

MEMORANDUM

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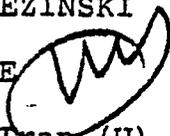
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NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL

November 9, 1979

INFORMATION

MEMORANDUM FOR: ZBIGNIEW BRZEZINSKI
FROM: PAUL B. HENZE 
SUBJECT: Thoughts on Iran (U)

I have no original thoughts to offer on how we get the hostages released and our Embassy back, but it is important to think beyond the current imbroglio and not let emotions generated during it undermine our longer-term interests in this part of the world. If there is leftist and/or Soviet input, directly or indirectly, into the Embassy takeover, the aim can only be to make it impossible for us to have any relations with Iran over an extended period of time. The fact that we were on the way to reestablishing a military relationship and American business was still able to function was inimical to leftist objectives. It is in the long-term interest of the left, much more than that of the religious fanatics, to have us out of Iran entirely; but it is very convenient for the left (whether they are manipulating or influencing the situation or not) to have the religious fanatics doing their work for them. (C)

The Espionage Theme

The charge that the American Embassy was a nest of espionage directed against the Iranian revolution is pervasive at present. It is a curious theme for religious fanatics to get stress, but not at all curious for leftists. Can it be entirely accidental that this theme has been prominent among a whole series of anti-U.S. themes in Soviet clandestine broadcasts to Iran over recent weeks? (See the attached summary with excerpts of NVOI monitoring--TAB A.) all these accusations are, of course, part of the current anti-U.S. rhetoric. (U)

Fragmentation?

Along with China, Ethiopia and Egypt, Iran is one of the oldest polities in the world. We hardly need any more demonstration than we have already had of the strength of Iranian nationalism.

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These facts alone argue against any espousal by us of fragmentation/separatism. So does U.S. experience and basic policy. We avoided supporting separatist movements in Congo/Zaire, Nigeria, Ethiopia and can be thankful in each instance that we did. The destabilization which support of separatism in Iran would cause in the whole region would be awesome. In the short- and medium-term such an approach could only serve Soviet interests. We do not need to support brutal Iranian oppression of Kurds, Arabs, Azeris, Beluches, etc. either-- but we should be completely clear about support for Iranian territorial integrity. Within that territorial integrity, there is plenty of room for minority rights. (U)

Intelligence:

It is supremely ironic that we should stand accused of so much espionage out of our Embassy in Tehran when we have done so little. What modest efforts there have been in recent months will no doubt be shattered by what has just happened. But we can't simply close up and forget Iran. We have had so little luck [redacted] with the intelligence problem here that a special task-force effort to gather intelligence on Iran through all possible channels outside of Iran and through friendly governments inside of Iran needs to be made. (C)

Retaliation?

If worse comes to worst in Tehran, agitation in the U.S. for revenge and retaliation will be intense. We are likely to hurt ourselves more than the Iranian fanatics by any violent actions, emotionally satisfying as they may be on a temporary basis. And the left will know how to exploit such actions to our discredit and loss. We must still have a lot of friends in Iran. Retaliation will only make it more difficult for them eventually to assert themselves. (U)

Break Off Relations?

Keep the Ethiopian example in mind: we came close to breaking off relations there and some leftist and pro-Soviet elements clearly wanted us out. We did not have to put up with anything approaching the level of destructive provocation we now have in Tehran, but it was worth holding on. We are better off having regular diplomatic relations with Ethiopia [redacted] than we would be if they had been severed. Sooner or later the same

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will be true of Iran. If we have to take everybody who is now there out, we should send at least one man over to maintain a link, or set up a small interests section in an allied embassy. We could even maintain relations but not have a resident embassy--as we do in many places in the world. (C)

Attachment
TAB A

cc: Sick/Hunter w/att
Bremont w/att
Ermarth w/att
Welch w/att
Griffith w/att

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