Telegram from the British Embassy in Tehran to the Foreign Office, London, describing Russian activity in Iran, 11 July 1945

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FROM TEHRAN TO FOREIGN OFFICE

IMMEDIATE

There are many signs that Russians are making a tremendous effort to obtain virtual mastery over this country before the moment of evacuation arrives.

2. Violent article in Pravda mentioned in my telegram No. 689 suggests that action is being justified before the event by the manufacture of evidence which, as the Russians are well aware, no one on the other side can expose for lack of means of publicity.

3. Efforts of Tudeh[[1]](#footnote-1) backed by Russians to stir up industrial unrest are now to be backed powerfully by strong Russian Trades Union Delegation which has arrived in Tehran and is already holding out to Persian Trade Unionists the hope of a seat and a vote on Paris Trades Union International. Delegates are beginning tour with Isfahan, where the chief opponent of Tudeh was recently murdered in the street and where Persian authorities are already much too terrified of the Russians to pursue enquiry into the murder seriously.

4. There is no doubt that in part of Northern Kurdistan to which Russians do not allow Persia to send troops, Kurdish independence movement is being encouraged.

5. Tudeh emissaries are working hard in the villages in the north and north west often, if not always, urging non-payment of rent, and opposition to them is paralysed by fear. I am obliged to accept at least in part evidence that if emissaries are not actually accompanied by Red Army soldiers, such soldiers often happen to be in the vicinity at the critical moment.

6. Local officials in the north have no control whatsoever over Tudeh. I have as yet no confirmation of recent reports that Tudeh are forming Soviets in Resht, Tobriz and elsewhere in the north but their complete independence of control is shown by the fact, witnessed recently by our Press Attaché in more than one place in the north, that Tudeh agents wearing arm bands setting out their functions search all vehicles leaving for the south and confiscate all rice found in them. Excuse given is that rice is being exported but if the Russians had managed to induce Millspaugh[[2]](#footnote-2) to agree to another Russian barter scheme it is unlikely that Tudeh would have stopped export of rice to Russia.

7. The Russians are using Radio Tehran for violent political propaganda. One recent broadcast was against Fascists in United States. Another comprised items on British elections (objective but not their business), one item against anti-Soviet influences in various countries, violent attack on Swedish Government and highly critical items about the Doenitz Government.[[3]](#footnote-3)

9. It seems improbable that the Russians will try to bring off some violent coup, though in the absence of publicity even this cannot be entirely excluded. Most probable explanation is that they are determined to force upon the electors so many of their candidates that even if Tudeh has not a majority in the Majlis it will in fact be able to run it.

10. No one could blame the Persian Government if they refused to hold elections until after the withdrawal of foreign troops but in that case the Russians would almost certainly cause elections to be held for Soviet or provincial councils in the north. Possible remedies are

1. visit of a party of journalists who would be able and not afraid to publish their views and in view of servile attitude of English press towards Russia as reported in a recent Foreign Office telegram, they must be American or
2. admission of foreign observers to all parts of Persia at the time of the elections (in view of our policy in Greece suggestion to this effect would not be unreasonable).

11. Withdrawal of British and Russian troops from considerable area of Persia would, of course, have an excellent effect. Even withdrawal from Tehran alone would put heart into the Government and administration. And I again repeat my conviction that if the Russians refuse to evacuate even Tehran it would pay us to leave the city immediately. Apart from the effect on Persia this would make it extremely difficult for the Russians to convince the world of the genuineness of the elections resulting in their favour in areas dominated by their troops.

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Keywords: inter-allied relations, Iran

1. Tudeh – The Tudeh (masses) party was the communist party of Iran. Formed in 1941, by 1945 it was a significant political force in Iran. See Abrahamian, *Modern Iran,* 107-113. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Millspaugh, Arthur Chester (1883–1955), former adviser at the [U.S. State Department](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_Department_of_State)’s Office of the Foreign Trade, who was hired to re-organize the Finance Ministry of [Iran](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Iran) from 1922–1927 and 1942-1945 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The reference here is to the Flensburg Government, the remaining political authority in the Third Reich after Hitler’s and Goebells’ suicide. Grand Admiral Karl Donitz, who had been designated President in Hitler’s last will and testament, hoped that the allies would accept his government as a provisional government. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)