime Minister. Moreover, despite the widespread unhappiness with the Shah and his government, there is no readily apparent alternative to them. Those opposed are united almost exclusively by negative considerations and to date have shown few signs of being capable of agreement on any issue other than their antipathy for the Shah. Under such circumstances, the Administration is inclined to see the Shah as Iran's best hope for continued economic and social development and ultimate return to political tranquility. Finally, I suggested that the potential for xenophobia has always been present in Iran and that whatever the President says about the Shah is unlikely to determine in any major way whether that potential is translated into actual anti-American manifestations or remains latent.

COMMENT:

This meeting probably did more to demonstrate this particular group's naivete about the realities of inter-governmental relationships than it did to prove Washington's ignorance about what is going on in Iran (a charge frequently made by several of these scholars). However, one point seems both valid and pertinent: Anti-Shah sentiment runs deep and broad throughout Iranian society and public pronouncements of support for him on our part in the face of this sentiment probably do little to enhance his ability to cope with it. He may indeed be Iran's best hope and our encouragement potentially could fortify him in his determination to persevere, but this encouragement would perhaps be as effective if offered privately as it is when given in public. An element of uncertainty has entered into Iran's political prospects in recent months, and under the circumstances it is just good poker to hedge our bets. Should the Shah prove incapable of meeting the present challenge to his rule, a public posture of detachment now would simplify reaching a subsequent accommodation with whatever or whoever may follow.

  
TOMSETH

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