

THE COLD WAR COMES TO IRAN  
GREAT POWER BARGAINING OVER INFLUENCE, 1943-1947

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May, 1971

## A Note on the Draft

This is very much a draft. Moreover, it was not written at one stretch or even in one frame of mind. I know therefore that it contains repetitions of theme and unevenness. I have further research to do in other libraries, primarily on British and Soviet policy.

I fear also that it is excessively detailed and chronological in present form. There are two reasons for this. First, since the background of the dispute does not seem to be widely known, or at least is not reflected in most accounts of the climactic stages, I thought it important to supply a good deal. Second, since the ultimate outcome of the crisis--the complete displacement of Soviet power from Iran and the concomittant ascendance of American influence--was clear, but the point at which this became a certainty was not, I found it necessary this first time through the material to follow the process almost blow by blow to show how long the issue remained in doubt. This dispute was long in brewing and in resolving.

In the next revision I will attempt to do three things:

1. Condense the historical material.
2. Integrate into the text more analysis of bargaining strategies.
3. Comment more on how the Iranian case relates to scholarly controversy over the origins of the cold war.

May 21, 1971

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### I. General Remarks on the Iranian Case

Recent scholarship on the early Cold War has questioned traditional Western interpretations of a number of fundamental points, such as belief in America's relative weakness in the crucial stages of postwar bargaining, in the essentially nebulous and reactive character of American policy, and in Russia's responsibility for acting first to close off avenues of possible concert and agreement. A case study of Soviet-American bargaining in the postwar dispute over Iran provides a good opportunity to test and hopefully to advance the process of rethinking. The case itself is worth close attention. It was the first major public dispute between the contestants in the emerging conflict. The maneuvering for influence in postwar Iran began deep in the war years---as early as 1943. And it was only in the first half of 1948 that a relatively stable definition of rights and interests in the country was established. A study of the emergence and resolution of the issue requires taking a new look at a whole range of problems relating to the power, goals, and bargaining strategies of both sides.

The Soviet Union, despite an impressive power position and array of bargaining levers, was defeated on practically every demand it raised. Not only were the Soviets "contained" from expansion in Iran. They suffered also a kind of "roll-back" from previously acquired influence. Beyond that, the outcome of the crisis demonstrated the Soviet Union's inability to prevent the west from consolidating and in some respects even expanding its influence in Iran in ways denied the Soviet Union. This impressive defeat was accomplished by a belated and not always coordinated diplomatic response by Iran, Britain, and the United States.

The outcome suggests that Soviet power, resolve, and staying-power in areas of any but the most obvious vital concern may have been weaker than is generally held. Western effectiveness, by contrast, even in an area near to and physically in part, occupied by the adversary, was quite high. (note: see below\*) The prominence of the oil concession issue in Iran indicates the importance of economic stakes to both sides, although more traditional geo-political considerations certainly entered in. There is some evidence in the Iranian case, that the Cold War is as much a story of competing imperialisms as one of a mechanistic restoration of "balance," or, more unlikely still, of a conflict of governmental ideals. Unless one avoids the issue of the role of economic stakes by equating the getting and keeping of access to oil with the presumably more disinterested or natural imperatives of righting the balance of power, Iran poses some difficult problems for power or ideological models of the Cold War.

\*On the uniqueness of the Soviet defeat in Iran, Seton-Watson has pointed out that the withdrawal from Azerbaijan in 1946 is the only case since 1945 when Moscow gave up a territory in which a communist regime has been created. See The New Imperialism, pg. 111.

On the difficulty of accounting for the Soviet withdrawal at least under accepted assumptions, Librach, The Rise of the Soviet Empire, pg.193, writes:

"It is still not entirely clear why twice, in 1921 and 1946, Soviet Russia evacuated its troops from occupied Persian provinces in which the formation of Soviet regimes was already well underway. In both cases Western reaction was not sufficiently strong to force a Russian withdrawal."

The Iranian conflict did not involve a high probability of war between the great powers. Nor did it lead to a direct military confrontation between them. But in other respects it displayed the features of a serious international crisis. The dispute which erupted in fall, 1945, commanded the attention and energies of the great powers off and on for two and a half years. At the most intense point of conflict--the deliberations at the United Nations in 1946-- all parties to the crisis attributed great importance to its outcome, viewing it as an integral part of the wider competition crystallizing at the time. A great variety of bargaining approaches and tactics were tried. The basic Soviet strategy was to exert influence through the actions of proxies in Iran, or through direct contact with the Iranian central government, while rejecting the inclusion of other great powers as parties to the dispute. Avoidance of direct responsibility for, and international discussion of, the changes it aspired to in Iran was the Soviet Union's chief tactical principle. The western powers, too, employed, or benefited by actions of proxies or local forces at many stages of the crisis, and sought, in certain respects like Russia, to prevent the issue from becoming a direct conflict between the great powers. When the strategy of seeking mutual if not symmetrical disentanglement failed, they moved to one of diplomatic confrontation. Once the issue of control over Iran was placed clearly in the context of the developing global balance of power and interests, the ineffectiveness of the essentially local Russian strategy (bi-lateral coercion and conciliation of Iran) was revealed.

A detailed analysis of the bargaining will begin here in the months of August to November, 1945. At this point in the development of wartime relations in Iran, the Soviet Union and its allies in the country began

active, sometimes military efforts to create an autonomous republic of Azerbaijan, opposed to the western backed central government and favorable to other Soviet demands on Iran. The Western powers and Iran in turn began to take a posture of concerted and clear opposition to Soviet aspirations. This date allows us to begin close analysis of the bargaining at the point when great power disagreements began to be direct and public, and when a crisis atmosphere begins to emerge. The roots of the disagreement reach considerably further back in time, however, and a long, some what discontinuous bargaining process was well underway before August, 1945. The sources of the conflict and the early, "non-crisis" bargaining strategies of the parties involved will therefore be treated at length in order to give full comprehension of the significance of the stakes and the varieties of bargaining behavior involved.

## II. Systemic Environment

### A. System Structure

International systems must be characterized in terms both of the distribution of power and of the pattern of alignment among the powers, or how power is usually deployed. On neither point was the international environment in the years of the Iranian dispute--1943 to 1948-- easily defined. In terms of the distribution of power, the system was an emergent bipolar one, but: (a) as long as Germany and Japan continued the war, neither America nor Russia could spend full time contemplating their imminent emergence as the two nations who counted most, even though defeat of the Axis powers was only a matter of time after Stalingrad; and (b) British power continued to count heavily in world politics as late as 1947. In terms of the pattern of policies, the system was a latent bipolar one, but: (a) for a long period, and especially in the Middle East, the policy antagonisms were tri-polar--Britain vs the Soviet Union vs America; and (b) it was not until 1947 or 48 that the possibility of a Soviet-American duopoly or concert was decisively shattered. These years witness the working out of a bipolar structure of power that was perhaps inevitable given the destruction of European and British power by the war, and of a bipolar structure of policies that was hard to avoid given the values and ideological fervor of the main survivors. The Iranian case coincides with and is part of this crystallization.

The role of international organizations becomes interesting in this regard. The United Nations was not, of course, a power in its own right. But because of the tremendous political importance attributed to it at the time as an instrument of international diplomacy, and conceivably, military cooperation, none of the great powers could avoid seeking to influence the future of the organization. Great expectations, therefore, or more accurately, great uncertainties about the role of the UN, made it an important resource.



## B. Ideological Character of the System

Although it wasn't until 1946 or 47 that the ideological character of the bipolar pattern of power and diplomatic alignment became clearly defined, both poles in the emerging system promoted policy aims which, because of their presumed universal validity contained this likelihood from the start. As policies began to conflict sharply on almost every front, a definition of interests that questioned the basic legitimacy of the other's presence was readily at hand. The source of this attitude on the Russian side lay in a combination of communist doctrine on the unremitting and historically ordained struggle of capitalism and communism, and of ~~nationalist~~ universalism dating from the days of Pan-Slavism. The American sense of bearing universal right was compounded of the country's historical separation from European power politics and world politics generally, of the resultant feeling of moral superiority, and of a conception of the United States as not only the two-time savior of Western civilization but also the exemplar of its future. Both sides could and did say that they wanted something completely different than the other, and for reasons of a completely different order. Again, however, as in the discussion of the bipolar systemic structure, the development of ideological heterogeneity must be viewed as a strong potentiality in this period, not an accomplished fact. Other definitions of the diplomatic situation--the nature and validity of each sides motives, possible principles of settlement--were current, if not as likely prevail. Most important among them were the ideas of a great power concert through the United Nations and of mutually agreed recognition of each other's sphere of vital interest. Had either of these philosophies of foreign policy and international order prevailed, the inherent conflict of bipolarity would have been muted considerably.

The ideological division in the system between the great powers was often expressed in even more complicated form within less powerful nations, where the Second World war had created threefold divisions among collaborationist, exile, and resistance forces. The presence of such splits made it easier for outside parties competing for an area to strike alliances with local elements, or at least to fabricate them. Thus the universalist exclusive tendencies in the ideologies

of the super powers, and the complicated political and ideological terrain in many of the countries being fought over rendered agreements on legitimacy and non-intervention difficult to attain.

### C. Military Technology

The development during World War II of long range air power and ever greater explosives culminating in the atomic bomb promised to transform the character of strategy and men's calculations about the risks and duration of war in the postwar period. And yet, in the early years after the war, the period of the confrontation over Iran, these changes in the speed, range, and destructiveness of weapons systems were not sufficiently advanced or integrated into military planning that traditional force planning and strategic assumptions were outmoded. In the war itself, civilian bombing, whether for terroristic or more strictly military purposes, had not been the decisive factor: The defeat of both Germany and Japan required the almost complete elimination of their armed forces in the field. And after the war the military planning of both sides continued to rest for a long time on assumptions from the pre-nuclear era. Strategic nuclear arms threatened to reduce lead time to almost nothing and to put a premium on forces in being. But actual planning and much military theorizing proceeded under the traditional expectations that the impact of industrial potential brought to bear over a long period of fighting would be decisive. Granted that a mixture of strategic postures and philosophies prevailed in the system in this period, the discovery, possession, and use of the atomic bomb by the United States was the dominating military fact. Whether or not atomic weapons could be employed rationally as instruments of deterrence and defense, whether or not they could be integrated into traditional approaches to war, both sides understood that the development and use of nuclear capabilities would decisively affect their relations. Russia's attempt at atomic espionage and the transparency of the Baruch plan as a guarantee of the American monopoly demonstrate this at one level. Steps by the United States to establish the bases and forces necessary for atomic war, and the corresponding efforts of the Soviets as the have-not power to extend their defensive glacis as protection against a forward strategy were more significant demonstrations. (See P.M.S. Blackett, \_\_\_\_\_, p. )

#### D. Alliances and Alignments

TO BE ADDED

#### III. Recent Relations between the Parties to the Crisis .

The main actors in the crisis are the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain, and the Iranian central government. At time, other domestic political forces in Iran play a role--though whether as proxies or independent actors needs to be determined in each case. These forces are the Tudeh or "masses" party, a left-wing, anti-governmental party which, though a nation-wide organization, was strongest in the north where the Soviet occupation authorities backed it; the Azerbaijanian and Kurdish People's Republics, also Soviet backed; and a variety of conservative or feudal tribes in souther Iran, the area of British oil interests.

We will examine the background to the crisis under three headings: A.) The General State of Relations between the Great Powers During World War II. B) Recent Relations in Iran, including 1. Historical Involvement in Iran of the Main Parties, 2. The Strategic and Economic Importance of Iran in World Politics during the War and and Postwar Years, and, 3. Joint Wartime Diplomacy in Iran, 1941-45. C) The Precipitation of Serious Conflict between the Parties in Iran, November 1945.

##### A. General State of Relations During World War II

Diplomatic relations between the big three on the prosecution of the war frequently involved drawn-out arguments, the most important one concerning the timing of the second front against Germany, but, by and large, the basic decisions on strategy, including Russian entrance into the Far Eastern War, were made without serious disagreements. On the matter of the principles and procedure of postwar settlements, however, discussions during the war years had revealed deep differences of approach. While these persistent differences didn't erupt into visible and unbridgeable divisions until 1945-47, they had begun to cloud relations among the allies well before the war ended and so must be recounted as part of the background.

The Soviet Union was most precise in its conception of and insistent in pressing for an early allied agreement on the postwar arrangement of power and control. As



as the winter of 1941, and thereafter with monotonous regularity and marginal changes of content, Stalin and Molotov pressed for a British-American commitment to recognize Russia's borders roughly as they had been before the Russian attack. (Lukacs, 42-44.)

The rationale for these demands was simple. Russia was fighting so hard, Stalin said, and would suffer so much in the war against the Germans, that it was inconceivable that the allies would deny her control of a protective glacis of territory along her western border against the possibility of renewed invasion. (Williams, 210-214.) In the 1941 talks, as again in the famous spheres of influence discussions with Churchill in 1944, Stalin offered explicit assurances of Russian support for a comparably privileged British security position in Western Europe and other areas of vital concern. (Herz, 43.) At issue was not international law or forms of government, but rather the demands of great power security; more particularly, the security of the great powers making the supreme national sacrifice of defeating Hitler. As Stalin phrased it at Potsdam during the dispute over Poland: "Poland borders on the Soviet Union, which cannot be said about Great Britain or the U.S.A... I do not know whether a genuinely representative Government has been established in Greece, or whether the Belgian Government is a genuinely democratic one. The Soviet Union was not consulted when those Governments were being formed, nor did it claim the right to interfere in those matters, because it realizes how important Belgium and Greece are to the security of Great Britain." (La Feber, 18, quoting Department of State, Potsdam, I, 715, 784-785.)

While it is true that the Soviets declared their support of various documents--the Atlantic Charter, Moscow Declaration, Declaration on Liberated Europe--whose universalist and democratic spirit seemed to preclude the institution of traditional spheres of influence and to insure joint great power action, in each of these cases Soviet negotiators insisted on inserting clauses which reserved their freedom of action in areas they held to be vital to their interests. (Herz, P. 50.) On the consistency and explicitness of Soviet diplomacy during the war, Adam Ulam says the following in his impressive essay on Soviet Foreign Policy:

None of Russia's post-war moves can in all fairness be described as bolts from the blue. In most cases they had ample precedent in age-long aspirations of Russian foreign policy. And in many cases Stalin and his associates must have felt that they had stated their post-war ambitions and aims to their Western associates during the course of the war and that their allies' reaction had then been... of the kind to encourage them to pursue those aims." (Ulam, p. 429)

The British government, while hesitant early in the war to give final assent to reciprocal spheres of influence agreements, attempted to do so more and more as the conflict progressed. It acknowledged the logic of the Soviet position, and frequently tried to explain to the Americans the consequences of ignoring it. Eden warned in 1942 that the American attitude of refusing even to discuss a possible division of influence "... will surely appear to Stalin so uncollaborative a state of mind as to confirm his suspicions that he can expect no consideration for Russia's interests from ourselves or the United States." (Williams, p. 213) Later in the war the argument focussed more on the unreality and futility of continuing to deny Russian domination in areas where it already was a fact of life. The record of British diplomacy especially reveals that open disagreements over access and control in the postwar years were deeply rooted in the diplomacy of the Grand Alliance, even in the period when common didication to defeating Germany caused each side to avoid ideological language and statements critical of the other.

As persistent as the Russian demand for agreement on mutual spheres of influence was the American refusal even to contemplate a reversion to that language and practice of international political settlement. Hull and Roosevelt rejected on every occasion Soviet and British arguments that acceptance of this principle of settlement would minimize suspicion and uncertainty on both sides about the extent and motivation of policy aspirations after the war. American diplomacy sought instead to gain advance agreement on the principle of the "Open Door" and a great power commitment to participation in an international security organization after the war. On numerous occasions Roosevelt and other U.S. policy makers stated that there was not issue any where in the world which America would not insist on participating in settling. (Schlesinger, "Origins of the Cold War.") The precise mixture of naivete and

self-interest in such claims, and in the attempt to postpone hard territorial questions until the fighting ceased is a Key issue in the interpretation of the cold war by orthodox and revisionist scholars. (On Hull's advocacy of free trade and the Open Door as a cover for American economic interests, see John M. Blum, "Limits of American Internationalism; 1941-45," in Krieger, p. 387-401; more generally, on the question of the self-interested character of American multilateralism and internationalism, see Williams, ch. 6, and Kolko, ch. 11, and passim.) What can be said here is that at the level of American practice, self-serving elements were unmistakable: For all Hull's rhetoric against spheres of influence, everyone in the U.S. government admitted privately that any idea of equal access to Latin America was unacceptable; and they understood that the Soviet Union would never think of claiming such access. (See a statement by Kennan on this point, in Schlesinger, p. \_\_\_\_). And, in Italy, the first Axis country to surrender, the occupation arrangements instituted in 1943 by the British and Americans excluded the Soviet Union from any significant participation. This established an important precedent, which Stalin was to cite frequently, whereby "military occupation came to mean--by and large--political domination...". (Robertson, p. 22).

#### B. Recent Relations in Iran

The inability or unwillingness of the great powers to agree during the war on workable principles of settlement can be seen also in their wartime deliberations over Iran, and contributed to the worsening of suspicion and ultimately direct conflict that emerged there. But in order to understand the specific clash of interests that evolved, we must review at some length (1) the historical involvement in Iran of the main parties to the crisis, (2) the economic and strategic importance of Iran in the world politics of the war and postwar years, and (3) the course of wartime diplomacy in the country itself.

##### 1. Historical Involvement in Iran of the Parties to the Crisis

Throughout the 19th century Iran (Persia until 1935) was a focal point of Anglo-Russian rivalry. Nationals of both countries obtained various commercial rights, the most important being the British oil concession, which began to yield

significant production in the last years before World War I. British interests were strategic as well as commercial; initially the protection of India from Russian expansion, and then progressively also the defense of their quasi-protectorates along the eastern litoral of the Arabian peninsula. Russia, in addition to seeking equal commercial access, paid special attention, not always successfully, to keeping the five northern provinces of the country free of other foreign powers. (Hurewitz, Middle East Dilemmas, p. 8-10, Schwadran, p. 100).

In a situation remarkably similar to that which would emerge after World War II, Iran was occupied by Russian and then British forces for four years in the concluding and immediate post-war phases of World War I, and also experienced the establishment of short-lived, Soviet-backed independent republic in the province of Gilan in 1921-22. Both great powers tried to use their temporary military presence and various political and financial inducements to obtain more favorable relationships in Iran. The British failed to get major new preferences because of nationalist outcries against their policies, but they managed, through a series of treaties with moderate nationalists during the inter-war years, to yield on issues not vital to their imperial interests while safeguarding essential positions. The new Soviet regime liquidated the Gilan republic and unilaterally cancelled privileges won by the Tsars, in return for treaty assurances that Iran would not become a base of operations against Soviet security by a foreign power, and that the returned concessions were not to be ceded to a third power. An important clause in the Soviet-Persian Friendship Treaty of 1921 gave the Soviet Union the right to intervene militarily if Iran were unable to prevent such an occurrence; this clause was invoked by the Soviets in their dispute with Iran in 1945-46. As part of their efforts to ward off Soviet encroachments in this period, the Iranians appealed at one point to the League of Nations, providing it with one of its first cases, just as they would go to the U.N. (with greater success) in 1946. (Kirk, 19-23; Hurewitz, Dilemmas, 11-13; Gathorne-Hardy, p. 139; Ramazani, p. 151; text of Soviet-Persian Treaty of February 26, 1921 in Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 90-94.)



American interests in Iran prior to World War II were minimal. On two occasions American nationals had served as financial advisers to the government, and for brief periods in the 20's and 30's the State Department had vigorously but inconclusively backed private efforts to gain oil concessions there. (Schwadran, p. 100-101; Cottam, 206-208; Hurewitz, Dilemmas, 14-17.)

## 2. Strategic and Economic Importance of Iran during and after the War

The beginning of the Second World War forced Britain and the Soviet Union to reassert their strategic interests in Iran, this time through a joint occupation. But before discussing the occupation and its consequences, the economic and strategic importance of Iran in world politics must be filled in.

Iran was strategically significant during World War II as an area which had to be denied the Axis powers, who might have used it for incursions into the Arab states, and, more dangerously but less likely, for a link-up of German and Japanese forces in the Indian Ocean. It was also the second most important route of Western supply to the Soviet Union and had to be kept free of Nazi control and internally malleable for these purposes.

Seen from the perspective of the West in the emerging cold war conflict, Iran constituted, along with Turkey, the main buffer against Soviet acquisition of warm-water ports with the greater maneuverability that implied for military activity in the Mediterranean, the Middle East, and Indian Ocean. It also represented a potential forward base for defensive or offensive military preparations against the Soviet Union. From the Soviet perspective, Iran represented a historic buffer against a direct foreign presence on Soviet borders, a semi-feudal, semi-colonial country potentially susceptible to Soviet or Communist political penetration, and a chance to gain a strategic foothold for operations going beyond immediate self-defense.

The role of oil: In the period from 1920 to the end of World War II, total Middle Eastern oil production increased almost twenty-fold, in comparison to a world increase of almost four-fold. Although by the end of the war Middle Eastern oil still only amounted to around 7% of total world production, Western authorities were

predicting that a major shortage of oil reserves could only be avoided by continued rapid development of Middle Eastern sources, which were judged to contain 45% of the world's proven reserves. By 1959 the early post-war fear of scarcity had given way to a specter of uncontrolled plenty, but in 1945 during the war itself, America and Britain in particular, and the Soviet Union somewhat more ambiguously, devoted intensive diplomatic efforts to maintain and expand access to Middle Eastern oil. (Calculations from Longrigg, p. 276-177; see also Engler, p. 65-57, and Mikesell and Chenery, p. 2-13, 177, and ch. 3.)

By far the most significant oil producing facility in the Middle East, both before, during, and for several years after the Second World War, was the British controlled refinery at Abadan in southwestern Iran. Indeed, the Abadan complex was, as of 1947, the fourth largest producing company in the world, and the second largest exporter. The northern provinces of Iran, which would become the object of Soviet oil aspirations in 1944, were believed to be potentially rich in reserves, but no reserves had been obtained there by a variety of international operations during the past half-century. In fact an October, 1946 report by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff on the strategic importance of Iran to America took for granted the judgement that the north was an unlikely source of much oil. (Longrigg, 276-277; Mikesell/Chenery, 40-43; Schwadran, p. 100; U.S., Foreign Relations, 46, 47, 529-530.)

Control over the growing and increasingly coveted oil resources of the Middle East at the end of the war was in no sense evenly distributed between East and West. The United States, in 1946, accounted for 63% of the world's production of oil, the Soviet Union 6%. Of proven oil reserves in the world, American, British, and Dutch companies controlled 86%. The American share of this control excluding reserves within U.S. territory, was 42%. By contrast, Soviet control of proven world reserves, all within Soviet territory, amounted to 9%. Looking more closely at the Middle East, the disparities of control were even greater. Of proven reserves in the area, American British, and Dutch companies controlled 94%, the Soviet Union none. The American share in this case was 42%. (Mikesell/Chenery, p. 177-178.)

Western writing on the control of oil resources in the world and in the Middle East at this time accepts the exclusion of the Soviet Union from access to overseas supplies as both natural, given her rather plentiful reserves at home, and necessary, given the immense consumption needs of the Western nations and the suspect political goals of the Soviet Union. The idea that the great and growing imbalance of access to world reserves might cause resentment and insecurity leading to conflict is never encountered. (A rare reference to the problem in official discussion is contained in a memorandum from Joseph Davies, Chairman of the War Relief Control Board, to President Truman just before the Potsdam Conference, in which Davies said the U.S. might be prepared for a Soviet complaints about inequitable distribution, especially in the Near East. See US, FR, Potsdam I, 217-218.) And yet, given the proximity of the country in question (Iran) to the Soviet Union, and the already enormous areas of Western control there and elsewhere in the region, it must be asked whose interest in further overseas expansion into oil rich areas was the more natural and necessary. The question of differential grounds for access to oil will be dealt with at greater length in subsequent discussions of the stakes of the crisis.

### 3. Joint Wartime Diplomacy in Iran, 1941-45

In August, 1941, shortly after the German invasion of Russia and a pro-Axis coup in neighboring Iraq, Great Britain and the Soviet Union jointly occupied Iran as a precautionary measure against an extension of Nazi control there, but more importantly to assure the continued freedom of Iran as a route of military aid to the Soviet Union and access to the British oil fields in Abadan. (One writer judges that without Iranian oil the war might not have been won. See Van Wagenen, note, p.17.) Before the occupation, both countries had advised the Iranian monarch, Riza Shah, to take steps to eliminate growing German influence, but he had failed to comply. Not only was his country occupied as a result: The Shah was forced into retirement and replaced by his more cooperative son. Precedent for the occupation could be found as far back as 1907 when Britain and Russia, then also confronted with the growth of German power, had divided Persia into spheres of influence as part of a broader agreement in the colonial areas. This time they arrived at a similar division of

control, the Soviet Union in the five northern provinces, Britain in the central and southern areas, with a neutral zone in between. The capital, Teheran, was occupied jointly. (See Kirk, 129-141; and Albrecht-Carrie, 255-259.)

The Persian operation itself, though "practically unique in the completely harmonious synchronization of British and Russian actions," was not without signs of mutual suspicion: Churchill was anxious to keep Russian influence limited, and suggested to Stalin that Britain would take full responsibility if the Soviets needed their troops elsewhere. Stalin declined the offer. (Ulam, p 33 (check); McNeill, 54.) The Iranians accepted the occupation only under compulsion and cooperated half-heartedly when at all with their protectors. In order to assuage their fears and to give the occupation legal footing, Britain and the Soviet Union signed a treaty of alliance with Iran on January 29, 1942. This document, while committing the great powers to respect Iran's territorial integrity, political independence, and sovereignty, and to defend her against aggression, had the primary purpose of granting them extensive rights to control Iranian communications and transportation facilities, and to station troops in the country in accordance with strategic requirements. The military forces were not to constitute a legal occupation and the great powers pledged to disturb the internal life of the country as little as possible. In the coming dispute the positive assurances contained in the 1942 treaty were often cited by the Iranians and the British against the Russians. Most importantly for future events, the occupying powers declared their troops would be withdrawn not later than six months after the end of hostilities. This was later interpreted to mean all Axis hostilities, not just the war in Europe, putting the date of withdrawal at March 2, 1946. (Text of the treaty in Hurewitz, Diplomacy; 233-234; see also Woodward, p. 314.)

Iranian domestic politics and economic life during the occupation contained many features that invited the involvement of outside powers in the country's internal affairs. Freed from the fifteen year dictatorship of Riza Kahn by the British-Soviet occupation, the country entered a period of official liberalism that was more rhetorical than real. The revival of the trappings of democracy did allow long-



repressed political forces on the right and left to re-emerge, but no major changes in political organization or economic power took place. Government of the country returned more firmly into the hands of the landed and mercantile aristocracy, anxious to reassert its authority after the long period of centralized power. Elections to the Parliament (Majlis) were controlled by this group with regularity, when necessary by illegal interventions. (Cottam, p. 260; Lencz, 178-181.)

Simultaneously with these political developments, Iran experienced widespread economic disruption during the war, stemming from the stoppage of normal trade with Axis countries, the unhealthy stimulation of the local market caused by the purchases of the occupying armies and the interruption of internal trade and diversion of production caused by the supply operations. All this was compounded by the division of the country into zones of occupation, politically as well as economically competitive. Food riots, tribal revolts, black markets, crop failures, and official corruption were common occurrences in a situation which ultimately resulted in a wild inflation, comparable to that in China in the same period. (Lencz, 178-179; Kirk, 152-155.)

Following the legitimization of strategic necessity under the 1942 treaty, the next important joint deliberations between the great powers relevant to Iran took place at the Moscow Foreign Ministers conference of October, 1943, and at the Teheran meeting of the big three in December, 1943. Before these conferences took place, however, certain developments in the individual policies of the allies in Iran had begun to foreshadow disagreements. These were, primarily, the tendency of the Soviet Union to use its zone of occupation for political and economic gain as well as strategic supply; and the emergence of a substantial American economic interest in Iran.

Although formally committed not to treat Iran as an occupied country, the Soviet Union proceeded to exploit its presence in the northern provinces in a number of ways. (1) Soviet authorities were reluctant to admit allied and Iranian officials into their zone or even to discuss plans in case of a German breakthrough in the area. Foreign journalists were automatically barred. (2) They appropriated all the food resources of their zone, the most productive in Persia, leaving the allies to provision the poorer southern provinces through importation, and made propaganda use of the inadequate "mercy" shipments they did send south. (3) They resisted requests for cooperation from the private American economic mission working for the central government. And (4) they gave early support to a new party, the Tudeh party, that came into existence with the deposition of the dictatorial Shah in 1941. The Tudeh party was initially a liberal alignment, and not begun under Soviet auspices; but soon it came to depend on Russia for substantial aid and communists assumed leadership. After Stalingrad, Tudeh propaganda assumed a quasi-revolutionary tone and began to stress that the north was better off than the south and that the Soviet Union had always been a friend in struggles against the reactionary Shah. However, the Tudeh and related Soviet supported organizations like the

the Freedom Front, a coalition of communist and non-communist newspapers formed in July, 1943, did not become completely aligned with Soviet policy until 1944, when disagreements between the allies in Iran had become much sharper. (Kirk, 26-68; Hurewitz, Dilemmas, 19; Lenczowski, 196-207; Millspaugh, 174-79)

Soviet policy during these early phases of their occupation in Iran has been interpreted as already revealing expansionist objectives: The support of the Tudeh and refusal to cooperate in the economic stabilization of the country are cited in this view as evidence of a desire to exclude all Western interests and install a friendly regime in Teheran. (Kirk, p. 29) Alternatively, their harsh, exploitative, and exclusionist policies can be understood to stem from congenital Soviet secretiveness and the precariousness of their war effort in the dark years before Stalingrad. After all, the Soviet Union in this period was bearing the physical brunt of the war and vitally needed Iran as a supply corridor; not having the same close ties with the incumbent government in Teheran that their allies had, they were compelled to find or create wholly reliable political forces to deal with. We will return to this problem of objectives and motivations at length below.

Before turning to early U.S. policy, a word on the British role: The British, too, intervened in Iranian politics, though they did not attempt to seal off their zone as did the Soviets. British interventions were necessarily conservative, against any radical or disorderly tendencies that threatened oil production or undermined the central government's ability to maintain order. British authorities had a hand in the return of a prominent conservative nationalist, Seyyid Zia, in 1943, and they supported Zia and politicians like him in the 1943 elections. As a second line of defense against both the growth of Soviet influence and the possibility of a governmental collapse, they cultivated ties with the feudal, separatist-leaning tribes in the area of their oil concession. (Lenczowski, 250-62; Millspaugh, 155-169; Hurewitz, Dilemmas, 19-20.)

The growth of American interest and influence in Iran to the end of 1943 was of a different character. The United States declined an Iranian request to sign the Tri-Partite Treaty of 1942, in part to avoid association with a possible resurgence of British and Soviet sphere of influence politics, in part simply to retain a free diplomatic hand. The dispatch of 30,000 non-combat American forces to Iran to help in the supply operation was arranged through informal agreement with the British, and led to little diplomatic friction. But the establishment, late in 1942, of a powerful private mission of American economic advisers to the Iranian central government, and the pressing of requests by American oil firms for new concessions in Iran during 1943-44 were more portentous indications of American involvement. (Fatemi, 219-228; Lenczowski, 273-76).

The American economic advisory mission to Iran had been invited by the government to help organize the country's chaotic public finances. It was headed by Arthur Millspaugh, who had carried out a similar mission in the 1920's. Once in Iran, it soon assumed extremely broad executive powers over the financial and economic structure of the country. The American Ambassador to the country in 1942, Louis Dreyfus, judged Millspaugh to be one of the most powerful men in Iranian politics. (Kolpk, p. 299. Though not of comparable importance, other missions of U.S. nationals served as advisers to the Iranian military forces, police, and various social service departments. See Lenczowski, 271-2.) While the State Department had been involved in the original Iranian request for such help, and recognized the need for competent economic management to keep Iran afloat, by and large Washington maintained a posture of official neutrality toward the mission's activities, which, because of Millspaugh's frequent insensitivity to Iranian national pride, and the controversial nature of the economic reforms he instituted, was repeatedly attacked by both right and left wing factions. The British Ambassador in Iran, Sir Reader Bullard, had suggested

that the Iranians turn to American help, in part no doubt to deflect the merciless criticism directed against his government for Iran's severe wartime problems, in part from a genuine belief that American experts would be effective. The Russians, who did bear some responsibility for aggravations in the economy, had advised Iran not to accept the principle of U.S. aid. Such frictions as did develop were minor, from an international standpoint, since the State Department did not back Millspaugh directly in his arguments with the Iranians and the Soviets. But the fact that the Soviets often refused to cooperate in extending Millspaugh's reforms to their zone, and that on several occasions Soviet demands for alterations in economic policy were resisted by the Iranians primarily at Millspaugh's insistence, certainly created the impression that more than Iranian power and interests were at play. The Soviets probably remembered Millspaugh's successful opposition to their attempt to reacquire a fishing concession in the Caspian, during his first mission to the country in the mid-1920's. (On the origins, tasks, and difficulties of the mission, see Millspaugh, passim, esp. 44-48, 51, 54, chs. 7-9, 156, 182-187, 269-272; Kirk, 152-55; Lenczowski, 271-72; Woodward, 315-16; and Hurewitz, Dilemmas, 15.)

The international importance of the Millspaugh mission lay not in its particular policy measures, which while not directed toward basic reform, were honest efforts to reduce inflation, blackmarkets, crop shortages, and other hindrances to the supply operation. Instead the mission was important as a sign of the tremendous financial and economic power of the United States, power which necessarily conflicted with the Soviet Union's intentions and policies in the northern provinces, and perhaps for the entire country.

A second sign that American economic power and aspirations might be drawing the country into a stronger role in Iran came when American firms initiated a



competition for new postwar oil concessions during 1943, before the Soviets or even the British had begun to look this far ahead. Some background to the requests made of Iran will help explain the significance of the oil issue and the way it was handled diplomatically. The participation of American oil firms in the competition for Middle Eastern concessions, while sometimes erratic, was vigorous and growing in the 1920's and 1930's. By the beginning of World War II, the largest single industrial share of all direct American investment abroad was in petroleum. (Mik/Chen, 2-13) In the Middle East, United States interests controlled 42% of the proven reserves by 1944, as against 13% in 1936. (Mikesell/Chenery, 2-13, Kirk, pp. 24-25) A State Department Trade analyst, writing in 1945, concluded that "...a review of diplomatic history of the past thirty-five years will show that petroleum has historically played a larger part in the external relations of the United States than any other commodity." (Quoted in Kolko, p. 294). From 1943 on, the U.S. government, greatly exercised by the depletion of reserves in the Western Hemisphere, pursued a policy of strong support for oil industries abroad; a number of petroleum attaches were added, and cooperation between the government and industry was "closer than ever before." (Mik/Chen, p. 13; see also Kirk, p.24-25.)

While Saudi Arabia was the initial and main focus of increased American interest, industrial and governmental, during the war, the search for new concessions soon extended to Iran. Secret conversations, initiated in February, 1943, by the Iranian commercial attache in Washington with representatives of the Standard Vacuum Company, led to an invitation from the Iranian government to that company to open talks on new concessions in the fall of 1943. The American Ambassador in Iran at the time warned Washington that such a move would cause Britain and Russia to suspect American intentions in the country, especially since America was not bound by the Tri-Partite treaty not to seek peculiar advantages in Iran. Millspaugh, too, expressed strong reservations,

at least in retrospect. (Note, See bottom p. 26) But Secretary of State Hull, though informed of this warning, told Standard Vacuum to proceed:

(Because of the importance of petroleum both from the long-range viewpoint and for war purposes, the Department looks with favor upon the development of all possible sources of petroleum. (Quoted in Kolko, p. 300; see also Schwadran, 64-66.)

The result was that by the fall of 1943 both American and British oilmen (who had learned of the developing talks earlier in the year and initiated their own overtures) were in Teheran with their requests. In the words of the most detailed study of these developments, "The rivalry for Middle Eastern concessions was then on, for despite American suspicions of British intentions, the English had not yet made any overtures to obtain concessions in traditionally American areas." (Kolko, 300. For the whole development, see Kolko, 294-300 and Kirk, 474-75. One writer, Longrigg, 130, dates the U.S. oil presence as beginning only in 1944, but Kirk and Kolko give fuller accounts.)

The difficulty in interpreting Soviet policy during this period has been touched on: Congenital Soviet secretiveness and the imminence of total defeat at German hands in 1942-43 might be sufficient to account for the high-handed and exclusive control they exercised over their zone. Or perhaps wider designs for annexation of the northern provinces or control of the whole country might be assumed. The motives for the establishment of an American diplomatic and economic presence are also difficult to establish. One can argue that the Millspaugh mission and concurrent oil efforts merely reflected the natural preponderance of American resources, know-how, and commercial dynamism, noting that in distinction to the Russian and British cases the Americans were in each instance invited in by the legitimate government of Iran as a counter-balance to the historical and ever-present threats from north and south. (On the Iranian desire for a counterbalance, see Lenczowski, 270-71 and Sheehan, 17-19.)

Conversely, the protestations of "anti-imperialism" that accompanied the introduction of an American presence may not have been as valid as Americans imagined them to be. Two authorities on this point: "Less happily, once the Axis forces had been expelled from North Africa, the thoughts of homo oeconomicus began to turn from winning the war to the struggle for post-war markets." (Kirk, 24.) And, "what the Americans tried to claim was the Open Door, to the British and Russians appeared much more like a rival imperialism." (Kolko, 300. Kirk, 23-24, interprets Roosevelt to have been open to suggestions from Arab nationalist leaders--in Morocco, Iran, and elsewhere--that their countries should be freed of imperial concessions and developed instead with American financial aid and technique.)

Later in the narrative, we must pause to distinguish more carefully real motives and objectives from claimed ones, the perception of each side's aspirations by the other, and most importantly, the degrees of legitimacy of actual policy goals. For now it is sufficient to indicate that

...in Persia the 'coldwar' had opened earlier than in any other part of the world, from the moment when the 'hot war' began to move westward with the relief of Stalingrad: already in 1943 the forces of the Persian Left were being mobilized, doubtless with Soviet inspiration

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Note: In an account of his mission published in 1946, Millspaugh made one of the most damning judgements of the pressing of oil requests in 1944. He found it surprising that the government should have launched such a "combustible enterprise in the midst of a war." "It is equally surprising," he wrote, "that, in view of our devotion to three-power cooperation and to the principle of equal access to raw materials, we should have applied for the concession with no preliminary understanding with the Soviet Union and none of any practical value, unless we had a secret one, with Great Britain." (Millspaugh, pp. 231-234) Despite this ex post facto show of diplomatic sensitivity, it has been argued, (Kolko, p 299) that a person in his position of power must have known of the initial requests. Furthermore, it was Millspaugh, himself, who suggested in 1944 that the Iranian government retain as advisers on the entire matter of oil development two American engineers long prominent in American industries connected with oil. Just how neutral this act must have appeared to the British, not to mention the Russians, can be surmised.



and support, for the overthrow of the existing regime with all its social vices, and the propertied classes were beginning to organize themselves for the defence of their interests and privileges. (Kirk, p. 29).

And in these developments, as we have seen, each of the allies was involved in the mode of operation best suited to its political interests and policy resources.

Iran was discussed briefly at the Foreign Ministers Conference in Moscow in October, 1943. The British proposed a declaration assuring the Iranians as to present and future Allied war aims, but Molotov refused to agree to it. (Woodward, pp. 315-316). The issue was dropped and the first major Allied deliberations came at the meeting of the Big Three in Teheran in December. By the time of the Teheran conference, American experts on the Middle East in the State Department, and the American Ambassador in Teheran, had come to believe that continued U.S. opposition to joining in treaty declarations on Iran would indicate a desire to leave the British and Soviet positions unaltered. They began to recommend that greater official American aid and advice be given Iran to enable her to stand without interference. Similar views came from Patrick Hurley, Roosevelt's special envoy to the Middle East in 1943, who brought back an Iranian request for an American declaration concerning economic help to the country, a lessening of wartime controls, and a share in the fruits of victory. Roosevelt, responding to Hurley's reports of the pernicious role of British imperialism in Iran, began to speak of Iran as a "clinic" for working out his program for postwar recovery. He agreed with his advisers that realization of this aim would require a rededication by the Russians and British to non-aggrandizement, and probably the sending of the right kind of American experts to set the country in order. Thus American diplomacy began to seek new commitments to non-advantage from the great powers in Iran. (Fatemi, 219-228).

Roosevelt did this by offering a declaration in the spirit of the Atlantic Charter. It repeated the commitment of all parties to the independence and

integrity of Iran and contained a general pledge of economic aid after the war was over. To this proposal there was no objection, although the Soviets still showed resistance, as they had at Moscow, to any extension of three power cooperation. They refused, for instance, a proposal made at the ambassadorial level for a tri-partite committee to coordinate economic affairs. (Woodward, 316.) The Teheran Declaration became, in later phases of diplomacy over Iran, a key reference point for the West in opposing Soviet policy. Stalin's comments on the Middle East at Teheran were general, and related to the questions of Russia's larger strategic interests after the war; he introduced an inconclusive discussion on post-war oil rights, and Roosevelt and Churchill listened with sympathy to his comments on Russia's need for access to ice-free ports, west to the Baltic, south through the Turkish straits, and east to the Pacific. (McNeill, p. 363-65; Kirk, 447, fn 1; on the background of the American resolution, see Millspaugh, 206; and Lonbeck, 185-88, 195-97, 209-219. For text, see Hurewitz, Diplomacy, 237-38.)

The positions taken at the conference demonstrated the consistent American posture that no area of the world be considered the exclusive preserve of any set of powers, and, conversely, the Russian interest in the early mapping out of areas of vital and differential concern to the major powers. The seemingly impartial rhetoric of the Atlantic Charter dominated considerations at the level of joint diplomacy, but, as we have seen, even at that time all parties to the coming dispute were beginning in their individual policies to lay the groundwork for other forms of postwar influence.

The Teheran deliberations over, Allied relations in Iran during the next year began to be dominated by the oil question. American and British representatives pursued their negotiations with the Iranian government for new concessions. The Iranians, wishing to gain time requested, in April, 1944, the help of two American consultants for the drafting of an oil concession procedure. The two men who arrived to fulfill this task, Herbert Hoover, Jr. and A.A. Curtis, were long-time consultants to U.S. oil interests, chosen with Millspaugh's advice.

From this point on, identification of the Millspaugh mission with American oil interests began to be made by both communist and extreme nationalist forces in Iran. (Kirk, 28, 474-475.) And indeed, although Millspaugh himself was probably attempting to act in a neutral fashion, expressions of U.S. interest in the outcome of the negotiations grew. In mid-summer, the State Department told the American charge in Teheran that America now took a "(c)lose interest in the present negotiations for a petroleum concession in Iran." (Kolko, quoting a State Department communication to the U.S. charge in Iran, p. 309.)

While American and British interests competed for further access to Iranian oil, the two countries announced on August 8, 1944, the terms of a new agreement between them for the regulation of competition in the world at large. This was an effort to set limits to the now increasingly energetic competition between the two countries throughout the Middle East. In the context of developments in Iran, it might have appeared as a cover for recently negotiated concessions. Viewed from a broader perspective, it represented an attempt by the two main Western allies and economic powers to formulate among themselves the conditions for the working of the world economy, to which others of the United Nations would then be invited to subscribe. (See Kirk, 474-5; Mik/Chen, 95-100; Kolko, 300-4.)

At this point, the Russians intervened vigorously to make their own economic claims on the Iranian government, and in general to react to the way Iran had begun to rely on Western advice and advisers. In September, a major Soviet delegation arrived in Teheran, headed by the Vice Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Kavtaradze. His initial demand was merely for the revival of modest oil concessions in the north which the Soviet government had abandoned in the 1920's; but soon he enlarged his request to include rights to the entire area of the five northern provinces. The terms proposed were similar to those of the 1933 Anglo-Iranian oil agreement, and as a justification for the demand the Soviets appealed to the principle of compensation for concessions to British and American companies in the south. (Kirk, 475-9; Schwadran, 66.)

Just before the arrival of the Soviet delegation, the Iranian cabinet had

decided to postpone the granting of concessions to any country during the war. (Longrigg, 130.) When this decision was made public, representatives of the American and British companies in Iran accepted it and left the country, but not the Soviet mission. In October, Kavtaradze told Iran that the refusal had created an unfavorable impression in Moscow and that henceforth the Soviet Union would be unable to work with the government of Prime Minister Sa'ed that had made the decision. (Lenczowski, 219.) This unprecedented attack on the government, contributing to its fall a month later, was followed in the next two months by various expressions of Soviet Displeasure. The Tudeh press abandoned a previous opposition to all oil concessions and openly favored the Soviet request. It accused the central government of fascism. Mass demonstrations in Teheran and other northern cities were organized by the Tudeh, sometimes in the presence of Soviet military forces. In December, 1944, a nationalist faction in the Parliament, led by Mossadegh, proposed and secured passage of a law making it illegal for the government to open discussions on foreign oil concessions without its consent. This further obstacle to their aims angered the Soviets greatly and they invited the new Premier and Parliamentary deputies to their embassy to protest the law, pointing out that it left existing concessions in the south untouched. (Lenczowski, 219-223; Millspaugh, 189; see reports from U.S. Ambassador Morris to Washington mentioning other Soviet expressions of displeasure in US, FR, 44, V, 457-58, 461, 464-5.)

Russian reactions to the refusal were not limited to attacks on Iranian policies alone but for the first time took on a generally anti-Western tone, placing Iranian events in the context of other issues of discord among the allies then emerging, such as the Polish question, the Greek Civil war, and the overall problem of the Middle East. The American financial mission, already vulnerable to criticism from right-wing forces in the country, came under especially intense attacks, the Soviets and Tudeh party accusing Millspaugh of using his influence with the Iranian government to see that American firms received concessions. Isvestia also chose to call attention to the absence of a legal basis for the American troops in Iran for the supply operation. The increased attention to American rather than British



policy had begun even before the oil crisis broke, a reflection of growing Soviet consciousness of America as a chief power in the area. (Millspaugh, 190 fn; Lenczowski, 221; and Skrine, 214-218.)

In this round of allied diplomacy over Iran, the Soviets and their Tudeh allies began to define the situation in polarized and somewhat more global terms than before. The bluntness and persistence of the Soviet protests, and the emergence of the Tudeh as an avowedly pro-Soviet party for the first time, raised Western and Iranian suspicion of their long-range intentions considerably. The British and Americans, alarmed at the emergence of overt conflict, readily deferred their previously hard push for an oil agreement in the interest of avoiding a public break in allied relations and a choosing of sides in Iran. In informing the Soviets of their acceptance of the Iranian decision both countries limited themselves essentially to reminders of the commitment to respect Iran's integrity, with British expressions of dissatisfaction with Soviet pressure more frequent and pointed than the American. (Woodward, 317-318; US, FR, 44, V, 463-478.)

Most accounts of the oil dispute view the British and American response to the blatant and often heavy-handed Soviet pressure as weak, and therefore as an encouragement (or at least no discouragement) to a revival of such behavior in the future. By implication this judgement disregards the plausibility of the Soviet Union's initial reasons for acting--fear of its own reserves depletion, opposition to a unilateral extension of Western interests in Iran, and the possession of certain legal pretexts for their oil demands. Moreover, the intensity of the attack on Prime Minister Sa'ed's government may have been more for the purpose of saving face after meeting refusal on oil than for the build-up of a general "fascist" charge against Iran by which to justify future pressure. Minimally, it was necessary to put the West and Iran on notice that Soviet interests could not be so completely ignored in the future. Still, taking these qualifications into account, Western suspicions were understandable, and we must see the difficulty they faced in trying to oppose the Soviets without provoking a confrontation. Merely withdrawing from the race for concessions, as the Iranians requested, gave no guarantee

that the Russians would follow suit. On the other hand, active backing of the central government against Soviet demands threatened to confirm the Soviet Union's proclaimed suspicions that the central government was owned by Western oil interests.

For the moment, the resolution of this tactical problem was to accept the postponement of all oil discussions, pose moderate diplomatic resistance to Soviet pressure, and concentrate henceforward on getting the quickest possible mutual withdrawal of all Allied occupying troops, so that military means of leverage, and the temptation to use them lest the other side did first, would not be available to influence oil talks once they resumed, or indeed the whole course of Iranian internal politics. The British and Iranians were primarily active in setting this direction.

Another aspect of the problem of Western tactics was how to define the opposition to Soviet Aspirations in Iran. More than just a desire for increased access to the south for oil, the Western position reflected the fear that the Soviets would use any oil rights they gained to extend <sup>50</sup> illegitimate degrees of political control over the area. This fear was impossible to vent publically at the time, however, since (a) it contradicted the official United Nations philosophy that the allies had no fundamental differences in philosophy and aims, (b) the Soviets would just deny it, (c) it would invite the countercharge that the British exercised political control to protect existing concessions in the south, and (d) the Americans were already beginning to obtain "something like indirect political control in Saudia Arabia" in connection with growing U.S. oil interests there. (Woodward, 317.)

The way out of this difficulty was to avoid opposing directly the Soviet demands, or advancing directly those of Western firms, and instead to support the principle of the central government's right to make decisions free of undue external pressure. This would have the effect of blocking both the economic and possibly wider political aims of the Soviets while keeping in power a regime which would be friendly to Western economic aims when the oil talks resumed.

Yalta and Potsdam. British, and, to a lesser extent, American actions at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences of 1945 were directed toward an agreement mutual withdrawal of allied troops so that the discussion of postwar political and economic rights in Iran could proceed without outside interference. The Soviet Union worked to delay further action at the Big Three level, seeking in the meantime to consolidate and expand its political position in Iranian politics in order to better influence future deliberations over the country. By the fall of 1945, the inability of the Big Three to agree on the liquidation of the occupation and the Soviet Union's definitive support of a separatist regime in Azerbaijan precipitated a direct and intense crisis, at which point our detailed analysis of bargaining moves will begin.

The British foreign office concluded from the oil crisis that a mutual troop withdrawal, possibly before the deadline set in the 1942 treaty, was essential. And the Iranians, who came constantly to their Western allies with complaints of Soviet interference, asked both countries to work for this objective at Yalta. American diplomats viewed Russian pressure with growing concern, and tended, with Britain, to speak of Iran as a possible "test case" of allied relations, but nonetheless urged the British not to give the Iranian issue undue importance at Yalta, especially since the most blatant forms of pressure had declined by the time the conference convened. (See Woodward, p. 318; for Iranian requests for diplomatic support, see US, FR, 45, 8, 360-62; for evidence of growing American concern and several instances prior to Yalta on which Stettinius still advised a low-key approach, see ibid., 311-316, 321-331, 354-55, and US, FR, 45, Conferences at Yalta and Malta, 332-33, 338-39, 436-7, 443.)

In line with these concerns, British Foreign Minister Eden suggested, in the Foreign Ministers' discussions at Yalta, that the three powers refrain from any interference in Iranian domestic politics and proposed an agreement on the removal of forces from Iran in stages, as soon as the supply route to Russia was no longer needed, even if this date came before that specified in the treaty. Both Eden and Stettinius attempted to reassure Molotov that they had no intention of preventing

the Soviet Union from obtaining an oil concession in the north, emphasizing only that the oil talks should be resumed after the Iranian conditions had been met. The tone of these brief discussions was moderate; neither foreign minister engaged in any accusations against Soviet policy or strong endorsements of Iranian interests. (Stettinius, 43-44, 65-6, 87; McNeill, 560-61; text of Eden's proposal in US, FR, Yalta and Malta, 819-820.)

Prior to Yalta the Soviet Union had made strong formal and informal statements to U.S. and British diplomats of its unwillingness to let the oil demand drop. (Text of note to the State Department of December 28, 1944, US, FR, Malta and Yalta, 334-36; see also the report of Harriman's conversation with the Soviet Ambassador to Iran of December 11, 1944, US, FR, 44, V, 354-55.) At the conference itself, Molotov responded to Eden by denying any linkage between the oil and troop issues. He charged that the Iranians lacked good faith in the recently suspended talks and said that since the situation was no longer acute, it should be dropped. On troop withdrawals, Molotov asked time for study. Soviet opposition to any discussion of Iran extended to a refusal to consider later Western proposals for a reaffirmation of the Teheran Declaration, a communiqué on conference deliberations on the subject, or even a reference to the fact that discussion had taken place. (Van Wagenen, 21-22; US, FR, Yalta and Malta, 877.) Stalin, when approached by Churchill on these same points, repeated that he saw no need for a special assurance to Iran on the matter of troop withdrawal. Russia stood by past treaty commitments and had no intention of pressing Iran. (Woodward, 319.)

At the formal sessions between Heads of State at Yalta, only Roosevelt touched on Iran, discoursing on a scheme for bringing American skills to bear on its poverty as a demonstration of the potential of international cooperation in peacetime. Roosevelt's comments on Iran usually remained at this general and idealistic level; they raised no interest on Churchill's or Stalin's part to discuss Iran further, and the matter was dropped. (McNeill, 560.) On Roosevelt's views, see for example his earlier proposal to Stalin, made at Teheran, for an International Trusteeship to run a trans-Oranian railway and a free port on the Persian gulf. At the President's



request this idea was studied by Department Middle Eastern officials before Yalta, but never officially broached. (US, FR, 45, 8, 523-26.)

The Yalta Conference was dominated by issues other than Iran--Germany and reparations, Poland and Eastern Europe, the Far Eastern war, and the U.N. (Neumann, 137-60.) The exchanges over Iran were brief and rather marginal. British and American statements were moderate and conciliatory, the Russian replies curt and non-committal. Nevertheless, Stalin's acid allusion at one of the lunches--any nation that refuses to let its oil be exploited "works against peace"--and the British initiative for an early disentanglement indicated that all parties' concern for the area was growing. (For Stalin's remark, see US, FR, 45, Yalta and Malta, 930.)

The British Foreign Office was unhappy after Yalta and, after convincing its own War Department and Churchill that the advantages of having Russian troops out of the north outweighed the disadvantages of not having British troops in the south to guard the Abadan oil interests, persuaded Churchill to propose again at Potsdam a joint allied timetable for the removal of occupation troops. Other means of putting pressure on Russia--such as a citation of previous instances of Soviet interference, or pointing out that the tolerance of small powers for great power vetoes in the Security Council would diminish if Russia broke its obligations in Iran--were judged irrelevant to the key problem of removing foreign troops as an instrument of leverage. (Woodward, 318-19.) When the war in Europe ended, the Iranians formally requested on March 19, 1945, that the three countries take immediate steps to evacuate the country. The Russians pointedly failed to reply to this request, but the British and Americans made public announcements of their willingness to comply, in hopes of inducing Soviet reciprocation. Privately, the British told the U.S. they would only begin withdrawal if Russia reciprocated and that they would need to leave some troops in the southwest to protect the oil installations and lines of communication essential to the prosecution of the Far Eastern war. And although the American forces in question were non-combat troops, the U.S., too, wished to retain small numbers in Iran as long as 6 months after the Japanese war to protect American property and service important air fields. These reservations notwithstanding,

however, the main interest of both countries (as especially of the Iranians who stressed the point repeatedly and urgently) as to eliminate any pretext for the continued Russian presence in the north. All understood that this would require the complete removal of all other troops, and were prepared to run certain risks to this end. (For U.S.-British discussion of troop withdrawals, see US, FR, 45, 8, 373-4, 376-81, 383; and US, FR, Potsdam, I, 950.)

Against this background of calculation and activity, the British tried again at Potsdam to interest the Soviets in a three stage scheme for "complete joint withdrawal" beginning with Teheran, and leaving until the last stage the areas of greatest importance to each side in the north and south. Churchill conceded that according to the letter of the treaty, the powers had no commitment to withdrawal until 6 months after the conclusion of the war with Japan, but argued that Britain had intended the withdrawal pledge to refer to the war with Germany. Truman added that the U.S. had begun withdrawal of its forces already because they were needed in the Far East, and that the bulk would probably be gone within sixty days. The United States wished only to retain a few to protect supplies needed for the Japanese war. Stalin disputed immediately any presumption that the term for troops had expired. In the next breath he stated that he had no objection whatsoever to American and British troops being in Iran, and that the first stage of the British plan--withdrawal from Teheran, could begin immediately. Further withdrawals he wanted to think over; but there was ample time for that. Churchill, having been met part way, declined to press the matter; he did not hold forth on Soviet interference in Iran and agreed to begin with Teheran. The Foreign Ministers were to review the question of further stages when they met in September. When Truman mentioned again that the American withdrawal would proceed, Stalin gave the following assurance: "So as to rid the United States of any worries we promise you that no action will be taken by us against Iran." (Dept. of State minutes of July 23, 1945, in US, FR, Potsdam, II, 309-310; text of protocol on troops, 1946.)

Although the efforts of both the British and Americans during the Yalta and Potsdam conferences remained conciliatory and restrained, designed to alert the

Soviets to their concern and offer positive inducements to a change of policy in Iran, evidence from internal policy deliberations shows that decision makers in both countries were beginning to view the entire Iranian situation as having extremely serious implications for allied relations and world stability.

Witness a letter from Churchill to Roosevelt of January 15, 1945, just before Yalta:

"This may be something of a test case. Persia is a country where we, yourselves and the Russians are all involved; and we have given a joint undertaking to treat the Persians decently. If the Russians are now able to not only save face by securing the fall of the Persian Prime Minister who opposed them, (in the oil crisis) but also to secure what they want by their use of the big stick, Persia is not the only place where the bad effect will be felt." FR, Malta, Yalta, 1945, 337  
See also the earlier quite similar phrasing of the Foreign Office to the American Ambassador to Britain, Winout, November 28, 44, FR, 44, V, p. 352.

Less dramatic but equally sweeping was the estimation given in a State Department briefing paper prepared for the Potsdam Conference:

"Although the Iranian problem is only one aspect of the larger problem of Anglo-Soviet-American cooperation, it contains potentialities which, if permitted to develop, will assume proportions as disturbing to world peace as the problem of the Dardanelles in the last century, and as disturbing to Allied Cooperation as the Polish problem."  
FR, M & Y 45, p. 951. See for related comments a memo by Henderson of August 3, 1945, US Loy, Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs FR 45, vol. 8, 393-398.

The Soviet response to allied proposals, as we have seen, was consistently to deny the existence of any serious problems, repeat assurances that earlier pledges would be honored, and, at Potsdam, to take a concrete step in the direction of withdrawal. Concurrent with the tactics of delay, denial and reassurance at the level of big three diplomacy, however, the Soviets throughout 1945 stepped up their efforts to gain political influence over events at the Iranian level, particularly in the provinces they occupied, but potentially in all of Iran. This process climaxed in the systematic and often support given to the Azerbaijan revolt against the central government in November, 1945. But signs of it were evident before that, among them: a campaign in Tudeh newspapers, most important begun in early 1945, for the institution of provincial councils, a possibility in the constitution until then implemented and promoted with emphasis on Azerbaijan; increased attacks on the central government as repressive toward the north, **fascistic**, and in collusion with the imperialists; and, generally, intensified pressure by Soviet authorities against their political opponents in the north. (Kirk, 58-9) In August, 1945, two brief revolts against central government authority in the north occurred, both of which most observers attribute, in significant part at least, to Soviet agitation among dissatisfied elements. One involved young army officers and local tribesmen in the province of Khorasan, and was quickly put down by Iranian troops. (Note: it is worth pointing out that the Khorasan province, which the Soviets occupied de facto though not de jure, and where the local Iranian officials avoided undue provocations or hostility to the Soviets, the Soviet authorities allowed Persian troops to act against the mutiny attempt. The British Consular official in the province argues in his memoir (Kirk, 228-232) that this policy of good



relations with Russia helped save the Khorasan area from undergoing the year long attempt for Russian control of that Azerbaijan endured.) The second and more serious uprising took place in Tabriz, capital of Azerbaijan. There armed Tudeh partizans, protected by Soviet troops, who at one point blocked entrance by Iran police sent from outside the area, seized a number of government buildings and cut communications to Teheran. Neither of the August revolts lasted long. But they were widely regarded, at the time as "Dress Rehearsals" for bolder seizure of power. Political moves complemented the direct actions: In August, the Tudeh party in Azerbaijan was dissolved, and its membership transferred to a new "Democratic Party for Azerbaijan", which stressed regional aims. Tass published the new party's appeal with approval. This allowed the national Tudeh party to dissociate itself from events in Azerbaijan. And in September a Soviet trained Kurdish leader announced the formation of a Kurdish Democratic party which added to the demands for regional and ethnic autonomy from the central government. (Lenczowski, 286-7; Kirk, 62-3; Van Wagenen, 23-25; Bloomfield, 62; and Arfa, 342-45)

*Pishevari*

The familiar cycle now repeated: The Iranians, greatly exercised at the interferences with movements of their security forces, and the prospective dismemberment of the country, renewed their pleas for immediate troop withdrawal and complained vigorously to Russia. These complaints the Soviets merely ignored. (US, FR, 45, 8, 411-13, 400-04) To concurrent British proposals that the powers once again discuss a speeded-up, phased troop withdrawal now that the Japanese war, too, was over, the Soviets responded simply and accurately that the legal treaty date for removal remained March 2, 1946. Untilling to make direct and definitive charges of Soviet interference and annexationist aims, all that Foreign Minister Bevin could do was express satisfaction that both sides read the treaty the same. The Soviet Union apparently felt confident enough of its



ability to achieve indirectly or through proxies whatever it sought in Iran to promise again complete fidelity to past agreements.

Molotov to Bevin:

I would ask you to bear in mind that the Soviet Government attach exceptional importance to the strict fulfillment of the obligation undertaken. (See the exchange of letters between Bevin and Molotov of September 19-21, reprinted in US, Fr, 45,8, 413-415; quote 415.)

C. The Precipitation of Serious Conflict between the Great Powers, Nov. 45

On November 15, 1945, large amounts of small arms were distributed from Soviet supplies to Democratic party members and peasants throughout Azerbaijan. On November 16 the revolt was launched with the rebels moving to cut off all roads and communications into the province, attack police posts, and occupy government buildings. The revolt in Azerbaijan was not an overnight success. Rebel control throughout the province remained uneven for more than a month, with Tabriz falling definitely only on December 16. In late November the central committee of the Democratic party and the Soviet press proclaimed its demands that Turkish be used in the schools and Azerbaijan be granted provincial autonomy. Elections to a provincial assembly were organized and held, under conditions of intimidation, and the new Assembly formed in Tabriz on December 12. On December 16 came the formal announcement of a "National Government of Persian Azerbaijan" under new leadership of Pischevari, who, while in his own right a prominent figure in the Iranian communist party for a quarter century, had a political career intertwined with Soviet policies in the area. On several occasions Pischevari acknowledged and welcomed the receipt of Soviet aid in establishing his government.

He immediately instituted a series of badly needed reforms while maintaining police-state forms of control. Meanwhile, in October, refugees from a Kurdish revolt against the government of neighboring Iraq fled to Iran and, after the fall of Tabriz in mid-December, announced the formation of a Kurdish People's Republic. (Lenczowski, 287-91; Kirk, 60-63)

The revolt was not marked by extensive street fighting or bloodshed. Some Iranian army officers and officials simply fled to the south, while most were intimidated from prolonged resistance simply by the presence of Soviet power. Portions of the Azerbaijanian population welcomed and backed the regime, from a combination of grievances in addition to regional pride, among them: large-scale absentee land lordism and the defense of landed interests by the local administration; the increased poverty of the masses, aggravated by the war's ten-fold inflation; and a long history of exploitation of the province by the central government for the benefit of the capital and other sectors of the country. Thoughtful assessments of the Azerbaijan Republic generally conclude that while past Iranian treatment of the area had been slothful, discriminatory in favor of the south, and corrupt, the experience of Soviet-controlled regionalism was not regarded as any better. The case is one of lesser evils, since no opportunity for a real separatism existed. The speed with which the regime folded when faced with the reassertion of central government authority a year later is some evidence for this view. (See esp. Cottam, 124-129, and Van Wagenen, 23-25).

From the outset of the revolt it was clear to most observers that the Soviet diplomatic and military authorities in Azerbaijan had staged and controlled the action. Prior to its outbreak, the size of the Democratic Party had been increased by an influx of "refugees" from Soviet Azerbaijan. And as mentioned above, Pishevari was long associated with Soviet policies in the region. Soviet

propaganda in Iran and at home backed the movement as spontaneous, but they also gave significant military and physical support to the rebellion. Although aid was given covertly and through proxies wherever possible, several essential forms were difficult to disguise, or differently put, easy to verify. The main forms of overt aid were: The obstruction by Soviet troops of attempts by Iranian police in Azerbaijan to put down disorders. The use of Soviet troops to protect meetings and rallies held by the Democrats. The intimidation--some accounts say "psychological terrorizing"--of the Iranian population by arrests and harassment of non-cooperative Iranian officials. And, most importantly, on November 20, four days after the onset of the revolt, the use of Soviet troops to block a column of Iranian forces sent from Teheran to help quell the uprising, by threatening to fire on them if they crossed the province border. (Kirk, 58-59; Lenczowski, 287-91; Rossow article; Cottam, 126; and reports of the US Ambassador in Teheran on the revolt, US, FR, 45, 8, 430-3, 437-9, 450-51.)

The overt threat of force against the central government troops at Kazvin, more than any other act of support, signified the seriousness and extent of Soviet involvement. It gave the Iranians dramatic and indisputable grounds for complaint that Soviet methods and purposes in maintaining their occupation had gone beyond the letter and spirit of the wartime agreements to constitute an infringement on Iranian sovereignty, a betrayal of allied relations, and a general threat to world order which the United Nations was to guarantee. General Arra, the Iranian Chief of Staff at the time of the rebellion, claims in his memoirs that he sent the column of troops from Teheran for just the purpose of forcing the Soviet Union to reveal its intentions in Azerbaijan, and to lay a basis for subsequent resistance to the rebellion, not because he thought they stood any chance of military success. (Afra, 352-55) Whatever his expectations, this first Iranian countermove did have the effect of

committing the Soviets publically to the existence of the rebel regime.

The Soviet Union's definitive military commitment to the success of the rebels, in the context of the numerous other less visible interventions, changed the long-simmering dispute among the great powers over the conduct and liquidation of the occupation, and the allocation of postwar economic and political power in Iran, into a conflict of serious proportions. In Lockhart's terms, it was a decisive challenge to the other side, after a drawn-out period of lesser, and to some extent, mutual defections. In Snyder's terms, it constituted a basic move, irreversibly changing the structure of the situation by establishing a new physical presence in the north dependent on and actively supported by the Soviet Union, a presence very likely to be opposed in some fashion by the Americans and the British as well as the Iranians. The move tended to polarize the situation, although any one or all of the sides involved might choose to avoid accentuating the polarization by various withdrawal or integrative moves. Still, since the new regime and the Soviet backing for it were physical facts, the move made it likely that someone would have to give in some obvious fashion for the conflict to be resolved.

#### IV. The Bargaining Setting

We come now to an analytical pause necessary to lay out the elements of the bargaining setting before recounting the actual sequence of moves. This will be done under four headings:

- A. The Content and Relative Evaluation of the Stakes (Objectives)
- B. The Capabilities of the Parties; Asymmetries of Capability between them. (Means)
- C. The Parties' Relative Fear of War; or, Their Evaluation of the Stakes as compared to the Costs of Risk of War. (Balance of resolve)
- D. The Initial Images Held of the Other Parties. (Each actor's view of A, B, and C for the other actors)

## A. The Content and Evaluation of the Stakes

Two kinds of statements must be distinguished here: Those which merely record what the party itself said it considered the stakes to be; and those which record what the presumably objective outside observer considers the stakes to be for the party in question.

### 1. The Soviet Union

In asserting their influence in support of the Azerbaijanian rebels and against attempts of the Iranian government to stop them, what was the Soviet Union defending or attempting to gain? Soviet objectives in Iran, as stated at one or another point, were several, here listed from the narrow and concrete to the relatively more general.

a. Some sort of special position at the port of Pahlavi on the Caspian (infrequently mentioned).

b. Air transport rights between Russia and Teheran and for internal transport within the northern provinces of the country.

c. Rights to oil concessions in the five northern provinces; to that end, cancellation of the law prohibiting the negotiation of foreign oil concessions while foreign troops remained in the country.

d. The establishment of a friendly government in Teheran, which would  
 i. displace the reactionary forces now in power that rebuffed Soviet offers of friendship (on the oil issue and other policy questions), ii. not pose a threat to Soviet fields in the adjacent Baku region of the USSR, and iii. support the rights of the province of Azerbaijan to autonomy, thereby bringing into existence on the Soviet border a friendly regime. (Success of the Azerbaijan regime was not declared a policy objective, but rather was seen to be a consequence if the right kind of government were in power in Teheran.)

e. The reassertion of Soviet rights (under the Soviet-Iran Friendship treaty of 1921) to act to prevent Iran from becoming a base of operations by a third power or from suffering armed intervention by a third power.



(See SU note to US, December 28, 1944, US, FR, Malta and Yalta, 334-336; US Ambassador's report of Soviet demands made to Iranian foreign ministry November 26, 1945 & SU note to US, November 30, 1945, US, FR, 45, 8, 456, 468-9; and Molotov's comments to the Iranian Foreign Minister after Yalta, as reported by the US Ambassador in Iran, March 6, 1945, US, FR, 45, 8, 364).

In view of this list of stated objectives we may argue that the stakes for the Soviet Union in Iran were the re-establishment of the principle that the Soviet Union, as the neighbor of a politically vulnerable, resource rich, and strategically important Iran, had or would insist on a right to have its concerns in that country respected, at least equally with those of other outside powers, or perhaps treated with favor. The objective was to remind the Iranians and other powers involved that the Soviet Union viewed the country as an area of vital concern.

The Soviet view of Iran as an area of vital concern was not a new development, of course, but one rooted in history and geography. The immediate motives for a reassertion of interest at this particular time require some comment, however. By September, 1944, the time of the oil crisis, an allied victory in the war was assured, so that a shift in Soviet diplomatic attention to the fate of areas relatively neglected during the concentration of grand military strategy was only natural. (Trask, 121.) And, when they began having time to view the situation closely, wartime developments between the central Government and the Western powers provided new grounds for concern. One judgement to this effect comes from a British consular official in Soviet-occupied Khorasan province during the war, Clairmont Skrine:

It was the vigorous American intervention, the financial, military and gendarmerie missions, the apparent U.S. drive to capture the Persian market, and above all the efforts of Socony-Vacuum and Shell to secure oil-prospecting rights that changed the Russians in Persia from hot-war allies to cold-war rivals, if not enemies-- first of the U.S. and then, because Britain supported the U.S.,

of Britain. But that process took time. (Elsewhere Skrine writes:) The power and scope of the American intervention probably surprised and alarmed them. Skrine, 227, 185-186.

Skrine may overemphasize Soviet alarm at the American component of growing Western influence; Kennan, telegraphing the State Department from Moscow in November, 1944, does not, but confirms the overall point:

The basic motive for recent Soviet action in northern Iran (the oil demands) is probably not need for oil itself but apprehension of potential foreign penetration in that area coupled with the concern for prestige which marks all Soviet policy these days. The oil of northern Iran is important not as something Russia needs but as something it might be dangerous to permit anyone else to exploit. The territory lies near the vital Caucasian oil centers which so closely escaped complete conquest in present war. The Kremlin deems it essential to Russian security that no other great power should have even the chance of gaining a footing there. It probably sees no other way to assure this than by seeking greater political and economic control for itself and finds this aim consistent with contemporary Soviet conceptions of prestige. USFR, 44, v. 5, 470-71.

Similarly, Gabriel Kolko:

It was primarily the struggle over oil and the extension of American control over Iranian affairs that caused the Russians to intervene not only for oil, but to establish the principle that affairs along their borders could no longer be determined without regard to Soviet interests and security. Soviet references to the Iranian crisis in the fall of 1944 were for the most part critical of the growth of American power and influence there and the ability of the United States to define Iranian-Soviet relations. Kolko, 310-311.

Thus, there were local and international dimensions to Iran's importance: The country itself bordered the Soviet Union near the location of crucial oil deposits; it contained resource potential that would be dangerous for any power hostile to the Soviet Union to control; and with its corrupt and fragmented political system, it offered constant possibilities for external interference by powers who might threaten Soviet security if they obtained a position there. Iran represented a strategic and economic resource to be denied other powers. The broader and more symbolic importance of Iran to the Soviet Union was that failure to insist successfully on the principle of special Soviet concern might call into question Russia's intention and ability to do so in

comparable areas elsewhere. This may be termed a concern for one's reputation as a defender of vital interests--Snyder's reputation for resolve, Morgenthau's view of prestige as a reputation for power.

Phrasing the Soviet Union's view of the stakes in this way avoids thus far the usual question of whether its goals were offensive or defensive. Frequently, but not always, the policy changes sought by the Soviets, the "means" toward the objective, showed that nothing short of annexation, or the semi-annexation involved in a formalized sphere of influenced arrangement, would satisfy them. But in any area of such proximity and importance to a great power, the fusion of precautionary, protectionist, and annexationist intentions, and especially, the appropriateness of the same means to different ends, makes such judgements difficult to render. Conceivably, had the central Iranian government been amenable to certain of the precise demands the Soviets presented, a change of policy in Teheran would have diminished the Soviet interest in a complete change of regime. Similarly, the effort to install a puppet regime in Azerbaijan could be viewed less as evidence of an intent to annex that territory per se, than as a convenient means to demonstrate to the central government, and to the allies, the importance of taking other more narrow and defensive Soviet aims seriously. Control of Azerbaijan functioned both as a source of leverage and an aim of policy. (Note: The author of the Council of Foreign Relations account of the Iranian dispute made a similar point: Whatever ultimate objectives guided Soviet policy--from protection of the Baku oil fields to expansion to the Persian Gulf--"the methods used and the measures taken were adapted to the pursuit of any and all of them. (USWA, 45-57, 88.) Thus one could argue that the development of intentions went something like this: In pursuit of an initial, or primary, interest in denying to other powers certain forms of increased access to Iran the Soviets employed as means or sources of leverage activities tending toward outright control in

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part or all of the country. As the conflict developed, the goal or warning others off and the choice of means to achieve it transformed Soviet objectives into something more like "defensive expansionism." Thereafter, a combination of heightened resistance from the other parties and the opening of opportunities for influence unanticipated at the outset created conditions leading the Soviets to pursue clearly expansionist goals. This is the usual line of speculation taken by commentators on the Iranian affair, and it leads to judgements that what the Soviet Union came to want--if indeed it is not posited that they always so intended--was the subjugation of all Iran, thereby gaining military and economic access to the entire Middle East. (See Kirk, 4-5; and Millsbaugh, 192-93) The trouble with this argument is that it usually proceeds with little reference to whether a comparable overstepping of original aims occurred on the other side. The issue of what the stakes were for any one party can only be resolved after a look at each other party's initial estimation of objectives, the internal dynamics of its policy tending toward an expansion or downgrading of objectives, and, finally--and most essentially, the way the actual process of interactions of initial aims and tactics produced changed in original intentions. Stakes are not static. The same means may serve more than one end. The importance one's opponent attaches to a conflict can change one's own estimation of what is at issue. For these reasons we can, at this stage, only describe the tendencies present in initial motivations, objectives, and relationships between instruments and objectives. Even though statesmen have to proceed as if they know what their opponents will do before it is done, scholars have to admit that they cannot know what was to be done and for what reasons, until after events are over, if then. (On the indeterminacy of nations' goals, see Avon, ch. 11, esp. section 4.)



For the Iranian central government and monarchy in Teheran, resistance to Soviet military presence and actions in support of the rebels in Azerbaijan was viewed as necessary for the prevention of progressively more drastic infringements of the country's sovereignty and territorial integration, and, to a lesser degree, for promotion of certain positive aims.

Success of the Azerbaijan regime in achieving some recognition and autonomy would set a bad precedent for the future of central government control in several ways: a) It would give encouragement to other forces of separation in the country, such as the Kurds or numerous tribal groups. b) It would strengthen and legitimize social-revolutionary elements, such as the Tudeh, aiming at the overthrow of the ruling circles throughout the country. And c) It would concede, at least tacitly, the right of the Soviet Union, or perhaps any outside power, to intervene in Iranian internal politics, thereby undermining the legitimacy and effectiveness of the central government.

Outright annexation of Azerbaijan by the Soviet Union would involve even more fatal threats to the central government: a) The loss of a province containing one fourth of the Iranian population, the major food producing area, and one of the major industrial centers. And b) the acquisition by a feared power of a strategic foothold in Iran only \_\_\_\_\_ miles from Teheran, which, in the view of many Iranian military authorities would leave the country indefensible against Soviet coercion or attack. (For numerous references to the Iranian perception of the consequences of Soviet victory in Azerbaijan, see US, FR, 45, 8, pp. 359-522, especially 464-6 and 486 for the most dire predictions of an imminent Soviet takeover; also Arfa, 340-372).

The importance to Iran of preventing a rebel/Soviet victory stands out clearly enough from this listing: The regime felt that it was defending the classical attributes of statehood, although outside observers might question whether the granting of significant regional autonomy to Azerbaijan necessarily



created a dynamic toward fragmentation, or whether the acquisition of oil and other commercial rights by the Soviets in the north would be equivalent to annexation, two oft-repeated fears.

The nature of Iranian interests becomes somewhat ambiguous when the relationship of ends to means in the central government's policy is considered. The stated aim was to secure the immediate withdrawal of all foreign military forces from the country, in order to end Soviet interference in particular and to re-establish the regime's autonomy in internal and external policy in general. The means, troop withdrawal, was seen as virtually equivalent to the objective, the regaining of legal and operational independence, allowing a policy of complete impartiality toward the several great powers involved in the country's fate. In the absence of joint and simultaneous great power agreement on mutual disengagement from Iran, however, the objective of Iranian policy became just the opposite--to achieve the increased engagement of one great power, viewed as friendly--the United States--in order to offset the relatively more distasteful involvement of the others, mainly the Soviet Union, but Great Britain as well. Both strategies presumably served the same objective of maintaining Iran's "sovereignty and territorial integrity" but the end results in terms of outside involvement, and potential if not actual international alignment, were sufficiently different to make the objectives appear different. Iran, in short, faced the chronic dilemma of a small power situated at the intersection of multiple great power interests: She either had to be strong and reliable enough to persuade all sides to stay away equally, or weak and clever enough to enlist one side in the resistance to the other(s). The means required to re-establish neutrality--greater American involvement--threatened to contradict, in reality or in appearance, the proclaimed end. Throughout the war the Iranians were plagued by the problem of drawing America into the defense of their country's interests without creating a provocation, or new

dependency ~~that~~ would make the policy counter-productive. (Note: Early in 1944, for instance, the Iranian Prime Minister asked the Americans not to protest too vigorously provisions in an Iranian-Soviet commercial treaty that were unfair to Iran, since "continued good relations with the Soviet Union are worth many times the money those relations cost Iran." American Charge reporting a talk with Prime Minister Sa'ed, US, FR, 44, V, 390-92. For repeated instances of the Iranian requests for greater American involvement, see Sheehan, 11-19, and US, FR, 45, 8, 359-62, 365-68, 371, 373-4, 380-1, 383.)

### 3. Great Britain

The British stake in the fate of Iran was long-standing and relatively clearly defined: Iran was important as an existing source of oil, and as a strategically important link in communications to India, and, while the war lasted, to the Far Eastern theatre. The dependence of the British fleet on the production of the Abandan refineries meant that the oil there was actually a strategic and not just an economic interest. And, for Britain, the need for oil was intensified in the 1930's and 1940's by the depletion of coal resources at home, the rapid expansion of cheap production throughout the Middle East, and the extreme demands for industrial and military uses created by the war.

The stated objective of British policy was to preserve the integrity and independence of the Iranian central government. This entailed more precisely, a policy calling for the faithful observance of the provisions against internal interference of the 1942 treaty of occupation and a prompt or hopefully early withdrawal of allied forces there. Defense of the Iranian government's ability to make decisions free from Soviet military pressure served British interests in two respects: (1) It maintained in power a government formally independent of external controls but relatively receptive to the needs of British (and American) economic interests to maintain or expand their access to Iranian raw materials. And (2) In so far as it prevented the Soviet Union

from acquiring a position in the northern provinces from which they might be able to expand into the rest of the country, it saved the British the unpleasant necessity of resorting to direct methods of controlling and defending their vital interests in the south through such means as the introduction of troops and the fomentation of separatism among friendly tribes. The second observation gets at the crux of British calculations. The security of Abadan was their main policy objective; the defense of the autonomy of the Teheran government the main means of achieving the objective. This had been shown during the oil crisis of the previous fall; then the British foreign office recommended without much argument elsewhere in the government that British oil interests accept the moratorium on negotiations for new oil concessions, since the cost of continuing insistence would have been to encourage increased pressure on Teheran from the Soviets for expanded access, thereby undermining the first line of defense of the more important existing concessions. (See Woodward, p. 317, Lenczowski, 250-55 and Kirk, 19-23)

British policy, therefore, aimed primarily at maintaining in Iran the least costly publically objectionable political and military arrangements that would assure the survival of their strategic and economic interests in the south. Under a secondary set of considerations, British policy makers were also concerned that failure to oppose Soviet interference in Iran would encourage the Soviets to push for undue advantage in other areas of the world, which would be harmful to allied relations and the prospects for peace. (See Churchill's statement quoted above, p. 37, to that effect.) But the evidence is that, as of fall 1945, this fear colored their view of the situation less strongly than did concern over the defense of more immediate and concrete interests.

#### 4. The United States

American policy toward Iran was described in a typical State Department formulation (in a briefing paper prepared for the Yalta Conference) as

supporting Iranian independence and seeking "to strengthen the country internally, so that excuses for outside interference will be minimized. Iran is considered a testing ground for U.S., U.K., and U.S.S.R. cooperation. . ." (FR, Y&M, 340). An examination of the reasoning behind this undertaking will show how support of Iranian independence (through unilateral statements; pursuit of multilateral declarations; economic, military, and police advisory missions; economic aid) was actually an inclusive means for the advancement or protection of several other objectives.

Iranian independence was to be promoted in order to prevent political instability or fragmentation in the country that would invite outside interference by Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Outside interference might occur in two different ways which were undesirable for logically separable reasons: (1) If competitive and unregulated by reciprocal limitation, it would create a source of friction between the two countries that might result in war; or (2) if the result of formal or tacit collusion, it would result in a reinstatement of spheres of British and Soviet influence in Iran, to the exclusion of American interests in gaining access to oil, commerce, and civil air facilities in the country. American policy makers professed themselves ready to give "international security" considerations (point 1) precedence over "national interest" ones (point 2), when the two came into conflict, at least temporarily, as for instance during the oil crisis. Then the U.S., with the British, agreed to the postponement of concessions requests in order to decrease pressure on the Iranian government which might have undermined its independence in areas broader than commercial policy. But more often U.S. policy justifications and pronouncements tended to equate a threat to national interests--insuring a "non-discriminatory position for the United States in Iran with regard to commerce, shipping, petroleum, and aviation"--as coterminous with a threat to international security interests--insuring the sovereignty

and independence of Iran in order to keep it from becoming a source of international friction. This did not logically follow: The mutually agreed on reassertion of British and Russian interests in Iran need not necessarily have entailed armed conflict or more than local disturbances, while it would, of course, have put certain limits on American access to the country. Put another way, the United States was not a solely disinterested partisan in the campaign against spheres of influence, as the official justification of that policy had it.

Now the discovery of more narrowly self-serving ends behind a position advanced in the "general interest" does not make United States policy different from that of other nations; all it does is put treatment of the question of U.S. policy into the same universe of analysis and of cases with treatments of other powers, leaving the more difficult question of ascertaining degrees of self-servingness and self-deception to be resolved in comparative analysis in the context of the case. (Note: For a statement of this point by the master analyst of the relationship between interest and ideology, see Morgenthau, "Historical Justice and the Cold War.")

The American stake in Iran, therefore, was to prevent Iran from falling victim to a combination of internal weakness and external interference (by powers other than the United States) which might make the country into a new source of international discord or the exclusive preserve of particular powers. The means to this end was the preservation of Iranian sovereignty.

United States policy makers recognized that Britain and Russia had "special historic interests" in Iran and interpreted this to mean that a policy aiming at the protection of Iranian sovereignty required the closest consultation and cooperation with those two powers. Just as frequently, however, the imperative of reaching joint agreement over how to proceed rested on the more general argument that Iran provided a crucial test case of the workability of the Dumbarton Oaks framework for international cooperation, in particular the



pledge of the powers enjoying veto rights to respect the rights of smaller nations. The UN framework, however, rested on substantially different principles of foreign relations than had motivated Britain and the Soviet Union in the acquisition of their historic interests in Iran, and, for that matter, than those which the United States followed in Latin America. Thus is revealed a potential contradiction or tension in U.S. objectives in Iran: The aim of resolving the dispute over the country's future without aggravating relations among the big three, and thereby undermining chances for a stable peace, was not the same as using Iran to prove that the allies could, or must, agree to treat all countries in the manner prescribed by the UN Charter. The difference is between preventing Iran from becoming viewed as a test case and insisting that it be one; between subordinating U.S. interests in the openness and independence of the country to the principle of concert, and defending those interests at the risk of making concert impossible. This tension or contradiction goes back to the original equation of international peace with the widest possible application of the historical (for the U.S.) principles of the Open Door, now prominently if not exclusively enshrined in the UN Charter. (For detailed internal expositions of the rationale of U.S. policy in Iran, see: Stettinius to Ford, July 23, 1944, FR, 44, 5, 342-45; Yalta planning paper on Iran, FR, Yalta and Malta, 340; Potsdam briefing paper on Iran, FR, Potsdam Conference, I, 951-2; State Department memo on Iran of August 23, 1945, and U.S. Iranian Ambassador memo to State Department, September 25, 1945, FR, 45, 8, 393-8 and 418-19. See also Kolko, ch 11.

## B. The Capabilities of the Parties

### 1. Military Forces

The local military balance in Iran favored the Soviet Union. The Iranian army consisted of about 100,000 men; although there had been some defections in August, 1945, the army was by and large loyal.

Soviet garrisons in northern Iran had been increased by two or three

*Test of whether the world would really be a more peaceful place if the UN Charter were applied to all countries.*

divisions in October and were estimated at about 75,000. Of these 30,000 were in Azerbaijan. Some undetermined number of additional men, perhaps as many as 20,000, were stationed even closer to Teheran. Soviet forces were superior in armament to Iranian. Creation of an Azerbaijan rebel army began only in January-March, 1946.

Western forces were insignificant. The British had 5,000 soldiers near their oil installation in the south, the Americans less than 6,000 non-combatants at a supply base near Abadan. (Kirk, 60-61; Bloomfield, 60-61; US, FR, 45, 8, 464-66; 471; 480-83.)

## 2. Para-military instruments of policy.

Each side in the dispute could count on material aid for its moves from more than just regular armed forces. Supplementing the Iranian army was a gendarmerie force which was being trained and re-equipped by an American advisory mission. The loyalty and organizational effectiveness of the gendarmerie was much commented on by Western observers throughout the crisis. In addition, British and Iranian policy makers maintained close political ties with various conservative groups, primarily in the south, who could be (and were, later) armed to help resist Soviet, rebel, and Tudeh moves.

The Soviet Union had left from 2 to 3,000 officers and men in Teheran in civilian clothes after the official withdrawal of its troops from the capital city. Available to assist them in Teheran were an estimated 10,000 Tudeh partisans, immigrants from Soviet Azerbaijan, and what Iranian sources called "hoodlums." The effectiveness and reliability of Soviet agents and sympathizers was not however guaranteed. The abortive attempt to seize Tabriz in August revealed great "confusion, inexperience, incompetence, and lack of discipline" and had led to the decision to place all future actions firmly in control of the regular Soviet military. (Bloomfield, p. 62, quoting Paul Weaver, "The Soviet-Iranian Affair, 1945-46.")

### 3. Geo-strategic positions

The territory of the Soviet Union was contiguous to Iran. The key cities were close--occupied Tabriz 60 miles from their border, Teheran 300 miles from Tabriz, with no serious natural barriers intervening. Some of the Soviet troops were much closer. British installations centered around the Abadan oil fields some 400 miles south of Teheran, but within reach of air and sea power.

Immediate geo-strategic position and deployment of forces immensely favored the Soviet Union. The question was just how much the superior air power and mobility of the West could offset this advantage. This would be a matter of deterrence rather than defense.

### C. The Parties' Relative Fear of War

Making a judgement about who feared war the most in a crisis is difficult, for two reasons. First, because such judgements can only be made with confidence after the crisis is over, and thus cannot be cited as an explanatory factor in describing the conflict's evolution. And second, because a country's fear of war, or, positively put, the degree of willingness to risk war, is not static but rather changes according to the values attached to the stakes at issue; these of course usually change in the course of a contest. A third difficulty arises in our particular case: The quarrel over Iran did not hover constantly near the break-point of great power military conflict; only at one or two phases does it seem that the possibility of war became a key consideration for one or more sides. By and large the crisis turned on estimations of whether other forms of sanction, punishment, or mutual loss than great power war were worth risking or sustaining in order to prevail. But even this judgement is retrospective. A major purpose of the case study is to find out whether it was the fear or threat of war, or lesser things, that determined the outcome.

The following brief estimations are therefore phrased as statements about the tendencies to fear or not to fear war in each country's policy. The Iranians had no intention of risking a direct military conflict with Soviet forces, even if faced with as severe a prospect as loss of territory, including their capital city Teheran. They had, and would, however, engage Tudeh partisans and perhaps the forces of the Azerbaijanian Republic if the Soviet military were not directly on the scene, or poised to return.

Soviet willingness to run the risk of military conflict with Iran alone was quite high, but decreased in proportion as the U.S. and Britain took the Iranian side of the quarrel. Thus the Soviet calculus was a shifting one, depending on the magnitude of the stakes and Western involvement at any one

time. The closer to the Soviet border and vital interests the point at issue, and the less engaged the Western powers, the greater Soviet willingness to threaten and employ military force. At no point, however, does it appear that the Soviet Union considered any of the possible gains worth running even a low risk of direct military conflict with the United States.

Concerning the U.S. government, none of the public statements or private deliberations before the crisis began indicated any intention by America to further its goals by the threat or use of force. (See especially Stettinius' memorandum in FR, 44, V, 345.) As the dimensions and seriousness of the conflict expanded, however, certain (but by no means all) U.S. actions and statements showed a growing willingness to invoke a least some possibility that the U.S. considered the outcome important enough to be worth some risk of military confrontation with the Soviet Union.

Concerning Great Britain, to the degree that Soviet backed forces in Iran came to be viewed as a direct threat to well-defined economic and strategic forces and threats into its policy increased.

#### D. The Initial Images Held of the Other Parties

The information called for in this category may be logically impossible to supply, since by definition a crisis represents a surprising and extreme turn of events which the parties have previously not confronted and thought through, at least in exactly the same fashion. (It's true on the other hand that crises, because they are about significant values may well take place at crossings of power and purpose that have been prominent in the antagonists' calculations long before, with possible contingencies perhaps even made the subject of policy games. Berlin around 1960-61 probably falls here.) Since the dispute over Iran originated and found resolution concurrently with the working out of a new global pattern of power and alignment, for which none of the parties had easily applicable policy guidelines and long-standing contingency



plans, clear images of the other side's position and likely behavior in various situations are hardly to be expected. Worse still, if we accept the judgement that policies and objectives were not well-fixed during this period, then it's difficult to say which views were misperceptions and which a consequence of the objective uncertainty of the other's course. Because of the relative newness of Iran as an arena of intense conflict, and the evolving and fluid nature of the main parties' conceptions of one another in the early cold war, remarks on perceptions must also remain general and tentative.

The Iranian government viewed Soviet policies as tending toward a revolutionary expansionism that would subjugate the whole country. Some important political actor, however, such as Prime Minister Qavam and Mossadegh, did not regard the initial motivation behind these developing expansionist tendencies as completely illegitimate, but rather as the reflection of historic and justified security concerns given the growth of Western presence. Iranian estimates of Soviet and Tudeh capabilities tended to be higher than those made by British or American observers, and it was fully expected that the Soviet Union would use military force against Iranian resistance, although a coup was viewed more likely than an invasion. The gradual step up of Soviet activity during 1945 had begun to lower British and American prestige in the eyes of the Iranian populace, and strains of accommodationist, or "defeatist" thought in government and military circles indicated, perhaps, a low expectation of firm support from the allies against intensified Soviet pressure. On the otherhand, Iranians estimated the potential effectiveness of any show of American power as a counter to Soviet policy to be quite high.

Soviet images are less easily described. The Iranian regime was regarded as corrupt and backward, beholden to social and economic interests--domestic and international--that were bound to oppose the policies of a socially

advanced state like the Soviet Union. The British presence in Iran fit easily into the imperialist category in terms of its legitimacy and aims. The image held of American interests is harder to characterize; certainly they viewed America and Britain as potentially in conflict, but not to the point of welcoming American influence unconditionally as a counter to Britain's, because the U.S. so often took the Iranian side--an anti-Soviet position. The Soviet Union's own purposes in Iran were described as pro-democratic and internationalist.

The Soviets discounted Iranian military capabilities; the British were not perceived as ready to use force except in the south; the U.S. was not regarded as a factor in the local military situation. Summarizing, they perceived the Iranian regime's resilience, flexibility, and capacity for resistance from a position of military weakness to be insubstantial. I don't believe they had a clear or settled view of how firm the British would be in a struggle to maintain or expand their long-standing interests in Iran, or how vigilant and precise the U.S. would be in the application of its universalist doctrine to Iran as a symbolically as well as intrinsically important small power. Probably the Soviet Union underestimated the resistance both were prepared to pose, even short of military activity.

Neither Britain nor America, at the outset of the crisis, viewed Soviet objectives as unalterably expansionist. Both countries accepted the view that the most plausible motivation for Soviet actions in the oil and Azerbaijanian conflicts was to secure a buffer from attack in at least northern Iran. They did not expect the Soviets to attempt an invasion, but speculated most often that the real aim was the establishment of a "popular" government through less overt forms of pressure and persuasion. This latter contingency was held as rather likely and to represent a definite escalation of the threat to both countries' interests in Iran. The view of the Soviet Union as likely to be opportunistically expansionist in the course of guaranteeing its initial security.

concerns were not, at this stage, formulated in the later cold war terms that Soviet aggressiveness was endemic and to be resisted at every turn. But differences among the actors in degrees of legitimacy were assumed: The British viewed themselves as behaving decently in Iran and the Americas as having a policy there that distinguished between international and national concerns, whereas the Soviet Union, out of ideological self-deception or design was not capable of distinguishing its interests from those of the Iranians and the world at large.

The United States considered the Iranian regime unwilling and unable to take positive steps toward reform that might have diminished the appeal of Azerbaijanian regionalism and hence did not always support Iranian complaints of Soviet interference and Tudeh perfidy. The British posture in Iran, too, was viewed with faint suspicion as a holdover from imperialism--albeit a defensive and tactful one and hence more legitimate than the new influence aspired to by the Soviets. The varying degrees of American suspicion of everyone's motives and purposes in the country meant that U.S. policy makers held an especially strong sense of their own objectivity and uniqueness of purpose.

Both Britain and America had a low estimation of Iranian capability, morale, and staying power. They expected with some certainty that the Soviet Union could and would employ its occupation forces to back up political demands, though their use in overt ways, or outside the northern provinces, was held much less likely.

## V. THE BARGAINING PROCESS

### A. The Soviet move in Azerbaijan: Intentions and Tactics

The purpose of the Soviet decision in November, 1945, to back a full scale revolutionary takeover of the Azerbaijan province was to assure that Russia would have a politically reliable (or more accurately, controllable) regime for a neighbor after the wartime right of the Soviets to station troops in the area had expired. We shall investigate the extent to which this action represented a "basic move," irreversibly changing the structure of the conflict, and the tactics used by the Soviets in trying to convince their three main adversaries that this move was legitimate or at least had to be tolerated.

As Lockhart pointed out in the Cuban case study, the tactic of seeking a fait accompli has certain advantages: You don't have to spell out clearly in advance what you seek and what you are prepared to pay; instead, if successful, you confront the adversary with a physical alteration of the situation which almost immediately begins to acquire some legitimacy as the new status quo. This places on the adversary the burden of determining the extent of your commitment and of initiating a counterattack which quite likely will risk a greater disturbance of the peace and risk of war between the major antagonists than the original move. This is especially so when the altered situation is on the territory of a third power so that its establishment entails no direct contact between the forces of the major antagonists.

Success of the Soviet backed regime in Azerbaijan would have presented the Iranians, British, and Americans with an undesirable fait accompli--a new regime hostile to their interests in the province--but this achievement would have been acquired by proxy, not by formally admitted or unequivocally established action of the Soviet state. Thus the action had some of the characteristics of Schelling's category of "probe"--a non-committal testing

of the extent of the other side's degree of commitment. If unsuccessful, the Soviets could disentangle themselves from the results more easily than if their own forces had directly attempted a seizure; if successful, they would have in power an ally probably just as reliable as any regime they might have put into power directly, via a classical fait accompli, without being completely associated with either the illegitimacy of its origins or its subsequent faults. Their problem in the weeks surrounding the rebel uprising was to convince the allies not to oppose the change in regime in Azerbaijan while at the same time avoiding taking responsibility (whether blame or benefits) for it. This was tricky, because convincing the allies to tolerate the change required them to acknowledge that Soviet power and interests were importantly involved in the fate of Azerbaijan, yet to the degree that this was acknowledged, the regime became less tolerable. A review of Soviet communications will show how they tried to achieve the necessary posture of non-committal commitment.

The Soviets expressed on numerous occasions their approval of the Azerbaijanian rebels' actions and the legitimacy of their cause. They termed the movement a true democratic upsurge, representative of the 98% of the population said to view the Soviet Union as a good neighbor. They gave publicity to the appeals issued by the rebels. By these actions they linked their prestige to the success of the regime. At the same time, Soviet statements consistently and vigorously denied any involvement whatsoever in the rebellion, which put upon the allies the onus of having to charge the Soviet Union with dishonesty and to demonstrate their actual responsibility. Along with statements of approval and disavowals of responsibility went reminders that the Soviet Union's legal right to retain troops in Iran remained in force. To this was added a new argument concerning the legitimacy of Soviet policy in Iran. In some of their notes during the fall the Soviets recalled that



According to the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 1921 they had a right to send troops into that country in certain situations (which were left unspecified). While these references were intended mainly to threaten the Iranians with greater Soviet forces than those already present if the central government kept insisting on sending additional forces north, it also served to remind all parties involved that the Soviet Union had a long-standing legal basis for its intense concern with Iran. These statements avoided a precise commitment to the success or defense of the regime; but by applauding its emergence and justifying its existence to those who opposed it, the Soviet Union began to associate itself de facto with the rebels' fortunes.

Most of these steps had the effect of increasing the Soviet Union's apparent valuation of the stakes. Others can be considered means of increasing the probability of firmness without changing the stakes; for in so far as the rebellion was consistently defined as local and spontaneous, opposition to any challenge to it could be portrayed as inevitable. This is not the same as devolving decisional authority to lower levels, or losing control to subordinates. Instead the original definition of the situation is designed to remove the question from any but regional, i.e., Azerbaijani, control. The denial of responsibility is a denial of any ability to control (also a denial of the legitimacy of any outside efforts to control) the situation.

The most important steps taken by the Soviet Union and the rebels to raise the Western perception of the costs of resisting the rebellion were these: The blockage, by a detachment of Soviet military forces, of the column of Iranian troops attempting to enter the province. The warning, in Soviet messages, that the entrance of such forces would only result in greater unrest and bloodshed. And the threat, in Soviet messages, that any increase in the number of central Government forces in Azerbaijan would necessitate a corresponding increase in Soviet troops there. In addition, the rebels themselves,

while disclaiming any desire for formal separation, stated that they would fight if the central Government resisted their legitimate demands. (See Soviet notes to U.S. and Iran of November 23 and 30, 1945, FR, 45, 8, 445-47.)

The intention of these actions, warnings, and threats, was to shift to the Western powers, primarily Iran, the decision on whether to risk escalating the violence connected with the rebellion, which in November and December was only scattered and sporadic, to another level and to a wider net of participants. Minor harassments--such as the refusal to allow a U.S. military attache to travel in the north and the constant placing of difficulties before Iranian officials seeking entrance into the Soviet zone--were further signs that the Soviets intended to protect the rebels.

Other Soviet steps were designed to devalue the stakes as perceived by the Western powers. In communications to the United States, Soviet representatives downgraded the merits of the central Government, terming it reactionary and Fascist, recalling the difficult times the Millspaugh mission had had, and linking Iranian interests with those of British imperialism. (US, FR, 45, 8, 420-22) Some of these points were made as early as September, 1945, in a talk between the Soviet and American Ambassadors in Iran--that is two months before the actual rebellion broke out. This meeting was the first time in two years that the Soviet Ambassador had initiated a general discussion with his U.S. counterpart.

A second tactic designed to decrease American interests in the Azerbaijanian affair consisted of arguments denying the international character of the dispute. In a conversation with the U.S. Ambassador on November 23, the Soviet Charge emphasized that (1) the question of the movement of Iranian armed forces into the north was a concern of these forces and the Red Army only, (2) that the democratic movement was of concern to the Iranian government only, and (3) that the only pertinent international issue--the timing of the withdrawal of

occupation forces--had already been discussed two months before at the September foreign ministers' conference. (FR, 45, 8, 445-47).

Soviet actions toward Iran were a mixture of the physical steps already described, delaying maneuvers, and, occasionally, vaguely phrased demands. To show disdain for the central Government, and to provide time for the rebellion to succeed, the Soviet Union delayed answering the first series of Iranian complaints directed to it, and withdrew their Ambassador from Teheran. Much of the diplomatic discourse between the two countries took place in Moscow, a psychologically less advantageous forum for the Iranians. Soviet communications with Iran were devoted primarily to justifying the rebellion and denying any illegitimate actions by Russian forces. When the Iranians requested permission to send troops north, the reply was that none were required and could only cause more bloodshed. On one occasion an official of the Soviet foreign ministry did mention specific Soviet interests: the oil concession, air transport and various commercial rights. (US, FR, 45, 8, 456, 459.) But whether Iranian concessions on these points would ease Soviet pressure on Azerbaijan was left unclear. Soviet backing of the rebellion could be interpreted as a convenient source of leverage on Iran, as an end in itself, or both.

The basic Soviet aim, therefore, was to gain legitimacy for the rebels and time for them to succeed. In seeking approval and breathing space for what was defined as somebody else's fait accompli, their identification with it necessarily grew.

#### B. The Initial Western Response

The outbreak of the Azerbaijanian rebellion did not come as a complete surprise since signs of such a move had been present for several months. Neither the Iranians nor the British doubted that the Soviet Union directed the move; by contrast, the American State Department (though not its officers in the field) searched constantly thru the early phases of the crisis for

more and definite confirmation of Soviet involvement. (See especially Byrnes to Murray, FR, 45, 8, 472). The American insistence on confirming information notwithstanding, however, the main problem for each of the three countries was not to amass hard evidence. It was instead to convince the Soviets of the un wisdom of their course while avoiding at the same time asserting so definite a linkage between rebel activities and Soviet directives that the Soviet Union could not accept a rebel defeat. The unwillingness to force a direct confrontation over Azerbaijan stemmed from a compound of three considerations:

The lack of unequivocal evidence of direct Soviet involvement; the lack of immediately available military and political counter forces to the Soviet presence in Iran, the northern provinces in particular; and, the acknowledgement, on the British and American side, of a degree of legitimacy (legality plus interests) in the Soviet posture.

These constraints on opposition led the allies to favor a strategy of mutual disentanglement, to be achieved through a concessive rather than coercive set of tactics, leavened only by a hint of more negative sanctions to come if the strategy failed. (Luard, 322.) In Snyder's terms in working paper # , primary emphasis was on the realization of the presumably common aim of avoiding confrontation, with secondary attention to the risks the pursuit of such accommodation entailed from narrower, more one-sided interests. To use the same metaphorical situation from two different angles: The problem was to let the Soviets and the world know that the allies knew they were fishing in the troubled water of Azerbaijan, but in such a fashion as to give them a chance to get off the hook. The first necessity in achieving this effect was to make the Soviets aware in a non-accusing way that the allies were disturbed by and following closely, the events in Azerbaijan. The second was to rebroach, to fit the new context, previously advanced proposals for reciprocal disentanglement from Iran. The third was to avoid any unnecessary steps

that would increase Soviet suspicions about allied intentions in Iran or unnecessarily tie Soviet prestige to the fate of the rebel venture.

In their various communications of late November and early December complaining about the situation in the north, the three countries reminded the Soviet Union of its pledge at Teheran to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran. A typical reminder of the principles involved was contained in the main U.S. note of November 24. It stated that the U.S. government believed that "the fulfillment of these assurances (given at Teheran) requires that the Government of Iran should have full freedom, without interference from Soviet, British, or American military or civil authorities, to move its armed forces through Iran in such a manner as it may consider necessary in order to preserve its authority and to maintain internal security." (FR, 45, 8, p. 449.)

In responding to a question in the House of Commons about events in Azerbaijan, British Foreign Minister Bevin assured the House that Britain would guard her interests wherever in the world they were challenged. (US, FR, 45, 440-41.) A U.S. press release on the anniversary of the Teheran conference, December 7, was more precise; it stated that the United States interest in maintenance of Iranian independence as set forth in the declaration "has not changed in any respect." (US, FR, 45, 8, 483.)

All three countries realized early in the crisis that the only effective weapon immediately available was publicity. In one of their first pleas to the United States for support, the Iranians gave assurances that they had no intention of provoking an armed clash; their only recourse, they acknowledged, was to throw the case before the world. As the situation worsened, the Iranians did, as we shall see, recommend more concrete steps.



But by and large they and their British and American allies concentrated on maximizing public exposure of the Soviet moves or at least of the consequences of a rebel victory. The American Ambassador in Iran, Wallace Murray, recommended that the U.S. release figures on the military balance in Iran to undercut Soviet arguments that the security of their forces would be threatened by the entrance of Iranian forces into the north. Byrnes reported back to Murray that the Department was following his recommendations. (FR, 45, 8, 480-3, 487.) Similarly the British, in the first month of the revolt, decided that the best that could be done was to tell the Soviets they were being watched, and step up publicity. British officials worked to increase the coverage of Iranian events by major Western news sources. A difficulty facing the Western powers in getting such information out was that, as part of the agreements regulating allied occupation of Iran, the non-official press was subject to censorship at the request of any single ally. This subjected the content of the Western press to Soviet control, while official Tass publications, the major forum for Soviet commentary, were exempted from equivalent limits set by the allies. (US, FR, 45, 8, 479, For comments on the unequal propaganda advantages enjoyed by the Soviet Union, see Lenczowski.)

Supplementing protests and publicity were certain suggestions on how the situation might be mutually resolved. The Iranian notes to the Soviet Union directly implicated it in the troop blockage actions, while the British and American phrasings more circumspectly pointed out that there must have been "some misunderstanding of the position" or that the local Soviet commanders may have been acting "without the sanction" of the Soviet government. (Iranian notes summarized, FR, 45, 8, 432; British and American notes, ibid., 456-7, 448-50.) Even the Iranians, after issuing a stream of protests, wrote on December 3 that they would give no further citations of instances of interference since they expected that the provocations would cease. (This note came

back to haunt them two months later when the Soviets cited it at the U.N. as evidence that the dispute had been resolved.) The strategy evident here, of giving the Soviet Union a chance to withdraw its support for the rebels without having to acknowledge responsibility in the first place, sometimes extended to more explicit suggestions. The United States announced it was proceeding to complete the withdrawal of all its remaining military supply forces from Iran by January 1, even though the formal treaty commitment to withdrawal did not come until March 2. This announcement was made with the expressed intent that the Soviet Union (and Britain) do the same. The arguments advanced for the move were that the continued presence of allied troops in Iran beyond January 1 would likely result in further "incidents and misunderstandings" and that it would be a fitting recognition of Iran's contribution to the war effort and trust in the permanent members of the Security Council. (FR, 45, 8, 448-50.) The U.S. proposal was not contingent on reciprocity; it was intended as an irrevocable gesture of good faith, of trust in the other parties' intentions. Implicit in the proposal was the argument that any gains accruing to the Soviet Union from maintaining its forces in Iran would be offset by the costs of the loss of Iranian confidence. This can be viewed as a mild and veiled warning that such acts of Soviet interference might make the postwar peace-keeping machinery unworkable--a consequence the Soviet Union should seek to avoid.

The British were more dependent on a military presence in Iran to guard their interests than were the Americans. They therefore would go no further than recommending, after some initial hesitation, that the Soviet Union and Britain discuss coordination of plans for a somewhat earlier troop withdrawal than March 2. (FR, 45, 8, 487) This possibility had been included in the Molotov-Bevin exchanges of September, and thus did not have the disadvantage of seeming to deny the legalities and previous exchanges on the subject. In the British view, the best strategy was to remain by the letter of past understandings, on the assumption that the maintenance of a joint approach would

best guarantee Soviet willingness to honor its ultimate commitment to getting out and non-interference.

The tactics of communicating awareness and concern, and suggesting reciprocal disengagement were accompanied by a number of decisions whose purpose was to avoid giving the Soviets any new pretexts for suspicion of allied policies in Iran. Secretary of State Byrnes and other State Department officials rejected a number of proposed steps that would have pinned blame for the rebellion directly on Soviet leadership and placed American statements and influence behind the Iranian complaints. For instance, throughout the fall, Ambassador Murray urged Washington to take a firm and open stand against Soviet interference. When the rebellion broke out, he argued for stiff diplomatic resistance on the grounds that "(t)echnical interpretations of (the) tri-partite treaty and (the) special agreement between Bevin and Molotov on (the date) of withdrawal of troops should be overridden by higher considerations of world interest plus ordinary logic and justice." He thought the situation demanded a direct confrontation with the Soviet Union over the facts of the case, and a call for the immediate withdrawal of all troops; if the Soviets (or the British) refused to hasten troop withdrawals, he argued, the U.S. should not continue unilaterally. This would only invite a reinstatement of the 1907 sphere of influence arrangements in the country. (FR, 45, 8, 436-7, 478-80.) This advice was not taken by Washington. Nor was the State Department, or Murray, for that matter, responsive to an Iranian request that U.S. security forces remaining in Teheran make some demonstration of support for the central government's position. (A related Iranian request, that the United States use its good offices in favor of Iran's candidacy for one of the non-permanent seats on the Security Council, a position that would put Iran in a better position to present her case, was not acted on either.) Other actions of caution and restraint: In October, prior to the outbreak of the rebellion but still a period when signs of it

were accumulating, Murray had advised a U.S. oil company interested in discussing a concession in the northern provinces with the Iranian government to postpone the request because of the Iranian law against such discussions and the likelihood that this would hold up the foreign troop withdrawal and invite renewed Russian intervention, that lesson at least had been learned. (FR, 45, 8, 581-3) During the first month of the rebellion, when U.S. diplomatic and military officials at various levels were refused entrance into the northern provinces, the State Department refrained from registering sharp complaints to Moscow. (See FR 511-12, for one phase of internal discussion on this matter.)

Along with restraint went proposals for positive steps that the Iranians should take to ease the crisis. Throughout the period Murray, at times independently, at times at Washington's insistence, advised Iranian officials to avoid bloodshed, and to make concessions in the matters of cultural autonomy and the establishment of provincial councils in Azerbaijan. Murray counseled the Shah against addressing an appeal to the members of the Security Council, arguing instead that a high level Iranian mission to Moscow would do more to convince world opinion that Iran desired a settlement and to avoid creating Soviet fears of a diplomatic coalition against it. (FR, 45, 8, 444-5, 458, 504-5)

By mid-December these tactics had not yet shown effectiveness. The Soviets continued to bar the entrance of Iranian troops and supported the rebellion's progress in various other ways. The seizure of Tabriz was imminent. The Iranians considered the north lost without reinforcements and predicted that the fight would shift to the south thereafter. Reports of the continued presence of Soviet military units a few miles outside Teheran, and of a growing fifth column of Soviet supporters within the capital city added substance to this dire view. (FR, 45, 8, 464-6, 471, 477, 486-8, 490-1)

As the situation deteriorated so did the Iranian willingness to offer

reaisitance. U.S. officials on the scene reported to Washington the Iranian army's morale to be low, and the country's civil leadership in an appeasing mood. Iranian and U.S. diplomatic officials stressed repeatedly that only the United States was in a position to render effective resistance. The Chief of the Division of Middle Eastern Affairs, reporting on a fact-finding mission to Iran, put it this way:

Almost everyone expresses the view that Iran's only hope now lies in the United States. It is beooming ever more common to hear people say that the British are not interested in saving Iran, but are merely desirous of portecting their interests in the South. (FR,45,8,501)

Repeated requests by Iranian officials for support from Washington made the same point. To strengthen their argument, the Iranians began to place the Azerbaijanian situation in the context of a world-wide struggle for influence. Acheson reported that the energetic new Iranian Ambassador to Washington, Hussein Ala, argued to him that the interests involved were not just those of  
Iran

...but of world security since Azerbaijan was only (the) first move in a series which would include Turkey and other countries in (the ) Near East. He went on to say that if a strong stand were not aken now, the United Nations Orhanization would lose all significance as an instrument for preserving a peace based on justice, (the) history of Manchuria, Abyssiana, and Munich would be repeated and Azerbaijan would prove to have been (the) short fired in (a) third world war. FR,45,8, 508)

The apparent ascendancy of Soviet-backed interests norther Iran, the waning of the central government's capacity for resistance, and the growing conviction that only an unequivocal assertion of United States power and interests against Soviet policy in Iran---these developments seemed to indicate that the previously followed Wester tactics of conflict avoidance through offers of reciprocal self-limitation in Iran were wrongly selected or applied as check on Soviet Behavior.



### C. The Moscow Talks--Return to Big Three Diplomacy

As so often before in the evolution of diplomatic controversy over Iran when bi-lateral communications through regular channels failed to have the desired effect, the Western powers now made their disagreement with the Soviet Union a subject of discussion at a more elevated level---the Moscow Foreign Minister Conference of December 1945. The Iranians had been pressing for the issue to be placed on the conference agenda for some time in private communications with Britain and America. On December 13 they sent a formal note to the Big Three asking for the immediate evacuation of all foreign troops and the guarantee of absolute freedom of movement for government forces throughout the country. (FR, 45, 8, 487-8; 492-3) The Soviets, too, had been proceeding with an eye to the convening of the conference. The day after Byrnes and Bevin arrived in Moscow and formal announcement of the fall of the Persian garrison at Tabriz and the establishment of the National Government of Persian Azerbaijan under Pishiveri. The intention was to establish the autonomy and finality of events in Iran prior to any discussion.

In the Moscow talks, Stalin and Molotov maintained the position previously adopted: that the Soviet Union had not intervened in Azerbaijan, that the National Democratic movement was a purely internal matter, and that there was no need to revive the question of troop withdrawals. Even before this restatement the Soviets had argued that the Iranian issue be removed from the official agenda and discussed only informally. When the British and Americans insisted on treating Iran as a matter of joint concern, however, the Soviets had to depart somewhat from a posture of denial and avoidance. Complaints that the Iranian government was hostile to Russia were renewed; Stalin underlined this by saying that the one thing wrong with the Teheran Declaration was that it contained no statement of Iran's obligations toward the Big Three. The great powers should

remain skeptical of Iran, which was trying to stir up trouble between them.

To the derogation of the Iranian complaints was added for the first time a countercharge against allied behavior elsewhere: Stalin charged that American and British troops were not out of Greece and Indonesia. This statement foreshadowed an expansion of the context in which the disagreement might be defined, just as the allies' insistence on discussing Iran at Moscow had escalated its diplomatic seriousness.

A new justification presented by Stalin for denying entrance to Iranian troops was the Soviet Union felt that the hostility of the Iranian government might manifest itself in the sabotage of the Baku oil fields, important Russian refineries bordering Iran. In this connection, Stalin reminded his colleagues that Russia retained the right to maintain troops in Iran under the 1921 treaty if conditions remained disturbed and that a decision on the necessity of such a step would have to be considered at a later stage. Whether the fear expressed of Iran was genuine, or merely a rationalization for policy based on completely other grounds, is not easily determined. Byrnes thought it "the weakest excuse he'd ever heard" and Murray termed it "patently absurd"; other observers, however, for instance Kennan as early as 1943, argued that because of the wholesale destruction which the Soviet's Unions' industrial plant suffered at German hands, its leadership was understandably obsessed with protecting all remaining resources. (Byrnes, FR,45, 8, 517; see the Kennan quotation above p.45) The importance of the Baku oil fields reference probably lies in the context rather than the precise case: Stalin was recalling the Soviet Union's determination to assure itself that events in northern Iran did not take an anti-Russian turn. He concluded with the assurance that his country had no territorial designs and that, once secure on the issue of the oil fields, would withdraw its troops and take no interest whatsoever in Iran's internal affairs.

(For Stalin's entire remarks, see Harriman's report of a private talk with him and Molotov, and the accounts of the conference session, FR,45,8,510-11,517; also Gardner, 213.)

Unable to avoid the issue, the Soviets attacked the Iranian government, hinted at the possibility of lodging similar complaints against allied activities elsewhere, and restated their intense concern at the implications of any anti-Soviet regime in northern Iran. These tactics were designed primarily to impress the allied once more with the seriousness of Soviet interests in the area and with the illegitimacy of Iranian complaints.

When the efforts of Bevin, Byrnes, and Harriman (U.S. Ambassador to Moscow) to gain Stalin's assent to a speedier troop withdrawal and cessation of interference with Iranian troop movements encountered these extensive objections, the British and Americans faced the choice of either forgetting about the matter or devising new tactics. Both countries did so, the British by proposing yet another variant of the idea of a joint action by the Big Three to put Iran's affairs in order and subsequently to disentangle themselves, the Americans by warning for the first time of the possibility of a U.S. Iranian alliance against Soviet activities in Iran. We are here at the first stages of the transition from a collective, formally non-antagonistic treatment of the issue to a more polarized one. The hint of a shift in American tactics will be considered first.

After hearing Stalin's objections, Byrnes, on December 23, said that he feared the Iranian dispute would be raised at the first meeting of the U.N. in January and hoped that some steps could be taken to avoid this. In his memoirs, Byrnes claimed that he said explicitly in the course of these remarks that "it would surely be unfortunate if we should be opposed on such a vital question at the very first meeting," but unless Stalin would agree to withdraw his troops the United States "would have to support Iran vigorously." (All in One Lifetime,

333-334) It is difficult to determine if Byrnes actually was this forthright, in the official State Department records and in the Harriman notes on the exchange, the expression of a desire to avoid seeing the issue raised in the U.N. is followed only by restatements of the United States' concern over the observance of the Teheran declaration and a reconfirmation of its intention to proceed with the complete withdrawal of its troops from Iran to eliminate any grounds for suspicion of American policy. (FR, 45, 8, 417-19; add also state Dept. notes, citation from Harriman). Concerning the discrepancy, Lloyd Gardner had speculated that Byrnes might have wished to toughen up his record in retrospect, since once the United States did take a strong stand in the Security Council in the coming months, it would be necessary to play down any previous ambiguity. (Gardner, 213-214) We do know that Lloyd Henderson, Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African Affairs, in advising Byrnes on what position to take at Moscow, recommended that Bevin and Molotov be informed that in the American view the Iranian dispute was not merely important in itself, but as a "test of the ability of the permanent members of the Security Council to cooperate with each other on a basis of respect for the sovereignty of smaller members of the United Nations." And while the conference was still in session, Undersecretary Acheson directed Harriman to impress upon Stalin "in all frankness" America's concern over the troop issue

So that the Soviet Govt may fully realize the world significance of the policies which it appears to be pursuing in northern Iran (and) may not later charge us with lack of frankness in case it should learn only in London that we cannot ignore the basic principles of the Charter of the United Nations in order to avoid taking before all of the United Nations an attitude critical of the Soviet Union." (FR, 45, 8, 513.)

It was the United States; intention, therefore, to warn unequivocally that Soviet policies in Iran could precipitate a great power split at the U.N.



Before commenting further on this point, a second discrepancy between Byrnes's recollections and the official accounts must be considered, this one relating to Stalin's response to Byrnes. Byrnes had Stalin saying "We will do nothing to make you blush" if the matter is raised in the U.N., whereas the State Department account and Harriman's notes read: "He (Stalin) concluded by saying that no one had any need to blush if this question were raised in the Assembly." The first version can be taken as a promise of good behavior; the second more or less a repetition of Stalin's basic posture, which was that the Big Three should not let the complaints of trouble-making smaller powers come between them. Stalin did repeat at this point that the Teheran pledges of his government still held, but the main emphasis was on the alleged hostility and ingratitude of the Iranian government toward the Soviet Union. Once that changed, things would be in order; the Soviet Union had no objection to the presence of American troops. (See FR, 45,8, 518; also add official notes on this portion of the exchange; also Byrnes, AIOL, )

Now both the precise character and the significance of these discrepancies is difficult to establish. The possibility of putting the issue on an adversary basis at a more prominent diplomatic level had been raised by the United States but whether as a vague warning (this undesirable event might take place) or an explicit threat (if you continue A, we will carry out undesirable B) is unclear. Similarly, the Soviet Union can be read as simply restating a weak cover story for its action in northern Iran, as buying time--this is Byrnes's interpretation--or as taking special pains to separate its quarrel with the Iranians from the issue of great power harmony. One point is clear, however. The bitter objections expressed by the Soviet leadership later in 1945 over America's backing of Iran in the UN indicated that the Russians did not expect such a posture to be taken, or, if they did, never considered it to be legitimate and hence



continued to complain about it. Byrnes himself provided some basis for the view that his warnings were not clear enough to be heard:

The fact that our action (in the United Nations) seemed to surprise (Molotov) convinced me that our solemn warning had not been taken seriously, nor had those of the British, and that whenever in the future we made such statements we should have to make our intentions unmistakably clear and definite. (AIOU, 358)

This exchange over the UN was not the only Western rejoinder to Stalin at the Conference. For the moment, the British, with American concurrence, responded as if the Soviets were interested mainly in resolving the dispute with Iran without upsetting Big Three relations. On December 24, Bevin proposed the establishment of a tri-partie commission to assist the Iranian government in re-establishing satisfactory relations with the provinces, through such measures as the introduction of minority languages and the formation of provincial councils as provided in the Iranian constitutions. In addition, the commission was to investigate the question of troop withdrawal and make recommendations for its acceleration. Harriman stated from Moscow at the time that the British made this proposal as a "last resort: in the face of previous Soviet resistance to all American and British representations. It was designed "to enlist Soviet cooperation in reducing the scope of Azerbaijan autonomy and bringing the province back under de-facto authority" of the government. The section on troop withdrawal, he said, was "suggested by Byrne's to give recognition to Iranian complaints and avoid (the) appearance of considering only matters of internal Iranian administration." (FR, 45, 8, 519) Given this characterization of the intention of the proposal, Soviet acceptance might have been considered unlikely; on the other hand, it did maintain the solidarity of the three against the Iranians and presumably would have given the Soviets a legitimate form of leverage on the evolution of political affairs in the northern provinces.

First Soviet Reactions were positive. Stalin answered that agreement might be reached on the British draft and presented the next day three minor amendments.

The day after that, however, Dec 26, when Bouvier  
offered to accept the amendments,

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McClotov displayed a completely changed attitude. He refused to continue the discussion and reverted to the position that there was no need to take any decision, especially since Iran was not on the formal agenda. He closed with a conciliatory note, suggesting that the Big Three have informal consultations on any outstanding problems at the time of the UN opening. (FR, 45,8, 519; McNeil 704-12.)

Two reasons can be advanced for the Soviet about face. They might have decided after study of the British proposal that it gave the Iranians just what they desired--the cooperation of the British and Americans in the reassertion of central government authority in the north, thereby strengthening the governments position versus its left-wing opponents throughout the country. Or, they might have decided that, since British readiness to do anything more than re-propose such commissions was not apparent, and since the possibility of American backing of Iran had only been dimly hinted, and in any case might not be forthcoming until after the Azerbaijan regime was securely in power, their best tactic was to reject the proposal on formal grounds and continue as quickly as to consolidate their influence in the province. The failure of the British-American bargaining position in the 1st pass. Interpretation is that it was too hard--it asked the Soviets to accept a form of disguised defeat in its quarrel with Iran. The failure in the second was that the bargaining posture was too soft -- neither country had conveyed its opposition to further rebel gains in Azerbaijan in incredible enough fashion to dissuade the Soviet from continuing with the strategy of denying everything while making progress through proxies at the local level. (For the latter view, which seems more likely, see Ulam, 426.)

D. The Decision to Go to the UN

The period after Moscow and before the opening of the U.N. reveals a sharp divergence between British and Iranian tactics for getting the Soviets out of Azerbaijan, with the United States poised indeterminately in the middle. The British opposed a diplomatic confrontation with the Soviet Union over Iran for several reasons: fear of exposure of their political influence in the south, acknowledgement of the historical basis of Russia's claims in the north, awareness of the unlikelihood that the Iranian government would ever make substantial concessions to the legitimate demands of the Azerbaijan populace, and a sense of the limitations of their own power to directly affect events in the north. To avoid such a confrontation the British Ambassador put great pressure on Iran, at one point going so far as to insist that Prime Minister Hakimi draft in his presence and send over British radio a telegram instructing the Iranian delegate to the UN not to file a complaint against Russia with the Security Council. Britain urged the United States to influence Iran in the same direction, arguing that proceeding with the UN complaint would end all chance of Soviet acceptance of the commission proposal; at the same time they conceded that such acceptance was unlikely anyway, and that Iran might therefore be left with neither the commission nor the UN option. It seemed to Murray at the time that these tactics

may well be intended to prevent any action at all and to make it possible for (the) whole question to be shelved. (The) British may have decided there is nothing to be gained by engaging in acrimonious public dispute with Russia in (a) cause already lost and that they had better concentrate on making sure of their own sphere of influence in (the ) Persian Gulf. (FR, 46,7, 300)

Whether the British were this intent on cutting their losses, or merely marking time until a less risky means of opposing the Soviets than a U.N. campaign could be discovered, remains unclear. It is clear that they were not prepared to take the lead, at this point, in escalating the dispute over the issue. (FR, 46,7,293-295; 299; quote p.300)

The Iranians, while initially sympathetic to the commission proposal, because it seemed inevitable, and at least had the advantage of assuring U.S. involvement, gradually brought themselves to risk lodging the U.N. complaint. Several factors contributed to this relatively hard stance. First, the Soviet Union itself, directed more toward forcing the Hakimi cabinet to resign and bringing into power a more conciliatory group ready for bilateral negotiations. That is, the Soviets did not believe the best they could obtain was a multilateral form of control over Iranian policy. Second, Iranian officials and politicians were incensed at the pressure put on Hakimi not to go to the U.N. Third, vigorous criticisms of the commission proposal began to be expressed in the Majlis. Mossadegh, an outspoken nationalist, saw in it a repetition of the 1907 sphere of influence agreement over Iran. (Mossadegh, it should be noted, did not conclude from this that the Iranians should get U.S. and British support for a U.N. campaign; he admitted that the Soviets had a right to object if Iran sought the aid of a third power as an intermediary. He proposed instead that the present government resign in favor of a truly neutral one which could deal in good faith with the Soviet Union. This was a procedure for disentangling the great powers from Iran that was never seriously followed by the major actors, and more will be said about the possibilities of strict neutrality as a bargaining posture later. (See FR, 46,7, 299-301, ARFA,341) Fourth in the set of factors contributing to the Iranian decision to proceed to the UN was the posture of the United States on the several occasions when American officials were approached with requests for explicit advance support for such a move. (FR,46,7,292-3) Direct backing was not given, but in a variety of ways American actions indicated that Iran had some alternative between British and Soviet pressure.

United States policy was literally at the intersection of British and Iranian preferences, but, on balance, leaned toward Iran. From its diplomatic officers in Teheran and Tabriz, Washington had reports that the Soviet terror was growing and effective; these reports argued that dismemberment was imminent



unless action were taken soon to publicize the situation. In response, the State Department did act to maintain its previous level of resolve at the Iranian level. Articles in the Soviet press implying that the American consul in Tabriz, Rossow, had recognized the legitimacy of the provincial government of Azerbaijan after an interview with Pishevari, were denied in a Departmental press conference. The well-informed and watchful Rossow was kept in his Tabriz post as a sign to the Russians and the Iranians that the United States would continue to follow the situation closely. (FR, 46,7, 297-8, 302-303)

Beyond this, however, Washington hesitated to go. The State Department did not accept a proposal by Murray and Rossow that the U.S. Embassy in Iran issue a public statement to counter the prospective proclamation of Azerbaijani independence. Also denied was a repeated request of Ambassador Murray that the U.S. formally complain to the Soviets about their refusal to issue travel permits for American officials seeking to visit the north. Byrnes felt that this form of pin-pricking would only undercut his efforts to influence the Soviets on Iran at the upcoming U.N. meetings. (FR,46,7, 304-5)

In fact, the American posture was complicated. The British proposal was thought to have small chance of acceptance. At the same time, it was acknowledged that there were grounds for the Soviet argument that a recalcitrant and oppressive Iranian to cooperate with the commission proposal, and, more generally, to pursue any chance of conciliation with the Soviets that might appear. Some means of weakening the Azerbaijani basis for complaints had to be found or the Soviets could continue to use the situation to excuse an extension of its occupation. (FR,45,8,514-5; 520-22; FR,45, 7, 295-7) Occasionally the U.S. argument here was that Iran should make substantive concessions; more often, it was that unless Iran appeared to make concessions to the rebel and Soviet position, it would have



been difficulty convincing world public opinion of the rightness of its case. In other words, the plan was good public relations. (See Fr, 46, 7, 296). The British option was kept open only half-heartedly, however, for Washington did not join the British in discouraging the Iranians from going to the U.N., but instead publically scotched rumors to that effect and carefully pointed out that it had no intention of bringing any pressure whatsoever on the Iranians in this regard. The tentative character of this side of things, the non-discouragement of the Iranians, was clear on those instances when the Iranians came directly to the US officials to request advance backing for their move. The most that Byrnes would say on these occasions was that

The United States had friendly relations with both the Soviet Union and Iran, and for us to give advance commitments so either side would not be in harmony either with those friendly relations or with the spirit of the United Nations. The (Iranian) Ambassador was authorized, however, to assure his Government that the United States intends to carry out the commitments which it made when it signed the Charter of the United Nations and that it intends fully to support the principles of the Charter in any matters which may be presented to the UNO. (FR, 46, 7, 203 See also 45, 8, 513-4, for an earlier response from George Allen, Deputy Director of the Office of Near Eastern & African Affairs.)

This was formally a commitment to neutrality, a commitment to neutrality, but in comparison to what the British and Soviets were saying, hardly a disappointment to the Iranians. We see in US actions, therefore, signs of the previous policy of avoidance of provocation, and of backing for the British variant of a concert approach along quasi-traditional sphere of influence lines, but the ascendant tendency at this point was to move to the use of the United Nations principles and forum as the best basis for challenging and changing Soviet behavior. Important constraints remained: As before, the United States was very hesitant to become directly involved in local Iranian affairs on the side of the central government, since fidelity to the principle of non-interference of other nations was the ideological cornerstone of American policy. Equally important, American officials feared burdening the U.N. (and great power

relations) with this quarrel if it could be helped. As Acheson said to the Iranian Ambassador in Washington--- "While we would regret presentation of matters of this kind until UNO is well established, we adhere to our position that members of UNO should be entirely free to bring their problems to (the ) organization." (FR,46,7,297n.) Nonetheless it was felt that if the Iranians had to be supported, this could best be done under the banner of the Charter principles, and if the Russians had to be opposed, the most effective and legitimate instrument would be the harsh light of world public opinion.

A further comment on the gradual evolution of a harder stance by the US. If one concentrates, as I have here, on the public statements of officials, and on what the Iranians were told privately when requesting support, the harder stance must be viewed merely as a growing tendency, qualified and hedged in various ways. But in a letter which Truman says he read to Byrnes on January 5, 1946, and composed sometime the previous month, we see indications that Truman had already come to believe that a much more vigorous assertion of US opposition was called for. In part, Truman told Byrnes

There isn't a doubt in my mind that Russia intends an invasion of Turkey and the seizure of the Black Sea Straits to the Mediterranean. Unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language, another war is in the making. Only one language do they understand---"how many divisions have you?"

And, concerning Iran, this was another outrage...I do not think we should play compromise any longer. (Payne, pg.27, quoting Truman, Memoirs, I, 551-2)

The translation of such clear cut feelings about Soviet Middle Eastern policy and what to do about it into official stances occurred only over time, and even then with considerable reservations remaining. As always, in deciding what nations; decision maker actually felt to be important and required in policy, one has to assess what they said privately and publically against what

they actually did. The final balance of calculations is reflected in the actions themselves. (It is worth noting, for instance, that Byrnes denied that Truman ever read him such a letter. See Gardner, 102-102.)

E. The Iranian Issue at the U.N. Round One: January, 1946

On January 19, 1946, the Iranian delegate to the United Nations, meeting for its first session in London, transmitted to the Security Council in the following complaint:

Owing to interference of the Soviet Union, through the medium of its officials and armed forces in the internal affairs of Iran, a situation has arisen which may lead to international friction.

The complaint claimed that Iran had repeatedly tried to negotiate with the Soviet Union, but without success, and now therefore turned to the Security Council in accordance with Article 35, paragraph 1 of the Charter, so that the "Council may investigate the situation and recommend appropriate terms of settlement."

(FR, 46,7, 304-)

The escalation of the conflict to this level proved to be the first truly effective pressure put on the Soviets to change course. In the four months of intermittent UN debates on Iran that followed, the Soviet did everything they could to prevent the organization from taking any action, or even considering the situation in detail. The Soviet tactics were designed to prevent, or slowdown, or define as illegitimate, any UN activity bearing on their policies in Iran, while proceeding as quickly as possible to achieve their aims through localized pressure and bilateral negotiations. In the end, the Western powers' use of the UN as an instrument of pressure and exposure did significantly affect the Soviet Union's ability or willingness to persist. Actions in the conflict would have been resolved in Western favor. We shall focus therefore on the ways in which the Soviet Union was unable to avoid or deflect pressure exercised in the UN, and on why these pressure, in combination with other events outside the UN, were judged to costly to endure.

*the only cause of the eventual Soviet retreat, but without them it is unlikely that*

*UN was not*

The Soviets responded to the Iranian complaint by launching a counter offensive of their own, repudiating the substance of the Iranian case, and offering to settle out of court. The counteroffensive was directed against Britain, in the form of letters to the Security Council of January 21 complaining of the activities of British troops in Greece and Indonesia. It showed--as Stalin had intimated at Moscow--that two could play the game of embarrassing great powers in their imperial backyards, and was probably intended as a tacit warning to Britain to refrain from siding with Iran. As such, the counteroffensive can be judged to have backfired as will be seen in examining the British response. On the other hand, one reason for the caution of the Western allies throughout the UN debates not to push the Soviet Union too far--i.e., any farther than they did--may well have been an awareness of how quickly the UN could be reduced to a forum for achieving embarrassments of the other side rather than real solutions.

Soviet repudiation of the substance of the Iranian case came in a letter to the Security Council of January 24 and subsequent statements by Vyshinsky before it. Vyshinsky claimed that Iran itself, in a previous note to his government on the question of internal interference had declared the issue resolved. (In fact, the note in question has stated that no further evidence on complaints would be lodged at the time, December 1, in the expectation that "such a measure will not be repeated; or "ever again be taken by the Soviet military authorities." (FR,45,8,473-4.) He repeated legal arguments justifying the Soviet military presence in Iran, stressing that the real problems arose from the actions of a reactionary Iranian government against the legitimate local aspirations of the Azerbaijanians and against the Soviet Union. In this manner the facts of the complaint were called into question and the Iranians themselves defined as the disturbers of international peace.

The practical conclusion to the Soviet argument that the complaint was groundless, and thus that there was no basis for any UN action, and an expression



of readiness to settle the issue by means of bilateral negotiations. (FR, 46,7,309-311; 321; Van Wagenen, 30-36.)

Even though Iran's hope earlier in the winter of becoming one of the first non-permanent members of the Security Council had come to nothing the Iranian delegate was permitted to present his case personally before the Council. The opportunity to make such statements and to answer questions allowed Iran to be much more effective than had shee been forced to rely solely on the written word and the readiness of other countries to challenge Soviet statements. The court-like exchange of arguments did cause discrepancies and hitherto hidden points in one or another position to come out more clearly than would be the case in normal diplomatic exchanges, often, though not always, the Soviet disadvantages. Very importantly,, the nature of the UN proceedings permitted other countries whose support Iran required to act more in the role of judges in a dispute than as antagonists of the Soviet Union. The United States, in particular, told Iran again and again throughout the UN exchanges that support would be forthcoming in tactics on the Western side can be attributed to the contradiction between Iran's desire to have other powers present its case as antagonizing the S.U., and the American hope of justifying a completely responsible for making life difficult for the S.U. The UN record thus provided Iran a neutral arena in nations could to some extent couch their arguments in general terms and as an obligation of collective responsibility.

Against the Soviet representations the Iranians asserted that their sovereignty had been and continued to be interfered with on unjustifiable grounds, and that the Soviet Union had deliberately misconstrued previous exchanges on the subject. While the Soviets argued that the case should not even be placed on the agenda, the Iranian delegate requested a council recommendation that the Soviet Union remove its troops by March 2 and in the meantime stop all interference with the movement of government security forces. Understanding, however, that no action on the substance of the case would be



likely, both because of Soviet veto rights and because the Western powers were clearly unready to go so far, the Iranians expressed their willingness to negotiate bilaterally, but with the stipulation that under "no circumstances are we prepared to let the matter go out of the hands of the Council."

(Quoted in Van Wageningen, 37; see also FR, 46, 3, 314, 321.) The insistence on the maintenance of some form of Security Council supervision was, in the first round, the minimal Iranian demand, and one heavily disliked by the Russians.

Although the issue was ultimately resolved with a compromise not unduly hostile to the Soviet Union, debate over it led to the first angry clash in the UN between East and West, with Bevin taking the lead. We have seen earlier that Britain had not been the offensive, with "blunt and undiplomatic" talk, by the Soviet attacks on British policy in Greece and Iran. According to Stettinius, representing the US in London at the time, Bevin in a private session told Vyshinsky

Flatly that he would not allow the Iranian situation to be dropped by the Security Council, leaving Britain to stand alone in the dock on the Greek and Indonesian matters. (FR, 46, 7, 320; see also USWA, 45-7, p. 90.)

Thus was Bevin who pointed out certain weaknesses in the Soviet position: That he considered the talk of Iran threatening Russia incredible, that he was disturbed to hear Vyshinsky admit that Soviet authorities had in fact refused Iran permission to send additional forces to the north--a clear violation of small country's sovereignty. He rejected as too vague a proposal by the Netherlands, and based on Stettinius' suggestions, which expressed the Council's confidence that a just solution would be reached within a reasonable time through bilateral negotiations, asked the parties to inform the Council as soon as they did reach an agreement, and reserved the right of the Council to take the matter up again at any time. Bevin proposed instead more definite phrasing:

"such negotiation will be resumed immediately", the Council has the right "at any time to request information on the progress of the negotiations; and the "In the meantime, the matter remains on the agenda". Vyshinsky objected in turn to retention on the agenda, and finally a compromise was reached eliminating any explicit reference to that effect. There was verbal agreement, however, in Stattinius' words to the Council at the time, "that this matter remains a continuing concern of the Council until a settlement is reached in conformity with the purposes and principles of the Charter." (FR46,7, 325-6; Van Wagenen, 27-41) This was a minor defeat for the Soviet Union ; the Iranian complaint had been aired publically, and defined as belonging to the international community.

Because of Britain's willingness to take the initiative in these exchanges the United States realized its primary aim--support of the right of small countries to bring complaints to the Security Council and keep them on the agenda, so as to not impair small power confidence in the organization--without incurring the onus of leading the fight against Soviet objections in the specific case. Byrnes refused to go along with a Chinese proposal that the whole matter be dropped in order to avoid ruffling feelings, since he judged that Iran's hand will be greatly strengthened by the fact that its case is pending before UNO. He would accept the return of the matter to bilateral talks only if the UN retained a basis for reasserting interest. (Quote from Byrnes, AIOL, 317; on the US posture during the first SC debates, Fr 46, 7, 289-91, 306-9, 316-7, 323-4) His problem hereafter was to prevent the Iranaians from losing heart when Russian pressure back in Teheran threatened to make the costs of returning to the UN for renewed backing seem to risky. Working out the alternation *the have modes of bargaining--pressure by the great powers on the UN* between the two locales--the UN and Teheran--and the UN, concessions by the Iranians to at least some of the Soviet demands in Teheran--was to become an increasingly delicate business.

And indeed, developments at the Iranian level during and after the first UN exchanges were complex and rapid. On the eve of the UN debates, Prime Minister Hakimi's government, which had presented the original complaint, fell. This was not unrelated to Hakimi's inability to deal effectively with the Soviets. Some in Iran felt him too weak, others too strong ; this negative coalition brought him down. In addition, the Soviets, by cutting off all trade between Zerbaijan and the rest of Iran, had created enormous economic difficulties for him. This was a reminder that the Soviets had instruments of leverage at their disposal closer to the situation than the UN. As in the fall of 1944 after the oil dispute, Soviet actions had contributed to the fall of a cabinet. To form a new government, the Shah turned to Qavam as Saltaneh, an assured and energetic figure whose past political history showed tactical alliances with the Tudeh and who was widely regarded as more likely to be friendly toward the Soviet Union. Qavam's first step in foreign policy was to announce a readiness to negotiate with the Soviets in London and in Moscow, and with the rebels in Azerbaijan. On February 16 he dismissed the Iranian chief of staff, Genral Affa, long the object of vigorous Tudeh attacks; and on the 18th left for negotiations in Moscow, leaving behind three members of his delegation reputedly unwelcome to his hosts. (Kirk, 66-68; Lenczowski, 295; FR, 46, 7, 316-16-334-5; Skrine, 233)

The next basic move in the crisis was the Soviet Union's failure, on March 2, to evacuate all of its troops from Iran. This clear-cut violation of treaty commitments, combined with a series of demands made on Qavam in Moscow, called forth a vigorous and new level of U.S. resistance, in the UN and elsewhere. Before coming to this escalation of tactics on both sides, certain background events of January to March, indicative of a general hardening on all sides, must be recorded. Through these we can better establish what the aims, motivations, and balance of forces were when the acute confrontation of early March came about.

By mid-February, Qavam was off to Moscow with conciliatory (some said appeasing) intentions. But this was not the only face of Iranian policy. Ever since the small and abortive officer's revolt in the northeast of August, 1945, which clearly had been Tudeh inspired and Soviet advised, Iranian officials had been worried about a nationwide coup. After the Azerbaijanian revolt of November, General Arfa, the chief of staff whom Qavam was to dismiss, pieced together what he considered definite evidence of preparations for a coup in Teheran, and convinced the Shah, to whom he was much closer than to the civilian leadership, to permit him to take military precautions against it. Between November, 1945 and January, 1946, Arfa reinforced the army barracks and occupied strategic points in Teheran. Equally important he deployed bands of soldiers with small arms in the countryside around Iran, whose mission was to prevent armed Tudeh partisans from participating in a coordinated assault in Teheran led by the Azerbaijanian (or Soviet) army. Certain tribes loyal to the regime were armed for the same purpose. Although the chronology of Arfa's memoirs is not precise, it appears that these armed units outside Teheran did fight several engagements to the north and east of the capital against Tudeh partisans and soldiers from Azerbaijan armed by the Soviet Union., during January. Whether these engagements interfered with a coup already underway or were just skirmishes with various anti-regime forces positioning for it is also unclear; more likely the latter. In Arfa's judgement they gained time for Iran to proceed with its January complaining to the Security Council. (AREA, 352-356) Even after his dismissal, the units he armed and deployed outside Teheran maintained a quasi-independent existence. At the very least the existence and actions for a reinforced and expanded military arm of the central government must have indicated to the Tudeh and their Azerbaijanian and Soviet Allies that a takeover of Teheran would not be accomplished without a certain amount of direct military conflict. When a coup did seem imminent later in March, as we will see shortly, the Russians went substantial reinforcements into the country, and Arfa's actions, plus the continued effectiveness and



and loyalty to the central regime of the Iranian gendarmerie, organized and trained by an American advisory mission, certainly contributed to the necessity for increasing the Military means of pressure. (on the importance of the gendarmerie, see Lenczowski, 313-314) In the end, however, the conflict over Iran turned on what the great powers viewed as the stakes and what they were or were not prepared to spend in contesting them. The demonstration of an improved Iranian capacity for minimal military resistance was a necessary but not sufficient element in the ultimately successful Western policy there.

During February and early March, a general deterioration of great power relations became apparent, both contributing to and springing from hostility in Iran. The sessions of the Security Council following these on Iran were occupied by angry debates over Western imperialism, primarily British. On February 9 1946 Stalin argued in a major speech that Marxist-Leninist doctrines on the inevitability of conflict between communism and capitalism remained valid. He told the Soviet people that they must prepare for a long and difficult period of sacrifice. "There would be no peace, internally or externally." A month later came Churchill's Fulton speech, which, together with Stalin's, La Feber terms the declaration of a Cold War of both sides. (La Feber, 30-31) We will return to Churchill's pronouncement below. During February, American statements, too, on Russian-American relations became progressively harder. (Van Wagenen, 41-44) Speaking before the Overseas Correspondents' Club on February 28, Byrnes repeated US opposition to the maintenance of Soviet troops in Iran past the treaty deadline, warning that

We cannot overlook a unilateral gnawing away at the status quo. The (UN) Charter forbids aggression and we cannot allow aggression to be accomplished by coercion or pressure or by subterfuges such as political infiltration.



Byrnes painted a dangerous situation where "no power intends war but no power will be able to avert war." "If we fail to work together, he said, there can be no peace, no comfort and little hope for any of us." (AIOL,351 also Payne,26) Truman's belief in firm and direct opposition to Soviet policy in the Middle East was finding expression. It was also in late February that Byrnes agreed with a proposal of Forrestal that US naval mission be sent to the Eastern Mediterranean on a diplomatic pretext to "give encouragement to Turkey and Greece." (AIOL,351) Hammond describes this as the "first American military reaction to a Soviet military threat in the post war era..." (Hammond 14) While more directly related to the concurrent dispute over the Turkish straits, this step was clearly a sign of increasing American firmness in the area generally. The Cold War was beginning in earnest.

(Note: a sign at the Iranian level pointing in the same direction was a State department Decision, on February 6, to complain formally to the Soviets in Moscow about the inability of American diplomats and newsmen to get travel permits to visit the north. Lodging this complaint had long been delayed for fear of upsetting the coming Soviet-Iranian negotiations, but now it was felt that the importance of insisting on free access outweighed the risks. A small step in the direction of less caution. The Soviets responded that no permits would be issued, since the correspondents would only write "silly stories" on the situation. (FR, 46,7, 319, 326-7, 331N.)

#### F. Soviet Troops Remain

On March 1, 1946, Moscow Radio announced that Prime Minister Qavam, still in Moscow for talks, had been informed that while Soviet Troops would be withdrawn by March 2 from the northeastern provinces of the country where the situation remained "relatively quite," those in other parts of the country-- primarily Azerbaijan---would "remain there pending clarification of the situation." (Kirk, 66; FR, 46,7, 335.) Unmistakable but hard to prove backing for the revolt of November had been the first basic Soviet move in the crisis; not withdrawing their troops on deadline--in the face of Western protests at the Moscow conference and in the UN--was a second, and clearly more important basic move. Moscow had violated outright the most sensitive provision of a treaty which only recently had received the broadest possible publicity, and with which Britain and America had complied promptly. ~~This act put the Russians in position of admitting that they were using force or the threat of force to gain their ends in Iran, and, if they failed, of having to withdraw with which Britain and America had complied promptly.~~ This act put the Russians in position of admitting that they were using force or the threat of force to gain their ends in Iran, and, if they failed, of having to withdraw ingloriously. It raised the prospect that force would be used on one or both sides. What seem to have been Soviet calculations in taking this step? In what way were they intending to use their power in Iran for what ends, and what effect did previous Western action, and that expected in the future, have on these intentions?

The evidence of Soviet actions over the next several weeks indicates that the troops retained in northern Iran were meant to serve either as a bargaining counter---their withdrawal to be traded for negotiated concessions over oil and the status of Azerbaijan--or as actual instruments in effecting a change

of regime in all Iran. As it turned out, the troops (and reinforcements brought *withdrew in return for negotiated concessions. But at the same time they were pulled* in soon after March 2) were intended to serve as the arm of political takeover by forming a threatening backdrop against which Tudeh and Azerbaijanian forces would act. Given the concern that Britain and America had recently begun expressing over Iran, either course could be judged in advance as liable to antagonize them and world opinion generally. The basic Soviet judgement, which we have stated before for other points of the conflict, seems to have been that (1) Iranian staying power--military and diplomatic--was so insignificant that it would crumble quickly before (2) a combined application of the formidable and varied power resources at Soviet disposal in the area so that (3) the whole operation would be over before western pressure, heretofore somewhat vague and emanating primarily from the UN, half the glove away, could be brought to bear. The Soviet Union counted on being able to achieve a fait accompli, and relied on speed at the Iranian level and delay at the UN to hold the attendant diplomatic embarrassment to a tolerable minimum. Each of these assumptions turned out to be wrong, or at least incorrect enough to cause Soviet plans to fail. Whether the failure was because of Soviet misperceptions of what should have been known certainties, or whether all the parties involved didn't know what Soviet weaknesses and Western strengths would be, because these were previously untested in this situation and hence unknowable quantities, has to be answered in empirical analysis. There was nothing foregone about the Western success. Many observers on the western side were pessimistic before and pleasantly surprised after. We are dealing here with the emergence of new power constellations, with the working out of the strengths and weaknesses of each party around quite undefined boundaries of control and in the absence of acknowledged principles of settlement. Rather than say that the Soviet Union

"gambled: and proved subsequently to have been "bluffing"---which implies known quantities at least somewhere in the process---it's perhaps more accurate to say that it was experimenting with forces and their properties which, to repeat, could not be known, at least fully, until the experiment was carried out. It didn't work, and that has to be explained, but the language of miscalcuations and misperception, while appropriate at many points, understates and prevents us from seeing the essential indeterminacy of the situation.

What was the Soviet Union counting on to work in its favor, and how was pressure to be applied in late February and early March? Of Iranian weakness there seemed to be much evidence. The central government was excluded from Azerbaijan, whose borders were miles from the capital. The conciliatory Qavam was in power and in Moscow. Moreover, the Majlis, which could have pressed Qavam to take a harder line, had been dissolved on March 11 and by law there would be no new elections until one month after all foreign troops left the country. This left Qavam a virtual dictator. The Soviet Union had political allies in Iran, too. Pishvari in Azerbaijan depended on their support. Violent picketing by the Tudeh party to prevent the assembling of a quorum had been the reason why the Majlis failed to extend its lifetime. Tudeh propaganda ceaselessly attacked the authority of the central government stressing from February on that the government might not be strong enough to prevent a British-influenced coup from the right. And in mid-March Soviet authorities in Teheran (and perhaps also in talks with Qavam in Moscow) told the Iranians that they feared for the safety of Russian nationals in Teheran. These statements and the prediction of a British-led coup may have been intended to establish a pretext for dispatching troops to the capital as a part of a coup, or to warn the Iranians vaguely of the consequences that might follow if the negotiations then underway were not concluded satisfactorily. ( Skine, 234; Kirk, 66; Lenczowski, 297; FR, 46, 7, 332-334, 353-54)

Soviet pressure came to a head in early March. In the week following the announcement of March 1 that Soviet troops would not leave Azerbaijan until the situation was "clarified," extensive reinforcements were sent into northern Iran from Russia, and thereafter redeployed with other forces already in the country to points west and south. The reinforcements consisted mainly of motorized infantry and tanks, with supporting artillery. They were accompanied by a new field commander, a Soviet general with a spectacular war record and a noted armor authority. Formerly abandoned supply and ammunition depots were reopened. In the report of the U.S. consul in Tabriz:

All Soviet troops departing from here are quipped for combat and there seems noticeable lack in their supply trains of garrison types of equipment. All observations and reports indicate inescapably that Soviets are preparing for major military operations....I cannot overstress the seriousness and magnitude of current Soviet troop movements here. This is no ordinary reshuffling of troops but a full scale combat deployment. From available estimates, the Soviet Union had by early March around 30,000 troops in northwestern Iran, comprising at least 15 armored brigades and some 500 tanks with auxiliary forces.

The divided into three assault forces, and backed by one reserve; the troops were deployed along the Iraq frontier, the Turkish frontier, and the main road to Teheran. The Teheran group was within 25 miles of the capital. (Concurrently, another Soviet armored force was moving south through Bulgaria toward Turkey's European frontier. (Rossow; Rossow's reports from Tabriz at the time in FR, 46,7, 340, 342-5; quotes, 343, 344-5; Skrine 234-236; Lencaowski, 297-8.)

With their troops and political allies in Iran poised for action, and Prime Minister Qavam in Moscow, the Soviets appeared to be in a powerful position. And yet Iranian and American actions prevented them from exploiting it. In his talks with Stalin and Molotov, Qavam was just intrinsically enough to prevent them from getting what they wished right away---his capitulations ---but also just conciliatory enough to draw them into prolonging the negotiations, during which



time the Soviets' capability for (or willingness to exercise) military action and intimidation diminished while the Iranian and U.S. will and means of resistance grew. Stalin, Qavam reported to Kennan "with some sadness, was very rough." He and Molotov brushed aside Qavam's request for a troop withdrawal and help in resolving the Azerbaijan situation, and presented their own demands: that Iran recognize the autonomy of Azerbaijan, that the Soviet's be granted a 51% share in a joint stock company to exploit the oil in the northern provinces, and that Iran agree to the continued presence of Soviet troops in parts of the country. Qavam believed, as had Hakimi before him, that the real interest was oil, and this might have been so since (a) the proposal for a joint stock company was one the Soviets had refused when it was offered by the Iranians in October, 1944, and (B) they indicated that the troop demand might be retracted if the oil proposal were granted. The Soviets also offered the bargain over Azerbaijan, specifying that autonomy be only "internal."

Qavam made no concessions, at that point. The constitution forbade any special treatment for Azerbaijan beyond the establishment of regional councils, which he would offer. As to oil, he reminded the Soviets that the law passed by the Majlis in fall 1944 made illegal any discussions over new concessions until all foreign troops left the country. This would never be repealed, he said.

Neither side was prepared to begin splitting differences. The Soviets, upon meeting Qavam's refusal on oil, declared that henceforth they would accept only a full concession. Upping their demands was one way of stressing determination. Another was to invoke national prestige--they could do nothing about Azerbaijan, since "Soviet honor was involved." A third indication of determination to press for full satisfaction, and presumably the most sobering to Iran, was the comment---"We don't care what the what the US and Britain think and we are not afraid of them" ---which may have come in response to an allusion by Qavam of likely western opposition to any concessions by Iran to Russia.

(See Fr, 46,7,350, 343, 337-339; Kirk, 68)

Qavam for his part simply said his hands were tied, which they were legally and politically. Had he given in to the demands he certainly could not have remained in power on his return, ~~except~~ as a Soviet puppet; his inability, and, as he was a true Iranian nationalist, his unwillingness, to give in forced on the Soviets the **decision** of whether to proceed immediately to a coup, or to place their hope in the gradual regular negotiations, probably still under the implied threat of a ~~cup~~ coup. They chose the latter course, as less risky than a direct takeover, and apparently quite likely to succeed.

The maintenance and reinforcement of the Soviet troops in Iran after March 2 had the effect of finally pushing the United States to the forefront of Western protests. Truman asked Byrnes for a full briefing of past developments and directed that Russia be informed of US disapproval. The result was a note, delivered on March 6, which, while stating that the U.S. could "not remain indifferent: to Soviet Violations, remained relatively low key. It contained no threats or warnings, expressing instead the "earnest hope" that the Soviets would honor previous assurances to withdraw, and reminding them of the " heavy responsibility resting upon the great powers under the charter to observe their obligations." British and Iranian protests were quicker and sharper. (FR, 46, 7, 340-42; Truman, Memoirs, II,94.)

Even before learning of the reinforcement and redeployment of Soviet troops subsequent to March 2, the U.S. had decided (and communicated to Britain) that it would "have no choice" but to place the issue before the Security Council itself if no satisfactory reply to its March 6 note were received. (FR, 45,7, 346.)

And after top State Department officers were briefed on the new Soviet military moves, there was no doubt about the need for a vigorous response. As recalled by a State Department officer who took part in the briefing,

Mr. Byrnes, having gone over the telegram (from Rossow in Tabriz) and the place names with the map, remarked that it now seemed clear the USSR was adding military invasion to political subversion in Iran, and, beating on fist into the other hand, he dismissed us with the remark: "Now we'll give it to them with both barrels."

The feeling at this meeting--March 7--was that the Soviets had completely ignored March 6 telegram and were "determined to face Iran and the rest of the world with a fait accompli." Acheson proposed that the Soviet Union be told immediately that the U.S. was aware of its moves, cautioning, however, to "leave a graceful way out" if it desired to avoid a showdown. The result was a second telegram, sent on March 8:

The Govt of the US has the honor to inform the Govt of the Soviet Union that it is receiving reports to the effect that there are considerable movements of Soviet combat forces and materials of war from the direction of the Soviet Frontier toward Tabriz and outward from Tabriz in the direction of Teheran, Mahabad and various points in Northwestern Iran.

The govert of the US desire to lear whether the Soviet Govt. instead of withdrawing Soviet troops from Iran asurred in the Embassy's note of March 6, is bringing additional forces into Iran. In case Soviet forces in Iran are being increased this Govt would welcome information at once regarding the purposes therefor. (FR,46, 7, 346-7, text note. 348)

The U.S. Consul at Tabriz, Rossow, describing these events a decade later, said that in contrast to the "pro forma" message of March 6, this was "couched in far stiffer and more peremptory language than any previous communication to the Soviet Union since recognition." (Rossow,22.) This seems an exaggeration. Coming just three days after another communication, and having an unusually terse and explicit character, the note certainly must have alerted the Soviets to rise in U.S. concern. Still, it made nor direct charges or demands; it left the Soviets the option of withdrawing without having been directly challenged or else of insisting that justification did exist for sending additional troops; the latter course might be seen as too costly to risk, but they had been able

to live down the all but overt original intervention in Azerbaijan the fall before. The importance of the note is that it put the Soviet Union on notice that the United States had reliable information on its activities in Iran, and was prepared to use its information, at the very least for propaganda purposes. Three days after the March 9 note the State Department released information about Soviet troop movements to the press. This publicity had an effect, as western newspapers began to show an "almost hysterical concern," according to one account. On March , for instance, the New York Times ran an eight column headline: "Heavy Russian Columns Move West in Iran; Turkey or Iraq May Be Goal; U.S. Sends Note...." (Van Wagenen, 46.)

Two other indications of stiffening western resolve came in early March. On the 8th, the Navy Department announced publically that the U.S. Missouri would sail to Turkey within two weeks; as we saw above, deliberations within policy circles on the advisability of the Missouri mission had been underway for several weeks. But the timing of the announcement was no doubt influenced in part by Iranian developments. Observe, on the other hand, that newspaper reports of the time stated that plans to send the entire fleet to the Mediterranean were vetoed by the State Department as too provocative. ( Bloomfield, 69)

Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, which came three days after the Soviet treaty violation, was a second and more significant, if general, indication of growing Western firmness. While it did not refer directly to events in Iran, the timing, setting, tone, and content of his much publicized remarks could not but give the Soviets pause in all their foreign policy actions. Speaking as the former proponent of the Grand Alliance, in the country and presence of the American president, Churchill declared flatly that the Soviets wished the "indefinite expansion of their power and doctrine," and that "there is nothing they admire so much as strength." He called for an Anglo-American alliance outside the United Nations to reorder the world. He stressed and justified American power,



asking Americans to realize that "God has willed" the United State and not "Some Communist or neo-Facist state" to possess the atomic bomb, Stalin responded in kind a few days later. He accused Churchill and his American friends of propagating the "racial theory" that English-speaking nations "should rule over the remaining nations of the world, " which, he warned, was a "set-up for war, a call to war with the Soviet Union." The crucial stages of the Iranian crisis took place in a climate of ominous and escalated rhetoric. (Quotes and other commentary from La Feber, 31-32; also Payne 27.)

The result of the events of early March was a kind of war scare. Many observers in Teheran predicted a coup in the city during the Iranian New Year's Holiday of March 21-27. Some people fled the capital (indeed, plans for moving the Shah's court south or into exile were considered), as top correspondence flew in. (Kirk,47; Van Wagenen, 46; Lenczowski, 297-98; Sheehan, 31; FE, 46, 7, 375-76)

At a press conference in April, 1952, President Truman claimed that in "in 1945 he had to send an ultimatum to the head of the Soviet Union to get out of Persia... and that they got out because we were in a position to meet a situation of that kind." Was there such an ultimatum, and was it decisive in resolving the crisis?

Some accounts accept Truman's recollections at face value. (Sheehan, 32-33) Others, while not citing any specific ultimatum, argue that some "forceful private messages: must have been sent in addition to the public notes. (Payne,27)

It is hard to be certain about this: From State Department qualifications made to Truman's remarks at the time of the press conference, and from the absence of any reported record of such an ultimatum in State or Defense Department files, it seems probably that Truman referred here to the comparatively stiff note of March 9 and to the general step-up of publicity and diplomatic activity, primarily in the UN, produced by the Soviet actions of March 2 and after. These U.S. reactions



were, in time, effective. But only in time. Beyond the fact that the coup which pro-Soviet forces in Iran could have launched never materialized, no simple turn-around in Soviet policy is observable in early March.

The Soviet Union had been put on notice that a stronger response might come, but as always the chance existed that its leverage at the Iranian level, which consisted of more than just the threat and capacity to take the country over, might succeed before more diffuse and distant counterpressures could be brought to bear. It took several months more to demonstrate conclusively that increased U.S. British, and Iranian resistance would work against all forms of possible Soviet gains, and for this the course of the next round of the UN debates must be examined. (See FR, 46,7, 348-9; Truman's own account of the Iranian crisis, Memoirs, II, 94-95, states that at one point, date unspecified, he asked Byrnes to send a "blunt message " to Stalin. I think this was probably the March 9 note.)

G. The Issue at the UN, Round Two: March to May, 1946

The Soviet Union feared airing its dispute with Iran before the UN, and worked to prevent or at least delay any UN action until it could achieve its aims through bilateral talks with Iran. The means at its disposal for this were conveyance of a mixture of threats and promises to Iran to prevent the issue from ever becoming to the UN, and, if it did nonetheless, the use of procedural and legal maneuvers to avoid real action or debate there. The Soviets tried first to dissuade Iran from lodging a complaint by sending a new Ambassador to Teheran, had been as agreed with Qavam in Moscow. His arrival, it was assured, would remove present difficulties. They also warned Qavam that a complaint to the Security Council would be an "unfriendly and hostile act and would have unfortunate results for Iran." At least, they argued, Qavam should refrain from taking the initiative and wait for the Council to request a report, by which time the Soviets obviously hoped to be able to prevent a joint face. (FR,45,7, 356-358.)

Qavam's spot was delicate. He needed the UN (or more precisely US and British backing in it), but greatly feared Soviet wrath if he went there. The new Soviet Ambassador might object that recourse to the UN in the midst of resumed talks doomed all chances of reconciliation; or, if Iran delayed the appeal, the Soviets might use their tremendous local influence to install a new government so completely under the control that no appeal could ever be made. Ideally for Qavam, the US and Britain would take the lead, thus putting pressure on Russia without his government getting the blame. He needed the benefits of the alignment without the onus of having invoked it. In this regard, Iran's position was better than it had been

in January, that the withdrawal of foreign troops from any country requesting it should be without conditions, and for the United States had now stated publically that it would raise the issue at the Council session of March 25 if Iran ~~did~~ not. Privately, US officials still insisted that Iran take the lead in presenting its case. Nonetheless, Byrnes considered the case so important that he planned to attend the New York meetings personally, "to insist on a final disposition now" and he urged Bevin and Bidault to do the same, though without success. Even though Bevin did not attend, he professed himself equally concerned in a telegram to Byrnes: (FR,46,7,368-70; Kirk, 68-69; AIOL,351-2)

Any weakening or inconsistency on this fundamental Persian issue would put U.N.O. on a slippery slope. I believe that the whole future of the United Nations is at stake.

More than ever before, Iran and her western supporters seemed ready to present a common front.

DM  
And yet so anxious was Qavam not to offend the Soviets unduly that he considered no less than five different ways to present Iran's case to the organization, each entailing different degrees of toughness. Unable to avoid some initiative, he tried to maintain his credibility with the Soviet leadership as much as possible by keeping them fully informed of his move, and emphasizing that it should not be considered an unfriendly act but something he must do to fulfill his obligations under Iranian law. (For details of Qavam's tactical reasoning, see FR,46,7, 354-55, 356-58; also Skrine, p. 236, who, while stressing the importance of local factors more than most commentators, still calls the decision to go to the UN with great power backing Qavam's "master card.")

On March 18 the Iranian representative to the UN, Hasein Ala, presented a note to Secretary General Trigve Lie claiming that developments in Iran since the January 30 resolution--the maintenance of Soviet troops past the treaty date, continued Soviet interference in internal affairs--

had created a dispute likely to endanger international peace. The note argued that immediate and just resolution of the dispute by the Council was of greatest importance and requested that it be placed on the agenda for the first meeting in New York on March 25. On the next day, the Soviet representative, Gromyko, asked that the Council session itself be postponed until April 10, on grounds that the Iranian request was unexpected, and that negotiations were presently being conducted. Ala rejoined that the negotiations had failed. The United States informed Lie at this point that it would move, when the Council reconvened, that the Iranian letter be placed first on the agenda and that Russia and Iran be asked to report on their negotiations in accordance with the January 30 motion. Truman underscored this with a statement to the press on March 21 that the US could not agree to postponement. (FR,46,7, 36-7, 371-2)

Unlikely to achieve postponement, since they were in a permanent minority in the UN Organization, the Soviets had to accelerate the process of pressuring or conciliating the Iranians, or face additional embarrassment when the Council convened. The new Ambassador, Sadchikov, arrived in Teheran on March 20 and, amid complaints about Iran's actions in New York, immediately began talking with Qavam about a deal trading oil rights for troop withdrawal. This inaugurated several intense and complicated days of negotiations between Qavam and Sadchikov, interspersed with long reports and consultations between the Prime Minister and the British and American ambassadors. Forced into negotiations, the Soviets had to specify--and therefore begin to limit--the objectives, and speed up the process of using the leverage they enjoyed in Iran. Reliance on the presentation of diffuse demands against a backdrop of indefinite military and political pressure became less and less possible as U.S. and UN involvement increased.

Sadchikov proposed the outlines of a formal deal on March 24--

*its your  
move  
setting  
deadline*

days before the Security Council was to convene. Regarding troops, the Soviets said they would complete the evacuations within five or six weeks, "if nothing further happened." Regarding oil, they proposed again formation of a joint stock company in which the Soviets had 51% control. Regarding Azerbaijan, they offered to persuade the rebels to accept a definition of their regime emphasizing its regional character. (FR, 46,7, 379-380.)

What functions did this Soviet move have to serve, and how was it carried out and received? On the one hand they needed to be able to demonstrate --speedily-- that their troops were on the way out, so as to avoid a UN debate. On the other, they had to keep intact the only source of reliable leverage they had on Iran--the prospect of the use of these very troops--- or run the risk of seeing their interests over oil and the status of Azerbaijan be thwarted. The two aims were contradictory, of course, but they had to attempt to achieve them both at once. Initiation of specific negotiations with Iran from March 20 on allowed them to claim--Tass on the 25th at the UN itself on the 26th, that an agreement on troop withdrawal had been reached. At the same time, by keeping the talks with Iran secret, and by maintaining the vague condition on the troop withdrawal promise--"If nothing further happened"--they were able to maintain the fiction, necessary to keep the US happy that the presence of their troops had not been used to extract other concessions, while reminding the Iranians that the withdrawal was dependent on future good faith. Success of this strategy depended on a.) the willingness of the leading powers in the UN to accept rather vague assurances from the Soviets that things were on their way to resolution, and b.) the credibility--to the Iranians--of the implicit Soviet threat that, if treated too badly on oil and Azerbaijan, they would risk UN censure and exacerbated great power relations by leaving their forces in the country. The two factors were closely interrelated: in so far as the Iranians could be induced to agree to the Soviet deal, it became more difficult for the UN to justify taking a close interest



in the conflict.

For this move to succeed, the Soviets needed quantities of either trust or power that they no longer possessed. They did not convince or cajole Qavam, on March 23, to appear to say at a press conference that, since an agreement on troop withdrawal was on the way, he had asked Iran's representative at the UN to postpone discussion for a week or two. This effort to buy time failed. The very next day Qavam held another press conference at which he stressed that Ala would receive no new instructions until a satisfactory agreement had been finalized, which was not yet the case. This reversal came about after vigorous urging from the US Ambassador, and probably also after Qavam had heard the vague and still conditional details of Badchikov's first offer. (See FR, 46, 7, 376-378) The two press conferences reveal again the delicacy of Qavam's position: In trying to soothe the Soviets wherever possible on the way to a final deal, he did need to make statements toning down Ala's representations in New York; but at the same time, to keep pressure on the Soviets, and to assure the support of his western allies, he had to keep open the UN option too. A man in this position will be saying different things to different people at different times.

Generally, however, the Soviets failed to dissuade Qavam from a firm line, except in one important respect. He considered an agreement with them over oil long overdue. Some response had to be made to the Soviet charge that Iran discriminated against them in this matter. Against the advice of American and British diplomats, therefore, who thought no payment should be made for troop withdrawal, and against the ruling of the Majlis of October, 1944, that no negotiations over oil could take place until all foreign troops were removed, Qavam entered into detailed talks about oil.

He had hoped by this concession to demonstrate to the Soviets his essential good faith, while entangling them in drawn out talks during which world pressure against their military in Iran could only increase.

By March 28, Qavam had responded in writing to the Soviet offer of March 24. He expressed satisfaction with the troop withdrawal promise, adding the crucial proviso that it be notified formally to the Security Council, and the conditional phrase omitted. On the oil question, Qavam having acknowledged the legitimacy of the demand, could now object to specifics of the Soviet position without running too great a risk of antagonizing them. His counter-proposal gave Iran completely equal participation, eliminated any Iranian financial contribution, omitted from the concession area territory contiguous to Iraq and Turkey, and put any security forces connected with the exploitation solely under Iranian control. On Azerbaijan, Qavam would go no further in concessions to regional autonomy than already permitted under the constitutions. He intended, he said, to deal directly with a delegation from the rebel regime, implying that Soviet intercession was unwelcome. He told the Soviet Ambassador that unless this resolution of the issue were accepted, he would regard any oil agreement as nullified. Qavam knew that once Soviet troops were gone, the re-establishment of central government control would be much easier. Procrastination until more favorable circumstances obtained was an appropriate tactic here, too. (FR, 46,7, 379-380; 385-387, 394-396.)

After the exchange of Soviet bid and Iranian counter-bid, some deal involving the three points---troops, oil, and Azerbaijan---was on the way. The precise terms would be affected importantly by the positions taken at the UN. Qavam, though always hesitant to give Ala full rein, had now conceded that success in dealing with the Soviets required maintenance of

the negative sanction of UN exposure as well as the positive inducement of a definite oil commitment. He therefore instructed Ala not to withdraw Iran's complaint. That major Soviet objective had failed. The question remained what attitudes the great powers would take in further discussions at the UN.

The issue was not a minor one. In conversations with US and other diplomats the day the Security Council was to convene (March 26), Soviet representative Gromyko indicated that he could not participate in any deliberations on Iran before April 10th, and there as a "Distinct possibility," in Secretary Byrnes' words, "that Russia would withdraw from these Security Council meetings and possibly from (the ) UN as a whole!" (FR,45,7, 383-4)

At the Council session itself, Gromyko began by asking not just for postponement but that the matter not even be placed on the agenda, because, in conformity with the January 30 resolution, negotiations had resulted in an agreement regarding troops in Iran. Evacuation had already begun on March 24, he said, and would "probably end within five or six weeks unless unforeseen circumstances arise." Stalin made a similar statement to the press at the same time. (FR,46,7,381)

How far Soviet credibility had diminished with the United States and Britian, and how much the necessity of acting under UN procedure had begun to set limits to what a great power could say and do unilaterally, is demonstrated by the ineffectiveness of this Soviet request. The Soviets has been forced to negotiate with Iran sooner than ~~they~~ wished, and now were even willing to pledge withdrawal from high places just to stop further airing of the issue, subject only to the reservation implicit in all

international understandings, especially those involving great powers that changed circumstances could undermine the agreement. But none of this sufficed to draw off western pressure.

Byrnes countered by pointing out that since the agreement was not presented in the form of a joint SU-Iranian statement, Iran still must have the opportunity to present its case. This was a matter both of the spirit of the UN--its guarantee to small powers of the right to be heard--and of procedural regularity--Iran had not in fact withdrawn its letter of complaint. (The latter point was crucial: Had the Soviet Ambassador in Teheran succeeded the week before in convincing Qavam to reverse Ala's instructions, it would have been harder for Byrnes to make the argument. On the other hand this should perhaps not be overemphasized: Later in UN debates over Iran, the US did insist that the case remain on the agenda even after Iran announced itself satisfied)

After heated argument, the Soviet motion to remove the case from the agenda was defeated 9-2, with only Pland in support. Then, by the same vote, the Iranian case was placed on the Council's agenda. This was, in effect, a "vote of no confidence" in the USSR. (Van Wagenen, p.49) Gromyko now retreated to his request for postponement to April 10th, but this too, met opposition, mainly carried by Byrnes. The next day, after an ad hoc commission of the Council failed to agree on several compromise proposals, the Council reconvened and Gromyko's postponement motion was defeated again 9-2. Soviet isolation was practically complete, and Gromyko and his three aides walked out. After he left, Hussein Ala was given the floor and made public for the first time the details of the Qavam-Sadchikov talks in Teheran.

The possibility of Soviet withdrawal had been anticipated by Byrnes, as noted above. That it did not deter the United States from taking the Iranian side reveals that continuation of the wartime concert for the peacemaking period had ceased to be a first requirement of policy. The Soviet bid for postponement had been denied, and a serious split, transcending the Iranian issue, now threatened. Evident in the subsequent actions of both sides, however, is a desire not to let the consequences of disagreement go too far.

The Soviet walkout applied only to the Iranian case; they continued to attend UN discussions on other issues. Unable to use their veto on the procedural issue of whether to take up Iran, they sought to prevent the organization from acting on it by the precise tactic of a limited boycott. (USWA, 45-47, 106) Even if the boycott failed to prevent discussion, it might still buy more time to get a definitive settlement in bilateral talks with Teheran, while putting the west on notice that the Soviet Union would not allow its minority position to subject it to repeated defeats in the Council.

What were the elements of caution and flexibility in the US position? Burnes felt strongly that Iran must be given a chance to be heard, or, as he put it in debate, the UN would die in its "infancy of inefficiency and ineffectiveness." He viewed Gromyko's walkout as a "splendid demonstration" of the UN's power to embarrass the Soviet Union. (FR, 45,7, 389; AIOL,350, 390)

Having insisted on Iran's right to speak, however, he took the lead in sponsoring what were regarded at the time as compromise procedures for subsequent steps. On March 29 the Council--with Russia still absent--unanimously adopted Burnes' proposal that Iran and the Soviet Union report on the status of their negotiations by April 3rd. This did grant the Soviet Union some of the additional time it had demanded, a feature which explains the gratitude with which other members of the Council welcomed it.



(Schwadran ,pg.75) But in justifying his call for more time and information ostensibly necessary to permit the Council to decide whether to consider the substance of the case, actually intended as further pressure on the Soviets to get quickly and completely out--Byrnes stated conditions highly distasteful to the Soviet position. The Council, he said, must be able to assure itself that the withdrawal of Soviet troops was absolutely unconditional, and both parties to the dispute (meaning Iran) must reserve the right to have the case immediately take up again in case of any developments threatened to retard withdrawal. In the guise of a procedural suggestion, therefore, Byrnes injected substantive points about what would constitute a proper resolution of the case. (FR,46,7,396-8; for the whole UN sequence, Van Wagenen, 44-6)

To complement this move in New York , Byrnes asked his ambassador in Teheran for definite information from Qavam on whether the Soviets were insisting on conditions. They were of course, and Qavam had all along been willing in principle to grant some, though his tenacious haggling over oil and Azerbaijan, to which we will return in a moment, hardly constituted easy going for the Soviets. At present, however, that is April 3, the day he learned of the US request for information to be presented in New York in accordance ~~with~~ Byrnes' resolution, Qavam was prepared to say that the negotiations did not involve conditions, but that details could not be revealed until things were concluded. (The latter phrase was true: He was about to close the deal with the Soviets) Fr,45,7, 402) As before, he needed the pressure of an ongoing UN debate without the provocation of someone there asking the Soviets to make unacceptable concessions. But things were not to be so subtly

handled. Iran and the Soviet Union remained at odds in the session of April 3, even though, in view of the speed with which talks were proceeding in Teheran, a tapering off of UN concern with the case could have begun at this point.

What happened was this: Gromyko informed the Council in writing on April 3 that the troop withdrawal announced on March 24 would be complete within 5 to 6 weeks and that other questions were not attached to this agreement. No mention remained of the proviso about "unforeseen circumstances". The Soviets had conceded to reply, if not to attend, and had dropped their vague condition.

All turned on the Iranian statement. Hussein Ala, his voice bolstered by a letter from Qavam reaffirming his full accreditation as Iran's representative, denied everything in Gromyko's statement: Negotiations had not led to positive results, conditions were still attached, and Soviet agents and officials still interred in the internal affairs of his country.

Again Ala's word contradicted Gromyko's and again Byrnes proposed a resolution to der action. This time he asked, on April 4, that the two nations report back to the Council on the state of the withdrawal by May 6 that is, at the time when the Soviet Union had now promised it would be complete. In this motion, Byrnes' verbal stipulations of March 29, that the withdrawal be unconditional and that any member could report back at any time if events threatened it, were made explicit. Again the motion passed almost unanimously (there was one abstention), with even the Poles applauding it as an escape from a difficult impasse. Nonetheless, it did further specify and limit the terms the Soviets could extract for their withdrawal. And it was a frequent tactic of pro-Iranian speakers in the

debate to emphasize the assurances the Soviet Union itself had given, thereby to bind it further to the desired outcome. The several resolutions passed since January 30 had become progressively more exacting. (FR, 46, 7, 402-4; 407-9. Van Wagenen, 63-65)

The meetings of April 3-4 were thus not just a simple replay of those of March 26-29. The Soviets remained under ever more precise pressure to vacate Iran or to affront the UN in explaining why they did not.

It is worth noting how time, technical difficulties, and personalities had prevented the Soviet Union from presenting the joint front with Iran it needed to get the issue out of the UN. Time was a factor in that the April 3 session came just a day too early for Sadchkov and Qavam to be able to announce the final terms of their agreement, which would have weakened the grounds for further UN inquiries. Delays in the transmittal of Byrnes; instructions to Murray (after the March 29 Council request for information on the talks) further shortened the time available to Qavam to coordinate his willingness to negotiate in Teheran with his posture in New York. But the most important reason why Iran failed to begin presenting a joint face with the Soviets on April 3 was that Hussein Ala clearly violated the spirit of his instructions from Qavam. Whereas Qavam wished only a general statement that the talks were continuing with details available shortly, Ala proceeded to reiterate all the Iranian grievances against the Soviets, and to reveal the specific components of the deal itself. This exposure of Soviet demands before the UN at a key stage in the talks clearly annoyed Qavam, always fearful of antagonizing his huge northern neighbor.

Predictably, too, it angered Sadchkov. (See FR, 45,7, 406-7; also Lenczowski, 298-299) Ala's excessive zeal, or insubordination, became a regular feature of Iranian policy hereafter. At times, Qavam may have welcomed it, but usually it undermined his preferred strategy. Ala's position can in part be attributed to the difficulties of coordinating a subtle diplomacy with little time and over long distances: He may simply have lacked up to date information or acted on basis of necessarily vague instructions. But he had also come to view Qavam as operating dangerously close to folly or treason in conciliating the Soviet Union, and his actions in New York were designed to counteract, or stave off the consequences of, misguided policy at home. From a combination of unintended factors, then, a temporary lack of coordination in Iranian policy occurred at the April 3-4 meetings, and spoiled a developing chance for the Soviet Union to get the case out of the Security Council.

To offset the effects of Ala's anti-Soviet statements, Qavam hastened the process of publishing the results of his talks with Sadchkov. On April 4, the same day the Council asked both countries to report back May 6, the joint communique that Moscow hoped would get it off the hook was released .

Whom the agreement favored on balance, and what it portended for future relations, was in dispute at the time. Lenczowski , reporting British opinion , of the time and reflecting western views of the early cold war years, judges Qavam to have paid a "heavy price" with little assurance of delivery. The Soviets had "extorted" an oil agreement, while keeping the Azerbaijan regime intact. Might not a combination of Azerbaijan rebels,

the Tudeh party, and Soviet troops be able to control the next elections and bring Iran definitively into Russian orbit? (Lenczowski, 300-301; also Skrine, 238) In this view, which the Shah himself held, any Soviet gains were illegitimate and disastrous, only a prelude to even worse things. Saftey required the unequivocal and immediate elimination of Soviet power and proxies from the country.

Qavam thought differently. ( That is, at the time: subsequent events showed that perhaps all he really differed from more anti-Soviet forces in were his tactics and timetable for eliminating Russian influence.) To him, Soviet demands were a mixture of the legitimate, illegitimate, and inevitable, and in dealing with them a small power like Iran had to accept in the words of a U.S. Diplomat, "justice must be cajoled by special inducements to perform her duties." He had, after all, successfully kept the issue before the UN, and, in the agreement just announced, resisted any Soviet role in the resolution of Azerbaijan, and won on two of three particulars of the oil agreement. (The Soviets insisted on retaining 51% control for the first 25 years of the 50 year pact, but Iran prevailed on the question of Territory covered and control of the security forces.) US Ambassador Murray inclined to accept the necessity of Qavam's mode of proceeding. In his view the pressure on the Prime Minister was " not overwhelming" and the agreements were the "Result of give-and-take by both sides". As long as Qavam held firm on the ultimate removal of Soviet troops, Murray could not advise against other deals that would smooth the way. (FR, 46,7, 375, 399-401)



As to the role of oil in US calculations: Throughout this phase of the bilateral talks, the US refrained from any expression of interest in Iranian oil, so as not to invite a Soviet charge in the UN that American interests planned to move in as the Russians moved out. Maintaining a posture of disinterestedness was made easier by the fact that Qavam, on his own initiative, assured Murray on several occasions that the US would have first rights to unallocated oil in the south once the Majlis law against new concessions expired. (FR,46,7,373,378,380-381,413.)

With the agreement now joint, public and unconditional, Gromyko once more returned to the UN, demanding, in a letter to the Secretary General of April 6, the removal of the case from the agenda. Again Iran's dilemma was acute: When Ala's first response was to inform the Secretary General that Iran did not wish the complaint removed, the Soviets declared this an insult not to be tolerated. It appeared that months of careful conciliation might be destroyed in a few hours, for ten days Iranian policy vacillated tortuously, Ala insisting on a fire line, Qavam taking one stance one day, another the next. On April 15th, after several reversals and the receipt of new informal assurances from the Soviet Ambassador, Qavam instructed Ala to withdraw the complaint. A brief look at Qavam's definition of his alternatives and final grounds for decision shows again how necessary it was for him to keep up an incessant search for just the right degree of firmness and conciliation.

If he offended the Soviet Union by keeping the issue on the agenda, they might exert their influence to block his efforts to regain control over Azerbaijan. Even with their troops withdrawn, and that was not yet a certainty, the Soviets could continue to supply the rebels with arms, thereby forcing Teheran to send troops precipitate fighting, whereupon Russia could assert its right to intervene to protect the security of

its frontiers. Where would the UN be then, with no troops of its own and so far away? Soviet power, proximity, and pretexts for stepped-up involvement were too imposing and real to forget.

If, on the other hand, he withdrew the complaint, <sup>the risk was that</sup> the Soviets would violate their agreements anyway, leaving Iran completely defenseless, even without the support the UN provided.

Qavam went to Murray for advice: Wasn't there some in between? Couldn't Iran acquiesce in the removal of the case now and get it put back on if necessary? Murray and Byrnes were doubtful, recalling the strenuous debates required to place it before the Council, originally. If Iran withdrew, Qavam was informed, it might appear to world public opinion that it had used the UN forum only to achieve better terms and not to uphold the principles involved. This would hurt the chances for a sympathetic hearing another time. This example of the curious logic of American internationalism, seemingly dissociating principles from the idea of anybody's self interest, sounds as if American policy makers weren't aware that use of the UN had been an effective tool for influencing the terms of Soviet retreat, but one that needed to be used for restraint. In fact, US policy calculations were not quite so inattentive to Qavam's dilemma, although it is true that Washington's more elevated perspective of maintaining the integrity of the UN as protector of small powers tended to obscure the view to Teheran. Byrnes' main concern was to maintain the best possible pretext for continued inquiry into the progress of withdrawal and this required continued initiative from the Iranian central government. On April 13 Qavam decided, "with evident misgivings" according to US diplomat, not to instruct Ala to withdraw the complaint. To make this step mild as possible, he followed a US suggestion that Iran simply declare itself willing to leave the matter entirely in the Council's

hands , to act as it chose. Ala was also to tone down his statements.

But this did not solve Qavam's problem. Upon learning of the decision, Sadchikov protested to him that it showed bad faith toward the Soviet Union. Whereas in the communique of April 4 Iran said it had confidence in the Soviet Union's word, Qavam now acted as if he did not. Qavam acknowledged this logic, and in return for renewed assurances, reversed his instructions formulating the new ones to Ala, in Sadchikov's presence. The assurances were (a) that the evacuation would continue and (b) that the Soviets would use their influence with Azerbaijan to keep the rebels' demands within limits Teheran could accept. (For Iranian indecision, see FR, 46,7,415-23; 426-7)

(Note: In accounting for Qavam's reversal, Van Wagenen, 67, and Lenczowski to a lesser degree, 298-299, state that because US Ambassador Murray was seriously ill during early April, and consequently saw less of Qavam than usual , the Iranian Prime Minister was subject to greater than average pressure from Sadchikov. ( Also, on March 19, Sir Reader Bullard, the long-time British Ambassador to Iran, retired, and was not replaced until the end of April. Skrine, 238.) The argument that an accidental hiatus in the US support was decisive continues with the point that when Murray's replacement, George Allen, who previously was a close adviser to Byrnes on Iran in Washington, did arrive in early May, the Iranian posture stiffened considerably. This position needs some qualification. It is true that after April 10 the Second Secretary of the US Embassy represented Murray in talks with Qavam, but the primary function of these talks was to inform Qavam of Washington's viewpoint on how he should proceed, and that seems to have been faithfully done. By Qavam's own admission he had kept the Americans, and the British even more so, uninformed of his last minute talks with Sadchikov, but he immediately told the US once the decision was taken. There's little evidence, therefore, that US advice suddenly

became markedly softer and less available. Nor was Qavam acting in isolation at home: He obtained approval by the Iranian cabinet of his new instructions to Ala on April 15th. The decision seems to have been consistent with the now familiar imperatives of his position.)

As a result of this turnabout, the Security Council session of April 15, opened with the reading of a singular letter from Hussein Ala. In order to indicate that his government was subject to pressure and indecision in Teheran, and to dissociate himself from an outcome he vigorously opposed, Ala included in his letter the exact texts of the conflicting instructions he had received in the previous two days. The latter of these was to

inform the Security Council that the Iranian Government has complete confidence in the word and pledge of the Soviet Government (to unconditionally withdraw from Iran by May 6) and for this reason withdraws its complaint... (FR, 46, 7, 723-4).

Splitting Iran off from the Council majority should have been a great victory for Soviet diplomacy; and Gromyko---again present at Council deliberations under more favorable circumstances---attempted to capitalize on it in the debates of April 15, 16, and 23. To his dismay, he found the US position on retention of the case on the agenda completely unchanged and the Soviet Union lost another Council vote.

Gromyko had considerable logic on his side: Now that Iran, too, had requested removal, only a person with no "sense of reality" could still maintain that the case constituted a threat to international peace and security. In fact the chief threat to the quiet resolution now underway came from the illogical position held by the US and others that the UN member had no right to withdraw its own complaint.

Stettinius, speaking for the US, had a degree of legality on his side (the previous motion called for reports only on May 6, after the evacuation would be over), plus an implication of Soviet wrong doing (one must observe that the Iranian reversal came about with Soviet troops

still in the country). Debate being inconclusive, both sides turned to the Secretary General for a judgement according to the "letter of the charter." Could the Council remain seized of an issue after both parties to the initial dispute declared it settled? What appeared a legal question was a profoundly political one: To what extent would the Security Council (i.e. , those powers then forming its majority) assert the beginnings of a claim to true supranational power, by overriding the expressed wishes of two formally sovereign members? Even though the matter of the composition of the agenda was just procedural, and the great power veto would still apply to substantive decisions, the symbolic effect of such an assertion, joined with similar steps, could be very important. A simple majority of the Council could begin to define issues---domestic or international---as appropriate for the "international community," and not just for the sovereign nations most involved to resolve. Viewed less in organizational terms and more in the context of the emerging East-West division, such a step would be a significant stage in the progressive erosion of the principle of the indispensability of great power concert to oversee the frictions of peace-making.

Secretary General Lie returned no conclusive answer, though his remarks tended slightly to favor the Soviet position. But in any case he had no authority to decide. The next obvious step was formation of a sub-committee of experts, one drawn from each principal, to give definitive legal advice. Not surprisingly, when this group reported back, it split precisely along the lines adopted in debates previously. The majority



avored the opinion that the Council could keep Iran on its agenda. On April 23, a French motion for removal was defeated 8 to 3, with France and Poland backing the Soviet Union. (FR,46,7, 424-6; 427-31; 435-7; also Van Wagenen, 67-74, especially for the legal situation.)

After the vote went against him, Gromyko states that his delegation could no longer take part in future discussions on the matter. This was not a threat or warning, just a statement of consequences. The Soviet Union could not win in the UN. Against its will the Iranian case had been put on the agenda, discussed on the Soviet representative's absence, and retained even when Iran joined Russia in asking for removal. As a permanent minority power in the organization, the Soviets had no other issue on which they could make things equally embarrassing for their adversaries. It wasn't even worth defending themselves there.

The defeat of April 23 was obviously a bitter one. In the final stages of debate, Gromyko protested that

"Efforts to use Iran as small change in the bargaining game of international politics can serve no good purpose and are a sorry spectacle." (Van Wagenen, p.73)

And at the Paris Foreign Ministers Conference in late April, Molotov and Vyshinsky complained to the American delegation that American actions in the UN appeared to be part of an "anti-Soviet campaign" which had artificially exaggerated the Iranian situation. Bohlen's comment on this conversation may have identified the real basis of grievance:

The observations of Molotov and Vyshinsky again reveal the Soviet thesis that the relations between the great powers were more important than the strict observation (observance?) of the Charter and that their actions and policies in effect were outside the jurisdiction of the Security Council. (FR,46,7, 442; also Byrnes, AIOL,126.)

It is true that by now the US was committed---more than Iran--- to insisting on the right of the UN to assess the progress of Soviet withdrawal, even at the cost of evident Soviet displeasure. Just how far the US was prepared to make the Russians uncomfortable on Iran, thereby poisoning other areas of its relations with them, was unclear. If Washington now believed that vigorous opposition to all increases of Soviet influence in the immediate future was required, in order to stem a general threat to the UN order (balance of power?) then opposition over Iran was a useful way of signaling this conviction. Conversely, if compromises were judged possible in other areas, opposition in Iran might have to be softpedaled, perhaps some risks run, whatever the intrinsic merits of the case. We will return to these broader, supergame considerations below. From our narrower perspective, the primary question to be answered still once more was whether the Soviet Union's sources of influence at the local level could or would be used to counteract or circumvent pressure exercised at the UN. Of course the Soviet Union, too, had to make a supergame calculation--whether continued perseverance in Iran would be worth the deterioration of general east-west relations this policy had now begun to entail.

On May 6, both parties were due to report to the Security Council on the progress of troop evacuation. Iran's report kept the issue alive and uncertain by stating that Soviet forces had withdrawn from all of Iran But Azerbaijan. While the central government had reports that the remaining troops would be out by the next day, this was impossible to verify because it had been unable to exert its authority in the province since November, 1945. The Soviets were still on the carpet. American policy makers,

fearful of renewed Iranian backsliding, had urged Iran to make a report, and were prepared, had it not done so, to have the Council request one, thereby assuring continued exposure of Soviet delays. Once Iran did report, ~~and were prepared, had it not done so, to have the Council request one, thereby assuring continued exposure of Soviet delays. Once Iran did report,~~ however, the US was willing, as on previous occasions, to recommend deferral until definitive information was available. On May 8 the Council passed an American motion requesting Iran to come back on May 20, when it would presumably have evidence gathered by its own officials. In addition to the readiness to accept another limited postponement, American policy showed another element of restraint. Ala was unsuccessful in trying to persuade the US and other delegations to expand the issue before the Council beyond the question of troop withdrawal to that Soviet of interference in Iran's internal affairs. It was felt ~~this~~ would cause undersireable controversy. (FR, 46,7, 443-47; 450-453; 456-7.)

The Soviet Union boycotted this session, and submitted no report. But its reaction was soon felt---in Azerbaijan. Qavam's initial proposals to the rebels, announced on April 22, were interpreted by the US Embassy as "designed to show good faith of (the Government ) and (the) considerable length it is willing to go in allowing (a) measure of local autonmy." Sticky issue **remained**, however, relating to the fate of the Azerbaijan army and provincial assembly, and control of finances. By early May the rebels and the Soviet Ambassador, present at some sessions as an intermediary, began to take a hard line on these. On May 13 the negotiations were suspended in anger and Sadchikov told Qavam that failure to reach an agreement would lead to "iron and blood." This was truer than Sadchikov perhaps knew , since from the other side Qavam was being pressured by the Shah to send the Iranian army north immediately to end the rebel regime once and for all. Qavam approached the new American Ambassador Allen

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for help and advice. Couldn't he convince the Shah that certain concessions were necessary to avoid civil war? What would the UN do if actual fighting broke out? Allen was vaguely firm: No, he could not interfere in Iranian internal politics. But if Qavam were to make a frank public statement about the negotiations, establish a clear case of foreign interference in the UN and stick to it regardless of pressure, things might improve. Sometimes it was necessary to act as was proper despite the difficulties. (Allen reported to the Department his view that Qavam was exaggerating the dangers in order to justify concessions.) Allen added that Qavam underestimated what the UN had done and could do in the case especially if the Iranian position were consistent. (FR, 45,F, 453-6; 458-9; 460-462 ; 464-65.)

The day after this interview, May 14, Qavam issued masterful statement on the suspended negotiations, obviously inspired in part by Allen's counsel of resolution, but drawing primarily on his own brilliantly complex bargaining strategy. He charged that his readiness to settle in a spirit of conciliation had been rebuffed by the rebels, whose demands (which he specified) surpassed his legal powers to grant. Then he spelled out the several links between a settlement in Azerbaijan and troop withdrawal, and the granting of the oil concession to the Soviet Union:

According to the Soviet Iranian agreement of April 4th, the oil treaty was to be submitted to the Majlis for ratification within seven months of the signature of the accord. Such ratification was required by the Iranian law of fall, 1944, passed in response to the original Soviet demands for a concession.

Before ratification could take place, however, a new Majlis had to be elected, the former one having expired earlier in the year, and prevented

from extending its life , by the way, by Tudeh led demonstrations.

Since it was therefore in everyone's interest that the voting take place as soon as possible, Qavam continued, "I expect that the Azerbaijan representatives will provide the necessary facilities to the end that the Government may announce the general elections in conformity with law and the inhabitants may freely elect their deputies and send them to the capital.: In other words, if a decision on the Soviet oil concession was not to be postponed indefinitely, the central Government must be permitted to re-establish control over the rebellious province; otherwise the elections would not be national and legitimate; the Majlis could not vote; etc.

Thus were the Soviets forced to contemplate accepting an Azerbaijan settlement on Teheran's terms; if they withheld the settlement, Qavam could withhold the elections. And, unmentioned in Qavam's statement, but obvious to the informed, were two other linkages unfavorable to the Soviet Union. First, in accordance with a law passed in 1945, elections could not take place while foreign troops remained in the country; this law, like that concerning oil, had also been passed to prevent a combination of Tudeh and Soviet pressure from dominating the next Parliament. Second, in the process of re-entering Azerbaijan to supervise the elections, officials of the central government would at last be able to confirm definitively whether any troops did remain in the province. The implication was that the troops had better be out before that point, or the Soviets would face outcries in the UN once more.

In short, Qavam had them. They needed him as Prime Minister, it being clear that he he resigned (a possibility he put before them more than once in the Azerbaijan talks) his successor would more likely be from the right than from the left. They needed legitimized elections in Azerbaijan, in order for any decision at all on oil to take place, and to send to the new Majlis as many deputies as they could who were likely to favor their position. (Qavam's statement in FR, 46,7, 462-3)



Having created this net of complications and revealed it, Qavam did not become rash, but continued to conciliate ( or as some said, to appease) on numerous fronts. The most important one was of course the UN, and here, as before, he had difficulty in getting his representative Ala to go along . On May 29 Ala presented another report to the Council which said that the central government still did not have enough first-hand evidence to make a final statement on withdrawal since it was still prevented from exercising authority in the province. Ala's intent was to begin a shift in his country's complaint and the Council's considerations away from the troop issue and back to the problem of Soviet interference (direct and indirect) in Iran's internal affairs. He stated that if reports of imminent armed conflict in Azerbaijan were true, the danger to international peace remained serious. (FR,46,7, 468 N)

This went too far for Qavam who now relied more on procrastination than on pressure. Again he reversed Ala, having him inform the Secretary General the very next day that an inspection carried out by his agents confirmed that all Soviets troops had evacuated by May 6th. He understood that this step probably would mean removal of the case from the agenda, and counted on being able to return to the Council with new charges if it became necessary. In informing Allen of his decision, Qavam expressed the hope that the US delegate to the UN would underline Iran's right to do so. The threat was to be kept alive, in principle. (FR,46,7, 468-9)

For a brief period in its deliberations on what stance to take at the session of the Council hearing Ala's reports, the US considered escalating the issue again, or more precisely not letting it subside--- perhaps by probing Ala, who was quite ready to question Qavam's judgements,

on why his government still lacked information, perhaps by recommending that the Council launch its own investigation independently of what the two principals were saying. The chief argument for proceeding this way was the contradictory and ambiguous nature of the evidence coming from Teheran. Even if it was now virtually certain that the uniformed troops were out, rumors persisted that Soviet agents in civilian clothes remained, and the central government obviously had at best only imperfect and intermittent access to the province.

In the end, arguments for revived pressure were outweighed by others. Despite Ala's claims, reports from Teheran indicated that Azerbaijan was not on the verge of civil war; that would only happen if the central government felt it had no choice but to begin right away eradicating the rebels. Qavam, still engaged in delicate negotiations, was against a new UN inquiry; he even wanted to stop being asked to report himself. In the Council itself, only Britain favored a new initiative, and one of the constant concerns of American diplomacy in Iran and elsewhere in the colonial areas was to void any taint of defending British imperialism. Perhaps also, the US was hesitant to embarrass the Soviet Union again in New York because it feared unfortunate consequences at the concurrent Foreign Ministers Conference in Paris. There Gromyko had made several unexpected compromises in the previous two weeks, and a critical stage was about to be reached in the discussion of the Balkans. Gromyko and Vyshinsky's complaints about the April 23 vote may have had an effect. In brief, the Soviet Union could still hurt Teheran in Tabriz, and Washington in Paris. Besides, the months of publicity and renewed deadlines in the UN were finally having a noticeable effect with the evacuation of troops and the beginnings of settlement on other issues.

The point on which the US remained firm at the May 22 meeting was that the Security Council retain the item on its agenda so that any member could revive the case at any time in the future. This had been the principle minimal tactic adhered to throughout. Motions by France and Poland that would have led to its removal were defeated, and one by the Netherlands calling for adjournment until an early date was passed. The discussion of May 22 proved to be the last time the Council considered the case. At several points in the coming weeks, various pro-western delegations met to consider what to do if Iran never filed a more definitive report, but as events in Iran moved toward resolution in the summer-fall no nation called for any further action. (FR,46,7, 466-79; 487-00; also Van Wagenen, 74-81.)

H. The Spelling Out of Western Victory: May, 1946--November, 1947

Events through May, 1945, show that on the troop issue, at least, the Soviet Union was unprepared to challenge the UN's Western majority. Regular Soviet army forces in Iran were in fact withdrawn during the first half of the month. (FR, 46, 7, 484-486) But it would be a mistake to count the crisis as essentially over at this point, as many accounts do. For although the March - May debates represented the highpoint of East - West confrontation over Iran, the final balance of influence in the country was anything but settled when the UN stopped debating the issue. Just as the conflict that erupted in November, 1945, had been a long time brewing, so the resolution of the extent of Iran's East-West alignment was only clearly worked out over the next two years. And in this process American and British power was often directly employed on Iran's side against the Soviet Union. The Western powers and Iran had successfully compelled the Soviet Union to stop the direct application of military pressure on Iran. But preventing the Soviet Union from exploiting other means of influence to gain its aims required continued attention and opposition. This process of making the victory stick at the local level must now be briefly recounted. The conflict was dramatized and defined in the UN, but it was not finished there.

Throughout the late spring and summer of 1946, Qavam continued his twofold strategy of placating the Soviet Union, so as to lessen grounds for foreign interference, and of conciliating or stealing the thunder of the Iranian left, so as to remain in a position of influence after the elections to the new Majlis. The two policies were intertwined: To the degree he could claim to have satisfied the legitimate Soviet aims in Iran, the domestic left would have fewer grounds for making common cause with the Soviet Union. And to the degree that he could claim to have met legitimate grievances of the domestic opposition, the Soviet Union would be deprived of grounds for exerting further pressure, or more

importantly, of allies within the country to help it in gaining influence. He had to move to the left to forestall the left (domestic and international) careful, on the one hand, not to become its prisoner in the process, and on the other, not to antagonize or scare the right into stopping the experiment before it had a chance to succeed. Viewed in international terms, Qavam was searching for the limits of neutrality and independence available to a weak and vulnerable country in a bipolar system of power and ideology. Put otherwise, he was trying to avoid the following negative outcomes, in order of distastefulness: A Soviet takeover or acquisition of dominant political influence in the whole country; a return to the division of Iran into Russian and British spheres of influence and the consequent rise of tribal and regional separatism; and a reliance on the United States as the main international influence in Iran. The first two of these negative outcomes, which were likely to be accompanied by considerable bloodshed, became for brief moments distinct possibilities over the summer and fall, until the last--a new international reliance, on the United States--finally came about as the only way of avoiding them.

This is an appropriate point to summarize the steps in Qavam's conciliatory strategy during 1946, since they were the backdrop against which the other forces acted.

In foreign policy the most important step was the withdrawal of the Iranian complaint to the UN on May 20. Qavam went further, however, to diminish the possibility of antagonizing the Soviet Union, by having it announced a few days later that henceforth Ala's activities would be limited to serving as Ambassador to Washington. The other major international moves were, as we have seen, to agree to the oil concession and to offer what were generally regarded as quite liberal terms with Azerbaijan. Qavam's spokesman in the intermittent talks with the rebels was noted for pro-Soviet views. (US, FR, 46, 7, 480-82; 486-87; also



Kirk, 93. US Ambassador Allen seems to have convinced Qavam not to simply recall Ala, thus trying to avoid an appearance of total repudiation of his work and Iran's protests at the UN.)

In internal policy, Qavam arrested certain important political figures hostile to Soviet policy, suppressed the more outspoken anti-Soviet publications, and transferred or dismissed many army officers and government officials considered anti-Soviet. (At the same time he continued to support the American-advised gendarmerie, a security force loyal to the regime and hated by the Tudeh.) He released from suspension various Left publications, removed a ban on Tudeh meetings, recognized the Tudeh labor organizations, and appointed many Tudeh party members or sympathizers to government posts.

To blunt charges made at home and abroad that Iran was a backward state, incapable of managing its own affairs progressively without outside interference, he undertook numerous reforms in administration and state policy. An important act here was a decree for the distribution of state lands to the peasants. In the view of one American diplomat, Qavam had launched his reforms with "promptness (for Iran) and is in general conducting himself with more decision and determination than any other Prime Minister in recent years." (FR, 46, 7, 437-40; 490-91; quote 440.)

In July Qavam took a step designed to reap the political benefits of his leniency toward the Left in the coming elections by forming the "Democratic Party of Iran." The name was intentionally chosen to sound like the "Democratic Party of Azerbaijan," and in the announcement Qavam vehemently castigated reactionary forces in the country. As he moved to the left, the Tudeh party made gestures toward the center, forming a "Liberal Front" with a more nationalistic reform party. (FR, 46, 7, 505-6)

In June, these policies bore some ambiguous fruits. After six months of training an army and calling for a Holy War against the central Government, the

Azerbaijan regime abruptly softened its line and came to an agreement with Qavam on the status of the province, which in general outline followed the terms Qavam had offered in April. There is reliable evidence that the Soviet Union pressured Azerbaijan to make peace with the central Government, once Ala's accusing voice at the UN had been silenced, and knowing that a settlement was necessary for the elections and subsequent oil decision to take place. The accomplishment was not, however, final. As many observers point out, signing an agreement was one thing, implementing it another. Essentially, the rebel regime remained unchanged and subject to Soviet tutelage and control. The US Embassy was pessimistic. The real test would come with the physical attempt to regain control, and Qavam was not yet ready for that step. (Rossow, "Battle of Azerbaijan;" FR, 46, 7, 494-95, 497-98, 500-501; Kirk, 74; Lenczowski, 300-303.)

Summer brought more dramatic evidence that conciliating the Iranian left would be a long and difficult process. Beginning on May 10 and culminating two months later in a huge attempt at a general strike, Tudeh labor agitators inspired a wave of vigorous and often bloody protests in the fields of the Anglo-Iranian oil company. Unquestionably ample grounds for labor discontent existed in the British fields. But we must focus here on the political background and consequences of the strike situation that the Tudeh were able to exploit. Tudeh agents, some at least sent from Azerbaijan, had been laying the groundwork for major actions against the British economic position for a long time, waiting until the war was over so as not to jeopardize the allied supply operation. Soviet involvement was indirect; In June, Moscow radio began to stress Iranian-Soviet friendship, and turned its criticism toward British policies in the south. Some accounts state that Soviet diplomats in Iran advised on the coordination of the protests, and this seems likely.

The general strike itself failed, but as a demonstration of Tudeh power the three months of agitation were a distinct success. The government had to proclaim martial law, send a commission that partly acknowledged the grievances, and eventually release arrested Tudeh leaders under the pretext that they would "call off" activities that had already ended. In Teheran crowds were aroused by anti-imperialist speeches. The Tudeh gained an image as the "party of the future," and their influence grew, especially in the chief towns. The Soviet Ambassador raised a demand that the party be represented in the government.

Qavam retreated further. On August 2 he reshuffled his cabinet to include three Tudeh party members, and elevated to the Vice Premiership and Ministry of Labor and Propaganda one Muzaffar Firuz, a long-time Tudeh ally and spokesman for Soviet positions. In the weeks following Tudeh party members filled more and more government vacancies, although the important ministries of Interior and Foreign Affairs were kept under Qavam's control. (Kirk, 74-76; Rossow, "Battle of Azerbaijan.")

At this point it looked as though pro-Soviet "troops" in the oilfields of Abadan and the crowds of Teheran would be a more effective means of taking over the central Government than actual troops had been in Azerbaijan. Perhaps Soviet diplomacy had found the right level of informal penetration, just under the threshold of UN or Western protest. Again the Western allies had to consider raising their level of opposition or see their interests erode. The British reaction was quick and unequivocal, though limited primarily to concrete British interests in the south. The American response was slow in coming and harder to see, but ultimately far broader than the British in its implications. This fits the pattern of Western response throughout the conflict--Great Britain's interests were clear, limited, and long-standing and thus the British were usually better informed and more ready to react to new challenges than the Americans, whose

policy toward Iran was new, vaguely defined, and only slowly being related to a regular pattern of instruments of influence.

The strikes, riots, and sabotage of May-July threatened British oil production directly forcing them to take three immediate steps to indicate a readiness to defend their installations by force if necessary.

On July 17, three days after the general strike attempt, the Admiralty ordered three warships into Iraqi territorial waters just off Abadan, as permitted under a 1930 British-Iraq treaty.

On August 2, the day Qavam reformed his cabinet, the Indian government announced the "in order to safeguard Indian and British interests in South Persia, troops are being sent from India to Basra," a city in Iraq just across the border from Abadan. These troops were not to enter Persia, it was said, except in a grave emergency.

And on August 6, the Foreign Office issued a statement reminding the Iranian government of its responsibility to ensure that "such conditions of security prevail in the country as will enable Persian oil to play its full part in the Persian and world economy." (Kirk, 76-77; quotes, 77; Lenczowski, 303.)

This was the first display of British military power in the crisis. The message was mainly to the Iranian government: Unless you can guarantee the safety of the Abadan installations in the future, Britain will be forced to provide that security with its own troops, and perhaps revive a policy of exercising political control through alliances with local tribes. Britain clearly hoped to move the central Government to stronger action, not replace it. But the suggestion of separatism had some basis. The British had long cultivated good relations with the tribes in their area and could be expected to desert the central Government if worse came to worst. (Lenczowski, 304) The problem with following the policy to this conclusion was that the demise of central Government authority in the south could easily mean the same in the north. If



British troops came in, the Soviets would have an easy pretext to do the same. And whether the British could remain in their oil fields with the other half of Iran controlled by a Tudeh government in alliance with the Soviet Union was questionable. But for the present, with Abadan in such danger, a readiness to defend it had to be shown.

The British initiative was not completely unwelcome to Qavam. It insured, for then, the safety of the oil fields, from which his country, probably more even than Britain, needed revenue. At the same time it was necessary to protest: To prevent the British from going further, to show the Soviet Union and Iranian left that he would not tolerate a resurgence of the imperialists and extreme right. (There were reports of Soviet troops once again along the Azerbaijanian border.) Iran sent Britain a mildly complaining note on August 8, and, to show that it meant business, arrested several Tudeh leaders 10 days later.

In September and October of 1946 came the real domestic reaction to the Tudeh party's show of strength during the summer. Armed tribal rebellions broke out against the authority of the central Government throughout many of the southern provinces. By October the government had lost control of considerable territory. Delegations to Teheran demanded the resignation of all the Cabinet except Qavam, the release of arrested tribal leaders, and the same degree of autonomy that Azerbaijan had received. Iran was a step nearer fragmentation.

Suspicion immediately pointed to the British. The Soviets and the domestic left charged them directly with fomenting the revolt, and the Iranians claimed in private talks with the US to have evidence of British incitement, and even contemplated at one point a complaint to the UN. In the judgement of two reliable, but also British, accounts, British diplomats, though aware of the revolts, were not directly involved. "The revolt was a genuine movement among powerful tribes whose leaders had long resented control by an over-centralized Persian Government and who now faced the prospect of a Persia turned into a Russian satellite." (Skrine, 248; also Kirk, 77-78. I will do more research here.)



Whatever the origin of the rebellion, it proved to be the event that pushed (or allowed) Qavam to begin reversing his previous leftward course. The government conceded most of the tribal demands. On October 17 Qavam resigned from office and two days later formed a new cabinet without any Tudeh participation. The vocal and pro-Soviet Firuz was sent to Moscow as Ambassador. Three Tudeh city governors were dismissed. And then over the next two months the new government moved with military force to eliminate the Azerbaijan regime, and thereafter to hold elections under conditions that insured its victory. This was the turning point, and before sketching out the steps in the Soviet and Azerbaijan defeat, we must examine at some length the forces that compelled or permitted Qavam to take it.

The tribal revolts represented the first serious domestic resistance to the policy of conciliation, so serious that they threatened the very integrity of the state. As with British force movements during the summer, so the rebellions gave Qavam added incentive but also added support to begin shifting the balance of policy. But if the revolts had been the only new element, the likely outcome would have been the fragmentation, not the reassertion, of Teheran's authority. Three other factors were crucial to the change: Soviet and Tudeh actions during October; vigorous pressure from the Shah for a change in policy; and, most importantly, the growth of a firmer economic and diplomatic commitment to the central Government by the United States.

Tudeh influence in Iranian politics had grown steadily since the summer-- in the Cabinet, in the labor unions in the south, in the crowds of the main cities-- and Soviet diplomats worked to profit from this growth, both publically and behind the scenes. As mentioned before, the Soviet Ambassador had demanded after the summer strikes that Tudeh representatives be included in the cabinet. When the tribal rebellions of September broke out, Moscow sent a high foreign ministry official to Teheran to press for elections right away and the Shah was moved to

sign a decree calling for immediate "preparations." The Soviets also stepped up their attacks on British policy and offered Soviet combat equipment to assist in putting down the southern tribes. To some of this Qavam was ready to respond, on the standing principle of using one great power to keep the other honest: He asked the British to investigate charges against certain diplomats and formally requested that one figure be recalled. (FR, 46, 7, 519, 522-3; Tenoy, 304-306.)

But the other forms of Soviet pressure went too far. In early October the Iranian cabinet was asked to consider a Soviet request for 50% control of all aviation in northern Iran. One non-Tudeh minister, after expressing opposition to the concession at a cabinet meeting, was visited by a Soviet Embassy official at his home and berated for his position. Since meetings of the Cabinet were presumably confidential, this could only mean that the Tudeh ministers had gone to the Embassy with a request for such intimidation. Qavam was angered by this duplicity, but apparently did nothing about it immediately. He may have felt that granting the air concession would ensure Soviet tolerance of the strong action he soon planned to take against Azerbaijan. Or he may just have been scared. In any event, what the Prime Minister would tolerate or ignore for broader reasons, his Monarch would not. Upon learning of the incident the Shah was furious. After assuring himself of the army's loyalty, he demanded Qavam's resignation. At first the Shah planned to jail Qavam and form an entirely new government; he had been considering the need for an interim government to conduct the elections even prior to the air concession episode. Reasons not to take this step were that since Qavam had made the alliance with the Tudeh he should bear the political onus of breaking it, and that any government instigated by the Shah might be viewed as excessively conservative and accelerate the polarization of Iranian politics. The Shah, too, recognized the political value of Qavam's tortuous effort to remain a neutral figure. Thus after an emotional pledge of loyalty from the Prime Minister, he agreed to let him lead a new cabinet, under

three conditions: First, that the Tudeh ministers and Firuz be dropped. Second, that Qavam immediately organize his recently formed Democratic Party into an effective force to campaign against the Tudeh in the elections. And third, that he abandon all negotiations with Azerbaijan and prepare for the direct reassertion of Teheran's authority. This was the shift in policy inaugurated with the announcement of the new cabinet on October 19. Although Qavam was progressively more disillusioned with Tudeh behavior and took some actions against Tudeh members in local offices at this point, by himself he had neither the will nor the power to carry out this shift. He wanted to delay the elimination of Firuz from the government, for instance, and seems to have told Firuz and (thereby the Soviet Ambassador) of the impending shift. Apprised of the Shah's conditions, Sadichkov told Qavam in abusive language that the changes would be an affront to the USSR. Qavam came back to the Shah fearful that Soviet troops might enter the country if the shift were made. The Shah disbelieved him and had the change announced anyway, saying he would go to the UN if the country were attacked. (FR, 46, 7, 533, 536-39; Rossow, "Battle of Azerbaijan;" Kirk, 78-79; Lenczowski, 304-306.)

The story of the shift in Iranian tactics cannot, however, be reduced entirely to a dramatic confrontation between a willful Monarch finally drawing the line, and a Minister suffering from a final failure of nerve. During September and October, both men had been receiving increasingly insistent warnings from the US and British Ambassadors against continued cooperation with Tudeh forces. Whatever Qavam's many waverings, the record shows that he was persistently searching for signs of strength to his right, domestically and internationally, that would permit him to begin relying less on the left. And although it may be that the Shah was so incensed by Soviet and Tudeh actions, as well as by Qavam's indecisiveness, that he would have risked an heroic but probably losing battle without guaranteed outside support, it is likely that he also judged domestic and

international alignments to be changing so as to make an open struggle a less risky choice. Let us review then the slow and uneven evolution of a firmer US commitment to the central government. (British policy stiffened at this point, too, but I need to do more research on exactly how; the US posture seems decisive.)

US policy makers were extremely worried over the summer and fall that Iran was sliding into Soviet arms. In numerous audiences with Qavam, the Shah, and various liberal and nationalist political elements, Ambassador Allen pointed to the dangers and enjoined the Iranians to stick up for their own independence. But by and large, the US policy commitment to Iran remained exhortatory. (FR, 46, 7, 495-501, 510-511; Lenczowski, 308.)

When Ala laid dire predictions before Byrnes of where Qavam's policy was leading, the Secretary of State sympathized but said he saw no way of protesting the forms of indirect pressures now employed by the Soviet Union and its allies. When Qavam, in a "most determined" mood, asked Allen in mid-August what role the UN might play if he used military force in Azerbaijan and the Soviet Union interfered, the Ambassador's initial reply, as reported back to Washington, sounded rather more definite: ". . .while USSR has veto in Council and UN has no security forces, nevertheless nations which were determined to make UN successful would find means to make it function in defending member states against aggression." But upon learning of this effort to stiffen Qavam's attitude, Acheson immediately cautioned Allen not to give Qavam a mistaken impression of UN capabilities or US intentions. Any US action would "depend upon decision at highest level in light of prevailing circumstances." (FR, 46, 7, 491-3; 511-514; quotes 512, 514.)

The state of US internal deliberations on the degree of commitment to Iranian independence was summarized in a State Department Policy Statement of July 15. Under the heading implementation, it said that the US would continue to make unilateral declarations of friendly concern toward Iran, but would avoid any appearance of forming a bloc with the British Informational (propaganda)



activities were to be increased. Military and economic advisory missions would continue as an arm of policy, and efforts were underway to amend legislation to permit the sending of such missions beyond the period of national emergency. But, there was no contemplation at that time of either the use of military force or of granting loans for political purposes. If Iran persisted in its "present tendency to orient itself exclusively toward the Soviet Union" despite U.S. warnings, it might become necessary to remind it that the 1943 Declaration "was based upon the implicit desire of Iran itself to enjoy sovereign equality with other nations and that voluntary surrender of sovereignty by Iran to the Soviet Union relieves us of the obligations expressed in the Declaration." (FR, 46, 7, 507-509.)

In the absence of a dramatic Soviet move such as the failure to withdraw troops in March, and in the continued uncertainty about Iran's commitment to its own independence, US policy hesitated on the edge of more firm and material commitments. But as the situation threatened to deteriorate further, it became evident that Qavam could not risk the decisive string of actions the US was looking for without advance assurance that he would have the resources and protection to carry it through. This came out clearly in an interview of September 30 when Qavam stated his dilemma: The failure of the policy of conciliating Azerbaijan had prepared him for a sharp break with the rebels as well as for a continuation of energetic national reforms, but to take such steps toward re-establishment of national independence and unity Iran needed immediate US assistance in the form of military supplies and financial credits. At the end of September and early October, this line of argument began to take effect in internal deliberations. (FR, 46, 7, 518-520)

Allen continually urged the Department to allow him to reply favorably to Qavam's requests, as well as similar ones from the Shah. Loy Henderson, Director of the Office of Near Eastern and African affairs, wrote several long memos in



mid-October, stressing the seriousness of the situation, and criticizing previous US responses as "half-hearted" and "negative." He cited the view of the JCS, recently solicited by the Department, that the oil fields in Iran, Iraq, and Saudia Arabia were "absolutely vital to the security of this country." And already on October 1, Acheson suggested to Byrnes, on the basis of communications from Allen, that the US "strengthen Qavam's hand by a positive show US interest in Iran through full implementation our declared policy of economic assistance." His argument was simple: "It seems to us not unnatural that in absence material assistance from disinterested friendly power Qavam should yield to selfish foreign pressure." (FR, 46, 7, 532-35, 533-35; Henderson quote 524, Acheson, 520.)

Though not immediately, and not without equivocation, the firmer US posture shown here taking shape in internal deliberations began to manifest itself in the next few weeks, before and after the cabinet reformation. On economic aid, Qavam was told on October 5 that Byrnes had approved the sale of some non-military surplus materials to Iran. (The request for military supplies was deferred.) At other points, the Iranians were assured in general terms that every effort would be made to implement a program of economic assistance, although specific proposals were not acted upon. On the possibility of a return to the Security Council, Acheson refused a request from Ala in Washington that the US reopen the case, but did say the US would give wholehearted support to a well-founded Iranian complaint of internal interference. On the question of when to hold elections for which the Soviets were pressing daily, the US, while refusing to explicitly recommend postponement, tended to advise that they be held off until law and order, i.e., nation-wide central government control, was restored. Allen continued to embolden Qavam in his dealings with the Tudeh and Azerbaijan, and was especially frank in his comments on the air concession incident, telling him that "when such conditions existed, it was obyious that present Government of Iran had no

freedom or independence, and that we might as well recognize the fact and cease pretending." Still, he reported to the Department that Qavam was reliable and remained the best man for a difficult job, and urged a positive response to Iranian requests for help. (FR, 46, 7, 520-21; 524-9; 536; 539-545.)

In late November Allen was instructed to tell Iran that an expanded program of support had been approved. This had been under detailed discussion for over a month, and Byrnes had approved portions of it in principle as early as October 18. The new policy had four features. First, the US said it was prepared, as long as Iran demonstrated its own willingness to resist external pressure, to support Iranian independence "not only by words but also by appropriate acts." Second, the US would help obtain credits for the acquisition of nonaggressive military materials to assist in maintaining internal order. Third, the US military mission would be kept in the country if Iran so desired. And fourth, American cultural and informational activities in the country would be intensified.

At the same time, Qavam began taking the more forceful steps long contemplated in the campaign against Azerbaijan. On November 22 he announced that elections would take place only when Iranian security forces were present in the various provinces, meaning of course Azerbaijan. To underline the seriousness of his intentions he had already sent government troops into a border area of Azerbaijan on the 16th. On December 3 he announced that the elections, previously scheduled for the 7th, would be postponed at least three more months.

On November 27, Allen stated to the press that Iran was perfectly within its rights in sending troops to ensure order in the elections.

The move against Azerbaijan with US support aroused one last storm of Soviet protests. There were straightforward objections: The Soviet Union "could not remain indifferent to changes on its frontiers." There were warnings of complications and repercussions: Sending troops would result in partisan warfare and clashes of arms, both within Azerbaijan and along the Soviet-Iranian frontier;

The Soviet Union would have to reconsider its attitude to Qavam. There were compromise proposals: Why could he not send a commission of liberal minded men rather than an army to oversee the re-establishment of government control?

(FR, 46, 7, 549, 556-558.)

Qavam rejected each of these points: A commission would be useless; sending an army to restore local order was no threat to the powerful Soviet Union; any successor to him in the Prime Ministership would pursue the same policy. He pointed out to the Soviet Union once again that either they must allow a new Majlis to be elected, which entailed the reoccupation of Azerbaijan, or suffer the indefinite postponement of ratification of the oil agreement. (Kirk, 80)

There was nothing new about the logic of Qavam's arguments or his willingness to make them. But now he was able to do more than just stubbornly reason with the Soviet Union. He went to both the US and the Security Council for backing.

Informed of the Soviet objections and warnings, and Qavam's concern about the US position Acheson authorized Allen to give the following assurance: If Qavam sent troops, and could prove before the Security Council that the Soviet Union was giving the rebels support, the United States would be prepared "to pursue the matter energetically." Qavam was advised to notify the Security Council at once of possible difficulties.

Following the State Department's advice closely, Qavam had Ala present a letter to the Security Council on December 5. Described as a report on further developments in the case, it stated that the Soviet Ambassador had given "the friendly admonition" that sending troops could result in disturbances and thus advised Iran to abandon the plan. The letter closed with the determined statement that while Iran hoped the Soviet Union would not use the dispatch of government troops as a "pretext for hostile demonstrations," Iran would "not fail to take the action necessary to maintain law and order throughout Iran, even though

disturbances may be threatened." (FR, 46, 7, 554-55; my italics.)

The Iranian letter did not become a subject of Council discussion, but it didn't need to to have an effect. At once it reminded the Soviet Union of the availability of the UN option, and of Iran's readiness, this time, not only to complain to the UN but to run the risk of military conflict in defying Soviet warnings. All the other members of the Security Council were informed again of Soviet efforts to dissuade Iran from eliminating the Azerbaijan regime. There were renewed complaints by the Soviet Ambassador, and violent denunciations from the Tudeh in Iran, but Qavam remained steadfast.

On December 9 and 10 government troops crossed the border into Azerbaijan. For a brief moment on the 11th it appeared that the rebel army in Tabriz would offer serious resistance, but surprisingly little fighting developed. It turned out that the rebel government was seriously divided on the question of resistance, the army ill-equipped, and morale generally low. Some of the leadership fled to the Soviet Union, some surrendered to the government troops, and some of the followers were slaughtered by anti-communist crowds in the interregnum between governments. Once the collapse came, observers could immediately point to signs of the increasing weakness of the rebel regime over the previous month, or even year, but no one expected it to fall so suddenly. When the Soviet Ambassador demanded on the 13th that the fighting cease, the government troops had already won. Writing from Moscow, US Ambassador Smith labeled it a "humiliating reverse." (FR, 46, 7, 559-562, 567, quote; Rossow, "Battle of Azerbaijan"; Kirk, 80-84; Skrine, 248-250.)

Although another year would pass before Soviet influence in Iran was fully displaced, detailed narrative can now give way to a summary of the highlights of the process. After the suppression of Azerbaijan, US influence in Iran grew steadily. Further agreements on military assistance were reached in December and the following summer, a US firm was engaged by the Iranians to elaborate a



development plan to be financed through the IBRD, and US oil firms signed an agreement for access to a percentage of existing Iranian oil production. The announcement of the Truman Doctrine in March, 1947, included no direct reference to Iran, but in fact US policy in the country was already beginning to give the kind of aid that Greece and Turkey were singled out for in Truman's speech. The State Department created a new Bureau: of Greek, Turkish, and Iranian affairs. (Kirk, 84; Sheehan, 36-38.)

The long-promised elections got underway in January, 1947, but the new Majlis only began work in August. In it Qavam's policy enjoyed a substantial majority, while Communists held only two seats. This was perfectly in accord with predictions by all knowledgeable observers: Elections in Iran were a "farce" (the exact term used by Allen), and would be won by the government that counted the votes. When the Soviet Union resubmitted its proposed oil draft for ratification, Qavam began hedging: The circumstances under which Iran originally signed the agreement had indisputably changed, he couldn't force a newly elected body to approve it. Soviet protests mounted. The British, perhaps fearful of nationalist attacks on their own holdings if the Soviet request were refused, cautioned Qavam against outright refusal. At this point US actions were again decisive. In a speech on September 11, 1947, Allen criticized the Soviet Union indirectly for accompanying its request with threats and intimidation, defended Iran's right to accept or reject the oil offer as it chose, and concluded that the Iranians could "rest assured that the American people will support fully their freedom to make their own choice." Although at the start, a majority of the Majlis had favored the concession, the combination of renewed Soviet threats, early and public US support, and rising nationalist opposition to all foreign concessions (Mossadegh's faction had twenty five seats in the new parliament) led to rejection. On October 22, and again on November 20, 1947, Soviet requests were turned down. (Kirk, 86-88; Lenczowski, 309.)



## VI. Conclusion: Determinants of Bargaining Strengths

In bringing the story to its essential conclusion in late 1946 we have concentrated on the evolution of Iranian resolve and of American commitment, and on the interdependence of the two processes. Without the growing signs of a more than verbal US commitment to Iranian independence, it is questionable whether Qavam would have launched his decisive military attack on the Soviet position in Azerbaijan. But equally, without the hard evidence that Qavam and the Shah had the will and capability to carry out the act---temporizing on Soviet demands for elections, expulsion of Tudeh from the cabinet, specific plans to send troops north---it is questionable whether the gradual but indispensable US commitment would have materialized. On several occasions in the late summer and early fall, Washington warned that its support of Iranian sovereignty depended entirely on Teheran's willingness to take the lead. The implication of these warnings was that had Qavam's policy of conciliation led to a Tudeh dominated government, willing to proceed with elections, legitimize Soviet demands for air rights and oil concessions, and leave the Azerbaijan regime in power, Washington would not have reacted. The possibility of Iran sliding into the Soviet camp was judged highly probable at points, and yet one finds no speculation in US policy deliberations that it might be wise or necessary to take the lead in installing a reliably anti-Soviet government, by overt backing of the Shah or by military intervention. Perhaps the British would have reacted militarily to protect their oil from control of a pro-Soviet government, but it seems that they, too, were not prepared for pre-emptive intervention in Teheran to prevent the initial phase of Qavam passing wholly under Soviet influence. The events of March-May, 1946, in the UN and out, explain how the Soviet Union was deterred from the overt use of troops to engineer a change of government and policy in Teheran. But why Soviet efforts below the threshold of the overt use

of troops failed requires further elaboration. For as we have emphasized throughout the last section, considerable uncertainty about the outcome remained right up until the last days of the suppression of Azerbaijan by government troops.

The superpowers were not in direct contact in this phase, as they were in previous phases, either at the UN or wartime conferences. Instead, the US worked indirectly to influence Soviet actions by encouraging Iranian firmness, while the Soviet Union itself acted through local agents as much as possible. US acts of support were primarily verbal and often vague, although promises and some small amounts of economic and military aid began to be made in mid-fall. Given the highly unsecret character of Iranian policy making, the Soviet Union must have been aware of growing American moral support and potential concrete aid to Iran. And on one significant occasion--Allen's endorsement of Iran's right to send troops north on November 27---that growing support was made public. The Soviet Union knew also that the US had encouraged Qavam to return to the Security Council with complaints against the Soviet Ambassador. But, to repeat, Iranian resoluteness was not only a function of *AMERICAN* backing. Nor was the Soviet Union's failure to prevail only a function of combined US and Iranian determination and power.

Iran avoided succumbing to incessant Soviet and Tudeh pressure not only because of US support, but also because of the nationalism and anti-communism of the Shah, the army, and other gradually emerging anti-Soviet political elements in the country. The revolts of the southern tribes were a significant factor here. There were, then, internal, autonomous forces behind the anti-Soviet policy which no outside source could create or replace. On the other hand, these anti-Soviet elements, had they come to a direct conflict with the Soviet-backed Tudeh, might not have won. Thus it was highly important that the US, the anti-Soviet elements, and Qavam himself, understood the need to keep Qavam, or at least another determinedly neutral figure like him, in power. The

presence of an avowedly neutral government, exquisitely skillful in procrastination and contradictory actions, deprived the Soviet Union of a clear pretext for intervention. At the same time, it prolonged the period available to the US to make up its slow-moving mind about aid, and provided a demonstrably "independent" government--neither pro-British nor anti-Soviet---to give the aid to. Qavam's continuation in office helped avoid a clear and premature domestic polarization of forces, which would have forced <sup>on</sup> all parties a quick decision in a civil war context: This might have driven cautious Iranians back onto the fence or onto the Tudeh side, and would have made a US commitment less likely. Qavam's strategy of formal neutrality, entailing delay where possible, concessions where necessary, <sup>+</sup> <sup>gain</sup> designed to / time for the emergence of forces to his right to balance Tudeh and Soviet pressure, contributed importantly to the Soviet defeat; it was a consequence of the nature of Iranian domestic politics and his particular brand of ambiguous diplomacy. American support could complement it but not substitute for it.

But what of Soviet actions themselves in the last stages? One fact apparent in retrospect is the weakness of Soviet allies in Iran. The rapid collapse of Azerbaijan surprised everybody. It turned out that Soviet aid to the rebels had been small, and given at a high price. Moreover, the ostentatious control of policy exercised by the Soviet Consul General in Tabriz deprived the rebel leadership of local support that would have led the population to fight the central government more vigorously. Even the Tudeh party, though growing throughout the country, did not have power by itself to engineer a takeover. The strikes in mid-summer can be judged premature, in this regard, since they encouraged the emergence of strongly anti-Soviet forces which might have remained dormant had Tudeh growth been more gradual.

But the Soviet Union also made serious mistakes in exploiting Iran's

undoubted interest in preserving its friendship through timely, if limited concessions. The Embassy's intimidation of non-Tudeh cabinet members aroused everyone. Later on, when government troops were poised to enter Azerbaijan, the Soviet Ambassador again made the mistake of threatening Qavam personally, which at that point only hardened his determination. The Soviet Union lacked adequate power, and finesse in using what power it had, to take advantage of what appeared to be a most favorable situation for gradual informal penetration. When Qavam finally sent forces north, the Soviets had either to fight and risk incurring greatly increased Iranian and US hostility (more on this risk in a moment), or to allow their bluff to be called in hopes that Iran would at least make good on the oil pledge once it had eliminated Azerbaijan. But once Iran did regain Azerbaijan it no longer had any reason to honor its previous commitments: The Azerbaijan lever itself was gone, the US was increasingly behind the central government, and besides, the Soviet Union had revealed an unwillingness to moderate its demands in days when the government had been compelled to negotiate from weakness. None of these Soviet errors would have made the slightest difference, however, had Qavam not persevered along his complicated path, had Iranian nationalists and anti-communists not re-emerged, and had the United States not increased its support. In the absence of these elements, the Soviet Union could have had its way even with the blunders. The most we can say is that had the Soviet Union not overplayed its hand, Iran might have opted for a somewhat pro-Soviet neutrality in order to avoid domestic polarization and the introduction of a possibly destabilizing alignment with America. Soviet bullying, if that's the right word, was perhaps the most important factor in the prevention of this outcome. A less pressured Iran might have exercised more restraint in establishing close ties with the West.



The foregoing remarks have shown, I hope, that the conflict over Iran's international alignment was not decided at the UN in spring 1946. What was revealed there was that the Soviet Union would not risk the reaction from the United States that would follow if it kept troops in Iran on a permanent, illegal basis, or used them to carry out a change of government. In other respects, however, the outcome of the UN debates and attendant acts of Western opposition was not a clear defeat for the Soviet Union. They *RECEIVED* an oil concession for <sup>THE</sup> troop withdrawal, and their ally in Azerbaijan remained in power. It required nine months more to show that even below the threshold of troop use Soviet efforts to maintain and expand their influence would fail, too. (See esp. Millsbaugh, pp. 198-202, who, writing in mid-1946, was thoroughly pessimistic about Iran's ability to escape domination.) In part, as just argued, this subsequent Soviet defeat can be attributed to changes in Iranian internal politics, to Qavam's diplomacy, and to Soviet mistakes. But in part, the final reluctance of the Soviet Union to defend, much less advance, its interests in Iran by force was attributable to US opposition, presumably to be exercised through the agency, or in the name of, the UN. We must therefore inquire more closely into the kind of threat to the Soviet Union implied in the US policy of backing Iran in the UN, both in the spring and winter of 1946. What was the risk the Soviets were unwilling to run?

Of those accounts that define the turning point to be late March, early April, 1946, when the Soviet Union agreed to withdraw its troops under UN pressure, that by James Payne offers the most explicit speculation as to what the American actions entailed for the Soviet Union. Payne believes that Churchill's Fulton speech, along with actions by Truman and Byrnes the same March, threatened the Soviet Union "with a process leading to war" if it failed to withdraw its troops from Iran. The role of the UN in conveying this threat was of some importance: UN procedures permitted a slow tightening of the screws, and actions taken to "save the UN" were more likely to appeal



to the American public and hence make execution of the threat more credible. But, Payne says,

the backbone of this victory was the American and British willingness to press the matter through the United Nations and their apparent willingness to mobilize force against Russia when the Security Council made its eventual finding of aggression. Without this determination, without this veiled threat to use force, the activities of the Security Council would have been fruitless and the UN would have been a sham. (p. 31)

Payne argues that what probably would have occurred was a situation like June, 1950, that is, the United States would have found a way to work around the Soviet veto in order to get the UN on its side for a military enforcement action. The scenario that then presumably played out in the Soviet mind was quite dramatic:

The allies would probably land troops in Iran and proceed to confront the Russians. If they did not withdraw, combat might eventually begin. Of course, the Soviets would have a comfortable superiority in ground forces, but the United States had the atomic bomb. The bomb had been used twice less than a year previously; there was no tradition against its use. The Soviet Union could expect, therefore, that if a ground battle went poorly for the Americans, the A-bomb might soon be used against it. Once the United States was engaged in a war with the Soviet Union, we might be expected to force a Russian retreat everywhere. Poland, East Germany, Austria, Bulgaria, Romania, Korea...Indeed, Stalin might have believed that the Western "capitalists" would want to obliterate communism in Russia. (p. 29)

As evidence that the Soviet Union did take this chain of consequences to be sufficiently possible to counsel withdrawal, he cites Stalin's interpretation of Churchill's speech as a call for a "new war against the Soviet Union," and the appearance in Communist propaganda during this period of the charge that America was waging "atomic diplomacy" against the Soviet Union. They felt the situation carried a real risk of war. At the same time, he notes, the Soviet Union hastened to pay its full contribution to UN expenditures (and was the only nation fully paid up at the time), and made it very clear that Gromyko's walkout did not mean Russia was leaving the entire organization. These were necessary steps to prevent the US from enjoying complete freedom in using the UN against the Soviet Union. (pp. 23-32 for entire discussion of the Iranian case)

Adam Ulam gives a more frequently encountered interpretation of the significance of the US posture, and one that I feel is closer to the truth.

The main factor in the Soviet withdrawal, Ulam writes, was undoubtedly the American involvement

to the point where, while no drastic confrontation...threatened, the Soviets became convinced that their interests in more important areas would be challenged if they remained obdurate about Iran.... It was a classical case of what the language of diplomacy calls "complications" arising out of what had promised to be a simple exercise of Great Power politics. (427, 428.)

A few writers (for instance Corman, 123-125, and Kennan, too, reporting from Moscow in March, 1946, before the withdrawal, FR, 46, 7, 362-364) emphasize that British opposition, more than American, was the key element in Soviet calculations, on the general premise that the power with concrete and well-established interests in the area, and a long tradition of using force to defend them, would be the main antagonist, though backed in some form by the US.

Did the US and Britain threaten war, and did the Soviet Union think so? Some points are clear. There were no explicit threats of war and few significant force movements in connection with the opposition to Soviet policy voiced at the UN and in various speeches and diplomatic communications. UN deliberations never came close to a substantive decision to use force against the Soviet Union; all members, including the US, held back from even beginning such a move. (We know, too, from diplomatic records that the United States was not contemplating specific military actions in Iran, or even, apparently, engaging in contingency planning. But that is irrelevant to speculation on what the Soviets may have thought.)

What the Soviets did face in spring 1946 was

1. Frequent and increasingly somber expressions of Western concern and opposition at high levels---Bevin's protests in the January session, Byrnes' leadership of the US delegation in March, Truman and Churchill speeches.

2. A great outcry in the Western press. Rossow describes it:

(The) world press set off a very noisy alarm. It produced a flash public crisis without prior build-up the likes of which (sic) the world had not seen since the early days of the war. It startled and stunned Americans, but it appears to have startled and stunned the Russians as well. (p. 25)

3. Constant pressure to appear in the UN and bear the accusations of Hussein Ala as well as important Western diplomats, and be forced to return a few weeks (or sometimes days) later to hear them again if policy hadn't changed; repeated losing votes as a consequence of these debates.

In my judgement the Soviets did not withdraw from Iran because they feared that the British or Americans, together or alone, with or without UN sanction, would use force to drive their troops out or to liquidate the Azerbaijan regime. (Though it seems likely they would have expected some local British military action in the far south.) They withdrew because the negative diplomatic consequences, in Iran and the Middle East and elsewhere, of acting in clear defiance of Western opinion ensconced in UN resolutions, would be greater than the possible gains. Even without/<sup>Western</sup>military opposition, Iran was not easily controlled; the situation would remain contested. To remain in occupation of an uncertainly pacified country, in violation of fairly clear treaty commitments and against the long accumulating protests of the other major actors in the area and the system as a whole could only mean constant argument and difficulty and ill-will. There could be no quick and decisive victory in Iran, and even if there were, the fact that the issue of Soviet interference had become defined as a cardinal Western complaint would mean that cooperation would become more difficult in quite distant as well as closely related areas. The "complications" would have a wide effect and a long life.

The importance of the UN in this needs some clarification. It was more than just a "convenient means of applying pressure," though it was that, and

something other than a vehicle for "mobilizing world public opinion," as American policy makers liked to describe it. Lodging a complaint through the UN was at this time the best single sign the Western powers could make that the issue was of great importance to them, not intrinsically, that is something to be fought for then at all costs, but symbolically, as a precedent of Soviet hostility and ill-faith that would not be ignored or quickly forgotten. Iran turned out to be a sensitive spot. Raising it at the UN was like devoting unpleasant hours to Poland at a wartime conference of chiefs of state. It meant that Soviet actions were being closely followed & disapproved of strongly, and that this message would be communicated even at the cost of spoiling the spirit of concert which such conferences were supposed to advance.

The Western powers never threatened or intended war, over Iran. The Soviet Union never meant to risk war, over Iran. George Kennan provided an estimation of Soviet intentions at the time of their troop buildup in northern Iran in early March, which accurately describes, I think, the limits of risk-taking in their policy:

and

Unless there has been some tremendous/fundamental decision taken here to forego all advantages of further cooperation with (the) western world and to enter on (a) path of complete defiance and armed isolation, a turn of events for which we have as yet no evidence, then I feel (the) Russians will try in whatever action they may undertake in (the) Middle East to keep just this side of the line which would mean a complete diplomatic break with the British.... It is not like the Kremlin to blunder casually into situations, (the) implications of which it has not thought through. (FR, 46, 7, 364)

When they discovered that the issue would be judged by the West to be of international significance and cause something like a "complete diplomatic break" in the UN, they naturally reduced their efforts to a less obtrusive, local level. We have seen additional reasons why that strategy, too, failed.

(To come is a set of much more general concluding remarks, giving a retrospective on the motives and tactics of all parties throughout the whole dispute. Will present these at the project session on this case; write in later.)