

DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 21, 2006

DECLASSIFIED
Authority 969000
By *AK* Date 7/1/02

To → RS/AN
POB 13-2 IRAN

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

AIRGRAM

FOR RM USE ONLY

NEA-10		
RS/R	REP	AF
1		
ARA	EUR	FE
NEA	CU	INR
	3	6
E	P	IO
L	FBO	AID
		15
AGR	COM	FRB
	6	
INT	LAB	TAR
	6	
TR	XMB	AIR
		5
ARMY	CIA	NAVY
3	16	5
OSD	USIA	NSA
34	10	3
	NEW	NSC
	9	6

A-136
NO. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
RECEIVED
MAY 17 8 35 AM 1971
ANALYST SEARCH
TO : Department of State
INFO : KHORRAMSHAHR, TABRIZ
FROM : Amembassy TEHRAN
SUBJECT : Student Disturbances at Universities in Tehran
REF : Tehran 2294, May 3, 1971
DATE: May 10, 1971
File:

SUMMARY

During the past week, sizeable student strikes erupted at both Tehran and Arya Mehr Universities, resulting in police intervention on both campuses involving some fairly rough tactics, a large number of temporary arrests and even injury at the hands of the police of some students and faculty members.

The trouble began at Tehran University where some students marched on campus shouting slogans against the Shah, the White Revolution, the 25th Centenary Celebrations and praising the murder of General Farsiou. Similar sentiments (except for praise of Farsiou's murder and condemnation of the Shah) were expressed by students who demonstrated at Arya Mehr. The quick despatch of police to the perimeters of Polytechnic and National Universities seems to have prevented similar demonstrations there.

Although none of the four universities has been closed, attendance at all four is extremely low. One hundred-and-thirty of 180 full-time teachers at Arya Mehr were so angered by police behavior that they submitted their resignations and asked for some form of apology from the government.

While this semester has been marked by increasingly frequent student disturbances--and the appearance at Tehran University of a growing

Group 3
Downgraded at 12-year intervals,
not automatically declassified.

NEA/IRN
26 May 71

FORM 4-62 DS-323

FOR DEPT. USE ONLY
 In Out

Drafted by: POL:ALRaphel:psk - 5/8/71

Contents and Classification Approved by: DCM:DHeck

Clearances: POL:CWMcCaskill *lum*

1971 MAY 17 PM 3 07

COPYFLO-PBR

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 969000
By AK Date 7/1/02

Tehran A-136

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

2

anarchistic "violence for the sake of violence" among the students--the events of the past week have, in the opinion of most observers, exceeded the student-police confrontation of 1968 in terms of both severity and numbers.

It is possible--though far from certain--the forcefulness of the government's reaction to the most recent student demonstrations may serve to prevent further such demonstrations this academic year. It has, however, greatly widened the gap between the students, on the one side, and the administration and the government on the other. Unless actions are taken to reduce this gap--which would seem to require some conciliatory gesture from the university administrations and the government--it is difficult to see how the gap will not carry over into the next academic year and provide fuel for further student demonstrations then.

END SUMMARY

Tehran University

Tehran University has been plagued by intermittent student strikes since the beginning of the second semester. Several of the Colleges, including Engineering, Science and Law have been closed for a considerable part of the term, and student activism is increasing. The students are angered that five of their colleagues, picked up by Savak after the December disturbances on campus (when Dean Ganji of the Law Faculty was forced to leave his position because of student opposition to reforms he attempted to institute), have not yet been released. An additional three students were also detained by Savak and charged with involvement in the Siah Kal incident (see Tehran's A-91 of March 27, 1971), when government forces broke up a large band of dissidents operating in the mountains south of the Caspian littoral. The Engineering College has been in session only infrequently since the beginning of the semester and went on strike again on April 27.

In an effort to establish a "dialogue" with the students, the university administration arranged a meeting at which one of the Engineering professors was to discuss the campus situation with the students. The meeting was not successful, however, and was broken up when about 700 students began to march around the campus, shouting slogans against the White Revolution, the 25th Centenary Celebrations and the Shah. They also handed out leaflets praising the assassination of General Farsioc (Tehran's 1912, April 14, 1971) and supporting the Siah Kal dissidents. The police were sent onto the campus armed with riot clubs, sub-machine guns and gas masks. During the subsequent fighting, about 250 students were arrested and an equal number injured, several of them seriously. A number of teachers were also injured in the fighting.

The students demonstrated again on May 1, shouting, among other things, that "the College is closed and students are jailed". The University announced that the Engineering College would be closed for three days, and the students have been warned that if they do not attend classes once the

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 969000
By AK Date 7/1/02

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
3

College opens, they will lose all credit for this semester. The University has also said that it will follow the same policy toward any other colleges that go on strike.

As of May 8, a stalemate existed, with the police saying they will remain on campus until the students return to classes. The campus has been nearly deserted and students contend they will not return to classes until the police vacate the university premises. The Government's position is especially difficult since it officially justifies the police presence on campus as allowing "the vast majority of students" to attend classes free from "intimidation".

Arya Mehr University

Arya Mehr has always been the calmest of the universities in Tehran. Chancellor Reza Amin has established cordial relationships with his faculty and student body, so Arya Mehr has usually been free from student demonstrations such as occur at Tehran University. The recent demonstrations and police actions on the Arya Mehr campus are all the more noteworthy considering the school's history of having generally constructive and positive faculty-administration-student relationships.

On Saturday, May 1, about 500 students at the University demonstrated on campus, shouting slogans condemning the expenses being incurred for the 25th Centenary Celebrations. Riot police who had been stationed around the campus entered the university and began beating some of the demonstrators. About 400 students were arrested and a number injured. Riot police entered classrooms and arrested students en masse. The police also beat a number of faculty members, and one was hospitalized with two broken fingers, a broken arm and a broken skull.

The faculty became angered at the rough police tactics noting that the police entered the campus without being invited by the administration. Chancellor Reza Amin--who has the support of his faculty and close relations with the students--has not allowed the police onto the campus during former demonstrations, realizing that their presence could destroy his close rapport with the students. During the May 1 demonstrations, the police entered the campus over Amin's objections.

One hundred-and-thirty of the 180 full-time teachers and professors submitted a joint resignation to the university and stated they would not return to work until a number of their demands are met, the first of which was the dismissal of General Nassiri, Chief of Savak. Prime Minister Hoveyda met with Chancellor Amin on the evening of May 4 and told him that the teachers would not be allowed to resign. Amin then requested, and was granted, an audience with the Shah on the evening of May 5. Several representatives of the faculty also attended the audience at which time Amin described the faculty's position and the reasons for the resignations. The Shah finally agreed to order the Prime Minister to appoint an investigative committee to study the faculty's charges of police brutality during

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 969000
By AK Date 7/1/02

Tehran A-136

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

4

the demonstrations. The Committee began its work on May 6, and the Faculty members have agreed to withhold their resignations until the committee releases its findings and recommendations.

National and Polytechnic Universities

Both National and Polytechnic Universities are also being patrolled by riot police with batons and gas masks. There have not yet been demonstrations on either campus and the police have remained off the grounds, but it is obvious the government is highly concerned that sympathy demonstrations may be held at both universities. Student attendance is very low at both schools and many classes are not meeting.

Comment

Although student strikes at the universities in Tehran occur every semester, there have been a number of disturbing trends this academic year which indicate that student-university confrontations are increasing and posing increasingly bothersome problems for the GOI.

a) Increasing Number - During previous years, most Iranian universities were plagued by semi-annual strikes before each examination period when students protested examination schedules. However, during the past semester at Tehran University, the students have been out of classes for much of the term in several faculties. For example, in the Engineering Faculty they protested the detention of five students after the December disturbances and did not attend classes before the Now Ruz vacation (from mid-March to early April). After returning to classes for a few weeks, they are out on strike once again.

b) Increasing Radicalism and Violence - Former strikes at Iranian universities were usually centered around specific student demands, ranging from lower tuition fees to longer examination schedules--although the specific demands may often have been merely indicative of more substantial grievances about the educational and political structure in Iran. During this past academic year, however, a growing number of students are advocating radicalism for its own sake. Some students state they should emulate their Turkish colleagues. Also, since a university administrator was attacked by students in February and hospitalized with a concussion, several university administrators are afraid to walk on campus. This trend toward greater radicalism and violence has been evident throughout the semester.

c) More Radical Slogans - The recent disturbances at the Engineering College were marked by anti-Shah and anti-White Revolution slogans. Although during previous strikes, such slogans were painted on university walls and printed in leaflets, this is the first time in seven years they have been voiced so loudly during a student demonstration. This evidence of increasing boldness and dissatisfaction on the part of the students has

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 969000
By AK Date 7/1/02DECLASSIFIED
PA/HO Department of State
E.O. 12958, as amended
June 21, 2006

Tehran A-136

5

considerably unsettled university and security officials. Reportedly, the main impetus to send police onto the Tehran University campus was the slogans and leaflets praising the assassination of General Farsioc. One Iranian official told the Embassy that student praise for the assassination of a high-ranking military official was bound to provoke a strong reaction from the government.

d) Strong Official Reaction - Tehran University has reacted strongly and quickly to the most recent demonstrations. The threat to withhold credit for this semester if the Engineering students do not return to classes is a serious one, and it may engender an equally strong reaction from the students. Entry of the police on campus so soon after the most recent demonstrations began and the rough police tactics are an indication of the government's new "hard-line" and probably also reflect its concern over the anti-Shah and Farsioc slogans.

The Government's policy toward students has paralleled its policy toward laborers. It acquiesces in what it considers to be minor demands which do not threaten the stability of the educational or labor scene, but takes firm action to stop any "illegal" student or labor activities which may hamper the country's progress. The recent demonstrations on the Tehran campuses represent another swing in the pendulum which probably heralds the beginning of another era of tightening up on student demonstrations. Reportedly, the Shah told the Editor of the London Times on May 2 that he would not allow student "disruptionists" to hinder the course of Iran's "educational revolution" and also implied that he personally ordered the police onto the Tehran and Arya Mehr campuses.

A further indication of the new GOI "hard-line" toward students is reports, which the Embassy has received, that the Shah has questioned Iranian news media coverage of demonstrations by youth in Turkey, Western Europe and the United States. He reportedly has stated that it is not useful to carry such stories as they only provide a dangerous example for Iranian youth. Last month, the national television station carried a fifteen minute film on student demonstrations in Turkey. Reportedly, the station was told that such coverage should not be repeated in the future.

These trends all indicate that the already wide gulf between the students and the universities is becoming even larger and the government's credibility with the students is very low. The US-educated Dean of the Faculty of Political Science and Economics at National University told an Embassy officer that he had never seen such antipathy toward the government among students as had been generated by police actions against the universities in the previous few days. He added that the government will completely lose its credibility among students and large numbers of the faculty if it tries to blame the recent disturbances on "outside elements".

The events of the past week cannot be fully understood without mentioning the forces which have motivated the students. Undoubtedly, foreign influences, both by example and direct involvement, played a central role.

DECLASSIFIED

Authority 969000
By AK Date 7/1/02

Tehran A-136

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

6

The example of student activism and radicalism in the West and Turkey has given encouragement to Iranian students who wish to rebel against the educational and social system. Also, foreign powers, such as Iraq and the USSR have attempted and will certainly continue to attempt to exploit the students' dissatisfaction.

However, it would be remiss to overlook the fact that a large number of Iranian university students feel they have serious, legitimate grievances against the educational and political system in Iran and hope that their demonstrations will encourage changes in the system. These students are not swayed by outside influences and act from their own personal sense of frustration and impatience at what they see as inequities in the universities and the nation. It would be incomplete to blame the demonstrations completely on outside influences and not consider the students' personal and deeply-felt antipathies to many aspects of their environment.

Unless the university administrations and the government take some action to reduce the gap between themselves and the students and to increase understanding on both sides, it is probable that the animosity felt by the students will carry over into the next academic year and provide an incentive for further student demonstrations.

MACARTHUR

MacArthur