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*CIA/ONE-STAFF MEM/54-61*

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

15 September 1961

STAFF MEMORANDUM 54-61 (Internal O/NE Working Paper -  
CIA Distribution Only)

SUBJECT: Soviet Pressure on CENTO: A Tentative Evaluation

1. In recent weeks the USSR has sharply increased its pressure on Turkey, Iran, and Pakistan, the Middle Eastern members of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO). In each case, the pressure has been related to Soviet publication of classified Baghdad Pact documents, presumably acquired as a result of the 1958 revolution in Iraq. In Turkey, the Soviets, disregarding objections from the Turkish Government, have insisted on publicizing documents which charge the alliance members with aggressive intentions.

2. The Soviet radio beamed at Iran has highlighted alleged Baghdad Pact plans for nuclear attacks on the USSR and an "atomic death zone" in Iran. Taking off from this, the Soviet ambassador in Tehran and his associates have threatened

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to intervene under Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921, unless Iran leaves CENTO.\* The Soviet press and radio have used a purported Baghdad Pact document proposing the partition of Afghanistan between Iran and Pakistan to exacerbate already tense relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan and to threaten the latter with massive Soviet support for Afghanistan.

3. We believe that these threats should be considered primarily as part of a general policy of bluster and intimidation consequent on the Berlin crisis. Moscow probably finds them useful both as diversionary efforts to distract the West from Berlin and as devices aimed at breaking down the morale and will to resist of the recipient countries. For the time being at least, we believe the chances are against any major Soviet effort deliberately to open "a second front" against the West in this area -- although the pressure here, as elsewhere on the periphery, will probably be intensified and diversified further as the Berlin crisis grows more tense.

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\*The Soviets have consistently asserted that certain provisions of the treaty, initially designed to enable the USSR to take action against any counterrevolutionary forces which might establish themselves in Iran, gave them the right to intervene against any "aggressive forces" in Iran.

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4. It would probably be unwise, however, to dismiss Soviet threats against the CENTO countries as nothing more than parts of a truculent Berlin policy. The Soviet Union has long chafed over what it regards as US efforts to develop military bases in this area and by now has given up hope that any of the present CENTO governments can be cajoled into dropping their US ties. In the case of Turkey, protected by NATO, strongly anti-Russian by tradition, and fairly stably governed, we doubt that the current pressure campaign is designed to do more than generally raise tension. However, Iran and Pakistan are more vulnerable.

5. In the case of Iran, Khrushchev appears never to have forgiven the Shah for initiating and then breaking off negotiations for a non-aggression pact in 1959. While the Tudeh (Iranian Communist) Party has relatively little internal capability at the present time, Khrushchev has repeatedly emphasized the instability of the present Iranian Government and has made no secret of his expectations that it will fall of its own weight in the not too distant future. He is also aware of the possibilities for subversion offered by Iran's geographic proximity to the USSR and the presence there of discontented minorities, such as the Kurds and Azerbaijanis.

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6. No such opportunities for subversion exist in regard to Pakistan. However, the tentative moves toward an improvement in Soviet-Pakistani relations (Soviet assistance in oil exploration and land desalinization) which took place earlier this year have been overshadowed by Ayub's visit to the US and his outspoken statements in favor of the Western position on Berlin. Pakistan's quarrel with Afghanistan is now at its most acute stage. With the Pakistani-Afghan border closed and the prospect of fighting between the two countries increasing, the USSR will have a chance to make Afghanistan virtually completely dependent on it; if this fighting actually breaks out, much of Pakistan's army and many of its resources could be tied down in futile guerrilla warfare.

7. In general, we do not think that the USSR by its own actions will seek to provoke another confrontation with the West over Iran or over the Pakistani-Afghan situation. In both cases, however, it will probably continue vigorously to fish in the existing troubled waters; should a new development take place in either one of them which could be utilized to Soviet advantage, the USSR might be prepared to take strong measures to exploit it, regardless of the current state of the Berlin crisis.

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