

THE TRIUMPH OF DIPLOMACY.
JAMES BYRNES AND THE IRAN CRISIS OF 1946.

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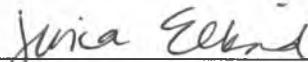
Master of Art
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History

By
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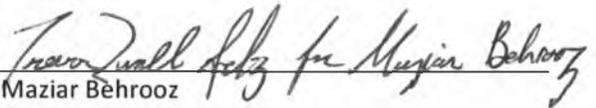
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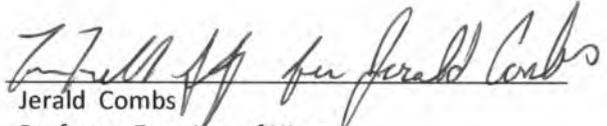
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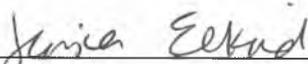
THE TRIMUPH OF DIPLOMACY.
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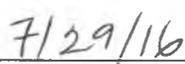
The Iran crisis of 1946 marked the end of America's wartime policy of accommodation toward the USSR. Russia's refusals to withdraw her occupation army from northern Iran at the end of the war as per treaty obligations and agreements with her allies proved that policy which had anticipated postwar cooperation by the USSR, was ineffective. Instead, the resolution of the dispute between the two victorious great powers came about as a result of a diplomatic strategy pursued by Secretary of State James Byrnes. Contrary to popular belief, the Iran crisis played over the conference table of the newly inaugurated United Nations Security Council not American ultimatums or threats of armed force against the USSR.

Byrnes diplomatic strategy at the Security Council abandoned FDR's soft Soviet policy but preserved his greater foreign policy goal of establishing a viable United Nations. American support for Iran's complaint lodged against the USSR before the Council (the first order of business ever taken up by the new body) legitimized the executive branch of the U.N. as one that would hear grievance by smaller nations even when the accused party was a veto proof permanent member of the UNSC.

I certify the Abstract is a correct representation of the content of this thesis



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Date

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	1
1. From Bridge to Victory to Bridge to Cold War.....	18
2. The Grand Inquisitor in London	112
3. Mission to Moscow.....	153
4. "A Full Scale Combat Deployment"	173
5. "With Both Barrels"	216
6. "What Is Russia Up to Now?"	235
7. Conclusion	291
Appendix.....	311
Bibliography	312

LIST OF APPENDICES

1. Declaration of the Three Powers on Iran. (Eureka Conference).....311

PREFACE

Iran in early 1946 provides a valuable case study of the origins of the Cold War. Here the Soviet policy of Franklin Roosevelt was put to the test; here the United Nations Security Council met its first test; here a growing hard-line faction in the American government found evidence for their suspicions of postwar Soviet aggression in the Middle East; here the Big Three alliance that had united to defeat the Axis powers drew a final breath; here a popular myth became embedded in the memory of the public that saber rattling was more important in the resolution of the dispute between the great powers than diplomacy.

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Introduction

At the start of 1946, three men—an “accidental president” in Washington, an obscure career diplomat in Moscow and a world famous statesman in Fulton, Missouri—considered the state of American-Soviet relations. Since the end of the Second World War images of American and Soviet soldiers linking arms at the Elbe in certain triumph over the common enemy had given way to mutual suspicions, tension over new issues arising from the victory and deadlock in disputes that arose during the war but had been deferred to the start of the postwar era. The unlikely alliance between the western liberal democracies and the communist Soviet Union had held together until the Axis enemies had been defeated in large part because of the policy fashioned by President Franklin Roosevelt to accommodate the Russians to the greatest degree allowable. FDR had hoped that his soft Soviet policy would extend into the postwar era and usher in a new era of cooperation between the great powers.

Harry Truman (dubbed the "accidental president by the press when he unexpectedly succeed FDR) contributed to the reevaluation of American relations with the USSR in a letter to Secretary of State James Byrnes dated January 5, 1946. This was followed by a lengthy telegram on February 22, from George Kennan, the American *Chargé d'affaires* at the embassy in Moscow, to his superiors in Washington. Then on March 5, at Westminster College in Missouri, Winston Churchill publically announced what Truman and Kennan had said behind the scenes: that the Soviet Union was immune to the words of diplomacy and only understood the language of force. “From what I have seen of our Russian friends and Allies during the war," Churchill said, "I am convinced there is nothing they admire so much as strength, and there is nothing for which they have less respect than for weakness, especially military weakness."¹ During the Iran crisis this thesis was put to the test and in the case of Iran it was not proven. The evidence shows that the dispute among the great powers over Iran in the first year after the end of the war was resolved with diplomacy not armed force.

¹ Winston S. Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace" in *Never Give in! The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches*. (New York: Hyperion, 2003), 423.

The Truman-Kennan-Churchill thesis strongly implied that FDR's Soviet policy of maximum allowable cooperation with Moscow was rapidly proving inadequate in the postwar period. It was not in the face of the emergence of the USSR as a superpower, securing American interests or protecting the western liberal democratic values embodied in the Atlantic Charter, the credo the Grand Alliance. Their critique of President Roosevelt was implied but their prescription for change was not: they explicitly stated that a firmer, harder approach by the USA and England toward the USSR was necessary if western objectives were to be achieved: "Unless Russia is faced with an iron fist and strong language," Truman wrote to Byrnes, "another war is in the making... I do not think we should play compromise any longer."² Initially the new president had tried to reform Roosevelt's Soviet policy rather than junk it outright yet that proved unproductive Iran being a prime example. By early 1946, the situation in that country became the proximate cause for the end of the Soviet policy that had been fashioned by FDR. American hopes had been high for its success yet the payoff, projected cooperation by the USSR after war, was minimal.

All three men cited the case of Iran as a prime example of what was going wrong in the postwar period. All three linked Iran to their common prescription for a correction in American foreign policy: a hard and unambiguous approach to the USSR that resulted in firm and detailed commitments. All three men stated that America's Soviet policy had to be backed with, in Truman's words, "an iron fist and strong words."³ FDR had bet heavily that goodwill, plentiful Lend-Lease and his personal rapport with Stalin, would yield the kind of cooperation from the Soviets that had eluded his predecessors most notably Woodrow Wilson who set a pattern of American hostility toward the Bolshevik state as well as Foggy Bottom. At the core of FDR's Soviet policy was the assumption that Russia's sole objectives on the world stage was security for the USSR. The revolutionary years of promoting international communism were over, he believed, terminated by the Thermidor from Georgia, Joseph Stalin. He had substituted Lenin's Comintern with a policy of Soviet isolationism. Postwar Iran, however, posed no credible

² Truman's letter to Secretary of State James Byrnes dated January 5, 1946 (marked unsent) in Robert Ferrell (ed.), *Off the Record. The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980), 80.

³ Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1955), 552.

security threat to the Soviet Union and yet in early 1946 the occupying Red Army was digging in for a long stay and promoting armed revolution among the Azeri and Kurdish minorities.

As the deadline for a Soviet withdrawal of his army from Iran and the return of independence for that country, Stalin not only failed to evacuate his troops from Iranian Azerbaijan he doubled down by introducing hundreds of tanks into the province to intimidate the government in Tehran, which could only field a vastly inferior army, into submission. This contravened treaty obligations the Soviets had reached with Tehran and promises made to America and England to respect Iranian independence and rapidly restore her full sovereignty following the end of the hot war. Moreover, Soviet treaty obligations and their own statements required them not to interfere in domestic affairs. Soviet sponsorship of armed separatist minorities belied one of Roosevelt's most basic assumptions: that Stalin's Russia had permanently gone out of the revolution business. It was this blatant interference in the internal affairs of Iran that became the initial cause of action submitted by Tehran to the United Nations Security Council.

Iran highlighted another defect in FDR's Soviet policy: the failure to coordinate a joint approach with England. Central to FDR's approach to the USSR was reassuring Stalin that no joint or common Soviet policy between America and England existed. Indeed, on several occasions the President went out of his way to advertize to Stalin strong differences that existed between Washington and London and if that were not enough, ridiculed Churchill for Stalin's amusement. Proving that the two western democracies would not "gang-up" on Russia after the war, Roosevelt thought, would reduce Soviet anxiety of a return of the post Great War western hostility toward the Bolshevik state.⁴ Because FDR believed that the Soviet's only foreign policy objective was security, a less anxious Stalin would translate into a more cooperative Stalin. Applied to Iran this meant resistance to forging a joint Iranian policy with London even though American and British objectives coincided: a rapid return of Iranian sovereignty following V-E Day. Roosevelt's efforts proved fruitless. A dedicated Leninist, Stalin always assumed that the capitalist nations would "gang up" on the Soviets once the

⁴ FDR quoted in Robin Edmonds. *The Big Three*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1991), 315.

common Axis enemy was defeated or perhaps even before.⁵ Had the United States joined in a common approach with England when the opportunity was presented by the British to forge a common phased withdrawal of all foreign armies from Iran, Stalin would have at a minimum been on notice that Washington regarded Iran as important and thus possibly deterred from aggression as a result. Instead the virtual bug out of the American military forces from Iran probably left the opposite impression on Stalin. Washington's snub of the British proposal to jointly approach the Soviets with a phased withdrawal plan for all foreign armies undoubtedly reinforced the impression on Stalin that Washington did not consider Iran as critical and would not act in concert with London to restore Iran's independence.

Iran became the unlikely graveyard for FDR's soft Soviet policy yet it also proved to be the proving ground for his larger postwar objective: the establishment of a new and improved League of Nations. A close examination of the Iran crisis reveals that the diplomatic strategy pursued by James Byrnes in the United Nations Security Council in the first months of 1946 combined with his efforts at public diplomacy, not only created conditions for the successful Soviet-Iran negotiations that paved the way for a Russian withdrawal from Iran, it legitimized the Security Council which was in serious danger of failing the first test of its viability.

*

Like the Cold War itself, historians have debated the origin and resolution of the 1946 Iran crisis and its significance. The central controversy that has emerged is this: who provoked the crisis, the Soviet Union or the United States? A secondary controversy has been this: Why did Stalin, having deployed considerable armed force in northern Iran and having fought a stubborn diplomatic battle in the Security Council, withdraw his army having accomplished so little for his efforts? Was he intimidated by American saber

⁵ Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 146. Thus, Stalin told the Polish communist Wladyslaw Gomulka in mid November 1945: "Do not believe in divergences between the English and the Americans. They are closely connected to each other." [Stalin quoted in Geoffrey Roberts, *Stalin's Wars. From World War to Cold War*. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2006), 302].

rattling, diplomatically outmaneuvered and publically embarrassed in front of the world community or had his objectives been achieved?

The orthodox case was established by three of the prominent participants: Secretary of State James Byrnes' book *Speaking Frankly* (1947); President Truman's *memoir* published in 1955; and followed the next year with a journal article authored by Robert Rossow the American vice-consul stationed in Soviet occupied Tabriz in 1946. All agreed that the Red Army had not only failed to withdraw from northern Iran on schedule as per terms of the 1942 Tripartite Treaty and pledges made by Stalin to both FDR and Truman, Stalin reinforced their presence on Iranian soil with tanks and fully equipped combat troops led by battle tested officers; the Red Army appeared to be deployed for region wide aggression; that the Soviets were violating the 1942 treaty by substantially interfering in Iran's internal affairs, often under the thinly disguised excuse of border security, by sponsoring armed separatist movements among the Azeri and Kurdish peoples in Iran; that Soviet aggression in Iran was coordinated with Russian pressure on Turkey both of which were designed to bring the two countries into the Soviet orbit; and that the Russian agenda in Iran demonstrated that Stalin was playing for high stakes in the region while America had not even anted up. Rossow put it this way a decade later in 1956:

It was suddenly necessary to revise the estimate of Soviet intentions. It had appeared that the seizure of Iranian-Azerbaijan and northern Kurdistan and the extraction of various concessions from Iran were the primary Soviet goals. Now it seemed clear that these were only subordinate means toward a far larger end--the reduction of Turkey, the main bastion against Soviet advance into the entire Middle East.

*This magnitude of Soviet intentions and the crude threat of force the USSR was using to fulfill them came as a distinct shock to Washington, for American policy until that time had been under the influence of Yalata and Potsdam...It was still believed that the Soviet Union could in peace, as in war, be a great and good friend of the West if it were treated liberally and tolerantly.*⁶

The growing "get-tough-with-Russia" camp of hardliners in Washington believed the United States had indeed treated Moscow with tolerance and liberalism under FDR's

⁶ Robert Rossow, "The Battle of Azerbaijan" in *The Middle East Journal*. (Winter 1956, Volume 10), 21; Truman also said at the time that he believed a Soviet invasion of Turkey through Iran was a strategic objective of Stalin. [Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City: Doubleday and Co., 1955), 552.]

Soviet policy, recognizing her legitimate security interests in Eastern Europe only to be taken advantage of by Stalin who was intent on extending the communist system at bayonet point. Truman, Rossow and Byrnes denied that a security threat to the USSR existed in Iran in 1946. It was one thing for Moscow to demand the Polish corridor be slammed shut as a German invasion route into Russia but Iran was not the Poland of the Middle East and no comparable threat to the USSR existed there. All Stalin could say with any truth, as he told Ernest Bevin, was that the Shah's government was not a friendly one.⁷ As in Europe, they concluded Stalin used claims of vital security interests to justify aggression they believed was rooted in Leninist ideology which held that the first communist state in history could never find peace and security in a capitalist world.⁸ It was a fight to the finish and no matter what impression Stalin had left on FDR, security, Stalin believed, could only be achieved by a constant expansion of the closed Soviet system. The orthodox school found stunning confirmation of this in a boastful statement by none other than Stalin's chief lieutenant Vyacheslav Molotov: "My task as minister of foreign affairs was to expand the borders of the fatherland as much as possible. And it seems that Stalin and I coped with this task quite well."⁹ Indeed, captured German foreign ministry documents that revealed negotiations between Molotov and the Nazi leadership in 1940 that if successful would have conceded the Persian Gulf and Turkey to the Soviet sphere of influence, provided the orthodox interpretation of events six years later with powerful ammunition that these were strategic pre-war objectives of the Soviet Union not a bi-product of the recently concluded war.¹⁰

Historians sympathetic to this interpretation (e.g. Herbert Feis) have accepted the main points advanced by Truman, Byrnes and Rossow with one exception: Truman's many claims that the crisis was resolved not through skilful diplomacy conducted by Secretary of State Byrnes but with an ultimatum and threats of armed force delivered to the Kremlin from the White House. The evidence does indeed demonstrate that the

⁷ William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 125-126.

⁸ Melvyn Lefler, *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 53; William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 11.

⁹ Molotov quoted in Michael Kort, *The Columbia Guide to the Cold War*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 13.

¹⁰ H. W. Brands, *Inside the Cold War. Loy Henderson and The Rise of The American Empire, 1918-1961*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 142.

majority view among orthodox historians that diplomacy and not saber rattling by Truman (if it ever even happened) resolved the crisis in favor of Iran is indeed correct. However, all agreed that Roosevelt's Soviet policy, whatever its virtues in wartime, had proved inadequate beginning in the last stages of the war and required replacement with a firm approach toward Moscow. The first example of this new harder approach to the USSR was implemented by Byrnes' stubborn support for the Iran case before the Security Council even at the price of a possible Soviet withdrawal from the United Nations.

The orthodox interpretation held sway among historians throughout the 1950's however by the middle 1960s revisionist historians (e.g. Diane Shaver Clemens; Walter La Feber; Lloyd Gardner; and Daniel Yergin) began to challenge them. As with the origins of the Cold War in general, these historians are far more sympathetic to the Soviet version of events which held that the USSR was seeking only to secure its border region against threatening activities in Iran a concern made all the more dramatic when it was taken into account that Soviet oil production was centered just across the border in southern Azerbaijan. While most orthodox historians are more sympathetic to the pro-Western monarchy, the revisionist historians considered the shah's regime to be reactionary with a long standing history of hostility toward the USSR and a practice of harboring anti-Soviet operatives. The recent past, including a large Axis colony in Iran which was the proximate cause for the Allied occupation of Iran, they claim, gave Stalin good cause to be highly suspicious of Iran and perhaps, as Daniel Yergin suggested, as a reason to teach Tehran a lesson.¹¹

These historians look favorably on Stalin's attempts to negotiate an oil deal with Tehran in the north of the country. The British had deep oil interests in the south of the country and American oil companies had been probing northern Iran for their own oil deal with Tehran. In the prewar years Iran was by far the largest oil producer in the Middle East. With British already established in Iranian oil production and the Americans prospecting for their own share, it was natural enough for Stalin to say, "Me too!" Some revisionists interpret Stalin's bid for an oil deal with Iran to be separate from his claim of vital security interests in the Soviet-Iranian border region while others view them as

¹¹ Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 188.

intertwined. All agree that Stalin's goals were *limited* and *legitimate* not, as the orthodox camp would have it, aggressive and a threat to regional peace and security by making an opening bid for a Middle Eastern sphere of influence which the orthodox school believed to be Stalin's strategic objective. At most Stalin might have been rounding off his sphere already established in Soviet-Azerbaijan. In that sense Stalin's actions were little different from America's when forming her natural sphere of interest in Latin America and the Caribbean.¹²

In the case of Iran, Stalin is cast by revisionists as reactive not pro-active, responding to Washington's efforts to turn Iran into what Dianne Shaver Clemens called a virtual American protectorate on the Soviet border.¹³ Once his modest objectives (all the more so when compared to the British Anglo-Iranian Oil Company which virtually ran its own state within a state in the south of Iran) were achieved Stalin withdrew his army. His tanks and troops did not advance on Tehran or the Persian Gulf but headed back to the USSR. Americans, it is alleged (e.g. Rossow in Tabriz and Loy Henderson in Washington) overreacted when they feared a Soviet thrust into the heart of the Middle East that would leave Iran and Turkey as little more than Soviet satellites.

Although generally sympathetic to the Soviet's narrative these historians parted company with the Kremlin on one key point. They generally not see the American reaction to the Soviet presence in northern Iran as part of a dark conspiracy of military-industrialists to create a "war scare" to sour popular support for the wartime alliance with Russia and support for remobilization of the armed forces to confront the Soviets Union. Like most revisionists of this era they took their cue from William Appleman Williams and attributed America's alleged overreaction to the Soviet presence in Eastern Europe and Iran as a threat to the American "open door" driven foreign policy which placed the establishment of markets for American exports as the highest priority. Anything that closed off markets to America, like the extension of the closed Soviet communist system,

¹² Henry Wallace, a hold over from the FDR years, was among the few in Truman's cabinet to express sympathy with this view. (Chapter 7, fn 33.)

¹³ Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 245; William Appleman Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 224-225; 252; 259).

generated fierce opposition from the United States.¹⁴ Thus, applied to Iran, Lloyd Gardner characterizes FDR's high minded pleas for the postwar independence of that country from England and Russia (the wartime occupiers) as an application of the "open door" foreign policy that would pave the way for American economic penetration.¹⁵

Just as the orthodox historians followed the thinking of direct participants like Truman, Byrnes and Rossow, so too the revisionists two decades later drew upon another American participant: Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace. Wallace became increasingly alienated from the hard-line drift of the Truman administration's Soviet policy exemplified by Byrnes' diplomacy during the Iran crisis. Contrary to his idealistic words, Byrnes was, Wallace believed (and as revisionist historians would later agree) doing the spade work for western oil companies by driving the Soviets out of northern Iran. Like the revisionist school, Wallace claimed a Soviet sphere around here borders was a quest for security and in any case, was similar to America's establishment of a sphere of influence in Latin America. These early revisionists of the 1946 Iran crisis were adept at challenging contradictions in the orthodox case, but like many scholars of the Cold War era they were severely hampered by limited access to the Soviet archives. Consequently much of their work was devoted to criticism of the American and British sources. Moreover, to make their case they often must minimize Soviet activity in Iran. Thus Daniel Yergin wonders what all the fuss in Washington and New York was about. Stalin, he says, was only engaging in bluster and bluff to impress upon Washington that Russia was a great power that could not be pushed around "in its own backyard." Would Washington act differently in Latin America? In any case the Soviet army did not march on Tehran let alone Turkey or the Persian Gulf as Rossow and Henderson projected. Having put on a show they returned to their homeland.¹⁶ Yet, this view (it was all a big show by the master of show trials) understates the substantial Russian interference in Iran's internal affairs including arming and training Azeri and Kurdish separatist militias.

¹⁴ Jerald Combs. *American Diplomatic History. Two Centuries of Changing Interpretations.* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1983), 256-257; William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 7.

¹⁵ Lloyd Gardner, *Three Kings. The Rise of An American Empire in the Middle East After World War II.* (New York: The New Press, 2009), 3.

¹⁶ Daniel Yergin. *Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War.* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 188-189; William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 131.

Just as England had set up a virtual state within a state in the southern Iranian oil fields so too did Russia aim to do so in the north, an objective minimized by revisionists.

Just as the excesses of the Cold War and the war in Vietnam created an environment that nurtured the 1960s revisionist historiography of American foreign policy, the decades long American ground wars in the Middle East in this century has inspired some historians to return to the revisionist schools' Soviet friendly interpretation of the Iran crisis. Rashid Khalidi, for example, has written:

*Stalin can undoubtedly have said to have been following in the footsteps of the tsars in bullying both Turkey and Iran, taking advantage of the USSR's new found power. However overbearing they may have been, his government's demands on Turkey and interference in Iran may also have been a defensive reaction to the USSR's demonstrated vulnerability along its southern frontiers during World War II. If this is the case, it was prompted as well by Stalin's long standing fear of moves by the Western powers in this region...More specifically, the Kars-Ardahan region abutted the Soviet port of Batum, where major Soviet oil facilities were located, and thus, as in Iran, this attempted push southward may have involved an attempt to create a buffer zone around this strategically sensitive area of the southern Soviet Union.*¹⁷

Thus, Stalin in Iran, as in Eastern Europe, was attempting to establish a security zone for the legitimate protection of the USSR. The security threat to the USSR from America in 1946, Khalidi says, was real and immediate as was competition for Iranian oil and Russia's response to push southward into Iran was a defensive move.¹⁸

¹⁷ Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis. The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 54-55. Another 21st century reboot of the revisionist interpretation that Stalin was pursuing a limited goal (i.e. an oil deal) through bluff and bluster while the Truman administration overreacted may be found in Victor Sebestyen's *1946. The Making of the Modern World*. (New York: Pantheon, 2014), 193-194.

¹⁸ Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis. The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 53. Khalidi's chief piece of evidence that a security threat existed to Soviet Azerbaijan was the wartime construction of a U.S. air base at Dhahran, Saudi Arabia. In the immediate postwar months Truman renewed the American lease on the base even though the hot war was over. [Rashid Khalidi, *Sowing Crisis. The Cold War and American Dominance in the Middle East*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 2009), 53]. However, Khalidi fails to mention dates in his assertion of an American security threats originated in the Middle East to the USSR. The Dhahran base was not expanded to accommodate strategic B 29 bombers until the late 1940s that is well after the Iran crisis and Stalin's failure to withdraw from Azerbaijan province. The threat then in 1946 was only theoretical. However, Khalidi is right about one thing: if the Dhahran air base is what worried Stalin and led him to justify Soviet actives in northern Iran under the justification of the 1921 treaty between Tehran and Moscow, then he did consider the United States to be a security threat to the USSR as early as the start of 1946.

Post-revisionist historians (e.g. John Lewis Gaddis; Bruce Kuniholm; William Taubman; etc.) attempt to establish a *third course* in the Cold War blame game between the orthodox school (that identified an ideologically driven aggressive Soviet Union as the cause) and the revisionist school (that identified the economic determinism of American capitalist expansionism as the cause) instead casting the Cold War in geo-political terms in which the USA and USSR pursued their interests rather than ideology.¹⁹ Bruce Kuniholm put the case this way: "The methods of the Allies in exercising influence over the Iranians were strikingly different. While the Americans appealed to principle, the British used the velvet glove and the Soviets the bludgeon. But if their methods were different their ends were all based on conceptions of national interest."²⁰ Thus the communist USSR, capitalist USA and imperialist England in Iran were all united in one commonality: doing what great powers do, pursuing their national interests.

Looking beyond the finger pointing of the orthodox and revisionist schools, the post-revisionists assigned blame for the Cold War to both the USA and the USSR who each bear some responsibility the only question being the degree. Applied to Iran, as we shall see, it is easy to grasp their point: the pell-mell evacuation of the American army presence in Iran without coordination with the other great powers contributed to creating the environment that made Soviet aggression in Iran likely. Without a counterforce, power vacuum ensued that virtually invited Soviet aggression. A realistic Soviet policy on the part of FDR would have anticipated this outcome and implemented a firmer approach that would have included a slow, phased withdrawal. That is exactly what the British had proposed but had been ignored by Washington.²¹

Borrowing heavily from the realist school of international relations, the post-revisionists claimed that the Soviets were indeed aggressive in Eastern Europe but the cause was less Leninist ideology than a power vacuum that was sucking the Russians in once Germany and her satellites collapsed. This also explains Soviet aggression in Iran: a

¹⁹ William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 7; Michael Kort. *The Columbia Guide to the Cold War*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 12.

²⁰ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 203.

²¹ Ironically, unlike the USSR and England the USA was not a signatory to any treaty with Iran and was thus under *no* treaty obligation to withdraw her military by any specific deadline or at all.

power vacuum was created by the rapid demobilization of the American military presence and then the withdrawal (on schedule) of British armed forces leaving no counter-force and only a lightly armed and under strength Iranian military to face the Russian Bear. As in Eastern Europe, the Soviets were sucked into the ensuing power vacuum. Indeed, the British empire, severely weakened by the war, was increasingly incapable of acting as a counter-force in the Middle East and in the absence of America assuming that role, Stalin moved to fill the developing power regional vacuum starting with Iran and then Turkey.²² Speaking of the 19th Century "Great Game" between Russia and England for the Northern Tier of states, Bruce Kuniholm put it this way: "At the end of World War Two, this game became more difficult, and the survival of Turkey and Iran was threatened by the relative disparity between Soviet and British power...Of the remaining three [Northern Tier states]--Norway, Turkey, and Iran--the latter two were in serious jeopardy of being drawn into the Soviet fold and the United States was the only power capable of assisting them. Although almost all the states of the Middle East welcomed the decline of British influence, those on the periphery of the Soviet Union recognized the need for a countervailing force to balance Soviet influence. Invariably, they asked the United States for help."²³

Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov have provided an example of the post-revisionist attempt to navigate between the previously warring orthodox and revisionist schools. While they concede that the evidence that has emerged after the Cold War confirms the revisionist argument that Stalin's goals in Iran were far more limited than the orthodox school claimed, they also agreed with the latter faction (and against the revisionists) that the Soviets used security concerns as a pretext for aggressive expansionism both in Europe and Iran. More importantly they agreed with the orthodox interpretation that Stalin was driven by ideology ("a true Leninist") that held that the USSR could never be secure in a world among capitalist states. Stalin's sponsorship of revolutionaries like the separatist government in Iranian-Azerbaijan, Zubok and

²² At Potsdam Stalin had also submitted a bid on Libya as a Soviet trusteeship and wanted a Russian share in Syria and Lebanon and along with a Soviet say on Tangiers in Morocco. [Charles Mee, *Meeting at Potsdam*. (M. Evans and Co., 1975), 54].

²³ Bruce Kuniholm "U.S. policy in the Near East: the triumphs and tribulations of the Truman administration" in Michael Lacey (ed.) *The Truman Presidency*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 300.

Pleshakov maintain, was more evidence that Stalin's abandonment of the Comintern had only been temporary concession to appease his American ally. Now in 1946, "Stalin was back to his role as pontiff of all world revolutionaries."²⁴

Although a refreshing pause in the bitter war between the orthodox and revisionist schools, the *realpolitik* post-revisionists greatly underrate the neo-Wilsonian idealism behind Byrnes' campaign during the Iran crisis to rescue the Security Council from the fate of irrelevance and discredit before the general membership body composed of the smaller nations. Instead they, like the revisionists, tend to see Byrnes as an opportunist out to appeal to the hardliners in Washington rather than a man acting on principle. For Byrnes and his boss, there was far more at stake than a readjustment of the balance of power. As we shall see, the Council was faced in its very first session with a complaint by a small nation against a permanent member and one of the Big Three at that. Had Iran been denied due process in her complaint about the USSR, Byrnes recognized the United Nations project would have been in serious jeopardy owing to a loss of confidence in the Council by an already suspicious general membership composed of small nations. If that happened the postwar vision of a world peace and security organization that FDR promised upon his return from the Yalta summit would replace the old school balance of power diplomacy, would have died and with it the guiding principles of the United Nations Charter.

In the aftermath of the Cold War and in an era of globalization, some historians have tended to look at the crisis of 1946 not from the perspective of Washington, London or Moscow or even the United Nations headquarters in New York but from the vantage point of Tehran. These historians (e.g. Ervand Abrahamian; Stephen McFarland; etc.) are more inclined to see the issue as less an East-West struggle than an assertion of Iran's traditional survivalist policy of counterbalancing the great powers against each other to serve Iran's national interests. In 1946 it was America that the Iranians called upon to

²⁴ Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 45. Zubok and Pleshakov cross over into the revisionist school as well when they agree with Rashid Khalidi (fn. 14) that the Soviets had long standing security concerns in northern Iran: "Since czarist times the northern part of Iran (Persia) had been regarded by Moscow as part of a legitimate perimeter of security." [Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 121.]

counterbalance Russia and England in a policy of "positive equilibrium." Indeed, unlike the orthodoxy that saw the crisis as a result of Soviet aggression or the revisionists who viewed it as the product of American provocations, McFarland claims it was Tehran significantly contributed to creating the crisis: "Iranians exploited the budding Soviet-American rivalry to their advantage. The main result of this Iranian manipulation was a series of crises that exacerbated great power differences and eventually helped to nudge the superpowers to the brink of war."²⁵ In this game of manipulation, the diplomacy of Iranians like Prime Minister Qavam are more significant than that of Secretary of State Byrnes, Foreign Minister Ernest Bevin or that of Vyacheslav Molotov and Andrei Gromyko.²⁶ Accusations of exaggerated reports of the Soviet presence in Iran are shifted from Rossow-- a favorite target of the revisionists--to the Iranians themselves particularly Ambassador Hussein Ala in the United States who McFarland claims was little more than an "agent provocateur" who grossly inflated or even invented reports from Azerbaijan province to appeal to the growing hard-line faction in Washington.²⁷ They thirsted for ammunition to use against the Soviets and Ala obliged albeit with a curve ball.

Ervand Abrahamian has also attempted to view the 1946 crisis from the perspective of Tehran to the point of excluding the perspectives of the great power capitals and the United Nations. Like the revisionists, Abrahamian lays the blame for the

²⁵ Stephen McFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in Melvyn Leffler (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 241. Note that McFarland considers the stakes in the escalating crises to have been a war between the superpowers.

²⁶ The emphasis on Qavam's diplomacy, although most fully treated by these historians as the central if not exclusive element in the resolution of the 1946 crisis, did not to completely originate with them. Thus, the revisionist school's Daniel Yergin concluded in the early 1970s that neither the diplomacy of Byrnes nor the action at the United Nations Security Council did little if anything to resolve the crisis. That, he said, was exclusively the consequence of Qavam's diplomatic initiative with Stalin. [Daniel Yergin. *Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 190].

²⁷ Stephen McFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in Melvyn Leffler, (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 251-252. More recently Victor Sebestyen has attempted to reboot the revisionist accusations of bad intelligence from Rossow. While not denying the Soviets deployed tanks into Azerbaijan province and maintained an armed presence of approximately 30,000 soldiers beyond the withdrawal deadline, Sebestyen maintains Rossow's dire warnings that they were being deployed for offensive operations was exaggerated at best. He says Rossow erred by relying on local Iranian informants who undoubtedly told him what they thought he wanted to hear which he relayed to Washington without proper vetting setting off unwarranted alarm bells. [Victor Sebestyen, *1946. The Making of the Modern World*. (New York: Pantheon, 2014), 190-191]. Of course it is true that, as we shall see, Rossow depended on local informants because he was not allowed by Soviet authorities to move freely about the province. Yet, his reports were verified by his British counterpart and relied also on his observations in Tabriz neither of which is mentioned by Sebestyen.

series of crises over Iran between the USSR and the United States at the feet of the latter. The thirst of American oil companies for concessions in northern Iran on the Soviet border, he says, generated legitimate defensive responses on the part of Moscow. Abrahamian also greatly reduces the accusations of Soviet interferences in the internal affairs of Iran (charges that triggered the interest of the Security Council when the Tehran government submitted a formal complaint) by claiming the minority Azeri and Kurdish peoples in northern Iran under Soviet sponsorship only established "provincial" and *not* separatist governments.²⁸ Like McFarland, Abrahamian emphasis is on the diplomacy of Prime Minister Qavam but he adds the presence of then parliamentarian Muhammad Mossadeq. Mossadeq sponsored laws that severally limited Qavam's discretion during talks with Stalin and is thus, he says, the real author of the resolution of the crisis.²⁹ Qavam was an advocate of "positive equilibrium" in foreign policy but Mossadeq promoted the policy of "negative equilibrium" meaning neutrality toward the great powers or non-alignment as it would be known later in the Cold War.³⁰ The restrictions the Mossadeq sponsored legislation placed on Qavam's diplomacy with the Russians was an implementation of that policy.

These historians have shed light on a previously underrated aspect of the 1946 crisis: the diplomacy pursued by Qavam and the internal dimensions of Iranian politics on her foreign policy. However, by completely abstracting the Iranian crisis from the growing tension and clashing interests of the United States and the Soviet Union (the diplomacy of Byrnes at the Security Council is not even mentioned by Abrahamian) fails to grasp the significance of the crisis (which included the future legitimacy of the United Nations Security Council) and how it was resolved. An early example of this myopia was advanced by the revisionist Daniel Yergin. "The Security Council debate," he wrote, "did not force the Russians out of Iran; it publicized the problem, but it did not solve it. It came to its end because Tehran and Moscow had agreed to a settlement framed when Qavam had been in Moscow."³¹ Yergin failed to grasp that publicizing the problem was

²⁸ Ervand Abrahamian. *The Coup*. (New York: The New Press, 2013), 40-41.

²⁹ As we shall see, the reverse was the case. Mossadeq's oil law hampered the relocation of the crisis and only the discovery of a loophole in it by Qavam worked in favor of ushering the Soviet army out of Iran.

³⁰ Ervand Abrahamian. *The Coup*. (New York: The New Press, 2013), 38; 41-42.

³¹ Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1990), 190.

critical to solving it. Byrnes created an atmosphere that fixed a very uncomfortable spot light on Soviet intransigence on Iran and blatant interference in her internal affairs. A chief point raised by Churchill in his "iron curtain" speech was that the Soviets had established a closed sphere in Eastern Europe which blocked observation from the outside. The iron curtain had yet to fall on Iran, however, making scrutiny by the world community still a possibility and in light of the absence of any military assets in the country, it was just about America's only option. Without that outside pressure organized by Byrnes, it is, based on Stalin's record, highly doubtful that Qavam's diplomacy would have been successful by itself. To reduce Byrnes' performance in the Security Council to a mere "PR" campaign grossly underrates the effect of world opinion on influencing the Soviet army evacuation of Iran. Far more persuasive is the balanced assessment of Bruce Kuniholm who attributed the successful end of the crisis to a hardening of America's Soviet policy (represented by Byrnes' diplomacy) *combined* with skilful maneuvering on the part of the Iranians.³² Indeed, the evidence indicates the first part of Kuniholm's joint award was more effective in ushering the Russians out of Iran than the latter.

All schools of historical interpretations have made some contribution toward clarifying the evolution of events, yet a close examination of the Iran crisis of 1946 reveals that it is the orthodox school most closely reflects the available evidence. The record, incomplete as it may be, indicates that far from the *realpolitiker* FDR took him to be, Stalin was motivated by an ideology that dictated the USSR could never find security let alone happiness in a world of capitalist states. Security was to be located in a constant expansion of the Soviet system Iran being but one example although more startling at the time to the postwar world because Iran posed no security threat to the USSR. Indeed, orthodoxy has been particularly effective in revealing the continuity between Stalin's expansive Middle Eastern objectives during the life of his pact with Hitler and the immediate postwar period when he was still a member of the Big Three in good standing. Before, during and after the war a Middle Eastern sphere was near the top of Stalin's agenda and Iran Iranian Azerbaijan was slated to be the launching pad.

³² Bruce Kuniholm "U.S. policy in the Near East: the triumphs and tribulations of the Truman administration" in Michael Lacey (ed.) *The Truman Presidency*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 302.

Above all, the orthodox school recognized that, utilizing the Iranian complaint against the USSR, Byrnes' campaign in the Security Council and the public arena aimed to establish the nascent United Nations as a viable organization and its Security Council as legitimate not, as the Soviets would have had it, a glorified rubber stamp for the Great Powers. All the participants who established the orthodox interpretation (Truman, Byrnes and Rossow) cited the future of the United Nations and its Security Council as the greater issue at stake during the Iran Crisis.

Chapter One

From Bridge to Victory to Bridge to Cold War

Bridge to Victory

For a country removed from the battlefields, Iran was continually thrust to the forefront of the Second World War: as a vital strategic land link between the western democracies and the Soviet Union; as the venue for the first Big Three summit; next as the scene of tense conflict between the USSR and the Iranian government in 1944 which presaged the 1946 crisis. Iran also became the site for an early application of Roosevelt's Soviet policy. The weakness of that policy, which would become evident in Eastern Europe after V-E Day, were on glaring display throughout wartime Iran including a failure to challenge Russia's establishment of a *de facto* closed occupation zone; to protest flagrant Soviet interference in Iran's internal affairs; or to conduct intelligence gathering on the Soviet occupation zone; failure to forge a joint policy with England to pressure Russia for a coordinated and phased withdrawal of all foreign military from Iran. Taken together with the rapid dismantling of the American military presence at the end of 1945, the scene was set for Soviet expansion into Iran. This chapter traces the evolution of Iran as a dispute among the Big Three from wartime occupation to the great wartime summits (Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam) and the postwar conferences (London and Moscow) of the Big Three foreign ministers. An evaluation of the evolution of events during this time reveals two salient facts. First, that beneath the thin veneer of wartime cooperation, the Soviet Union was maneuvering for strategic postwar advantage in Iran whereas America's concern for the country was largely limited to her utility in the war effort; and second, missed opportunities by the United States to pressure Moscow to withdraw from Iran at war's end. Franklin Roosevelt's Soviet policy held that such pressure was unwise since wartime cooperation between the Allies would reduce Soviet suspicion of the Western democracies and result in postwar cooperation. As a result American diplomats failed to adequately support detailed and firm proposals floated by two British foreign secretaries for withdrawal of all foreign armies from Iran in

accordance with the wishes of the national government in Tehran. Without more than token American support these proposals were doomed. Yet, had they been adopted by the Big Three they might well have avoided the postwar Iran crisis.

Operation Countenance, August 1941

On August 25, 1941, the Soviet Union and England staged a joint and simultaneous invasion of the country after the Iranian ruler, Reza Shah, ignored diplomatic warnings from both countries to voluntarily clear his country of Germans. As part of his modernization project, Reza Shah had over the years established friendly relations with Berlin and recruited a sizeable contingent of German advisors to develop his country.¹ German businessmen followed and naturally so too did German intelligence agents, hardly surprising given that Iran bordered the USSR; that England enjoyed massive oil concessions in the south; England's extensive interests in Iraq which also bordered Iran; and the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf. Reza Shah also saw strong ties with Germany as a means to counter-balance her imposing Russian neighbor which was great land power and the equally intimidating Royal Navy that enforced Britain's interests in Iranian oil. Regarded at the time by the Allies as another fascist sympathizer who got what he deserved when the invading Soviets and British forces expelled him from his country, today he could with the benefit of hindsight be seen as a realist attempting to shepherd his country into the modern world while struggling to use but not be abused by the great powers. Nonetheless, Moscow and London in 1941 interpreted Tehran's snug relationship with Berlin as strong evidence of pro-Nazi sympathy and Reza Shah as a Middle Eastern Quisling.²

¹ It is an irony of Iranian history, that the modernization project launched by Reza Shah to achieve independence from the undue influence of foreign powers required the import of foreign advisors, technicians, scientists, teachers, engineers, etc. from the developed countries. To achieve genuine independence Iran had to become even more dependent on foreigners.

² Just how serious the Axis threat in Iran to Russian or British security interests was under Reza Shah that would justify their invasion and occupation has been the subject of dispute. Reza Shah and his supporters (chief among whom was his son and successor Reza Shah Pahlavi) argued that the invaders exaggerated the presence of Germans in his country or Reza Shah's pro-fascist sympathies and in any case his security police were capable of controlling the German colony in Iran and protecting British and Russian interests *sans* invasion and occupation. The Shah maintained that Iran was neutral both in words and deeds. Ironically, during the lifetime of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, Moscow ignored and sometimes even encouraged the growth of the German presence in Iran. Now, at war with Germany, the Soviets claimed fears of Axis

The June 1941 German invasion of the USSR made the Soviets an instant ally of the British. England and Russia now united in a common and desperate war against

saboteurs sneaking over from northern Iran to the Soviet oil fields where they would set them ablaze. They further claimed the German embassy was generating Nazi propaganda and organizing sabotage teams, distributing weapons to local fascists, and in general preparing the country as a launching pad for a new front against the USSR all with the tacit consent of the shah's regime. Thus they invoked the 1921 Soviet Russia-Persian friendship treaty which allowed Red Army intervention if a third party in Iran threatened Russian security as had been the case during the Russian Civil War when Persia was a sanctuary for White Army forces. Suspicions of enemy saboteurs crossing the border into the USSR from Iran would be cited by the Russians again in 1945-1946 as would the possibility of a new invocation of the 1921 treaty. Who the "enemy" would be in that case went unsaid by Moscow and proof of postwar sabotage activity was never offered. Even in 1941, the ease with which the Anglo-Russians over ran the country encountering only the most token opposition and no acts of sabotage or guerilla resistance by local or Axis fascists, hardly confirmed the image of Iran as a Nazi bastion, thus making the supposed German Fifth Column far weaker than London or Moscow claimed. Still, at that stage in the war with things going very badly for the Allies, the possibility of a German offensive in 1942 rampaging southward through the Caucasus into Iran to link up with an Axis Fifth Column ready to deliver the oil fields to Berlin could not be ignored. Indeed, a link up in Iran between German forces invading Russia and Axis forces coming out of North Africa and initially been part of Operation Barbarossa but by the 1942 offensive Hitler had reduced his ambitions to capture the oil fields in the Caucasus and stop short of Iran. Yet, a thrust into the Persian Gulf and even Turkey in Spring of 1942 could not be ruled out. Under those circumstances the Soviet invasion and occupation of northern Iran in 1941 was a reasonable insurance policy to block the German thrust. Besides the prize of the Caucasus oil fields, Hitler was also anxious to cut off the flow of Lend-Lease flowing out of Iran into the USSR. [David Glantz and Jonathan House, *When Titans Clashed. How the Red Army Stopped Hitler*. (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2015), 133].

Iranians, even those opposed to the shah (except for communists who obviously welcomed the Red Army in part because it meant they could emerge from the underground) regarded the invasion as naked aggression and like the shah considered it a blatant violation of their neutrality. The British were especially nervous and willing to join in a preemptive action against the shah's regime because they had just narrowly thwarted a pro-German coup in Iraq. With German support and money, the so called Golden Square in overthrew the pro-British government and installed the pro-Axis Rashid Ali. When the British army attempted to remove the new pro-Nazi government the latter received a show of support from the Luftwaffe operating out of Vichy controlled Syria. The British calling upon Gurkha units from India successfully removed Rashid Ali but they feared a similar coup in Iran if Reza Shah was not removed. However, short sighted Reza Shah's German friendly policy may have been it is hard to identify anyone similar to Rashid Ali. England tried to cast Iranian General Zahedi in that role and he was arrested by the Strategic Air Services (SAS) after the British established their occupation zone in the south. The SAS insisted that they had evidence that Zahedi was plotting a Golden Square inspired coup in Iran. Interestingly the American minister Louis Dreyfus deviated from the administration's tacit approval of the invasion and officially protested the SAS arrest of Zahedi claiming there was no evidence of a pro-Nazi coup plot. The Soviets would, for their own reasons, back up the British claims about an Iranian version of the Golden Square during the war. On the eve of the Iran crisis in 1946, Stalin's chief henchman, Levrenti Beria, in a public speech claimed that the Red Army defeat of the Wehrmacht at Stalingrad had the collateral effect of thwarting a planned pro-German coup in Iran. [Bullard Reader, *The Camels Must Go*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 251; Framarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 20-21; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 309; Fitzroy Maclean, *Eastern Approaches*. (London: Cape Publishers, 1949), 266.] (Ironically, Zahedi would make a dramatic political comeback as a pro-British prime minister when he replaced the deposed Mossadeq following the 1953 coup.) Historian Nikki Keddie appears to take the threat from Zahedi and German agents in Iran a bit more seriously: "German agents were active among southern tribes, and reached an agreement with General F. Zahedi to lead a southern tribal revolt should German troops reach Iran's frontiers." [Nikkei Keddie, *Modern Iran. Roots and Results of Revolution*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 105; 109.]

Germany. They claimed Iran was not neutral as the shah maintained but a *de facto* ally of the Nazis. Fearful that the growing corps of German agents would strike at Soviet oil production across the border in Baku or the British oil life line in the south of the country which fueled the Royal Navy, the two new friends joined to brush aside token resistance from the Iranian army and *de facto* occupied the country with the British establishing an occupation zone in the south and the Soviet zone in the north leaving Tehran more or less unoccupied.³ Azerbaijan province became the center of the Soviet occupation. Reza Shah was considered too tainted to remain on the Peacock Throne. The Soviets would have preferred an abolition of the monarchy but the British insisted that a palace *coup* was stuffiest and a political revolution unnecessary. They proposed he be exchanged for his son, Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was suitably pro-Allied and with a reputation as a rake not a politician, was deemed controllable. The old shah was sent into exile and died shortly thereafter. Suspected Iranian sympathizers of the Axis were often arrested by the occupying authorities. German nationals were expelled or arrested by the British and Russians and the two armies settled in for the duration.⁴

Because of the vitality of securing oil production both on the Soviet-Iran border and in the south, both Moscow and London argued they were justified in militarily occupying Iran as long as Germany remained a threat. The Soviets could even produce a legal basis for their part in the invasion and occupation of an at least officially neutral nation: the 1921 treaty of friendship between Persia and the Bolshevik regime in Moscow. In an eerie precursor to events twenty-five years in the future, Bolshevik troops pursued retreating White soldiers into northern Iran where the counter-revolutionaries

³ The invasion code named Operation Countenance was the only example in the entire war of a joint Soviet military operation with any of her Western allies. In a sign of the importance the Kremlin attributed to the operation, the Soviet invasion force was about 40,000 strong facing a vastly inferior Iranian force. It is worth recalling this was at a moment when the Soviets were fighting for their lives as Axis armored thrusts aimed at Moscow and Leningrad. The failure to stage further joint operations was not due to lack of trying by the British and later the Americas. The Soviets, paranoid and xenophobic were highly reluctant to expose their troops to western allies and insanely fearful of western spying. During the course of the Soviet occupation of northern Iran, unauthorized contact by Soviet troops with English or American soldiers was dealt with harshly by Russian commanders. Conversely American soldiers were always eager and even encouraged by their commanders to fraternize with their Soviet allies.

⁴ Gholam Reza Afkhami notes that excessive Allied arrests of suspected pro-German Iranians led to mounting friction with the Iranian people. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 87.] Undoubtedly most Iranians considered being pro-German to be little different from domestic communists who were pro-Soviet.

had received succor. Once there the Bolshevik troops tried to extend their revolution by neutering a soviet style uprising in northern Iran. In February, however, having crushed the White Army counter-revolutionaries, Lenin's government signed the friendship treaty that led to the withdrawal of the Red Army and an end to support for revolutionary insurgents in the north. In exchange Moscow insisted on a clause that allowed for future Russian military action in Iran if an armed third party was found to be operating in the country against Soviet security interests.⁵ In August 1941, the Kremlin asserted that the presence of Germans in Iran constituted such a third party threat and justified her invasion of Iran to remove it. Thus, unlike the British, the Soviet invasion was predicted on an existing treaty.

In a desperate attempt to save himself, Reza Shah appealed to FDR as a fellow neutral. Even before the invasion his diplomats in Washington had been appealing to the State Department to pressure the British and Russians to give Iran time to accommodate their demands.⁶ Now he begged FDR to persuade the Anglo-Russians to pull back, recognize Iran's rights as a neutral and give him time to switch teams. He found no sympathy in the White House. FDR (who had been apprised of the invasion in advance by London) believed Reza Shah was just another fascist puppet getting his comeuppance although publically he justified the Anglo-Russian violation of Iranian neutrality as a necessary step in the cause against the Axis.⁷ FDR did tell the shah, however, that he requested the Soviets and British issue a public statement rejecting any designs "on the

⁵ According to the 1921 friendship treaty: "If a third party should attempt to carry out a policy of usurpation by means of armed intervention in Persia, or if such power should desire use Persian territory as a s base of operations against Russia, or if a foreign power should threaten the frontiers of Federal Russia or those of its allies, and if the Persian Government should not be able to put a stop to such a menace after having been once called upon to do so by Russia, Russia shall have the right to advance her troops into the Persian interior for the purpose of carrying out the military operations necessary for its defense. Russia undertakes, however, to withdraw her troops from Persian territory as soon as the danger has been removed." [Faramarz. Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 19]. The 1921 treaty would resurface in 1946 when. the Soviets frequently cited it as justification for her military remaining in Iran not matter what their obligations in the 1942 Tripartite Treaty to withdraw. [James Byrnes, *All In One Lifetime*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 334]. Unlike 1941, the Soviets would not in 1945-1946 identify whom they regarded as the third party threat.

⁶ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 86.

⁷ Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 227; Lloyd Gardner, *Three Kings. The Rise of an American Empire in the Middle East After World War II*. (New York: The New Press, 2009), 36.

independence or territorial integrity of Iran."⁸ Secretary of State Cordell Hull had already been somewhat more sympathetic to Iran's position than had his boss. Several days before the invasion, Hull had spoken with the Soviet and British ambassadors in Washington and advised any actions in Iran be limited to military necessity to win the war with the Axis. After the invasion he advised that American acceptance of Operation Countenance and subsequent occupation would require an Iran-Soviet-British treaty that would guarantee a return of full sovereignty to Iran once the war was over both for the sake of the Iranians and to assure the Islamic world that the war was not just an excuse to recolonize the region.⁹ Hull's involvement albeit indirect, provided the Iranians with enough leverage to force the Russians and British to formalize their presence in a treaty. To appease the Americans, the invading powers agreed. On January 29, 1942 the Tri-Partite Treaty of Alliance was signed by Sir Reader Bullard, Ambassador André Smirnov, and Foreign Minister Ali Soheily representing England, the Soviet Union, and Iran respectively.

The document affirmed postwar Iranian independence and non-interference in her internal affairs during the occupation. In foreign affairs, however, Iran was to be under the strict supervision of the Soviet and British embassies. Iran was allowed to remain officially neutral but could not conduct any foreign affairs contrary to the interests of the occupying powers starting with their demand that Tehran break relations with Berlin and Rome.¹⁰ The all-important Article V of the treaty stated that "The forces of the Allied Powers shall be withdrawn from Iranian territory not later than six months after all hostilities between the Allied Powers and Germany and her associates have been suspended" either by peace treaty or armistice. Seemingly straight forward, this article

⁸ FDR quoted in Lloyd Gardner, *Three Kings. The Rise of an American Empire in the Middle East After World War II*. (New York: The New Press, 2009), 36; Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold the War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 110.

⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 142-141; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 86. In the tradition of William Appleman Williams, revisionist historian Lloyd Grader sees something more in FDR and Hull's insistence that Iran return to full independence after the war: to keep the country open as a potential market to be exploited for American exports. [Lloyd Gardner, *Three Kings. The Rise of an American Empire in the Middle East After World War II*. (New York: The New Press, 2009), 37].

¹⁰ Sharon Lucas, et. al., *World War Two Day by Day*. (New York: DK Books, 2004), 268; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 2009), 86-87.

would later become a tense point of contention among all the parties when the end of the war approached. Another critical portion, Article VI stated, “The Allied Powers” would not “adopt an attitude which is prejudicial to the territorial integrity, the sovereignty, or political independence of Iran” and would consult the shah’s government over matters directly affecting his country. This article promising non-interference in Iran’s internal affairs would become a contentious issue in the 1946 crisis and the proximate cause of Iran’s complaint to the newly formed United Nations Security Council. Article VII pledged that the Allied Powers would safeguard the Iranian economy and protect the Iranian people from deprivations if possible while Article IX set the expiration of the treaty as the date of the withdrawal of all the Allied forces from Iran. The treaty stated that no military occupation would be established in Iran since Iran was technically neutral yet realistically it could be called occupation by foreign armies.¹¹

Never an official reason for the Soviet-British invasion and *de facto* occupation of Iran, an unofficial objective was to open a line of communication in the rear of the Russian front that would give the Soviets access to the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf. The wisdom of that aspect of the invasion of Iran was seen almost immediately. Heavy shipping losses in the Atlantic from U-Boats necessitated finding an alternate route to deliver American Lend-Lease supplies to the USSR.¹² Lend-Lease was a critical means to reassure Stalin that America was a reliable partner in the war effort and keep the Soviets from reaching a separate peace particularly in the absence of an early second front.¹³ For, FDR Lend-Lease was also a means to cement a bond between the USA and the USSR for the postwar era. The railway line through Iran to the Soviet border, connecting the south and north of the country by rail had been among the more successful modernization projects of Reza Shah, could now be used to transport Lend-Lease overland into Russian hands. Roads could also be expanded to allow for truck convoys

¹¹ The full text of the Tripartite Treaty of 1942 is reproduced in Arthur Millspaugh, *Americans in Persia*. (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 1946), 276-279.

¹² T.H Vail Motter, *United States Army in World War II. The Middle East Theatre. The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia*. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952), 12.

¹³ A second front to relieve pressure in the eastern front in 1942 or 1943 had been Stalin's chief objective in dealing with his Western allies. Once the Red Army turned the tide of war by the fall of 1943 the second front although important to the Soviets strategy declined in prominence on Stalin's agenda.

into northern Iran and then the USSR. Once American shipping was diverted to the south Atlantic the route proved to be more secure and shipping losses declined.

Upon formally entering the war, to further facilitate the flow of Lend-Lease into the USSR, the USA established the Persian Gulf Command (PGC) initially headed by General Donald Connolly and composed of non-combat logistical and technical personnel with a small band of lightly armed MPs for security.¹⁴ By the end of the war between 25 and 27 percent of all Lend-Lease shipped to Russia traveled through the Persian Corridor earning it the official motto of the PGC: “The Bridge to Victory.”¹⁵ The PGC was stationed in the British zone in the south of Iran and on the outskirts of Tehran at Amirabad. Its strength eventually reached approximately 30,000 personnel. Lend-Lease supplies were off loaded from Allied ships at ports on the Persian Gulf and transported to the Soviet zone in north either by rail or truck convoys.¹⁶

Although in many ways the inspiration for it the United States was not a party to the 1942 Tripartite Treaty and did not consider itself to be part of any occupation of Iran. Instead, the PGC presence was at the invitation of the British. Iranians in general did not welcome any foreign occupation (except for communists who approved of the Russian occupation) but many tended to view the Americans as a possible counterbalance to the Russians and the British. Ironically, while it was the goal of the Tehran government to

¹⁴ In contrast, the Soviets kept a large occupation force of regular army soldiers in northern Iran throughout the war—all heavily armed and long after any “fascist Fifth Columns” had been crushed. Early on Stalin rejected Churchill’s offer to station British troops in Northern Iran to allow the Soviets to redeploy as many as five or six divisions against the rampaging Germans at a moment when the Russians were fighting for the very life of their country and complained constantly that her Western allies were not doing enough to ease pressure on the Russian front. (Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 145, fn. 43.

¹⁵ Among the more vital resources flowing through the Persian corridor to the USSR were 750 tanks delivered on FDR’s orders to the USSR via Iran to join the battle at Stalingrad. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 146].

¹⁶ Although the PGC’s mission almost exclusively designed to fuel the Soviet war machine with Lend-Lease supplies, it did once directly support an American combat operation. In June 1944 supplies flowing through Iran were directed to the Ukraine to support Operation Frantic, the long awaited shuttle bombing scheme that had been proposed many times by the American Air Force. Finally the use of Soviet territory for air bases had only been very reluctantly approved by Stalin. Flying out of the Ukraine, American bombers struck German targets before returning to their home bases in Italy.

The current could flow both ways on occasion. Thus, when Churchill finally persuaded Stalin to release 120,000 Polish army personnel being held as POWs in Russia they were released into Iran via the Bridge to Victory to the British occupation zone.

usher the British and Russians out of Iran as soon as possible it was also their unofficial goal to convince the Americans to stay as long as possible to act as a counterweight to the other great powers. Generally Connolly, however, speaking for the Pentagon, made it explicit that as soon the PGC's mission was fulfilled his command would exit as quickly as possible. The PGC had specific wartime objectives and would not, they insisted, be dragged into a contest between the Soviets and the British and Iranians. Indeed, throughout its life time the PGC was highly resistance to mixing in Iran's politics. Because they were not regarded as harboring old school imperialist ambitions the Americans found more favor among the Iranian public than the other great powers and thus well suited to play the role of a third party interloper that the Tehran government had cast them for.¹⁷ The PGC objective of facilitating Lend-Lease movement to the north of Iran meant efforts to improve Iran's infrastructure e.g. roads, railroad and ports—improvements that had been neglected by the British even though they had substantial oil interests in the south of the country for decades.¹⁸

Far from grateful the Soviets vigorously opposed the shift in shipping southward even if it meant a substantial reduction in Allied shipping losses and thus more war supplies in Russian hands. A paranoid Moscow believed that the shift was an American

¹⁷ Unlike its relations with the Soviets, the PGC sometimes found itself at odds with America's British allies primarily over what the Americans regarded as old school colonialism practiced by the English. Although they could not say so openly the British were also uneasy about the PGC regarding it as a possible base to for alleged American designs on their oil interests. There were, of course, some difficulties with the PGC as well primarily as a precursor of the "Ugly American" phenomenon: discipline was lax and thus public drunkenness and insulting behavior toward the locals was not unknown. In contrast, Red Army personnel in the north, partly because of harsh discipline and stern leadership, were known for more correct public behavior and greater sensitivity toward local customs. Even anti-communists in Iran noted the favorable difference and appreciated at least that part of the Soviet occupation. [Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 38]. The American minister Louis Dreyfus telegraphed Washington to report that too many cases of "drunkenness and debauchery" among PGC personnel was having a "deplorable effect on American prestige in Iran." Also, the pressure to move supplies quickly combined with fatigue and again a lack of discipline sometimes resulted in terrible traffic accidents that angered locals especially in the rural areas where contact with foreigners of any kind was rare. [Louis Dreyfus quoted in Manucher and Roxane Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), p. 149; Edward Stettinius, *Lend-Lease: Weapon for Victory*. (New York: Macmillan, 1944), p, 218.]

¹⁸ British oil interests in the south were vital to the Royal Navy which relied on the giant oil refinery at Abadan, which the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company ran as a virtual state within a state. Indeed, it was said that the RN floated on sea of Iranian oil. Churchill, who had converted the RN from coal to oil, called Iranian oil "a prize from fairyland beyond our wildest dreams." [Churchill quoted in Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 112.]

subterfuge (inspired by anti-communists) to cutback Lend-Lease shipments to the USSR.¹⁹ The Russians further strongly opposed the establishment of the Persian Gulf corridor and the PGC claiming that an American presence was unnecessary since the Soviet Army could handle the transport of Lend-Lease *via* Iran *sans* American assistance. This was an unrealistic claim: at that moment the Red Army was fighting for its life on the battlefield and could hardly spare troops to act as stevedores and truck drivers in Iran. The implication, however, was clear: the Soviets did not welcome an American presence in Iran even if it was warranted by military necessity specifically meeting the Soviet objective of more Lend-Lease arriving into their hands faster.²⁰ Clearly, Stalin was already thinking of the postwar period when he feared American troops might not leave Iran as quickly as they arrived.

When the first American contingent arrived in Iran the government in Tehran was surprised. The United States was not a signature to the Tripartite Treaty nor intended to be and had not even asked Tehran for permission to station the PGC on her soil nor did Washington provide any notification.²¹ The American legation responded to frantic inquiries from the shah's government by stating the PGC was present in Iran at the invitation of the British, a response that no doubt added insult to injury. Tehran, however, was assured by the American diplomats that the PGC was only dispatched to Iran to facilitate the flow of Lend-Lease to the Soviet zone, not to interfere in Iranian affairs or establish an occupation zone. Because they feared the Soviet reaction, Tehran also inquired at their embassy about Moscow's position on the PGC. The Soviet ambassador, Andrea Smirnov, fired off his own frantic inquires to Louis Dreyfus at the American legation: Why had the USSR not been notified of the dispatch or arrival of the PGC? Why did they have to hear about it from the Iranian government? Where the Americans trying to infringe upon Soviet rights and privileges contained in the Tripartite Treaty? Was the USA planning on signing the Tripartite Treaty or a separate treaty with Iran? Was the USA going to set up its own occupation zone? Dreyfus replied that the

¹⁹ Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 215.

²⁰ Conversely that the USA assigned as many as 30,000 troops to the PGC is a clear indication of the great importance the Americans attached to facilitating Lend-Lease to the USSR.

²¹ Of course the necessity of wartime security could excuse the American failure to notify the Iranians.

Americans were not aiming to establish their own occupation zone and that the British in the south, where the PGC would primarily be deployed was in full and exclusive control, there was no power sharing. In an odd twist, Dreyfus further assured Smirnov that the USA was not providing any military assistance to the English in Iran although America was present at the invitation of England.²² He said that the PGC was there to help move supplies into Russian hands. Somewhat mollified, the Soviets relayed to Tehran their approval of the PGC although the Russians never fully accepted the large American contingent in Iran.²³

Why the Soviets were anxious to keep the United States out of Iran even though it meant a greater flow of desperately needed supplies for them would become obvious as the war ended and the Cold War began. It was yet another example of Stalin, even in 1942 when the USSR was fighting for its life, thinking not of the moment but rather strategically about the postwar era. FDR deemed Iran vital to the war effort and with a new pro-Allied shah on the throne, he authorized Lend-Lease supplies to the Iranian government in early 1942. The PGC, however, confined its activities as much as possible to fulfilling its mission of rapidly delivering Lend-Lease into Soviet hands and assumed once their mission was concluded they would return home as rapidly as possible certainly no longer than V-E Day.²⁴ Consequently, although some of their primary activity had the secondary effect of improving Iranian infrastructure, the PGC did little to build good relations with the Iranians for the postwar era nor did the Pentagon direct them to do so. By contrast the Red Army in the north of Iran virtually from the start of their occupation

²² Why Dreyfus felt the need to add this point is not clear. The USA and England were allies as was the USSR which had a formal mutual defense treaty with England. England was already a recipient of Lend-Lease. So why did Dreyfus add that no American military assistance to England was flowing from the establishment of the PGC in the British zone? Is it possible that Dreyfus sensed Russia's sensitivity about a postwar challenge to the Soviet position in Iran? More likely it was yet another effort by the Roosevelt administration to assure the USSR for the millionth time that there was no American and British "ganging up" on Russia underway. Such constant assurances were an essential element of FDR's soft Soviet policy.

²³ T.H. Vail Motter, *United States Army in World War II. The Middle East Theatre. The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia*. (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952), 437-438. The USA never formalized with Tehran any legal basis for the PGC's presence in Iran, an issue that would become, as we shall see, a subject of intense debate during the 1946 crisis when America's standing to take an interest in the Iran case became an issue. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 322; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 87.]

²⁴ Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold the War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 111.

began laying the foundation for a long-term relationship with the peoples of the northern Iranian provinces. The Soviets established cultural and language clubs; offered education and training in the USSR; flooded their occupation zone with communist inspired literature and newspapers, etc.²⁵ The PGC did nothing similar and any efforts to familiarize the locals with American culture, language, history or politics was nearly always done on an individual and unofficial level by GIs.²⁶

Iran was the one area of regular contact between American and Soviet troops throughout the war. Yet, it did not lead to any greater understanding or cooperation as FDR had always hoped such contact would. Largely this is because the Soviets closed their northern occupation zone to outside contact. Unlike the British zone in the south which was relatively open to Russians, the northern zone was *de facto* off limits to Britons and Americans without official Soviet permission which was difficult to receive.²⁷ Western journalists nearly always found themselves denied permission to enter the Soviet controlled zone. Even Allied diplomats on official duty (both the USA and UK maintained consulates in Tabriz) were subject to harassment and excessive scrutiny. The PGC had informed the Soviets that the conveyance of Lend-Lease could be far more efficiently delivered if they could be transported directly to the Russian border but the Soviets insisted that Americans and Britons stop at the entrance to the Soviet occupation zone and allow Russian crews to assume the last leg of the journey. The message was clear: paranoid and xenophobic, the Soviets wished to limit if not avoid completely, contact between American and British personnel and their own troops as well as deny their Allies as much observation about their occupation zone as possible.²⁸ It was just as well for the ordinary Russian; unauthorized contact with Allied personnel was dealt with

²⁵ George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran*. (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1949), 277-278.

²⁶ The closest the USA came to the Soviet level of a political, economic and cultural intervention was the establishment of an advisor program designed to "nation build" starting with supporting the central government. See fn. 112.

²⁷ The relative openness of the British occupied zone allowed the communist left to flourish in the south of Iran whereas the closed northern zone occupied by the Soviets meant pro-nationalist parties sympathetic to the shah and Tehran were driven out or under intense scrutiny. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 91.]

²⁸ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 147, fn. 48.

harshly by the Soviet authorities.²⁹ After the war even those who had authorized contact with Allied personnel came under intense suspicion and frequently were punished with lengthy stays in labor camps. Iranian officials, even on government business, were sometimes denied entry into the Soviet zone in violation of the Tripartite Treaty which prohibited Moscow and London from interfering in the internal affairs of Iran.³⁰ The Soviets did not want Tehran government officials in any kind of contact with the peoples of the Northern provinces and Azerbaijan province in particular. As always, the Soviet justification was the standard claim of border security: fears of fascist saboteurs; that representative of the shah's regime were too unpopular and would thus trigger anger among the public; etc. Because the Russians claimed wartime security was at stake the American embassy never challenged the *de facto* closure of the Soviet zone.³¹

The Soviet occupation of northern Iran during the war provided an initial indication of how the Moscow would govern foreign territory—if anyone in Washington had been paying attention. It proved to be an early example of what Churchill during the Iran crisis of 1946 would call an "iron curtain" lowered by the Russians over occupied territory to obscure outside observation.³² Indeed, had the Soviet occupation of northern Iran been scrutinized by the White House during the war, it would have flatly contradicted FDR's most basic assumptions about the Soviet Union: that Russia was not expansionist if their legitimate security concerns were met; that the days of exporting revolution outside their borders were over exemplified by Stalin's termination of the

²⁹ Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 237.

³⁰ Robert Rossow, "The Battle of Azerbaijan," *The Middle East Journal*. (Winter 1956, Vol. 10), 17.

³¹ A rare exception occurred on the eve of the postwar Iran crisis when in January 1946 the American embassy in Tehran officially protested the exclusion of American journalists from the Soviet occupation zone. [Dean Acheson (Acting Secretary of State) to Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran), 1/19/1946, telegram # 891.00-1/1246, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, p. 305]. With the war over, the Soviets could no longer seriously claim military security issues as a reason to exclude reporters.

³² Bruce Kuniholm has summarized the Soviet occupation thus: "Besides demonstrating a general unwillingness to cooperate, the Soviets sealed off their area of occupation and pursued a course that included administrative disruption, sympathy for separatists, political intrigue, and propaganda." In addition they used food as a weapon, northern Iran being the agricultural center of the country. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 147, fn. 48.] Gholam Reza Afkhami says that the Tudeh party became the "undisputed masters" of occupied Northern Iran under Soviet protection and guidance. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 91]

Comintern;³³ that frequent contacts between Americans and Russians during the war would substantially reduce Soviet suspicions about the West.³⁴ “His greatest concern,” noted biographer Frank Freidel, “was to win over Stalin through gestures of openness and generosity.”³⁵ It was an approach that FDR bet would pay off in postwar cooperation with the western democracies starting with a full and genuine Soviet participation in a new and improved League of Nations that he intended to be his chief foreign policy legacy. Iran would become the first test of the new Security Council and the first public challenge for FDR's primary foreign policy legacy. Roosevelt was not completely oblivious to the problems a postwar Iran posed; he had told Winston Churchill that Iran would be a headache for the Big Three after the war.³⁶ Yet the challenge of building a modern nation state in Iran he seemed to think would bring the Big Three together; he never anticipated it would split them further apart.

Eureka in Tehran

In November 1943, Iran was once again thrust to the forefront of the war when Tehran became the site of the first meeting of the Big Three. Once the USA became an official belligerent, FDR was anxious for a meeting with Joseph Stalin. Roosevelt aimed to keep Russia in the war against Germany to the bitter end and then unleash the Red Army on the Japanese. These wartime objectives would be archived by a mutual commitment to pursue a policy of unconditional surrender of the Axis and extensive Lend-Lease to Russia. The postwar objectives of global peace and security would be realized, FDR believed, by the establishment of the United Nations.³⁷ Central to the success of that project was the full participation of the USSR. Stalin, however, was not enthusiastic about a reboot of the League of Nations. No doubt a fear existed in the White

³³ John Lewis Gaddis, *The United States and the Origins of the Cold War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), 47.

³⁴ Robert Dallek, *The Lost Peace*. (New York: Harper, 2010), 27-28; John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan. An American Life*. (New York: Penguin, 2011), 183.

³⁵ Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt. A Rendezvous with Destiny*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1990), 480. The case of Iran and the *de facto* closing of the Soviet occupation zone to outsiders including Americans, highlighted the difficulties in testing FDR's theory that wartime contacts between Americans and Russians would produce a postwar environment of mutual understanding and goodwill.

³⁶ Francis Loewenheim, Et al., (ed.), *Roosevelt and Churchill. Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*. (New York: Saturday Review Press/Dutton, 1975.), 499.

³⁷ Jean Edward Smith, *FDR*. (New York: Random House, 2007), 633.

House that the USSR would lapse back into an era of isolationisms, a policy fashioned by Stalin in the 1930s.³⁸ If so, FDR need not have worried; expansion not withdrawal was on Stalin's postwar agenda.

Not known for his skills with personal diplomacy, Stalin was less anxious than FDR for a face to face meeting. That is apparent from his many delaying tactics that avoided a meeting with FDR for so long. However, Stalin was prepared to do so once his armies had scored at least one decisive victory. With a major battlefield triumph Stalin could sit at the conference table as an equal with Roosevelt and not as a man at the head of an army that was in full retreat. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad and then Kursk provided Stalin with not one but two substantial wins that sent the *Wehrmacht* into a permanent retreat.

Once Stalin's confidence was fortified by the German defeat at Stalingrad he could green light a meeting with FDR. Still, Stalin presented new criteria: his duties as warlord, he said, prevented him from travel outside the USSR.³⁹ Yet, a meeting so early in the alliance on Soviet soil would outrage Roosevelt's Republican critics at home. In any case the real reason Stalin was reluctant to travel to a foreign land was not the situation on the battlefield, a responsibility that was also common to FDR and the globetrotting Churchill. As a veteran of the Kremlin's dagger politics, Stalin knew survival meant never being too distance from his power base. Iran became an obvious compromise. It was accessible to both Churchill and FDR and it provided Stalin with the security blanket of his occupation forces camped outside Tehran and an unbroken chain of Red Army divisions stretching back to Moscow. As added inducement to settle on Iran he could arrive surrounded by his Praetorian Guard.⁴⁰ Code named Eureka the summit took place in Tehran November 28 to December 1, 1943. The Iranian government and the shah were not asked but told that the summit would take place on their soil. Perhaps justified as a matter of military secrecy, it was still the kind of insensitivity that was fueling Iranian resentment of the Allies.

³⁸ Stalin's isolationist policy was called by him "socialism in one country" meaning the USSR only.

³⁹ Keith Eubank, *Summit at Teheran*. (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 132.

⁴⁰ Aerophobic, Stalin's arrival in Tehran onboard an aircraft was one of the very few cases when he selected air over land transport and it was the last. The turbulent flight in his mind confirmed his fear of flying although it was an impressive show: his transport was escorted by a dozen Soviet fighters.

Roosevelt had hoped his first meeting with Stalin would have been a duet not a trio, that is, without Churchill. Ironically, it was Stalin who insisted that the career anti-communist British PM be present probably to counterbalance Roosevelt and perhaps manipulate Anglo-American differences. If so, FDR gave him several opportunities to do so when the president advertised the many differences the Americans and the British had encountered as allies. Some Americans present, like the president's Russian translator Charles Bohlen, found FDR's cozy relationship with Stalin at the expense of a fellow democrat, including embarrassing Churchill for Stalin's amusement, to be tasteless and unworthy of a POTUS but Roosevelt's defenders argued it was the implementation of his Soviet policy that held Stalin should never be left with the impression that America or England were "ganging up" on Russia even if that meant some temporary discomfort for Churchill.⁴¹ Just as important, FDR had hoped to impress upon Stalin that the United States had several potential commonalities with the USSR in the postwar world starting with opposition to the old school imperialism that Churchill embodied. "He [FDR] felt that Stalin," Bohlen noted, "viewed the world somewhat in same light as he did..."⁴²

Perhaps as compensation for his rejection of a one to one conference with FDR, Stalin offered the president the hospitality of the Soviet embassy in Tehran. In spite of a debate within his inner-circle, it was an offer Roosevelt readily accepted. It was all the more attractive because the invitation had been thoughtfully couched by the Soviets in the form of a security alarm that FDR's Republican opponents back home could not object to. Shortly after his arrival at the heavily fortified American legation compound in

⁴¹ John Eisenhower, *Allies*. (New York: De Capo, 2000), 393-394; Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1972), 146. Thus when Churchill asked to meet with FDR privately as the president had met with Stalin without Churchill present, Roosevelt declined. Churchill was offended and Harry Hopkins was dispatched to reassure him. He told Churchill that the PM should view FDR's snub as part of his strategy to convince Stalin that there was no Anglo-American strategy to "gang-up" on the Soviets. The effort, Hopkins said, would pay big dividends in the future when Stalin was more cooperative as a result. [Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*, (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 89]. Churchill was not mollified but Hopkins revealed two essential elements of FDR's soft Soviet policy: assuring Stalin that no joint Anglo-American Soviet policy (and indeed advertising that the USA and UK differed on many issues) and that goodwill extended to Stalin now that reduced Russian paranoia—even if it was Churchill's expense—would pay off after the war in Soviet cooperation. Both facets of FDR's policy would be tested during the Iran crisis in 1946 and found to be wanting: Stalin always just assumed (as per Leninist ideology) that London and Washington would have identical interests when it came to the Soviet Union and that American offered goodwill and cooperation during the war was not being credited by Moscow for some postwar account that FDR could draw on.

⁴² Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 211.

Tehran, the Soviets paid a visit and explained to the presidential party that they had uncovered a plot to assassinate the president and offered FDR not just the comfort but the protection of the Soviet embassy. To add to the gravity of Soviet fears, Stalin dispatched an NKVD General to announce that the Germans had parachuted thirty-eight assassins into the area within the past few weeks and while Soviet troops had apprehended most six were still at large. It has never been established if the Russians had indeed uncovered a genuine German assassination plot or not. That did not matter to FDR because true or not it made a *tête-à-tête* with Stalin possible and with security issues as the explanation his opponents back home could not complain about his camping at the Soviet embassy.⁴³

Chief among these commonalities FDR believed was that the USA and the USSR were both opposed to old school colonialism.⁴⁴ Although FDR's Soviet policy was controversial and disintegrated quickly as the war drew to a close, he was correct in predicating the postwar era would be one of de-colonialization but in correct in believing

⁴³ Had the Soviets uncovered a genuine assassination plot against FDR? Their intelligence sources in the country were vastly superior to that of the USA and although most Axis agents had been rolled up by then it was likely some sleeper cells had gone undetected. It was also undeniable that the trip from the American legation to the embassies of the USSR or England was a long one and a security risk for all concerned. The British, however, had uncovered no similar evidence about an Axis plot against FDR (or they didn't reveal it if they did) and Churchill had driven around the streets of Teheran protected only by one body guard with a pistol. FDR left no room for doubt about why he accepted Stalin's invitation when he declined Churchill's similar invitation. Having gotten wind of what the Russians were up to, the British prime minister told FDR that if security was an issue he would be most welcome at the British embassy which was guarded by a regiment of Gurkhas. FDR declined. Churchill then suggested that the American split his time between the Soviet and British embassies which were side by side. Again FDR declined. Nothing was going to come between him and the man he called Uncle Joe. Indeed, Susan Butler has pointed out that FDR sent a cable to Stalin in *advance* of the conference asking the Soviet leader where he could stay in Teheran (the USA had yet to establish an embassy but did have a legation compound) which Butler interprets as "fishing" for an invitation. He got one but since it came from the Soviet ambassador and not Stalin himself (who was out of communication *en route* to Iran) FDR ignored it. Nonetheless these pre-conference communications and even an advanced inspection of the Soviet embassy by the chief of his Secret Service detail would have made Stalin's offer to provide the security of the Russian embassy hardly a surprise to Roosevelt once he was on the ground in Iran. (He later admitted to his inner-circle he never believed there had been an assassination plot). It was undoubtedly a psychological charge for Stalin to host the American president on Soviet soil and another none too subtle message from FDR that there would be no Anglo-American "ganging up" on Stalin. Indeed, whenever possible FDR avoided private meetings at Teheran with just Churchill. [Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 135; Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 34; 44; 47; Keith Eubank, *Summit at Teheran*. (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 132; Frank Freidel, *Franklin D. Roosevelt. A Rendezvous with Destiny*, (Boston: Little Brown, 1990), 480; Elliot Roosevelt, *As He Saw It*. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 171-173; Hughes Thomas, *Armed Truce*. (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 74].

⁴⁴ Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 76-77.

that could translate into a basis for American-Soviet cooperation. In reality it was the source of further competition between Washington and Moscow.

FDR did *not* come to Iran to consider her future but thanks to the efforts of one man—Patrick Hurley—he did. Hurley, an oil man, a Republican and out of sympathy with the New Deal and its’ foreign policy corollary, Roosevelt’s soft Soviet policy, was an unlikely choice to be FDR’s special envoy in the Middle East. Always anxious to avoid the errors he believed committed by Woodrow Wilson, FDR, attempted to broaden his wartime foreign policy appeal by including selected internationalist minded Republicans like Hurley.⁴⁵ Like many presidents in later years, FDR preferred to circumvent the professionals at the State Department and instead dispatched “special envoys” answerable only to him to do his bidding around the world. Hurley was one such special envoy. “I wish I had more men like Pat [Hurley], on whom I can depend,” FDR told his son Elliott, “The men in the State Department, those career diplomats...half the time I can’t tell whether I should believe them or not.”⁴⁶ The secretary of war under Herbert Hoover, Hurley was a colorful man of action straight out of the Wild West. He received a promotion to two star general rank at the Tehran summit to go along with his status as FDR’s personal representative.⁴⁷ Hurley took an immediate interest in Iran probably because of the sizeable American presence there in the form of the PGC but also because of his dual antipathy toward the Soviet Union and England both of whom were occupying the country.⁴⁸ Hurley saw a new day for the Middle East after the war, free of old school colonialism, but he feared that might create a power vacuum that would

⁴⁵ Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 16.

⁴⁶ FDR quoted in Elliott Roosevelt, *As He Saw It*. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 193.

⁴⁷ Bruce, Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 165.

⁴⁸ Long before Averell Harriman advocated it, Hurley advised FDR to use Lend-Lease to the USSR as leverage to force firm and definite concessions from the Soviets. (Ironically, for all his hostility toward the USSR, Hurley scored an unprecedented invitation by Stalin to inspect the Stalingrad front in late 1942. Americans and Britons were never allowed to see the Red Army in action and his was a rare exception one that further impressed FDR about Hurley's abilities.) Hurley was also highly critical of England. Lend-Lease supplies flowing through Cairo, he claimed, were being held by the English possibly to use as leverage against Iran and force a more compliant behavior from Tehran. He also charged the British in Cairo of substituting British material from American Lend-Lease and then disturbing it to the countries in the region eligible for Lend-Lease to keep the locals dependent on British products. He even accused the British of selling Lend-Lease supplies for a profit. In both cases, Hurley was claiming that the USSR and UK were using (or misusing) Lend-Lease not just for defeating the common Axis enemy but to enhance their postwar goals: the spread of communism for the former and the imperial status quo for the latter. [Don Lohbeck, *Patrick J. Hurley*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1956), 221-222].

invite the Soviet Union and communism into the region. In that event England would probably compromise with the USSR and divvy up the region as they had done with the French during the Great War and would do so in the Balkans later in the war. America would be called upon to assert a substantial interest in the Middle East by acting as a third force between communism and imperialism. Preparing for that moment during the war when Americans were deployed in Iran only made sense.⁴⁹

Because he was highly regarded by FDR, Iran had an influential advocate in Hurley. Pleas from the American minister, Louis Dreyfus, to Washington to pay attention to Iran went unnoticed and without Hurley's influence it seem unlikely events in Iran would have registered with the White House.⁵⁰ Indeed, as he approached the summit in Tehran, FDR considered the future of Iran to be almost exclusively a Russian and British affair. Indeed, the presidential party consistently rebuffed overtures from the shah to pay his respects to Roosevelt once he arrived.⁵¹ If the shah's government found it difficult to

⁴⁹ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 93; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 149.

⁵⁰ The State Department harbored certain resentment against FDR's collection of special envoys that were not under their authority but reported directly to the White House. Occasionally they indulged themselves and registered their displeasure. At the Tehran summit, for example, Hurley had been scheduled to sit at the conference table near the president at all formal sessions. The State Department strenuously objected and insisted if Hurley was so seated so too must Minister Dreyfus. Hurley did not like Dreyfus but was willing to accept his presence next to him if it meant mollifying the secretary of state. FDR's chief advisor, However, Harry Hopkins, hated the State Department even more than his boss and challenged the seating of Dreyfus saying it was an intrusion into presidential discretion. Technically, Hopkins was correct; FDR was the head of state and it was up to him who would sit next to him at the conference table. A turf battle was erupting between Hopkins and Hurley on the one side and the State Department on the other. To avoid an embarrassing *contretemps* on foreign soil, Hurley declined the president's offer. Foggy Bottom technically won but it was a false victory. Had Hurley (and possibly with Dreyfus as well) been seated next to FDR at the summit sessions it would have been an unmistakable message to England and Russia that the White House had taken a serious interest in Iran. The effect might have been a deterrent to Moscow's interference in the internal affairs of Iran. It was yet another missed opportunity during the war for the USA to message the Soviets that Iran was off limits as an addition to the USSR. [Don Lohbeck, *Patrick J. Hurley*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1956), 212.] The unfortunate Dreyfus, a man who was popular with the Iranian people due to his charity work, was at FDR's initiative shipped out to Iceland--a casualty in Hurley's quest for revenge.

⁵¹ Much to the embarrassment of Minister Dreyfus, the presidential party refused to let the shah greet FDR upon his arrival, declined to let FDR review a Persian honor guard at Tehran's Gale Morghe airport and when an Iranian minister (Hussein Ala) was dispatched to the American legation compound where FDR was initially housed, he was unceremoniously turned away. The Iranians invited FDR to be the shah's guest at the Royal Palace rather than the Soviet embassy—an invitation the shah did not extend to Stalin or Churchill—again rejected by FDR. (The rejection in that instance, however, was just as much FDR's determination to be close to Stalin as his insensitivity to Iranian hospitality). The shah then inquired when FDR would pay a curtesy call on the royal palace—he was told by the White House gatekeeper and court

directly influence FDR they would turn to Patrick Hurley as a man capable of presenting their case for greater American involvement in Iran's future to Roosevelt. Unlike the shah Hurley could not be put off by Watson.

Hurley had previously met with Reza Shah Pahlavi several times and conveyed to Washington the concerns of Iran about her future. Their top concern was ushering the Soviet and English armed forces out of their country as soon as possible. Hurley fully shared the widely held fear in Iran that the USSR and England would invent excuses to lingering Iran long after the war was over in Europe.⁵² Indeed, like many Iranians, Hurley suspected that Operation Countenance had not been motivated by military necessity but was an opportunistic maneuver by Moscow and London to manufacture an excuse for an

jester, Edwin "Pa" Watson, that his boss, inspite of standard protocol, would make no such call on the shah. Swallowing his pride the shah said he would call on the president then if, however, there was a guarantee that FDR would return the courtesy with a call on the palace to satisfy Iranian pride if mothering else. Watson declined to even pass the request onto FDR. After further prodding, however, Watson did alert FDR to the shah's request. FDR approved but left the details up to Watson who ruled out a reciprocal trip by FDR to the Royal Palace; Watson said that FDR's disability precluded that. Iranians again swallowed their pride; after all FDR's disability did not prevent him from travelling all the way to Iran from the USA with stops in Cairo or a previous summit in Morocco, etc. The shah said he would have been satisfied with FDR just driving up to the palace and being greeted in the drive way then motoring off as long as protocol had been satisfied and the shah not embarrassed by foreign leaders on his own soil ignoring him. On this he was again turned down as was his request to meet the president at the American legation compound rather than the Soviet embassy where FDR was camped out. That option was turned down as well: Watson said it would be at the Soviet embassy or not at all, an embarrassing venue for the Iranians given that the Russians were an occupying power with uncertain plans for their country. Once again, however, the Iranians agreed to the humiliating terms. Minister Dreyfus was deeply embarrassed by the shabby treatment accorded the shah by FDR and his sidekick, "Pa" Watson and found himself apologizing many times to the shah.

To add insult to injury, the contrast with the Soviets could not have been greater. Stalin readily agreed to meet with the shah and did so at the royal palace as protocol required. Sensitive to Iranian pride, Stalin did not ask the shah for a reciprocal courtesy call at the Soviet embassy, Russia being an occupying power. Once there, by all accounts, including that of Reza Shah Pahlavi, Stalin conducted himself with the kind of courtesy sorely lacking in the presidential party. FDR had kept the shah waiting for a lengthy period and then barely spent twenty minutes with him whereas Stalin was punctual and stayed over an hour. The Soviet dictator had also, unlike FDR, taken the time to familiarize himself with many of the pressing issues in Iran as well as Persian customs and traditions. In contrast, FDR sent much of his short time with the shah lecturing him about the parallels FDR saw between the Dust Bowl in America and Iran, suggesting that Iran establish a Persian version of the New Deal Civilian Conservation Corps that would make the desert bloom. He offered his services as advisor to such a program after the war. It was a very bad first impression on the part of FDR and was all too telling about the failure of nearly everyone in Washington to grasp the probable significance of Iran in the immediate postwar era. In spite of it all, FDR's son Elliott, who had made himself present at FDR's meeting with the shah—mostly because he had heard the young monarch was a rake with a taste for fast cars and faster women—found that he was "earnest and serious" and anxious to win American to the side of Iran. [Keith Eubank, *Summit at Tehran*. (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 325-328; Reza Mohammad Pahlavi, *Answer to History*. (New York: Scarborough, 1982), 72; Elliot Roosevelt, *As He Saw It*. (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 192].

⁵² Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 2009), 93.

occupation which would permanently divide the country between them.⁵³ Hurley suggested, and the shah accepted, that Iran should declare war on the Axis powers and join the Grand Alliance. As an ally, Hurley reasoned, it would be harder for the USSR and England to violate Iranian sovereignty after the war.⁵⁴ On September 3, 1943, Iran did so and also qualified for expanded Lend-Lease supplies. Yet, what the shah wanted was a formal guarantee from the United States to support a full restoration of Iranian sovereignty following the war.⁵⁵ Hurley agreed but rather than a bilateral agreement he wanted the USA to sign the 1942 Tripartite Treaty and thus have the standing of a co-equal to the British and Russians. Hull had been a crucial to arranging the Tripartite Treaty to begin with but the USA had not only not signed it but had not issued a separate statement endorsing its spirit of a full restoration of Iranian sovereignty after the war. Hurley's renewed effort in 1943 was a step opposed by the State and War Departments neither of whom wished America to take on the responsibility of occupation of Iran which signing the 1942 Treaty might imply. As usual, Hurley suspected some darker explanation: the State Department was too pro-British to want co-equal status for America which might challenge England's long term interests in Iran and the White House too pro-Soviet to potentially horn in on Russia's occupation in the north.⁵⁶ There was another explanation for White House opposition to becoming a *de jure* occupying power in Iran: Congress would almost certainly balk at the price tag and what came with it: the responsibility for Iran's future. Signing onto the 1942 treaty would also require ratification by the senate, an exercise that FDR was undoubtedly not anxious to engage in. Memories of Woodrow Wilson's difficulties with the senate were never far from his mind. At the State Department the region was not yet widely regarded as vital to America's postwar interests. To the extent that postwar Iran entered into the policy considerations in Washington it was seen as a matter for London and Moscow to manage.

⁵³ Iranian suspicions were further fueled in October 1944, when Churchill and Stalin reached the infamous "percentages agreement" that divided the Balkans into Russian and British spheres of influence.

⁵⁴ Don Lohbeck, *Patrick J. Hurley*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1956), 195.

⁵⁵ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 87.

⁵⁶ T.H Vail Motter, *United States Army in World War II. The Middle East Theatre. The Persian Corridor and Aid to Russia*. Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Military History, Department of the Army, 1952), 442-443.

Recognizing the limits of what could be achieved and yet still convinced that increased and official American involvement was necessary, Hurley suggested something FDR had passed on previously: a presidential statement that would endorse the main points of the 1942 Tripartite Treaty. It might be a unilateral statement from FDR or a joint statement from the Big Three chiefs. When he floated a proposal for a Big Three declaration on Iran that guaranteed a rapid return of Iranian independence following the war, Hurley ran into a wall of opposition. The State Department thought it an unwarranted extension of American responsibility into an area it had no substantial interests; the USSR called the proposal a calculated insult since it would, they claimed, imply an American suspicion of Soviet intentions and distrust of her willingness to live up to the terms of the Tripartite Treaty. FDR may have thought that Foggy Bottom was a bastion of anti-Sovietism but at least in this case he was wrong; once he got wind of the hostile reaction of the Kremlin toward Hurley's proposal, under-secretary of state, Sumner Wells, vigorously opposed a Big Three declaration on Iran since it would antagonize Stalin.⁵⁷ Although constantly hyper-sensitive, Wells failed to grasp that the Soviets real objection was not a potential insult to their pride but fear that a joint declaration that included the USA in on Iran's postwar future would present a major obstacle to Russian expansion into the region. Such a declaration could well form the basis for a formal American interest in Iran's future contrary to the objectives of the Soviets. If that was what Moscow was thinking they were correct and far ahead of the thinking of nearly everyone in Washington in 1943. The Soviets were strategically oriented about the postwar era while the United States was still largely concerned only with the immediate issues of the war. In that sense, on the eve of the Tehran summit Iran was for the United States only a giant funnel for Lend-Lease. Hurley was again an exception to the absence of strategic vision in Washington. In October 1943 he told FDR's chief of staff, Admiral Leahy that the Soviet goal in Iran was to drive a "corridor" from their northern occupation zone to the warm water ports on the Persian Gulf while England was determined to stay on in the south to protect her oil interests. Reflecting what the regime in Tehran was thinking Hurley told Leahy that London and Moscow

⁵⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press. 1980),143-144.

would probably reach a *modus vivendi* and divide Iran between them rather than withdraw after the war as they had promised.⁵⁸

Hurley by-passed the unreceptive State Department and took his proposal for a Big Three declaration on Iran directly to the president. He told FDR that pro-British and pro-Soviet factions in the State Department were colluding to block a Big Three declaration on Iran. If that reissuance sabotaged a Big Three declaration on Iran, Hurley proposed that America at least work to encourage and support the shah's government in Tehran so it might have a fighting chance in the postwar period when it would almost certainly be squeezed by the Russians and the British. Iran would have little hope of success against the two giants in the north and the south but the viability of the regime in Tehran could be enhanced by American aid then it might have a greater hope of attracting international sympathy in her attempt to regain independence rather than be written off as a lost cause. The USA should start by establishing full diplomatic relations and now that Iran was an ally the flow of Lend-Lease directly to the Iranian government could be increased.⁵⁹ FDR agreed and by February 1944 the two countries exchanged ambassadors and the USA upgraded its diplomatic presence in Tehran to an embassy and by the end of the war the State Department established an Iran desk.⁶⁰ Yet on the eve of the Tehran summit, for all his accomplishments inching the USA closer to a long-term interest in Iran, Hurley still remained far behind his goals. He had, for example, no authority over the PGC who's commander, General Connolly, flatly stated he cared not at all about Iran past, present or future but only about moving Lend-Lease through the pipeline; Hurley had no influence with the American diplomats (and was on even worse terms with Foggy Bottom)⁶¹; he did have the ear of the president but only when his boss was listening.

At a ministers meeting held in Moscow in October 1943 to prepare for the Big Three summit in Tehran a month later, British foreign minister Anthony Eden did float a

⁵⁸ William Leahy, *I Was There*. (New York: Whittlesey, 1950), 187.

⁵⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 149-150.

⁶⁰ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 156-157.

⁶¹ Yet due to his influence in the White House Hurley ensued the hapless Minister Dreyfus would be shipped out to Iceland rather than be elevated to ambassador when full diplomatic relations were established. It was a petty scarf-ice of a pawn and all the more disappointing because Dreyfus was respected and liked in Tehran.

proposal that their bosses sign a joint declaration on Iran forbidding foreign interference in Iran's internal affairs and a postwar return to Iran of her sovereignty. Perhaps because it was not a proposal advanced by Hurley, Cordell Hull agreed. However, Hull added such a declaration should endorse foreign advisors in Iran as well as separate statements to be issued by each Big Three chiefs endorsing a postwar return of Iran's independence. Opposition from the Soviets proved to be an obstacle to agreement. Vyacheslav Molotov said that such a proposal could not be entertained because Iranians were not present in Moscow for consultation. The Soviet ambassador to Iran, Andrei Smirnov, was present and seconded his boss' objection claiming that the Iranians were confident in the Soviet's willingness to leave their country at the end of the war. Vice-Commissar Sergei Kavtaradze chimed in asserting another statement would imply distrust of previous Soviet pledges to leave Iran as scheduled in the Tripartite Treaty. Perhaps a new Big Three declaration was designated to sow distrust of the Soviets by the Iranians. All that Molotov would concede was that at the Eureka summit in Tehran the proposal might be raised for further discussion.⁶²

If a Big Three declaration on Iran was to be placed on the table at the Tehran summit it would have to originate with FDR, Churchill and Stalin-Molotov all having made it clear that they considered it superfluous and privately neither wanted to form any legal basis for American involvement.⁶³ Throughout the summit the Iranians lobbied Hurley and Dreyfus to present their case to FDR. Because of FDR's dislike of career diplomats Dreyfus' influence was non-existent making Hurley the Iranians primary advocate.⁶⁴ Finally, having met on November 25 with Iranian Prime Minister Mohammed

⁶² Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 164. Molotov's resistance to a Big Three declaration on Iran struck George Allen (then a member of Hull's staff and later the ambassador to Iran) as more than just the Russian's trademark obstructionism; it triggered suspicions in his mind that Moscow's intentions in Iran were suspicious. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 164, fn. 87].

⁶³ Churchill would remain at odds with Eden on the question of a Big Three declaration on Iran (i.e. including the USA) throughout the war by offering only lukewarm support for any renewal of the declaration (as Eden would propose) reached at the Eureka summit. In this, he was on the same page as Stalin.

⁶⁴ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 165; Other factors that led FDR to discount Dreyfus included Hurley's negative reporting on him and the PGC's General Connolly who also harbored an intense dislike of Dreyfus. Since the general was a close friend of the president's closest advisor, Harry Hopkins, word naturally got back to FDR who took

Ali Soheily and Foreign Minister Mohammed Said, Hurley conveyed their proposal to FDR and got the green light to prepare a draft with Molotov and Eden. Hurley and John Jernegan (the first State Department desk officer on Iran) worked on a draft not dissimilar to that Eden had already floated in Moscow, which reaffirmed the main points of the Tripartite Treaty and some additions: a rapid return of Iranian independence and full sovereignty following the war; material assistance to the Tehran government which was now an ally; concern for Iran's postwar economic recovery; non-interference in the internal affairs of Iran by the foreign powers; etc. The British readily agreed to the draft;⁶⁵ True to form, however, Molotov vigorously objected.⁶⁶ Unwilling to openly admit that his objection was to any Big Three Declaration on Iran—undoubtedly because it brought America into the process of restoring Iranian independence—the Soviet foreign minister reverted to procedural objections (for which he was famous) claiming that it was illegitimate because Iranian diplomats had not participated in the drafting. Naturally Molotov was fully aware that the shah as well as the Iranian prime minister and foreign minister all supported a declaration and that if necessary to satisfy him, it would be easy in Tehran of all places for Iranian diplomats to be called in to participate in the draft. Of course, had Iranians diplomats participated in the process they almost certainly would have insisted on more than vague promises.

As frustration with Molotov's obstructionism mounted, Stalin suddenly intervened and overruled his foreign minister. There would be a Big Three declaration on Iran with Stalin's blessing. What accounted for Stalin's personal intervention to reverse Molotov's stubborn opposition to the Big Three declaration draft when previously he must have been executing Stalin's orders? Molotov had earned a nick name from Lenin: "old iron ass." It was a tag that suited the dull grind work alcoholic and he earned it again at the Tehran summit. The explanation appears to be a direct appeal from Roosevelt to Stalin to accept such a declaration. It was one of the few definite examples of successful application of the president's style of personal diplomacy with Stalin to achieve positive

Connolly's poor opinion of the minister as fact and indeed, confirmation of his low opinion the State Department.

⁶⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 166.

⁶⁶ Keith Eubank, *Summit at Tehran*. (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 377-378.

results. FDR's confidence that he could charm Stalin and thus reach understandings and agreements that eluded professional diplomats and America's Soviet experts was an essential ingredient in his Soviet policy and appeared to have paid off in this instance if no other.⁶⁷ Months of Molotov's stubborn resistance was overcome with a direct personal appeal from FDR to Stalin. It was not, however, a complete triumph; Molotov was ordered by his boss to drop his opposition to the draft but apparently was instructed to dilute the document to the greatest degree possible. In this task he once again did not disappoint his boss. Unlike the Tripartite Treaty there would be no specific deadline for the withdrawal of all foreign armies from Iran; unlike the treaty there was no language specifically prohibiting foreign interference in purely Iranian internal affairs; and no Iranian would be asked to sign the document whereas Ali Soheili had signed the 1942 treaty for Iran. The Iranians as well as Hurley had tried for a declaration with firm commitments and a specific time frame for the withdrawal of foreign armies and a non-interference clause but had met unyielding opposition from Molotov. As he had at the October minister's conference, he argued the USSR was already committed to those

⁶⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 166. Kuniholm speculates that more was involved in Stalin's sudden spirit of cooperation than large doses of FDR's charm. Kuniholm believes that FDR reached a *quid pro quo* with Stalin, probably a concession on Poland's postwar borders in exchange for approval of a Big Three declaration on Iran. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 166]; Keith Eubank argues the opposite: that Stalin's unexpected flexibility was an indication that no concessions had been made by FDR to obtain Soviet acceptance of the declaration. Because he had reached nearly all his goals at the summit without the kind of hard bargaining he thought he was in for, Eubank concluded Stalin found he could be generous and concede the draft the Americans wanted. For this historian, Stalin, having nearly all he had aimed at during the summit could afford to be generous on this point. [Keith Eubank, *Summit at Teheran*. (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 378.] Kuniholm offers little evidence to support his suspicions other than the fact that Stalin was not known to be especially susceptible to charm or given to generosity. Eubank seems to have the more likely explanation particularly so since what resulted from further negotiations with Molotov were a diluted version of the original. Stalin knew the version that would emerge would be without details and thus he could afford to appear to be generous; he knew it because he knew Molotov would not allow anything other than a well meaning but vague statement to emerge from the negotiations over the draft. It may also have been the case that Stalin saw an opportunity to cast his lot with FDR against Churchill who had already shown himself to be hypersensitive to any threat to British interest in the Middle East starting with Iran. When asked at the end of the summit how it was going, the prime minister replied "A bloody lot has gone wrong". For FDR a bloody lot had gone right: he was now in contact with Stalin and determined he could do business with him and like it. Churchill quoted in Lord Moran, *Churchill. Taken From the Diaries of Lord Moran*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), 145]. In a March 18, 1942 note to Churchill, FDR assured the prime minister that he would be much more productive in dealing with Stalin than the pros at the State Department or the British Foreign Office had been in part because he was sure Stalin would personally like him. [Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 232.] It was a prime example of FDR's self-confidence and highly personalized approach to diplomacy.

points in the 1942 treaty it was unnecessary if not insulting for her to be asked to do so again even though England was also being asked for a repeat as well.⁶⁸

For all its' inadequacies, the document at least now established a formal commitment by the USA to the postwar restoration of Iran's independence and sovereignty. The document also committed the Big Three to the preservation of Iran's territorial unity which theoretically precluded a north-south division of the country feared by Hurley, the shah and the Tehran government.⁶⁹ Perhaps the only worry for Iranians was how it was signed: When the document came to Churchill for his signature he crossed out "Iran" in the text and replaced it with "Persia."⁷⁰ For his part Stalin offered another gesture of friendship and trust toward FDR: the time crunch before the closing session did not allow for a preparation of a Russian language version of the document. Presented with an English language copy Stalin said he would rely only on a verbal translation from his interpreter, Vladimir Pavlov, rather than postpone the signing to some future Big Three gathering where it might die a quite death. Once Pavlov read it out to him, Stalin signed the English language draft *sans* a written Russian version.⁷¹ It had been a close call all around. When Hurley arrived with the draft, Harriman standing guard at the door told him the conference was closing and no new business would be allowed. With only minutes to spare Hurley was able to convince Harriman that what he had was old business and was thus allowed to proceed with presenting the document to FDR who in turn presented it to the conference before it adjourned.⁷²

⁶⁸ Hurley and the Iranians undoubtedly found they could not call upon FDR again to pressure Stalin to agree to the more detailed language they preferred but which was vetoed by Molotov. Roosevelt probably did not want to go the well twice and in any case details were just not his style as noted by Ambassador Harriman: "...Roosevelt never was much of a stickler for language. Even at Tehran, when his health was better, he didn't haggle with Stalin over language. It was my impression that as long as he could put his own interpretation on the language, he didn't much care what interpretations other people put on it." [W. Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin*. (New York: Random House, 1975) 399.]

⁶⁹ See appendix for the full text of the Big Three Declaration on Iran.

⁷⁰ Keith Eubank, *Summit at Tehran*. (New York: William Morrow, 1985), 379.

⁷¹ Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 131.

⁷² Oddly, months after the summit, FDR related a bizarre recollection of the discussion with Stalin to one of his assistants, Jonathan Daniels. He told Daniels that the Big Three chiefs had agreed *in writing* to provide the Soviets with access to the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf by way of an internationalized railroad running the length of Iran into Russia. FDR said when he first broached the subject with Stalin, the Soviet replied "I had not t'ought of it. It is a good idea. I will sign." [Stalin quoted in Jonhan Daniels, *White House*

The Big Three declaration was not everything hoped for by Eden, Hurley and the Iranians but it was enough. It established a diplomatic toe hold for the USA in Iran's postwar future. Without it America would have been deprived of standing in international forums to support Iran's postwar pleas for a return of her independence.

The Pre-Crisis of 1944

FDR was satisfied to bask in the afterglow of Eureka and advertising it as a triumph of his Soviet policy. As he always suspected, he said he was able to reach Stalin in a way that the professional diplomats never could. "I 'got along fine' with Marshal Stalin," FDR reported, "I believe we are going to get along very well with him and the Russian people—very well indeed."⁷³ Within a few months, however, events in Iran would again prove that Churchill's assessment that a "bloody lot had gone wrong" at the Tehran summit was the more accurate appraisal.⁷⁴

In the 1920s, Tehran had tried to attract American oil companies to Iran, undoubtedly in an effort to counter balance the British owned Anglo-Iranian Oil Company but the effort came to naught. In the 1930s a similar attempt by Iran to attract American oil companies to Iran also failed.⁷⁵ In both periods the Soviets objected once they found out and threatened to involve the 1921 Soviet-Persian Treaty of Friendship which allowed for Red Army occupation of Iran to counteract a third party security threat.⁷⁶ Perhaps because America and Russia were eventually on the same side in the Second World War, Tehran might have believed they could again invite American oil

Witness. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1975), 222.] Of course, no such proposal in writing has ever emerged. Nor does FDR's version of what would have been Stalin's reaction sound in character for the Soviet dictator; however if it was accurate it would have shown Stalin to be at his most disingenuous: access to the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf was something he had "t'ought of" for a long time. Indeed, as we shall see, it was point of negotiation with Hitler during the lifetime of the non-aggression pact.

⁷³ FDR quoted in Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 144.

⁷⁴ Churchill quoted in Lord Moran, *Churchill. Taken From the Diaries of Lord Moran*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), 145.

⁷⁵ Stephen MacFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in Lefler, Melvyn. (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 245.

⁷⁶ Stephen MacFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in Lefler, Melvyn. (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*, 245.

companies into Iran without triggering threats from the USSR which by now had, in any case, already invoked the 1921 treaty and stationed a substantial military force in northern Iran. Following on the heels of Red Army, Moscow dispatched a team of geologists to northern Iran. Their objective was to determine the gas and oil resources there. In August 1944 they reported back to Stalin that northern Iran was as rich in those resources as the southern parts of the country which fueled the British Navy. He ordered Levrenti Beria to begin planning a campaign to pressure Tehran into an oil deal with Russia that would make northern Iran the Soviet equivalent of England's position in the south.⁷⁷ In early 1943 the Iranians informally floated a proposal granting oil concessions (including in Soviet occupied northern Iran) to American companies and once having received favorable response in December they formally invited several of them to begin talks. Over the course of 1944 the talks dragged on until the Soviet themselves made their own formal bid.⁷⁸

Without an invitation of any kind or much advanced notice, a Russian delegation headed by Vice People's Commissar Sergei Ivanovich Kavtaradze arrived in Tehran in September 1944 to pressure the shah's regime for oil concessions all over northern Iran. Kavtaradze it will be recalled had at the foreign minister's conference prior to the Eureka summit joined with his boss Molotov to reject Eden's proposal for a Big Three declaration on Iran that would have formally brought the USA in on the future of Iran. The Soviets arrived with a full team of geologists and engineers and as they landed in the Tehran, Soviet crews were already setting up drilling equipment in the fields of their occupation zone.⁷⁹ The implication was clear: the negotiations were settled before they had even begun. Although Kavtaradze claimed he was in Tehran to engage in "friendly discussions" he at the same time told the Iranian prime minister that his government was engaging in "discriminatory" and "unfriendly" policies against the USSR.⁸⁰ He could only have meant that American oil companies were putting in bids for oil concessions

⁷⁷ Abbas Milani, *The Shah*. (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 114-115.

⁷⁸ Stephen MacFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in Lefler, Melvyn. (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*, 245-246.

⁷⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 195.

⁸⁰ Kavtaradze quoted in Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 94.

including in the north of Iran. Thus, began the pre-crisis of 1944, a dress rehearsal for the events a year and half in advance.

This was not a completely unexpected development. Back in February 1944 a Soviet embassy staffer had told an American journalist that Moscow had “prior rights” over the USA and England when prospecting for oil in the north.⁸¹ More importantly, he added that the Soviets did not consider exploitation of Iranian oil to be purely economic but also a matter of Soviet national security.⁸² Not for the first or last time, national security was seen by Moscow as far more than the border security FDR assumed was the primary objective of their military and foreign policy. In this case, linking Soviet security and oil exploration in Iran would afford the Red Army an excuse to linger in the country perhaps indefinitely. Of course in this they were not alone; the Royal Navy was powered by Iranian oil and England also considered their oil interests in the south to be of vital national security.

At the same time the Soviets protested to the government in Tehran that any oil concessions granted to American companies in the north would be interpreted by the Kremlin as a threat to their national security. Again they threatened to invoke the 1921 Soviet-Persian Treaty of Friendship which allowed the Soviets to intervene in Iran if a third party present in the country posed a threat to the USSR.⁸³ Casting all expansionist

⁸¹ McFarland says that the same message about “prior rights” was also sent to Shah’s government by the Soviets. (MacFarland, Stephen, “The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War” in [Lefler, Melvyn, (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 245-246.] By “prior rights” the Soviets apparently meant they had the right of first refusal because they operated a small concession at Kavir Khorian. It was one of two concessions granted to foreign oil companies the British in the south being the other. Kavir Khorian however, was minuscule compared to the British operation and in any case had gone defunct. Tehran was now willing to revise if that would mollify the Russians but it would not. They saw the dead oil concession as “prior rights” over American oil companies and thus Tehran had no grounds to open talks with American oil companies or to turn down a competitive Soviet offer. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 192; MacFarland, Stephen, “The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War” in Melvyn Lefler, (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 246; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 88.]

⁸² Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 195.

⁸³ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 194; O’Neal, John R. *Foreign Policy Making in Times of Crisis*, (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1982), p. 82. Technically it would have been a renewed application of the 1921 Soviet-Persian Friendship Treaty since it had already been invoked as the legal basis for the 1941 invasion of the country by the Red Army, the German colony in Iran being the third party threat to the USSR.

objectives as matters of vital national security was fast becoming standard operating procedure for the Soviets. Here, however, they committed a Freudian slip that should have set off alarm bells at the State Department. Invoking the 1921 treaty provision against third party threats to Soviet security in this case would have cast the United States as that threat. Treating her chief wartime ally as a threat to the security of the USSR would have been an embarrassment for Moscow in early 1944 had the USA chosen to make an issue of it.⁸⁴ Moreover, the Red Army was already fully deployed in the north of the country; if the 1921 Friendship treaty was invoked (or technically speaking reinvaded) because of any oil concessions granted American companies in that region, where else could the Soviets flex their military muscle except southward toward Tehran? It was another missed opportunity for the Americans to insist that the Soviets explain themselves. Had Washington done so, they would have been far better prepared for what was to come in the immediate postwar period or in the best case scenario a display of concern by Washington at this point might have deterred Moscow altogether.

To make it clear that his objectives were strategic, Kavtaradze added he was empowered not just to reach an agreement on oil concessions but also a general political understanding with Iran implying that the Soviets wanted a new version of the 1921 Russian Soviet-Persian Friendship Treaty and an update of the Tripartite Treaty of 1942 once it expired. It was an objective not quickly grasped by many in Washington who preferred to see the Kavtaradze mission as solely concerned with oil.⁸⁵ That was a serious misunderstanding of Soviet goals in Iran, an error on Washington's part that would become all too obvious by 1946. The shah's regime and most in Tehran were in no doubt: the Soviet delegation was after more than oil and was implementing a long term strategic objective to incorporate Iran into the Soviet sphere with Soviet oil concessions in the north and new treaty of friendship the start not the end.⁸⁶ Indeed, the Soviet ambassador,

⁸⁴ Back in Washington, the Soviet ambassador, Andrei Gromyko, continued the not too subtle implication when he commented that a "hidden influence" was behind Mossadeq's law. (Gromyko quoted in MacFarland, Stephen, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in Lefler, Melvyn. (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 247).

⁸⁵ Although normally out of sympathy with the official story, revisionist historians in latter years have tended to endorse the general view in Washington at the time that Kavtaradze was only prospecting for oil.

⁸⁶ At this time Levrenti Beria assured a very receptive Soviet Socialist Republic of Azerbaijan and its' communist party that their dreams of a "Greater Azerbaijan" that is, the incorporation of Iran's Azerbaijan province into their Soviet republic headquartered in Baku, was Stalin's objective. [Abbas Milani, *The Shah*.

Mikhail Maximov, admitted as much to Averell Harriman when the latter stopped in for a chat.

FDR had become sufficiently concerned about the events unfolding in Iran to dispatch Averell Harriman (rather than the American ambassador in Tehran), then on his way back to his post in Moscow, to stop off in Iran to assess the situation. Harriman interviewed Ambassador Maximov and found the Russian remarkably blunt. He told Harriman that his government had no objection to American oil companies muscling England out of the south but the north was reserved exclusively for Russia. He further told Harriman that because the Tehran government had rejected the Soviet's advances it was not representative of the people of Iran and Moscow felt no obligation to respect it, indeed, quite the opposite. Harriman reported that "[Maximov] had no intention of letting matters drop but intended to take aggressive measures to attain Soviet objectives." Those objectives, Harriman added, appeared to be much larger than obtaining oil concessions and he concluded that the Shah and the national government in Tehran had good cause to worry about Soviet designs on Iran. He was particularly disturbed by Maximov's strong implication that the shah's regime was illegitimate and unrepresentative of the Iranian people and therefore not worthy of respect. Indeed, Maximov had spoken as if Iran was already in the Russian orbit claiming that "since the Iranian Government did not truly represent the Iranian people and since the Soviets knew what the Iranian people wanted, it was proper for the Soviet Government to see that this opinion found political expression."⁸⁷ Harriman had, like many in Tehran, concluded that the Kavtaradze mission had as its primary purpose a long term political agreement with Iran and oil concessions were only a means to that end. The shah agreed and told Harriman that Soviet agitation in Iran would not willingly stop until the country was in the Russian sphere. The 1944 pre-crisis was not the end but the beginning of much more serious attempts to destabilize the

(New York: Palgrave, 2012), 115.] It was further evidence that an oil deal was only the first step in a broader Soviet agenda. It might have been viewed as "rounding off" the "natural limits" of the Soviet sphere or it might have been the launching pad for extension of the Soviet sphere to the Persian Gulf.

⁸⁷ Harriman quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 195; 201.

country and provide the Soviets with an excuse to absorb the country based on security grounds.⁸⁸

Highly sensitive to the way the Qajar Dynasty had virtually sold Persia to foreigners in the previous century, Iranians were naturally suspicious of outside business propositions that would fundamentally alter the future of their country and especially when they came from a giant neighbor like Russia with a track record of aggression. Consequently Prime Minister Mohammed Sa'ed and his cabinet rebuffed Kavtaradze's demands for oil concessions in early October and announced that his government would refuse to grant *any* oil rights to *any* nation until six months or even a year after the end of the war when, theoretically, all foreign military forces would have been withdrawn from Iran. Sa'ed maintained that negotiations over oil undertaken while foreign troops were occupying Iran could only be construed as conducted under duress and thus would never be accepted by the Iranian people as legitimate. Moreover, although England occupied the south of the country their force was fairly small whereas the Soviets maintained a major military presence in the north even though the threat from the Axis had long since passed and the tide of the war in Europe had turned in favor of the Allies. As a sign of good faith to the Russians, the Iranian government broke off discussions with the American oil companies Sinclair and Socony-Vacuum. To help justify this stand the prime minister told Kavtaradze that his decision was supported by all Iranian representatives abroad and was enthusiastically endorsed by the Majlis.⁸⁹

Appealing to the Majlis for support might have been an error on Sa'ed's part; the parliament not only supported his rebuff of Kavtaradze it went further and passed legislation sponsored by Mohammad Mossadeq which strictly limited the ability of a prime minister to reach any oil agreements at all. Under Mossadeq's law no prime minister (or his deputies) could engage in negotiations with any foreigners, be they a government or an oil company, concerning oil concessions unless pre-approved by the Majlis and even then only for joint-oil ventures. Violations were punishable with a term

⁸⁸ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 201; John O'neal, *Foreign Policy Making in Times of Crisis*. (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 84.

⁸⁹ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 64; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 195-196.

in prison.⁹⁰ In spite of some pressure in the Majlis to concurrently repeal the 1933 oil deal with England, the law was not retroactive and thus did not concern pre-existing oil concessions granted the British in the south of Iran leading Moscow to claim the law was not nationalist in inspiration but directed only at the USSR.⁹¹ Mossadeq successfully explained that the 1933 agreement with England was a treaty and a unilateral repeal by the Majlis would severely damage Iran's future credibility.⁹² That American interests and future British projects were also excluded under Mossadeq's law did not disabuse the Russians or the Tudeh party who continued to claim it was an exclusively anti-Soviet law.⁹³ It is not hard to see why Mossadeq's law would be a bitter pill for the Soviets to swallow: once the Red Army had withdrawn from Iran the Kremlin would be without the necessary leverage it needed to force an oil deal which the Iranians otherwise were not likely to have agreed to or would have preferred to grant to American companies.⁹⁴ Yet that is what the new law was saying: no oil talks let alone deals with any foreigners until all their armed forces were evacuated from Iran.

Kavtaradze did not take rejection of his mission lightly and issued a thinly veiled threat saying that failure by Tehran to grant Russia oil concessions would have "unhappy

⁹⁰ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

⁹¹ Ironically, England was largely silent during the pre-crisis of 1944 indicating London may have been disposed toward the Russian line, leading some in Tehran to conclude that Whitehall was hoping the Soviets would establish a permanent foothold in the north based on the pursuit of her oil interests as the official excuse. That would have created the conditions for the north-south split of the country that was widely suspected in Iran to be Britain's strategic objective. [Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of a Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997) 171; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 93; 100.] And, of course, England feared competition from the more modern American oil companies which a Soviet presence in the north would tend to exclude. The Soviets had less modern oil companies and thus offered reduced competition to British oil companies. Further, a Soviet claim based on oil rights would also offer cover from Iranian nationalist objections to the Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. As we shall see, Britain's projection here was not without some basis. Justifying his eventual withdrawal from northern Iran to his Azerbaijan comrades, Stalin would claim he feared unfavorable (from his perspective) comparison in the court of world public opinion between the USSR and imperialist England. [Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War. From Stalin to Khrushchev*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 45].

⁹² Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

⁹³ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*, 89.

⁹⁴ Aside from any political or strategic goals in enticing American companies into Iran, there was probably a realistic economic explanation as well for preferring American companies over the Russians: American oil companies were more modern and technically more advanced than the Russians or even the British. And, frankly, they had more money to spend.

consequences.”⁹⁵ Moscow backed up Kavtaradze by issuing a statement that a delay in negotiations until after the war and evacuation of foreign armies would be an unfriendly act on Iran’s part. Kavtaradze then upped the ante: the Soviet delegation, he said, would have no more dealings with Prime Minister Sa’ed.⁹⁶ The hint was unmistakable: the Soviet vice-commissar wanted the prime minister sacked. Among the few in Washington paying any attention to these developments was Charles Bohlen who noted that the Russian language Soviet newspapers he had been following had begun to refer to Sa’ed and the shah as “fascistic” and “reactionary” and accused them of codling “Hitlerite agents” who were sabotaging the Lend-Lease pipeline.⁹⁷ The language was ominous since accusations of “fascism” and harboring “fascist agents” was likely to be a prelude to aggressive Soviet action as it had been in 1941 even though now Iran was an ally. The shah attempted to placate the Soviets with a state dinner for Kavtaradze but to no avail. Kavtaradze continued to publically denounce the Iranian PM calling him “unfriendly and disloyal” toward the USSR and unacceptable to the Kremlin.⁹⁸

Not surprisingly, without American or British counter-pressure, Kavtaradze got his way and Sa’ed resigned. Before he left office Sa’ed attempted to push back against Soviet pressure in a news conference where he reiterated the Mossadeq sponsored law did not preclude an oil deal with Russia but only after all foreign armies left Iran could talks begin and that applied as well to the USA and was in no way anti-Soviet.⁹⁹ Kavtaradze was not satisfied with this public performance and when Sa’ed attempted as a last act in office, to send telegrams to Iranian diplomats abroad restating what he had said publically, the Russians intercepted the communications and canceled them—a clear violation of the Tripartite Treaty which allowed the occupying powers to censor Iranian government communications with the explicit exception of diplomatic

⁹⁵Kavtaradze quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 195.

⁹⁶ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East, 195-196*; John O’neal, *Foreign Policy Making in Times of Crisis*. (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 83.

⁹⁷ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 63-64; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 88.

⁹⁸ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

⁹⁹ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*, 89.

communications.¹⁰⁰ Mossadeq chimed in as well; he publically stated that if the USSR needed oil after the war the Iranians would be happy to *sell* to them all they wanted (at market prices) but concessions were out of the question.¹⁰¹

What made the pre-crisis a prelude the full blown crisis of 1946 is that the Soviets did not limit their aggression in 1944 to words and abuse of their occupation authority. In addition to that they unleashed domestic Iranian forces under the tutelage of the communist Tudeh party and separatist ethnic factions primarily Azeri and Kurds.¹⁰²

The Soviets had kept the Iranian communist Tudeh party in relative check during the war to avoid antagonizing her American and British allies. As the fortunes of war turned in favor of the USSR, however, concerns about the sensitivities of her western allies diminished and the Kremlin took more chances the 1944 Iranian pre-crisis being a prime example.¹⁰³ In his campaign to unseat Prime Minister Sa'ed, Kavtaradze authorized the Tudeh party to come out from behind their front groups (e.g. the Freedom Front) and agitate openly against the central government as communists for the first time since Operation Countenance.¹⁰⁴ Although they could not say so publically, the Tudeh leadership recognized that the Soviet bid for oil concessions in the north of Iran was not Moscow's ultimate goal but a means to an end, an excuse for the Soviet army to linger in Iran and incorporate the region if not the whole country into the Soviet sphere: "An oil

¹⁰⁰ Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1961), 264; George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1949), 219; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

¹⁰¹ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

¹⁰² This is why I have labeled it the "pre-crisis" as opposed to "mini-crisis" the term that McFarland employs. *Pre-crisis* I believe better conveys continuity between 1944 and 1946 where as "mini-crisis" implies a greater degree of separation and distinction than is warranted.

¹⁰³ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 91.

¹⁰⁴ Stephen MacFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in [Melvyn Lefler, (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 246. Domestic communist opposition to the Mossadeq law was all the more ironic since the pro-Soviet Tudeh party in August 1943 had proposed in the Majlis a law almost exactly the same as that authored by Mossadeq in 1944. The only difference was that in 1943 the Tudeh was reacting to proposals by British Shell to seek new oil concessions. When it was the Soviets in 1944 the Tudeh dropped its opposition to waiting until after all foreign armies had evacuated and then only joint oil ventures—precisely what the 1944 law required. [George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1949), 216; Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold the War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 94.] Like all official communist parties, the Tudeh blew like a weathervane depending on which way the wind blew from Moscow.

concession, especially one comparable to that of the British-Iranian Oil Company in the south," the Tudeh conceded, "would simply consolidate the [northern] region as a [Soviet] security perimeter."¹⁰⁵ Assertions of security concerns as an excuse to incorporate foreign territory into the Soviet sphere was fast becoming the party line for the Soviet Union as exemplified in the Tudeh's honest admission that Moscow's goals were to claim northern Iran as the Poland of the Middle East. Unlike Poland, however, which had been twice a corridor for German invasions of Russia no comparable threat to Russia had ever existed in Iran.

Just as the Kremlin had kept the Tudeh party reined in until Sa'ed's oil policy and the issuance of the Mossadeq sponsored law, so too had they kept separatist factions within their occupation zone under control. These were the Azeri and Kurdish peoples, who resented—often with good reason—the central government in Tehran which ignored their needs, disrespected their culture and traditions and failed to offer them a fair share of the nation's oil wealth. Reza Shah's modernization program had forced a major dose of unwanted Persianification on the Azeri and Kurdish peoples generating considerable resentment.¹⁰⁶ Their native languages were not officially recognized and their customs and ethnic dress had to be concealed from the officious national government which pursued a policy of forced Persianification.¹⁰⁷ Consequently the Soviets did not create hostility toward Tehran or the separatist spirit in these provinces but found fertile ground to harness this sentiment into a pressure point against Tehran. It was an asset that could have denied the Soviets had the shah's regime undertaken timely reforms.

Throughout the pre-crisis persons and factions sympathetic to Soviet interests or just hostile to the Tehran government were given maximum freedom of action in the occupied north whereas expressions of sympathy for the shah or the national government were dealt with harshly by the Russians including censorship of newspapers and outgoing

¹⁰⁵ Noj Lederer and Wayne Vucinich, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), 56.

¹⁰⁶ Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran. Roots and Results of Revolution*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 111.

¹⁰⁷ Ervand Abrahamian, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudeh and the *Firqah-I Dimokrat*" in *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 1, No.4 (Oct. 1970), 296.

communications (on grounds of wartime security); harassment, arrest and disappearances of persons suspect in the eyes of the Soviet authorities. “Intimated by the Red Army,” Bruce Kuniholm has written of the Soviet occupation zone during this time, “the local populace could not refuse cooperation. In Azerbaijan, opposition to the Tudeh party was not allowed.”¹⁰⁸ The Tudeh and several communist allies like the Freedom Front, the Central Council of Trade Unions and Iranian-Soviet “cultural” organizations, rapidly grew in power in Azerbaijan during the 1944 pre-crisis. “Such power,” concluded Kuniholm, “was not a consequence of popular support, but derived from the fact that refusal to join either organization brought threats—which the Tudeh Party and Central Council often carried out.”¹⁰⁹ Already tight restrictions on British and American entry into Azerbaijan province were increased. No westerner, even allied officials on business, was allowed freedom of movement once they crossed into the Russian zone.¹¹⁰ Harsh occupation policies by Moscow that would take many in the West by surprise when applied to Eastern Europe following the end of the war were on full display in 1944 in northern Iran.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 153-154.

¹⁰⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 154.

¹¹⁰ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 155.

¹¹¹ Although warning reports were gathered and forwarded to Washington by American diplomats, gathering information about how the Russians were running their occupation zone (e.g. interference in Iranian internal affairs, sponsoring separatist factions, etc.) was difficult in part because of a self-imposed restriction by the USA. In line with FDR’s soft Soviet policy, to avoid offending the Soviets during the war US Army G-2 (Intelligence) activities were suspended in Iran leaving the USA at a distinct disadvantage in assessing Soviet intentions in the country. This gesture of goodwill annoyed men like Pat Hurley and all the more so because the Soviets did not reciprocate: Russian intelligence agents were very active in wartime Iran including extensive spying on the British and Americans. Even when Soviet spies were caught red handed spying on the PGC no protests were lodged by the Americans and the self-imposed ban on American intelligence gathering continued. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 149.] Another possible source of information might have been western journalists but they were almost always barred from the Soviet zone. When they were able to gain access—always because there was something the Russians wanted them to see, like a “spontaneous” pro-Soviet rally by the locals—journalists were subject to Soviet military censorship justified by the occupation authorities as necessary in war time. Either because these journalists acted out of wartime unity or because they feared their credentials would be yanked by the Red Army, they always ended up reporting the “party line” provide by *Tass* news agency. Thus little reliable and objective reports came from western journalists. Not until the eve of the 1946 Iran crisis did the American embassy formally object to the Soviet’s near total exclusion of American journalists from their occupation zone. As we shall see, many reporters remained partial to the USSR even after the war thus, for example, doubting the reliability of critical and alarming reports from Tabriz by the American vice-consul Robert Rossow. [Bruce

To further impress upon Tehran the Kremlin's displeasure with the rejection of the Kavtaradze mission, anti-government demonstrations were encouraged and protected by the Red Army while Soviet troops halted any attempts by the national government to control the agitation and confined the small number of pro-Tehran troops still in Azerbaijan province to their barracks on the grounds that their presence on the street would only inflame the public. That was fast becoming the standard Soviet explanation for excluding any national government presence in northern Iran. Azerbaijanis were stopped on the street and if not willing then coerced into signing petitions or sending telegrams to Tehran supporting the Kavtaradze mission. Traffic into the Russian zone from outside the north was nearly completely blocked by Red Army soldiers. Communist militias were not only allowed to assemble in public but also armed by the Soviets. It galled Hurley that the Soviets had found the wherewithal to outfit Iranian communist militias loyal to Moscow yet at the same time bitterly and constantly complained they were not receiving enough war supplies from Washington to fight the Axis.¹¹²

Protests in the provinces culminated in a larger demonstration in Tehran where several thousand—some trucked in by the Red Army—attended a Tudeh Party rally in front of the Majlis, demanding acceptance of the Soviet oil deal and the termination of the prime minister that had spurned Kavtaradze.¹¹³ Soviet soldiers roughed up and

Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 197].

¹¹² William Leahy, *I Was There*, (New York: Witlesly House, 1956); 22; Don Lohbeck, *Patrick J. Hurley*, (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1956), 222.

¹¹³ Protests were staged around the country as well. British diplomat Sir Clermont Skrine observed a demonstration in Mashhad to protest the Iranian snub of the Kavtaradze mission. Skrine described several thousand people—some Tudeh Party members or students and villagers trucked in by the Red Army from the country side as well as the “riff-raff from the bazaars”—marching guarded by a strong column of Soviet soldiers “Tommy-guns at the ready.” Eventually they rallied shouting slogans against Sa’ed and the monarchy but in favor of the Tudeh party and the obligatory cheers for “*Stalin! Stalin!*” Speakers insisted that the oil deal offered by the Soviets had been generous and its refusal the machinations of some hidden and inevitably proto-fascist dark forces. Tudeh agitators and the Soviets were careful not to explicitly name Russia’s most important allies, England and above all America as their targets, but the implication was unmistakable. *Izvestia* set the tone by accusing the Tehran government of selling out to “foreign masters”. Both Washington and London and their representatives in Tehran had approved of the Iranian decision to postpone the oil discussions until Iran was free of foreign armies and thus identifying just to whom *Izvestia* was referring did not require much of an imagination. Just in case, however, the article went on to remind its readers that the Soviets had concluded two major treaties with Iran (1921 and in 1942) that allowed her (under certain conditions) to station troops on Iranian soil whereas America had no treaties with Iran yet had introduced thousands of military personnel into Iran. The U.S. embassy in Moscow reported back to Washington that *Izvestia* was claiming that unlike Russian troops there was no legal basis for American

disarmed Iranian police struggling to maintain order in the face of the rowdy protests. Soviet embassy and consulates around the country “suggested” their Iranian employees and dependents join in on the protests and although never proven conclusively there was a strong suspicion in Tehran that some protesters had been paid by the Russian embassy or the Tudeh.¹¹⁴ Russian journalists inflated the numbers to around 20,000 at the Tehran protests and 25,000 in Tabriz; the real numbers, however, were probably closer to 5,000 in both cases and perhaps the same people in both demonstrations as well.¹¹⁵ Several western journalists submitted reports noted the Red Army involvement in the protests and their stories were promptly censored by the Russians and replaced with the line approved by *Tass* that greatly exaggerated the number of protesters.¹¹⁶

In a not so subtle threat, the Tudeh party newspapers promised mass protests on November 7, 1944 to coincide with the anniversary of the Bolshevik’s October *coup d'état* of 1917. Sa’ed acted in advance and raided the party headquarters on the morning of the scheduled demonstrations. Tudeh party leaders were arrested and the projected protests fizzled. Yet, Sa’ed resignation under pressure from Kavtaradze allowed the Tudeh to snatch victory from the jaws of defeat. Sa’ed was replaced by Murteza Quli Bayat. Bayat was warned both by Kavtaradze and the Tudeh party to break with his predecessor's policy on the oil question. The Tudeh further insisted that he shut down conservative and anti-communist parties and newspapers. They need not have attempted to muscle Bayat; he was by inclination responsive to the Soviet Union and willing to accommodate them if possible. Indeed, the Tudeh representatives in the Majlis abstained

troops in Iran. [Clarmont Skrine, *World War in Iran*. (London: Constable and Co., 1962), 209; S.M. Ploky, *Yalta. The Price of Peace*. (New York: Viking, 2010), 276-277.] It was a bizarre logic on the part of *Izvestia*: the Soviets constantly complained they were not getting enough Lend-Lease supplies and yet now objected to the American presence in Iran which was designed only to facilitate the flow of Lend-Lease into the USSR, as a violation of Iranian sovereignty and independence. It was yet another early indication that Iran was rapidly becoming a testing lab for her hostility toward her American ally.

¹¹³ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 198.

¹¹⁴ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 198; Clarmont Skrine, *World War in Iran*. (London: Constable and Co., 1962), 209-209.

¹¹⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 197-198; George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949), 220.

¹¹⁶ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 197-198.

on his confirmation, a sign of tentative support. Bayat allowed the Tudeh more freedom while pressuring Western influenced factions and media to toe the party line. Yet he made concessions to the Tudeh and the Soviets without receiving much in return while he needlessly alienated the British and domestic conservatives. Still, whatever his inclinations, he was locked by the Majlis law on the matter and there was no movement to satisfy the Soviet demands to reopen oil negotiations. Kavtaradze and his delegation left Tehran for Moscow on December 9, although not before delivering a Parthian shot warning the Iranians of the grave consequences to follow now that he had to return home empty handed and humiliated. Instead the Majlis had handed him a further setback by passing a new law that greatly restricted the ability of the executive branch to reach agreement with foreigners over oil rights. In the future, the parliament could not be circumvented or presented with a *fait accompli* when it came to oil but would be a controlling participant from the start.¹¹⁷

Perhaps the most effective weapon the Soviets enjoyed during the pre-crisis was not the Red Army, separatist militias, or the Tudeh; it was food. Azerbaijan province was the principal agriculture region of the country. Oil was being pumped out of the ground in the south of Iran but the people there and in Tehran could neither eat it nor drink it. They required food and that came from the northern of the country then under Russian occupation. At the start of their occupation of Iran, the Soviets had diverted copious quantities of food out of the country to the USSR causing a near famine. The result was food riots in Tehran which were put down by the government with the liberal application of machine gun fire. A classified American army report in early 1946 concluded that without wheat from the USA, England and Canada, Iran would have suffered a devastating famine due to Red Army diversion of food to the USSR. The report further concluded that food diversions to the USSR were not designed to meet Russia's war time requirements on the front lines or even in the rear but were, at least in part, a political weapon fashioned to bring the whole of Iran under Soviet control.¹¹⁸ Employing food as a

¹¹⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 201; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

¹¹⁸ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 152.

weapon was a favorite tactic of Stalin's and had yielded results for him in the past by terrorizing the peasantry and intimidating the non-Russian nations in the USSR. Now he was willing to try it against Tehran. As the part of the price for the rejection of the Kavtaradze mission the Soviets started delaying food shipments to the Iranian capital and beyond.¹¹⁹ Looking back on the wartime experience the 1946 US Army report concluded that occupation of the food growing region of the country gave "*the Soviet government a lever of no mean value in forcing concessions from an underfed capital.*"¹²⁰

In an effort to create a revolutionary atmosphere similar to that in Russia some twenty-seven years earlier, the Tudeh sponsored factory occupations and established workers councils. The demonstrations promised by the Tudeh to coincide with the anniversary of the Bolshevik *putsch* of 1917 approached, the State Department decided some counter-pressure was warranted. The American ambassador in Tehran, Leland Morris, had already stated that his government recognized Iran's sovereign right to deny concessions to anyone.¹²¹ On November 1, the American *charge d'affaires* in Moscow, George Kennan, delivered a note to Molotov. It stated that the American government could not "concur in any action which would constitute undue interference in the internal affairs of Iran." The note reminded the Soviet Foreign Minister that the *spirit* of the Big Three Declaration on Iran was that of non-interference in the internal affairs of that country.¹²² There was no formal Soviet reply to the note; the unofficial reply was a campaign against the American presence in Iran. The Tudeh had already openly challenged the American advisor mission and on November 4, *Izvestia* joined in claiming the USA was butting into Iran's internal affairs. There was, the newspaper claimed, no legal basis for the American presence in Iran and thus they could only be considered interlopers. It was an odd thank you for the Lend-Lease supplies that flowed

¹¹⁹ Stephen MacFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in [Lefler, Melvyn. (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 246.

¹²⁰ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 152. Italics in original.

¹²¹ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

¹²² Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 198.

through Iran courtesy of the PGC. The Soviets appeared to have forgotten quickly enough the Big Three Declaration on Iran because it was ignored in their press.¹²³

The note delivered by Kennan was rare official American questioning of Soviet wartime conduct in a foreign country and considering the circumstances a fairly mild one at that. Yet, it appeared to have had the intended effect since agitation by the Tudeh party suddenly fell off and direct Russian pressure was reduced.¹²⁴ There would be no second storming of the Winter Palace on November 7 in Tehran.¹²⁵

¹²³ George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949), 221; 228; 233; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 89.

¹²⁴ George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran*. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949), 198. Undoubtedly the unexpected diversion of Harriman to Iran to check up on events also made an impression on the Soviets that the White House was not totally oblivious to the pre-crisis. Stalin may also have been convinced to turn down the heat in Iran because he was losing control of the Tudeh party. Notoriously xenophobic Stalin never fully trusted foreign communist parties even when they were slavishly loyal. (When he lost control of the Greek communist party in 1944, the Soviets said nothing when the British army crushed them.) Bruce Kuniholm speculates that Soviet strategic objectives may have also played an important role in their decision to lower the temperature in Iran following the pre-crisis of 1944: "If the Soviets had pressed their desires on the Iranians in late 1944, it would have made suspect their intentions in Eastern Europe in 1945." [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 215, fn. 5.]

¹²⁵ Some Western historians sympathetic to the Soviet interpretation of events in Iran have asserted that Washington provoked the 1944 pre-crisis. If that were the case then Soviet belligerency would seem justified as a matter of self-defense. The United States is thus cast as the aggressor in Iran and the Soviets as victims assuming an instinctive protective stance. Like their Soviet counterparts, these revisionist historians argue that American military and economic presence during the Second World War amounted to an *informal* colonization of Iran which Moscow naturally enough viewed as a threat to their border security. One historian of the Yalta Summit, Diane Shaver Clemens, has written that whereas the Soviets attempted to cooperate with the Americans and the Iranians, Washington aimed to exclude the Russians completely from the country and thus caused the ensuing conflicts starting with the pre-crisis and culminating in the full blown 1946 crisis. According to Clemens "By November 1943, the United States had established a virtual protectorate in Iran..." [Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 245.] Clemens' identification of November 1943 as the tipping point that turned Iran into a "virtual protectorate" is interesting since that was also the month of the Tehran summit of the Big Three. That would strongly imply that FDR's sympathetic performance toward Stalin as the Eureka summit was nothing more than act. Yet, as we have seen, and contrary to Clemens assertion, Iran was barley on FDR's radar screen even though he was meeting his counterparts in her capital city. It took a monumental effort by the American diplomats—with little support from Foggy Bottom—in Iran to catch FDR's attention cornering the country (supposedly America's newest "protectorate") and in the end it was only through the determined efforts of Pat Hurley and against the inclinations of the State Department, that Roosevelt even took up the issue. A declaration was produced and approved at the behest of the American delegation but without details and time a framework it was far weaker than what Hurley or the Iranian government wanted, hardly reflecting the establishment an American protectorate, real or potential. Yet, it did serve as a basis for America to claim standing to have a say in the Soviet-Iranian dispute in 1946 but that hardly constituted the establishment of a "protectorate" and if it did as early as the Tehran summit it would have meant FDR had a foresight about the place of Iran in the postwar world that by all indications he did not. FDR approved of Hurley's project to guide Iran to modernity with USA advisors but to the extent that had

From Yalta to Potsdam

Reduction in tensions meant a slowing of the pre-crisis but not its end. Until the Soviets directly confronted the Iranian army with armed force on November 19-20, 1945 they had kept the atmosphere simmering following the 1944 pre-crisis with indirect means like roadblocks that tightly controlled movement in their zone, a campaign of general harassment of people loyal to the central government or the shah and preferential treatment shown to their Azeri and Kurdish allies. Calls for a new Soviet oil mission continued but more importantly the Soviets accelerated the establishment of a favorable atmosphere for their long-term presence: Russian language classes in the Northern provinces were offered; cultural organizations to promote Soviet style communism were established or expanded; the Tudeh party launched more branches in the north; and more Soviet political advisors arrived.

The pre-crisis of 1944 demonstrated that the Soviets considered Iran to be a strategic interest and that an oil deal was only a means to an end: the incorporation of Azerbaijan province and possibly all Iran into the Soviet sphere. Moreover, although the Soviets lowered the temperature in Iran following the note delivered by Kennan to Molotov and the appearance of Harriman in Tehran to sound out the Soviet ambassador, it was increasingly clear that once the war had decisively shifted to the Soviet's advantage, Moscow began to care less and less about American sensitivities or

Machiavellian implications they were directed at muscling England not the USSR. As Bruce Kuniholm has pointed out, USA policy under FDR in no way was designed to exclude the Soviets from Iran. Washington did not advise Tehran to resist the Kavtaradze but only that the Soviets observe Iranian law as would the USA. In a missive to the USSR on November 28, 1945, Truman authorized the State Department to tell Moscow that the American PGC would leave Iran unilaterally by New Year's Day 1946, hardly the actions of a predatory American policy. Indeed, it was a "bug out" of Iran that Tehran did not wish to see. They informed Washington that the Soviet and British forces' treaty obligations to exit Iran did not apply to America which had no treaty obligations in the country. In other words, Tehran preferred the PGC to stay no doubt as a trip wire for any future Russian interference in their internal affairs. Yet, Truman ignored the Iranian pleas which, again, hardly reflected the posture of an American attempt to establish a sphere in Iran at Russian expense as Clemens would have it. [Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 245-246; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 214, fn 2; Stephen MacFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the Onset of the Cold War" in Melvyn Lefler, (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 247.]

commitments like the Big Three Declaration on Iran.¹²⁶ The USSR had survived the dark days of the war and emerged victorious sending the Germans into an irreversible retreat; now in the fall of 1944, Stalin's agenda was increasingly topped with exploitation of his country's historic reversal of misfortune. The pre-crisis of 1944 demonstrated that Iran was a central part of those considerations.

The pre-crisis of 1944 was a case study of failure of the FDR's soft Soviet policy. If Washington looked upon Iran as a testing ground for Allied cooperation and the application of the principles that would form the new United Nations, than the test results were not favorable.¹²⁷ Goodwill and cooperation with Moscow applied directly on Stalin with Roosevelt's personal touch a year prior at the Eureka summit did not produced good behavior by the Soviets in Iran. Indeed, FDR's efforts may have actually encouraged Stalin's expansionist appetite. The man FDR called "Uncle Joe" probably felt a personal connection with FDR; they were both disabled men who, against the odds, had risen to the heights of power.¹²⁸ That, however, Stalin's world that did not translate into a reduction in his ambitions for the USSR.

In the face of the Kavtaradze mission's bullying behavior, the White House still did not accord the Iranian pre-crisis the status it deserved and was too readily satisfied by the apparent reduction in tensions as 1944 ended. Consequently, Iran played only a minor role in the last two summits of the Big Three. It was a missed opportunity to follow up on the initiative of the summit at Tehran to further put Stalin on notice that American interest in the return of full independence to Iran after the war was not just lip service. As it was, Stalin was left with the impression that high minded but ineffectual words like the Big Three Declaration on Iran was the limit of American efforts on behalf of Tehran. The failure to press for a detailed understanding with firm time tables back in November 1943 during Eureka could leave him with little else to believe.

¹²⁶ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 91.

¹²⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 214.

¹²⁸ One of Stalin's arms was deformed probably as a consequence of brutal beatings by his alcoholic father.

Yalta is undoubtedly the most controversial diplomatic conference in American history. To FDR's critics it became the American version of the infamous Munich conference in 1938. Republicans would use the negative fallout from the conference as an invaluable weapon in capturing the White House after two decades of Democrat ownership. Once again the venue of the conference reflected Stalin's refusal to move out of range of his massive army and security troops allocating to him a huge advantage over his Allied counter-parts. It did not have to happen that way. On January 18, 1945, the shah's government had offered Tehran as the site for a new Big Three summit. Unlike the Eureka summit, if accepted this time it would come from an official Iranian invitation. The Iranians no doubt hoped a return visit to Tehran would have allowed them to again lobby the Americans to advance a new and more specific Big Three commitment to restore Iranian independence. They were rebuffed by Stettinius but the Iranian ambassador in Washington was assured that FDR would, where ever he met with Churchill and Stalin, keep Iran's interests in mind.¹²⁹ The best the Iranians could manage during the preparations for the summit was to register their anxiety with Washington and London and request the "desperate situation" in Iran be treated at the highest levels of the summit meaning, of course, the Big Three chiefs.¹³⁰

Among FDR's central objectives at Yalta was the resolution of the differences with Stalin over the new United Nations.¹³¹ When he returned home, a man in rapidly declining health was anxious to promote the new United Nations as the crowning achievement of his wartime diplomacy. In an example of over-sell, FDR promised the new and improved League of Nations would prevent wars that the balance of power

¹²⁹ S.M. Plokhy, *Yalta. The Price of Peace*. (New York: Viking, 2010), 277.

¹³⁰ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 214-215.

¹³¹ Averell Harriman and Elie Abel, *Special Envoy to Churchill and Stalin* (New York: Random House, 1975), 132; Richard Overy, *Russia's War*. (New York: TV Books, 1997), 303. Stalin wanted representation for all sixteen Soviet republics in the General Assembly which FDR correctly recognized would be a deal killer in the US Congress. FDR toyed with several possible alternatives to make it palatable to the American legislators before Stalin settled on three votes (Russia, Belarus, and Ukraine) and even then the president feared that would be seized by American conservatives as a reason to reject the United Nations. Consequently he kept the agreement for three votes for the USSR a secret from the Congress perhaps hoping to reveal it after the U.N. was up and running and presumably proving its' worth. It was a short sighted move on FDR's part that only fueled suspicions that the Yalta summit had been filled with secret deals made by FDR to appease the Soviets.

politics failed to do witness the two world wars thus far in the 20th century. It was ironic, given the role Iran would play as the first—and potentially last— issue taken up by the United Nations Security Council, that FDR did not mention it at all.¹³²

In preparation for the Yalta summit, Stettinius and Eden discussed Iran when they met on Malta. The State Department director of European Affairs, H. Freeman Matthews, suggested that the Big Three collectively endorse the Iranian government's position that no oil negotiations take place until all foreign armies had been evacuated. The Yalta conference occurred (February 4-11, 1945) when the 1944 pre-crisis was still a vivid memory and the Kremlin was known to be very irritated at the failure of the Kavtaradze mission. That Stalin wanted to make good on Kavtaradze's threat to punish Tehran was no secret. Matthew's proposal would have rubbed it in, essentially telling Stalin to lower the temperature in Iran by endorsing the oil law of the Majlis and accepting Kavtaradze's failure. That, however, was too bitter a pill for Stalin to swallow. Tehran's rejection of his vice-commissar's mission was more than just a question of oil but a renewed assertion of Iranian sovereignty by Tehran that was unacceptable to the Kremlin. It could even be said to set a bad precedent from Moscow's perspective; foreign lands coming under Soviet control at the end of the war. If Iran could get away with rebuffing a high level Soviet mission maybe Poland could as well.

Eden insisted that England did not wish to split up Iran with Russia and suggested the best way to avoid this possibility, which the Iranians continually feared, was the quickest possible evacuation of all foreign armies. Indeed, Eden concluded, the sooner the better even if it meant ahead of the technical deadline set in the Tri-Partite Treaty. Once Lend-Lease aid was longer needed to defeat Germany, which Eden estimated would be the case by June 1945, the Bridge to Victory should be shut down and mutual withdrawal should begin at once.¹³³ Eden's proposal for an Allied evacuation of troops *paripassu*—at an equal rate—was one that the American delegation should have paid far greater attention to as events would quickly demonstrate. Instead of viewing Eden's proposal as setting bench marks for exit progress by the Soviets, the State Department

¹³² Ted Morgan, *FDR*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 758.

¹³³ Thomas Campbell and George Herring, (eds.) *The Diaries of Edward R. Stettinius, jr. 1943-1946*. (New York: New Viewpoints, 1975), 227-228.

suspected it was a delaying tactic by England to linger in Iran, a suspicion Eden vigorously denied. Even if Eden was sincere the State Department had good cause to wonder if he represented Churchill's thinking: the PM at Yalta was no more captivated by Eden's proposal than Stalin. Getting Stalin to agree to an advanced withdrawal from Iran and in definite stages coordinated with his western allies however, would prove to be an impossible sell for Eden. Even had he been previously inclined to live up to the 1942 treaty (and there was little evidence throughout the war that he was) Stalin was not about to let the Iranian regime escape punishment for their snub of the Kavtaradze mission. Besides his standard thirst for revenge—throughout his career he let no offense go unanswered—he probably feared allowing Iran to defy the Kremlin represented by Kavtaradze would only encourage similar acts of defiance from local populations then being overrun by the Red Army in pursuit of retreating Germans. Moreover, he was not likely to give up on forcing oil concessions no matter what the Majlis said, and he was not going to prematurely give up a base in north Iran that could act as a launching pad for further penetration of the region starting with Turkey and the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf. Stettinius agreed with Eden's proposal on endorsing the Mossadeq inspired Majlis' ban on oil negotiation until free of foreign armies. That reflected the positions recommended by State Department planners meeting in Morocco and then Naples shortly before the Malta rendezvous with their British counterparts. The stage was set by the Anglo-Americans ministers for coordination between their two countries on Iran policy. It was unlikely that Stalin would accept Eden's proposal which tied the withdrawal of the PGC and British forces to that of the Red Army. Yet, a united Churchill-Roosevelt front in support of Eden's proposal would have put Stalin on notice that differences among the western democracies were not as great as he believed (or as great as FDR had implied) and thus not as open to manipulation. In the case of Iran, his *modus operandi* of delivering a *fait accompli* required no opposition and that meant the British and American forces had to be removed irrespective of when the Soviet forces left. The State Department packaged the recommendation in a pre-Yalta memo for Roosevelt to review.¹³⁴

¹³⁴ Edward Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1949), 43; 65-66; 87.

The British and American foreign ministers mutually pressed their Soviet counterpart to accept an end to their quest for oil until the conditions set by the Majlis were met and to reaffirm at the Yalta summit the Tehran declaration of the Big Three on Iran.¹³⁵ As a concession they agreed, as at Yalta, to again avoid details, timetables, or benchmarks to measure progress. Even that modest goal proved to be an insurmountable obstacle leaving the more ambitious Eden proposal for an early and detailed withdrawal agreement DOA. During the Eureka summit Stalin had not been anxious to sign a Big Three statement on Iran and had done so to please FDR and because the text was, after getting the Molotov treatment, devoid of details about when and how Iran would regain her full independence. At Yalta, in the post 1944 pre-crisis environment, with the Red Army riding a wave of victories in Europe and America anxious to recruit Russia into the Asian war and solidify Soviet participation in the United Nations, Stalin believed he held the winning hand. He was not as inclined under those circumstances to even appear to be obliging on Iran as he had been during Eureka.

Having failed to elicit a favorable Soviet response on the ministerial level, it was clear to Eden that, as had been the case during the Tehran conference, any progress would have to take place among the Big Three chiefs at Yalta and especially between FDR and Stalin personally. Once again FDR would, if he was so inclined to take the Iran case seriously, be called upon to apply his own unique brand of personal diplomacy and large doses of charm to woo Stalin. Eden and perhaps Churchill himself could approach Stalin about Iran but the inescapable reality was that American prestige and power is what counted with Stalin and Molotov.

Unfortunately Patrick Hurley was not present in the Crimea to impress upon Roosevelt, the importance of Iran to American interests and the future course of relations with the Russians. Edward Stettinius had agreed with Eden's proposal but he lacked Hurley's influence on FDR and in any case, although Stettinius thought Iran an important

¹³⁵ Eden's ill-fated proposal read in part that Iran was "...entitled to *decline* to negotiate oil concessions as long as foreign troops were in control of their territory." [George Nash, (ed.) *Freedom Betrayed. Herbert Hoover's Secret History of the Second World War and Its Aftermath*. (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 2011).] Of course, the Soviets argued that suited England since their oil deals were old business and not touched by Eden's proposal to endorse the Majlis law. American deals would be new business like what the Soviets were after during the pre-crisis, and thus subject to the Majlis law referred to by Eden.

issue he did not consider it worth pushing to the center of the summit discussions unless FDR singled a green light. Stettinius, a strong advocate of the president's soft Soviet policy, was well intentioned yet he lacked a strategic comprehension of Iran not to mention a healthy suspicion of the Soviets and to a lesser degree the British that Hurley enjoyed. Eden attempted to fill Hurley's Tehran role, taking up the Iranian issue with the same vigor that he would have. Eden grasped the vital part Iran would play in the postwar world and was determined to wring as many specific guarantees from the Soviets supporting Iran's independence as possible. It is not hard to see why Eden believed action was urgent. If pressure on the Russians was delayed until the war in Europe was over and the common Axis foe was defeated, leverage (especially American) would rapidly decline and they might never get the Soviets to evacuate Iran at least not without conditions. The pre-crisis had already demonstrated that as Red Army victory over the Germans became increasingly certain, Moscow's sensitivity to American concerns and British interests, let alone the Iranians, was severely diminished. To unilaterally evacuate would leave Tehran without counter-pressure on the Russians and no incentive for Stalin to fulfill his obligations; rather it would be a disincentive to do so. It was undoubtedly cold comfort to Eden when that is exactly what did transpire just as he had predicted.

President Roosevelt, however, paid little attention to Iran or Eden's well thought out analysis and proposals during the Yalta summit instead limiting himself to the same generalized and paternalistic views he had expressed during and after the Tehran summit. During the February 7 session, he remarked on Iran but confined himself to bemoaning the sad state of the Iranian economy, her inability to fully participate in global trade and his belief that Iran was the ideal patient for the new United Nations to fix.¹³⁶ Ivan Maisky, one of Molotov's deputies, was present at this session and noted in his diary that FDR's musings on Iran fell on deaf ears: "[Churchill] listened politely to the president

¹³⁶ S.M. Plokhy, *Yalta. The Price of Peace*. (New York: Viking, 2010), 277. Maisky, however, did not think FDR's performance was an accident or the result of poor health or just another example of the president's tendency to engage in neurotic talking jags that went nowhere fast. For Maisky this was all a clever ruse by FDR to avoid the substance of the Iranian issue so the USA could pursue its own selfish interests in the country without being pinned down by any new agreement like that proposed by Eden. [S.M. Plokhy, *Yalta. The Price of Peace*. (New York: Viking, 2010), 277.] Maisky's suspicions reveal more about his and the Soviet leadership's trade mark paranoia than it does of FDR. Roosevelt at both summit meetings regarded Iran as more of a project for postwar cooperation among the Great Powers not a Machiavellian maneuver to usher in the United States at the expense of the USSR.

but the premier's face registered boredom and hidden irony. Stalin remained silent and drew figures in his notebook." Maisky himself was puzzled by FDR's rambling discourse on Iran as a possible United Nations rehabilitation project. Maisky correctly noted that two issues that concerned the Big Three and Iran were the presence of foreign troops and oil both of which were avoided by FDR. (Maisky was himself being somewhat disingenuous since he well knew there was a third factor that concerned Iran not spoken of by FDR: interference in the internal affairs of Iran primarily by the USSR).¹³⁷

Rather than address the central issue in Iran's future, that is, the evacuation of foreign armies from her soil and ending blatant Soviet interference in her internal affairs that had been full display during the pre-crisis, FDR engaged in musing with his inner-circle about how Iran could benefit from New Deal style agencies like the TVA and CCC both of which could make the desert bloom.¹³⁸ He also concluded that Iran would need

¹³⁷ Maisky quoted in S.M. Plokhy, *Yalta. The Price of Peace*. (New York: Viking, 2010), 277.

¹³⁸ As a follow up to the Big Three Declaration on Iran, Pat Hurley proposed that America support a strong central government in Tehran that could resist the probable temptation of the Anglo-Russians to linger indefinitely in Iran and possibly dismember the country in a north-south split. On Malta before the Tehran 1943 summit Eden told Hull that he and Churchill opposed such a division into spheres of influence but Hurley distrusted Whitehall as much as the Kremlin. The establishment of a third force by America would, he believed, be of enormous value both to United States and the Iranian people and the shah agreed. For Tehran it was an opening bid for continued American involvement in Iran after the war to act as a relatively disinterested counterweight to the Russians and British. If the PGC or any other American armed force was not to remain deployed to counteract the British and Soviets overstaying their welcome, then a corps of American civilian advisors might be the next best thing at least acting as a tripwire that might invite greater American involvement if things went badly with the occupying powers. "The [Iranian] government's motives," writes Bruce Kuniholm, "in asking for American assistance were much the same as those that caused Reza Shah to turn to Germany in the 1930s: it wanted to improve Iran's chances *vis-a-vis* Britain and Russia." [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 144]. Ironically, the advisors would be completing many of the projects that the Germans had been hired to work on by the old shah and which had been the proximate cause for Operation Countenance in 1941. Louise L'Estrange Fawcett agrees that for the Iranians, the advisor program was a means to enhance and make permanent the American presence after the war as a means to keep Russia and England at bay. [Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 109; 111].

Immediately following the Tehran summit, Hurley sent FDR a lengthy memo on December 21, 1943 which, in effect, proposed such a third force composed of American advisors and consultants, invited and employed by Tehran but pre-approved by Washington. These advisors would, he said, would not only provide crucial expertise to the Iranians in establishing a credible central government and "nation building" but would present an important psychological boost to Tehran which otherwise would feel isolated and vulnerable when dealing with Moscow and London. Supporting Iranian independence by promoting a strong national authority, Hurley argued was in and of itself important for American interests and that no "special privileges" be should be entertained by Washington in return for advisors or consultants; it should be *noblesse oblige* as FDR would have put it. Thus, they would not be present in any way attached to a possible oil deal. Hurley was explicit as well about the mission of the advisors and the policy that he was advocating which he characterized as the "Inauguration in Iran of the American pattern of self-government and free enterprise" which he argued was the only real guarantee that Iran's resources would be used for

the “improvement of all facilities contributing to the health, happiness and general welfare of the Iranian people.” Importing the American way of doing business through the advisor program coincided with the modernization dreams of the old Shah and now his son. Hurley continued that his Iranian vision had broader foreign policy implications: “This plan of *nation building* may be improved through our experience in Iran and may become the criterion for the remains of the United States toward all the nations which are now suffering from the evils of greedy minorities, monopolies, aggression and imperialism.” In other words, Iran should become a model for American policy which promoted the ideals of the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms rather old school imperialism or great power politics. An advisor program, Hurley maintained, was the vehicle to accomplish that. As was often the case, FDR like what he heard from Hurley endorsed the idea in a cover letter to Cordell Hull:

Enclosed is a very interesting letter from Pat Hurley. It is in general along the lines of my talk with him.

Iran is definitely a very, very backward nation. It consists really of a series of tribes, and 99 per cent of the population is, in effect, in bondage to the other 1 per cent. The 99 per cent do not own their land and cannot keep their own production or convert it into money or property.

I was rather thrilled with the idea of using Iran as an example of what we could do by an unselfish American policy. We could not take on a more difficult nation than Iran. I would like, however, to take a try at it. The real difficulty is to get the right kind of American experts who would be loyal to their ideals, not fight among themselves and be absolutely honest financially.

If we could get this policy started, it would become permanent if it succeeded as we hope during the first five or ten years. And incidentally, the whole experiment need cost the taxpayers of the United States very little money.

Would you let me know what you think I should say to Hurley. He is right that the whole lend-lease administration should take complete control of the distribution of our own lend-lease supplies in the Middle-East. [FDR to Hull in Don Lohbeck, Patrick J. Hurley. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1956), 225.]

FDR reiterated his support for Hurley’s advisor project in February 1944 communication to Churchill: “I rather like his [Hurley] general approach,” Roosevelt wrote to the prime minister, “to the care and education of what used to be called backward countries.” [Loewenheim, Francis, Langley, Harold, and Jonas, Manfred. (eds.) *Roosevelt and Churchill. Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*. (New York: Saturday Review Press/Dutton, 1975), 499.] On May 21, Churchill finally sent a reply and it was not pleasant. Although he accepted the advisor program he angrily rejected Hurley’s assertion that imperialist exploitation was the root cause of Iran’s problems. British imperialism, countercharged, had done more to spread democracy and civilization to the world than any other Great Power. Interestingly, unlike with Churchill, FDR never attempted to pitch the advisor program to Stalin for his approval. Although the American civilian advisor program might seem to lend credence to Clemens claims that by the Tehran summit the USA had established a *de facto* protectorate over Iran the reality is that the civilian advisor program was always dwarfed by the Soviet version in the north of the country which was backed up by a very sizable force of heavily armed regular Soviet soldiers and local communist militias. Moreover, the influence of the advisors could extend as far as the central government’s writ and until the Soviets and British left Iran that meant Tehran was their bailiwick. In spite of Churchill’s reservations and in the face of FDR’s enthusiastic support the project proceeded. The most prominent American advisor mission was that headed by Brigadier General Norman Schwarzkopf senior who was hired to reform the Iranian *gendarmarie*. Arthur Millspaugh headed a mission to provide financial advice to the Tehran government. The *gendarmarie* was the most critical, however, because as Bruce Kuniholm has noted it was “...the only Iranian security force then capable of maintaining order” and thus was a special target of the Soviets and the Tudeh party both claiming the American advisors were interlopers and present in Iran illegally even though they had been invited by the Shah’s government. Soviet occupation authorities rarely issued passes to the Armenian advisors to visit north Iran even when on official business. Ironically by September 1944, Hurley (later joined by Millspaugh) had soured on the advisory project claiming that due to a lack of support from the State Department (either because they were too pro-Soviet or too pro-British), indifference from the U.S. embassy in Tehran, the cold shoulder from the PGC and Soviet and British

substantial outside help to pursue modernization and thought that would be the perfect project for the new United Nations.¹³⁹ Beyond these daydreams about an Iranian New Deal regime, FDR was happy to let the wrangling over Iran to stay within the foreign ministers discussions which, given Molotov's obstinacy, meant burying the issue. He was as reluctant as Stalin, albeit for different reasons, to take up the issue at the conference table. FDR's fixation on launching the United Nations with Stalin's blessings and solidifying Russia's entry into the Asian war crowded out all other issues for him at Yalta. Even if FDR had broader agenda in mind it is doubtful that in his frail state he could have pursued it with the vigor. Iran unquestionably suffered as a result of his ill health making what might have been a manageable issue after the war doubly difficult to resolve. Stalin recognized the strategic importance of Iran and did not wish to further compromise his options through more talk whereas Roosevelt simply did not grasp the country's significance for America other than as a probable charity case. Only the Big Three chiefs could have broken the dead lock at the foreign ministers level yet none had the appetite to do so.

During the foreign ministers meeting at Yalta on February 8, Eden reminded Molotov that the Soviets and the British were bound by the 1942 Tripartite treaty as well as the 1943 Big Three Declaration on Iran reached during the Tehran summit, to leave that country at the end of the war. Eden then renewed his proposal for an additional Big Three declaration on Iran, hopefully one more detailed than past efforts. "The Iranian government," he told his fellow ministers, "should be the master in its own house and

opposition, an insufficient number of quality advisors, etc., the missions were not successful. [Kuniholm, Bruce. *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1980), 168-169; 344; Lohbeck, Don. *Patrick J. Hurley*. (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1956), 224-225; 237; Loewenheim, Francis, Langley, Harold, and Jonas, Manfred. (eds.) *Roosevelt and Churchill. Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*. (New York: Saturday Review Press/Dutton, 1975), 499-500.] Stephen McFarland has noted that the advisory missions were not imposed on Iran by Washington but eagerly anticipated by Tehran who regarded the presence of American advisors as yet another positive step toward increased American involvement in Iran to counterbalance the Russians and British. [Stephen McFarland "The Iranian Crisis of 1946" Lefler, Melvyn. (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 242.] The definite reluctance by the State Department, PGC and the U.S. Embassy in Tehran to support the advisors is another clear indication that, apart from Hurley and FDR, the American foreign and military establishment were not anxious to stay in Iran beyond the war in any substantial way and certainly not the actions of a government attempting establish a "protectorate" in Iran as asserted by Diane Clemens.

¹³⁹ Stettinius, Edward. *Roosevelt and the Russians*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1949), 180.

free to make its own decisions.” Eden conceded that while Russia would probably become a “natural” postwar consumer of Iranian oil, for now the Big Three should formally endorse Tehran’s rejection of new oil deals until after the war and the evacuation of all foreign armies as mandated by the Majlis.¹⁴⁰ Stettinius again supported Eden on this point, agreeing that America had no objection to Russia seeking oil concessions in Iran but only in compliance with the new Iranian law. Stettinius assured Molotov that his government was observing the Iranian law and ended oil negotiations until after all foreign armies evacuated and like Eden he assumed Russia would be a natural consumer of Iranian oil after the war. Molotov angrily rejected Eden’s proposal claiming that the withdrawal of foreign forces and the bartering over oil concessions were two distinctively different questions.¹⁴¹ In reality, although Molotov could not say openly, for the Soviets these were not separate questions since one (forcing a reluctant Tehran to accept oil concessions) was effectively conditioned on the other (the Red Army occupation). Without the leverage of the Red Army on Iranian soil and bearing down on Tehran at that, it was never likely that Iran would grant oil rights (concessions or a joint company) to Moscow and the Kremlin was under no illusions to the contrary. Tehran had already strongly implied its preference for doing business in the future with American companies and unless bullied by Russia, they would not be preferred. To Stalin and Molotov, saying wait until your army has left Iran was the same as saying no oil concessions at all.

Another factor seemed to motivate Molotov’s natural obstructionism. The normally impersonal Soviet foreign minister seemed to be taking this matter quite personally implying the rejection of the Kavtaradze mission had gotten under the skin of the Kremlin to a greater degree than anyone in the West had suspected. Consequently Molotov to threw up a blank wall at Yalta anytime the Iranian issue was raised by his American and British counterparts as is evident from this exchange¹⁴²

Mr. Eden inquired whether Mr. Molotov had considered the British document on Iran.

¹⁴⁰ Eden quoted in Diane Shaver Clemens. *Yalta*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 256.

¹⁴¹ Faramarz Fatemi. *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 70. Of course the Soviet Foreign Minister was being completely disingenuous: for the Soviets an oil deal and the withdrawal of the Red Army were interrelated.

¹⁴² Robert Sherwood, *Roosevelt and Hopkins*. (New York: Enigma, 2001), 826.

Mr. Molotov states that he had nothing add to what he had said several days ago on the subject.

Mr. Eden inquired whether it would not be advisable to issue a communiqué on Iran.

Mr. Molotov stated that this would be inadvisable.

Mr. Stettinius urged that some reference be made that Iranian problems had been discussed and clarified during the Crimean Conference.

Mr. Molotov stated that he opposed the idea.

Mr. Eden suggested that it be stated that the declaration on Iran had been reaffirmed and reexamined during the present meeting.

Mr. Molotov opposed this suggestion.¹⁴³

Molotov insisted that no new Big Three proclamation on Iran was necessary and any further discussion on the matter should await “further study.” Relegating a hot topic to “further study” was a typical tactic to bury an issue the Soviets did not wish to discuss but could not say so directly. Still, Molotov could not let the matter rest without replying to Eden’s endorsement the Majlis oil law. Molotov portrayed Moscow as an innocent victim during the 1944 pre-crisis and blamed Iranian duplicity for the *contretemps*. Diplomatic niceties prohibited Molotov from explicitly saying what in all probability he really believed: he strongly suspected that the British and probably the Americans as well had put Tehran up to the decision to terminate the Iranian-Soviet oil negotiations.¹⁴⁴ The fact that the law was inspired by Mossadeq or that the Tudeh delegates had proposed the very same law a year earlier in 1943 (when the British and not the Soviets would have been the target) did not seem to faze Molotov. The oil deal, Molotov continued, would have benefited Iran so the rejection by the government was not in the interest of her people and therefore must have reflected outside pressure. This was the same language the Soviet ambassador in Tehran had used when interviewed by Harriman about the pre-crisis, leading him to conclude that the Russians considered the shah’s government illegitimate and would treat it as such in actions if not words. If his counterparts did not

¹⁴³ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: University Press, 1980), 215-216.

¹⁴⁴ Soviet suspicions that London and perhaps Washington stood behind Tehran's complainants about the USSR in Iran would surface many times again during the full blown crisis in 1946.

believe him, Molotov said he would have Kavtaradze himself summoned to Yalta to make a report to the assembled ministers.¹⁴⁵

Even had Stettinius and Eden cared to hear Kavtaradze version of events directly with only forty-eight hours left in the conference schedule it was a phony offer by Molotov. His implication hung in the air—if Tehran’s action ending oil talks with Russia was not in the interest of Iran then who did it benefit? The implication did not escape Stettinius and Eden who countered Molotov’s insinuation claiming that neither of their governments opposed a Russian-Iranian oil agreement but only objected to the implied coercion of foreign armies would have on negotiations. Stettinius continually assured Molotov that American oil companies, in compliance with the new Iranian law, were no longer discussing oil concessions and that Washington had no objection to a post-occupation Soviet-Iranian oil company.¹⁴⁶

Molotov would not be mollified by assurances from Stettinius. He replied that no law passed by the Majlis would prevent the USSR from reopening negotiations with Tehran over oil—foreign troops on Iranian soil or not. Having made the point that the Red Army was all the law Stalin and Molotov needed in Iran, he lowered the temperature a bit by adding that, for the time being, no new oil mission on behalf of Moscow was being contemplated and it would best to drop the issue for the balance of the summit. Stettinius was apparently satisfied with this bland assurance and questioned the value of pressing the matter further and thus risking Molotov’s wrath. Like other soft-liners in the coming months, Stettinius did not believe pressuring the Soviets over Iran was worthwhile if it exacerbated tensions between Washington and Moscow. Molotov had clearly implied Eden’s persistence on the Iran case would stress relations with the West and especially the United States, leading Stettinius to advise Eden to drop his efforts for a 1945 version of the 1943 Big Three declaration on Iran.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: University Press, 1980), 215-216.

¹⁴⁶ Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 257; Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 120.

¹⁴⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 216.

Reflecting on that moment years later, Reza Shah Pahlavi questioned why Stettinius was willing to let Molotov off the hook when a pincer movement by the British and American foreign ministers might well have forced a new and explicit Big Three declaration on Iran and possibly an early evacuation agreement. If not the Soviets would have been forced to explain on the record about why they were in perpetual opposition even though they were only being to ask (at least in part) to restate what they stated in 1943.¹⁴⁸ What he did not grasp was that Roosevelt's Soviet policy, with which Stettinius was in full agreement, precluded joint pressure by London and Washington on Moscow. FDR was committed to avoiding the image of the two English speaking capitalist countries "ganging up" on Russia.¹⁴⁹ FDR wanted to assure Stalin that in the postwar era the democracies would not be untied against Russia as had happened after the Great War. Indeed, he wanted to advertise that the USA had considerable differences with old school British colonialism that might even mean a stronger bond between the USA and the USSR. The result it was hoped would convince Stalin to join the community of nations, the global balance of power and extend the life of the Grand Alliance—which otherwise might be just a marriage of convenience—into the postwar era. "He [FDR] felt that Stalin," Charles Bohlen noted, "viewed the world somewhat in same light as he did..."¹⁵⁰ On the other hand, it could not be said that Roosevelt believed he shared a common world outlook with Churchill. However, FDR miscalculated terribly. Paranoid and xenophobic, and guided by Leninist ideology which held that the leading capitalist countries could never accept the communist state in Russia as legitimate or give up on penetrating the closed Soviet market, Stalin always assumed the British and Americans were acting in collision against the Soviets in spite of Roosevelt's many assurances to the contrary. Bohlen had attempted to convince FDR of this and, contrary to the White House interpretation, that only a common front between the two democracies stood a chance of making Stalin manageable on Iran or any other important issue.¹⁵¹ Ironically, it was exactly what Stalin had expected and never got while FDR was alive.

¹⁴⁸ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. 216.

¹⁴⁹ John Eisenhower, *Allies*. (New York: De Capo, 2000), 393-394; Lord Moran, *Churchill. Taken From the Diaries of Lord Moran*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), 142.

¹⁵⁰ Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 211.

¹⁵¹ Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*, 217.

Eden, however, would not be put off as easily as Stettinius by "old iron ass". He recognized what the natural evolution of events would be if the Big Three did not formally endorse the Iranian government's decision to defer negotiations about oil with foreigners until Iran was free of occupying powers.¹⁵² Indeed, Molotov's obstinate performance only reinforced Eden's fears that action was required at Yalta to head off a creeping annexation of northern Iran. If Eden could not get anywhere with Molotov he decided, with Churchill's approval, to directly approach the Soviet dictator. Stalin immediately affirmed that Molotov was hyper-sensitive on the subject: "You should never talk to Molotov about Iran. Didn't you realize that he had a resounding diplomatic defeat there? He is very sore with Iran. If you want to talk about it talk to me. What is it?"¹⁵³ A man who delighted in *schadenfreude*, Stalin probably derived a certain satisfaction from Molotov's "resounding diplomatic defeat" during the 1944 pre-crisis but he agreed with his implied rejection of Eden's proposal. That should have come as no surprise to Eden; Molotov would never have acted on his own initiative on a vital issue. Stalin killed the Eden proposal with silence telling the British foreign secretary that he would think about it. If he did it was not for very long; Stalin never mentioned the matter again during the summit. Stalin's silence spoke volumes yet did not, with rare exceptions, alarm the American leaders. That Stalin would not entertain the proposals was predictable yet that neither Churchill nor FDR would take up the Iran case was fatal. Without their backing Eden had no hope of breaching the stone wall constructed by Stalin and Molotov. Having already conceded a vague declaration at Tehran, Stalin and Molotov must have also understood that any new statement at Yalta would have to be not just new but improved, that is, with the details and firm commitments absent in the 1943 document, precisely the reverse of what suited the Kremlin. Satisfying FDR as at Tehran, with a feel good declaration on Iran was one thing; firm and specific commitments that limited the Soviets options were quite another matter. The message from Stalin and Molotov was unmistakable: the Soviets would absolutely not consider a withdrawal from Iran earlier than previously agreed in 1942 and even that was open to modification by the treaty of friendship between Soviet Russia and Persia. That 1921 treaty which allowed for

¹⁵² Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 256-257; Stettinius, Edward. *Roosevelt and the Russians*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1949), 194-195.

¹⁵³ Stalin quoted in Anthony Eden, *The Reckoning*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1965), 596.

Soviet military intervention under certain circumstances was, Stalin and Molotov implied, was superior to the 1942 Tripartite Treaty.

The rejection of the Kavtaradze mission was also interpreted in Moscow not as merely the collapse of a business deal but an affront to the Soviet Union and, although they could not say so openly, set a dangerous precedent that the Kremlin was not going to let stand particularly as increasing degrees of foreign territory came under Red Army control in Europe and the Far East. There was something else that they could only imply at this time but firmly believed: London, probably backed by Washington, had been behind the Iranian rejection of the Kavtaradze mission. It was also a time when Russia's taste to placate Washington was diminishing every time the Soviets gained another mile towards Berlin. Stalin and Molotov maintained the right of the Soviets to negotiate over oil rights with Iran no matter what the status of foreign forces might be in that country and thus would not endorse the Majlis law on the question. The Soviets had lowered the temperature in Iran since the 1944 pre-crisis but they were now, in effect, reserving the right to turn the heat up again when they wished. The final protocol of the Yalta summit simply stated that the foreign ministers "exchanged views on the situation in Iran" and that the matter should proceed through the "normal diplomatic channels." No document on Iran was considered and no reaffirmation of the Tehran declaration issued.¹⁵⁴ Worse yet, the Soviet version of the Yalta proceedings did not mention any discussions at any level on Iran.¹⁵⁵ Like so many other occasions in his long career Stalin simply erased anything that he found objectionable or inconvenient from the record.

FDR's death shortly after the Yalta summit elevated Harry Truman to the presidency. Truman entered the White House more suspicious of the Soviet Union than FDR had ever been. FDR had kept him in the dark and Truman admitted he knew little of the details of America's relations with the USSR but his impression was that they had been a "one way street" with Moscow claiming the exclusive right of way.¹⁵⁶ None the less, he promised the public and the Allied leadership that all of the late president's

¹⁵⁴ Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 308; Stettinius, Edward. *Roosevelt and the Russians*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1949), 348.

¹⁵⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980). 216.

¹⁵⁶ Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1955), 77

foreign policy would be continued including his Soviet policy. That pledge would last until the Iran crisis one year later. In the interim Truman made several attempts to reform FDR's Soviet policy, to make it a two way street, by adding a dash of firmness but not by seeking to replace it with a new policy. The Iran crisis, however, convinced him and others that FDR's Soviet policy could not be reformed and had to be replaced if American objectives were to be achieved and principles of the Allies realized.

Stylistically, however, there was an immediate change. Roosevelt had considered himself to be his own best foreign policy advisor and *de facto* secretary of state. Truman, however, either because he was regarded as an “accidental president” not up to the role of following his four term predecessor, or out of personal inclination or both, did not consider himself to be more competent than the foreign policy pros. Nor was he suspicious of the State Department as the late president had been. FDR had been a master practitioner of the art of personal diplomacy and heavily invested in the ability of his personal charm to carry the day with Stalin. “I think I can personally handle Stalin...” FDR confidentially announced to a skeptical Churchill.¹⁵⁷ Truman, however, was not suited to the role of charmer-in-chief and preferred to employ career diplomats over personal diplomacy. Unlike FDR, Truman did his homework: he read the State Department briefing books and memos that FDR nearly always cast aside preferring to get verbal summaries from his inner circle.¹⁵⁸ Truman was not attracted to special envoys answerable only to the president as Roosevelt had been and as a consequence men like Harriman, accustomed to instant access to the president, fell out of favor. Nor was Truman attempting to run foreign policy exclusively from the White House. He preferred to rely on established channels of professional diplomats, foreign policy experts and to share the responsibility for foreign policy making with the Senate from which he came.

Relying on the experts at the State and War departments, however, immediately alarmed FDR's loyalists. Their old boss had been allergic to advice and guidance from those quarters on international affairs because he thought them too conservative, hostile

¹⁵⁷ FDR quoted in Susan Butler, *Roosevelt and Stalin*. (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2015), 232.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Beschloss, *The Conquerors*. (New York: Simon and Schuster), 224. Here again, we see the value for Iran of a man like Hurley. Because it came from Hurley and the latter had special access to the President, the proposal for an American advisor program caught FDR's attention in a memo that otherwise probably would have been ignored.

to the USSR and the prospects extending the wartime alliance into the postwar era. For a man with no foreign policy experience, who had been kept ignorant by FDR, and who knew none of his Big Three counterparts personally, it made sense to turn to the professionals. What troubled the New Deal left, led by Secretary of Commerce Henry Wallace, was that this course brought Truman into closer contact with critics of FDR's Soviet policy, many of whom had been seeking a sympathetic ear in the White House for years but had been shut out by FDR's inner-circle. Roosevelt critics had been searching for an issue that would serve to vent their criticism of America's relationship with the USSR and direction of the postwar world. Throughout 1945, the case of Iran increasingly served that role. Although not geopolitically at the center of the growing American-Soviet rivalry in the heart of Europe, Iran was a case where the USSR could not, unlike Poland, claim credible security concerns and in which the sovereign government (and all parties in national government service save the communists) expressly wanted the Soviet army to leave Iran.¹⁵⁹ Their continuing presence in Iran, not mention their blatant inference in Iranian internal affairs, in violation of past promises and treaties could only be construed as aggression against a member of the Grand Alliance.

In light of the pre-crisis of 1944 and the prospects for more tension, it was odd that Iran was again cast in a minor role at the last of the Big Three summits held at Potsdam July 17-August 2, 1945. Because of Stalin's silent rejection of Eden's withdrawal scheme at Yalta it was little surprise that the Soviets were not anxious to discuss Iran at Potsdam. Churchill's prescient complaint that Stalin need only dig in and run the clock out to

¹⁵⁹ Contrary to the fears of the Roosevelt partisans at the time and the assessment of some historians years later, Truman's desire to avail himself to expert opinion and advice on foreign policy and the USSR was not limited to hardliners known as the "get-tough-with-Russia" camp. He also listened to the pro-Soviet views of his poker playing buddy and former ambassador to the USSR, Joe Davies. He allowed Henry Wallace to express similar pro-Soviet views to cabinet meetings far outside his bailiwick as commerce secretary. Indeed, as we shall see later, Truman may have given Wallace too long a leash. moreover, some of FDR's critics who had extensive and direct experience with the Soviets like Harriman and Bohlen found themselves out of favor in the new White House inner-circle. Indeed, Harriman was passed up for secretary of state in favor FDR's protégé James Byrnes. And Churchill's many efforts in 1945 to recruit Truman to a joint Soviet policy with England came to naught as the president adhered to FDR's policy of not "ganging up" on Joe Stalin. And, for some time, Truman attributed difficulties with the Soviets to Molotov and not Stalin. [Robert Donovan, *Conflict and Crisis. The Presidency of Harry S. Truman. 1945-1948.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1977), 55; Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 298-299; Lord Moran, *Churchill. Taken From the Diaries of Lord Moran.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), 847-848. William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 100-101].

achieve his aims free of charge when the American and British military demobilized and melted away was becoming a reality.¹⁶⁰ Unlike the Tehran summit but like Yalta, the task of promoting the case for Iran fell to the British delegation with the Americans, as Stettinius had done at Yalta, offering only tepid support.

Eden floated his Yalta proposal for renewed Big Three Declaration on Iran and a pledge that all foreign armies leave Iran ahead of schedule and at an equal rate in a mutually phased withdrawal. Again the Soviets objected and hid behind the exact terms of the Tripartite Treaty of 1942, even though the Iran government had asked all foreign armies to leave their country ahead of schedule particularly since the Yalta summit V-E Day had been reached and the military necessity of occupying Iran was over. Again the Soviets demurred and Eden presented an alternative: a staged withdrawal in three parts starting with Tehran and then from each part of the occupiers' zones except Abadan in the south for the British and a sliver of territory in the north for the Russians; then a total withdrawal from Iran by all foreign military. Eden correctly recognized that the pre-crisis of 1944 had never really ended but had only been slowed down by Moscow not halted. The Tudeh party in Tehran and Azeri separatists in the north continued to lay the foundation for a long-term Russian military presence in Iran. At a minimum Eden hoped to start the process without delay. "I wanted to break the Russian stronghold on Iran," Eden recalled, "and this seemed one way to do it."¹⁶¹

As he had at Yalta, Molotov turned down Eden's proposal except for a withdrawal from Tehran. Moreover, Stalin chimed in stating that the Soviets considered V-J Day not V-E Day to be the end of the war and thus the point when the time clock for withdrawal from Iran as specified in the 1942 treaty, would begin to tick.¹⁶² At this time American military planners who were planning a ground invasion of the homelands projected the defeat of Japan to be as late as the spring 1947 which would have substantially extended the authorized time the Soviet army could remain in Iran. The Soviet foreign minister's counter-proposal to Eden was to defer the Iran case to the newly created CFM slated to meet in September in London. Apart from Molotov's normal pattern of delay and

¹⁶⁰ Herbert Feis, *Between War and Peace. The Potsdam Conference*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1970), 82.

¹⁶¹ Eden quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 272.

¹⁶² Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 272.

diversion in this case it was also part of a larger pattern at the Potsdam summit. The Big Three chiefs all deferred the most critical questions before them to the CFM to resolve. Stalin did, however, assure President Truman at the conference table that the Soviet Union had Iran's best interests at heart. "So as to rid the United States of any worries," Stalin proclaimed as if Anglo-American worries were irrational, "we promise you that no action will be taken by us against Iran." Truman thanked Stalin for what amounted to an empty gesture.¹⁶³ That Stalin was positioning himself as arbiter of what was in the best interests of Iran seemed to have escaped the attention of the Americans, an especially egregious oversight in light of similar Soviet claims during the 1944 pre-crisis when the Russian media and leadership had made it clear that the Kremlin knew what was best for the Iranians and what was good for Moscow was said to be good for Tehran. The Soviet media and Kavtaradze flatly stated in 1944 that American and British involvement in Iran was not in her best interests unlike the Russian presence which promised economic development and freedom from "foreigners." Truman and James Byrnes did not insist on an explanation for Stalin's rejection of Eden's proposal. Trapping Stalin in an embarrassing contradiction would not have been difficult at this point; he had pledged not to work against Iran's interests and yet Tehran had expressed a strong preference for all foreign armies to leave as quickly as possible, even before the deadline established in the Tripartite Treaty, an exit that would have been facilitated by the Eden's "trust but verify" plan. Moreover, if Stalin was willing to make such a pledge verbally to Truman's face why he was so reluctant to put it in writing in a renewed Big Three declaration as proposed by Eden? He was not challenged on this point by Truman or Byrnes. As at Yalta, the Americans suffered by the absence of a forceful advocate for Iran like Pat Hurley and by their stubborn refusal to coordinate strategies and tactics with the British as had been proposed by Churchill on many an occasion. Both FDR and Truman rejected developing a joint Anglo-American Soviet policy even on an issue of complete agreement like Iran.

The Iranians had hoped that Truman would move beyond FDR's well-meaning but ineffectual treatment of their country at the conference table starting with concrete,

¹⁶³ Stalin quoted in Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City, New York: 1955). 380.

detailed assurances from the Big Three chiefs that withdrawal of foreign forces would be on schedule if not sooner.¹⁶⁴ Given the great difficulties Washington was experiencing with Moscow over prior understandings with Stalin about Eastern Europe (Truman already had concluded that Stalin was flagrantly violating the Yalta accords¹⁶⁵) it was a critical lapse on Truman's part to simply thank Stalin rather than use the opportunity to pursue a specific plan like Eden had proposed. Truman had already been warned by the State Department that a major dispute over Iran was brewing that could jeopardize the future of Soviet-American relations. In the briefing book prepared for the conference, they had included the alarming assessment that Iran "...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 the Polish problem." Reference to the Polish issue was telling: Poland had been the proximate cause of the Second World War. Stalin had insisted on a "friendly" government in Poland, meaning a Soviet puppet regime, ostensibly because Poland was the traditional corridor for land invasion of Russia from the West. Yet, the reverse was also true: Poland could be a corridor for Russian movement into the West which was precisely what was happening since the Red Army overran the country. The question now being posed was this: would Iran become the Polish corridor of the Middle East, one in which the Red Army would at some point sweep into the Persian Gulf? Would Iran become the Poland of the Middle East? Although dismissed by many as a light weight, Secretary of State Stettinius proved prescient in December 1944 when he rejected the common assumption in Washington that Poland represented the most likely place for a breakdown of the Big Three and instead concluded Iran was "...perhaps the most prominent area of the world where inter-Allied friction might arise."¹⁶⁶ It was a prediction that had been lost on Roosevelt and primarily indications from Potsdam indicated it was lost on Truman as well.

¹⁶⁴ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 271-273.

¹⁶⁵ Jerald Combs, *The History of American Foreign Policy*. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1986), 316-317.

¹⁶⁶ John R. O'neal. *Foreign Policy Making in Times of Crisis*. (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 85.

The State Department warning that Iran might well become *the* flash point for a definite break down in relations between Washington and Moscow should have prompted Truman at Potsdam to treat Iran as vital and Eden's early withdrawal plan as worthy of vigorous support. Harry Hopkins had told Stalin shortly after FDR's death that Poland had "become the symbol of our ability to work out problems with the Soviet Union."¹⁶⁷ In reality, the fate of Poland had been sealed long ago and little if anything could be "worked out" with Russia on that issue. Iran, however, as not a settled issue with a sealed fate; the timely application of American pressure on Stalin held out the strong possibility of the kind of fulfillment of American interests and ideals that were failing in Poland. Prior to the summit, Truman had vowed to be firm even forceful with Stalin and yet when it came to Iran he pulled his punches rather than channel his pledge of strength into supporting Eden.¹⁶⁸ Contrary to what Hopkins told Stalin, it was Iran not Poland that would gauge the ability of the two superpowers to cooperate in the postwar era.

The summits at Yalta and Potsdam were a missed opportunity. Had the United States energetically supported Eden's proposal and coordinated their pressure with England on Stalin and Molotov to accept an early and phased evacuation of all foreign military the Soviets would have been on notice that the United States placed great importance on returning Iranian sovereignty. In the interim by not engaging in a phased all-party withdrawal as Eden wisely had proposed, but instead virtually bugging out of the country even before V-J Day, the USA (followed by England) left a power vacuum that invited Stalin to turn the slow motion pre-crisis of 1944 into a full blown version in 1946.¹⁶⁹ At the great wartime summits, both FDR and Truman were far too sensitive to

¹⁶⁷ Harry Hopkins quoted in Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Cycles of American History*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1986), 179.

¹⁶⁸ Alonzo Hamby, *Man of the People. A Life of Harry S. Truman*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 316; Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1955), 402.

¹⁶⁹ Truman told the conference the PGC would evacuate Iran within sixty days no matter what the other foreign armies did. He made no provision to keep a skeletal force in the country until Japan surrendered—the complete end point of WWII-- ironically it was Stalin who made that suggestion. [Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1955), p.380.] Once the PGC withdrew and the British followed suit, the Iranian armed forces of roughly 21,000 underequipped and poorly trained troops would face an estimated 31,000 heavily armed and battle hardened Red Army troops backed by tanks, aircraft and separatist militias. Truman's pledge to evacuate the PGC within two months irrespective of what the UK and USSR did can only be explained as an Rooseveltian gesture to reassure Stalin of American goodwill in the hope that he would act in kind once encouraged by the USA. In the months following the Potsdam summit, at a cabinet meeting on November

the possible perception in Moscow that London and Washington were “ganging up” up on the Russia if a coordinated strategy was adopted by the Anglo-Americans. As at Yalta, however, Churchill failed to offer more than lukewarm support for Eden's proposal and stopped well short of pursuing the matter with Stalin. If Churchill was unenthusiastic about the Eden proposal (perhaps because he harbored the possibility of reaching a "percentages" agreement about Iran with Stalin)¹⁷⁰ Truman might ask himself why he

23, 1945, Secretary of State James Byrnes continued Truman's bug out fever announced at Potsdam. By then the PGC was down to five thousand troops and evaporating fast. Concurrent reports, however, that the Red Army had halted an Iranian Army column heading into Azerbaijan province and turned it back toward Tehran after threatening to fire on the Iranians were arriving in Washington. It was a blatant violation of Iranian sovereignty and strongly implied the Soviets were digging in for a long stay in Iran. At a minimum they were attempting to intimidate the Iranian military. The suggestion was made under those circumstances to halt the redeployment of American troops and leave the reanimating PGC troops in place perhaps as a trip wire to ensure American involvement if the Soviet Army advanced on Tehran. If that was the case Byrnes was not interested: he recommended that the PGC not just keep to schedule but actually accelerate the redeployment and get of Iran even sooner, “He [Byrnes] thought,” recorded Henry Wallace, “the only thing for us to do was to act at once and get our troops out... [Robert] Patterson agreed with Byrnes that we ought to get these men out at once.” [John Morton Blum (ed.), *The Price of Vision. The Diary of Henry Wallace*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973), 519.] Wallace strongly implies that Byrnes and Patterson suspected more trouble with the Red Army and wanted to get the remaining American troops out of the way rather than keep them there as a deterrent. Although the PGC troops were lightly armed technical troops (and MPs) had they remained Stalin would have had to calculate the cost of his army overrunning American soldiers in a dash to the Persian Gulf ports. Byrnes, however, did not even want to face that possibility.

¹⁷⁰ The British, it will be recalled, remained suspiciously reserved during the 1944 pre-crisis and could not be said to have offered more than token support to the national government while her criticism of the Soviets was minimal at best. That left an impression in Tehran that they, like the Russians, preferred a weak central government incapable of resisting a *de facto* split up of the county between Russia and England. Further the British had during the pre-crisis responded by sponsoring their own separatist factions in the south primarily among the Arabs who identified more with Iraq than Iran and who were mostly Sunni Muslims that resented the Shiite majority in Iran. The British also stepped up support to the National Will party which was militantly anti-Soviet and anti-communist. An ultra conservative Islamic party they proposed a total reversal of all modernization reforms. During the 1946 crisis National Will attacked Tudeh offices in the British occupied south. British encouragement of separatism in the south, however, was never as extensive as the Soviet's similar effort in the north. The British, for example, did not distribute arms or organize separatist militias. In that sense Nikki Keddie's claim that all three Allied powers were maneuvering to influence Iranian politics was only technically true. It is hard to establish a serious basis of comparison between the understaffed and underfunded American advisor missions, the British sponsorship of some southern tribes and tolerance of the National Will party (which could hardly be compared with the advantages Moscow enjoyed with the Tudeh) with the massive influx of Soviet advisors (political and military) and arms and training to separatist militias. Moreover, as Keddie acknowledges, the Soviet zone in Iran was often closed even to her allies. Soviet activities in the north exceeded a bid for influence in Iran and crossed over into blatant direct interference. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2009), 93; Nikki Keddie, *Modern Iran. Roots and Revolution*. (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 2006), 109-110.]

Although counterintuitive on the surface, an agreement with Stalin to split Iran could have offered some important advantages for England particularly if they feared (true or not) that, as Clemens Shaver put it, that America was turning Iran into an American protectorate. The establishment of the PGC not only raised suspicions with the USSR but to a lesser degree with the British as well. Just as Moscow feared the USA might use its wartime position to prevent the Soviets from incorporating northern Iran into the Soviet

should.¹⁷¹ Another possible explanation for Churchill's reluctance to promote Eden's proposal among the Big Three chiefs is that he believed the Iran case would best be settled by the new CFM. If so, it would have been a newfound modesty on his part to defer to the British foreign secretary. Whatever the explanation it represented a collective failure on the part of the British and American heads of government to manage a developing crisis. The secret protocol produced by the summit stated "It was agreed that Allied troops should be withdrawn immediately from Teheran and that further stages of the withdrawal of troops from Iran should be considered at the meeting of the council of Foreign Ministers to be held in London in September 11 to October 2, 1945."¹⁷² The Soviets demanded and got any references to Iran scrubbed from the public *communiqué* about the summit.¹⁷³

The Iranian government was disappointed by the outcome of the Potsdam summit.¹⁷⁴ Renewed and specific guarantees of a restoration of their full independence after the war floundered on Soviet intransigence and American apathy. The Iranians were not alone in fearing that Washington was not taking events in their country seriously. Shortly after Potsdam, in late August 1945, Loy Henderson in the State Department's Near Eastern Affairs Division had attempted to renew his superior's interest in Iran

sphere so too London feared that the USA was angling to elbow England out of her sphere in the south. On February 29, 1943, FDR attempted to allay those fears in a communication with Churchill. Here he stated that the USA was not seeking any sphere of influence in Iran and was present only to expedite Lend-Lease into the USSR. The pre-crisis and the establishment of a small contingent of American advisors at the request of the Shah's regime, appears to have restarted English anxiety as much about the USA as the USSR. In a post-Yalta communication to Churchill, FDR again stated that the USA had no interest in a sphere of influence in Iran but this time added that America wished to see no country establish an Iranian sphere of influence, an addition that could have been aimed at both Russia and England. The USA, the president, said aimed to see a fully independent and sovereign Iran. (See Loewenheim, Francis, Langley, Harold, and Jonas, Manfred. (ed) *Roosevelt and Churchill. Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, 499). In this context it is not hard to see why Churchill might well prefer a north-south split of Iran with the USSR which probably would keep the USA out. If Iran did become the independent and sovereign postwar nation FDR said was America's objective then England could assume that given the chance Tehran would prefer oil deals with American oil companies which were wealthier and more modern than their counterparts in Russia or England.

¹⁷¹ Churchill was unexpectedly replaced as prime minister mid-way through the summit by Clement Attlee who exhibited even less interest in supporting Eden's proposal the latter having also been replaced by Ernest Bevin.

¹⁷² Herbert Feis, *Between War and Peace. The Potsdam Conference*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1960), 351.

¹⁷³ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 273. Iran was mentioned only in the secret protocol and then only to state that the matter was being deferred to the London CFM sessions.

¹⁷⁴ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 271.

including sending a long memo to the secretary of state. Henderson proposed keeping the issue alive by establishing a Big Three commission on Iran which could be a vehicle, he wrote, to "...impress on the British and Soviet governments the multilateral nature of their obligations in Iran." His efforts fell on deaf ears.¹⁷⁵

Autumn in London and Christmas in Moscow

When it came to Iran, Molotov's performances at Yalta and Potsdam had been brilliant. No new commitments by the Big Three had been accepted and the Soviets had not been locked into anything specific regarding Iran leaving Stalin with plenty of options. FDR and Truman had been placated with generic reassurances from him undoubtedly leaving the impression that Washington did not consider Iran as critical. In Stalin's world if the issue was important it would have been accompanied by pressure and firmness. James Byrnes, the new secretary state, furthered that impression at the London CFM sessions. Although Byrnes believed the American A-Bomb monopoly was sufficient leverage to intimidate Russia and break Molotov's winning streak by forcing concessions at the conference table,¹⁷⁶ he was almost completely unconcerned with Iran. Indeed, immediately following Potsdam the extent that he considered Iran was how to evacuate the PGC rapidly without consideration to what the USSR or England did or did not do.

In spite of Byrnes' relegation of Iran to a tertiary rank of interest, one of the few concrete accomplishments in London was setting a date as a deadline for all foreign military to leave Iran: March 2, 1946, six months after the September 2, 1945 armistice with Japan. If he had to be forced into definite promise this was the date Stalin preferred. The new British foreign secretary, Ernest Bevin, took up where Anthony Eden had left off at Potsdam, reviving the idea of a phased withdrawal with December 15, 1945 as the soft target for all but a token force of foreigners to be withdrawn; March 2 would serve as

¹⁷⁵ Louise L'Estrange Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War. The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946*. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 121; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 273.

¹⁷⁶ Randall Woods and Howard Jones, *Dawning of the Cold War*. (Chicago: Elephant Press, 1991), 88. Although juddered a failure and discarded after the London CFM, Byrnes' strategy of "atomic diplomacy" as it was dubbed by *Pravda*, might have had an afterlife during the Iran crisis. If Truman's account that the Soviets were forced to evacuate Iran under the implied military threats he issued from the White House to use force--even atomic saber rattling-- to achieve that end, then atomic diplomacy was revived with great success.

the hard date for final withdrawal of the small number of remaining forces. That proposal was rebuffed by the Russians. Molotov insisted that the 1942 treaty was sufficiently clear and no further discussion was required. Bevin, without support from Byrnes, attempted to raise the issue again and was again opposed by Molotov who insisted the 1942 treaty was sufficiently clear. As a result Iran was removed from the conference agenda and another opportunity for joint pressure by America and England on Russia was lost.¹⁷⁷

A date certain for complete withdrawal of all foreign military from their country was considered progress by Tehran. Four days after the formal surrender of Japan, the Iranian foreign minister, Anushiravn Siphahodi, issued a public statement reminding all foreign forces they now had six months to fully evacuate Iran.¹⁷⁸ (The PGC had been present at the invitation of the British and had no treaty obligation to leave but of course no explicit invitation from the Shah's government had ever been issued for them to stay either).

Still, Tehran had hoped for more at the London CFM. As in the past, most in the Iranian government favored a firm commitment from the USA to act as a guarantor that the Soviet and British governments would evacuate their armies. That was a role neither Truman nor Byrnes was willing to accept and at the time of the London CFM. Since the height of the 1944 pre-crisis the Soviets had seemingly gotten the message from Washington and cooled their Azerbaijani and Tudeh comrades down. It might appear that the Soviets could be made "manageable" after all as Byrnes assumed at the start of the conference. If so it was an assumption not warranted by the facts on the ground. The Soviets had turned down the heat in Iran but they had not turned it off.¹⁷⁹ As Bruce

¹⁷⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 276-277. True to form, Molotov was in no mood to speak of Iran at the London conference but he was anxious to address other places in the Middle East when he renewed the Soviet request for a trusteeship for Libya. Byrnes again misinterpreted the point, telling the cabinet that "the principal reason Russia wants Libya has to do with uranium." [Byrnes quoted in Robert Messer, *The End of an Alliance*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), p, 139.]

¹⁷⁸ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR in Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 80-82. Needless to say, Iranians preferred V-E day (May 8, 1945) to have been the date for the end of WWII but at Soviet insistence her Big Three allies accepted V-J Day as the formal end of WWII.

¹⁷⁹ In September 1945, for example, the political commissar of Soviet Azerbaijan, Lt. General Atakchiov, summoned Kurdish leaders to Baku, demanding that they restrain their immediate agitation for a separate state yet assured them that in the near future, Moscow would be sponsoring a regional upheaval that would include a greater Kurdish state carved out of Iran, Iraq and Turkey. [William Eagleton, *The Kurdish Republic of 1946*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 43-44; 76.] It was one more indication that the

Kuniholm has noted, during Potsdam and the London CFM, the Soviets continued to prevent Iranian police entry into their occupation zone (and confined any already there to the barracks) while the Red Army gave free reign to separatists in Azerbaijan to engage in rioting and looting especially of national state property and that of larger landowners.¹⁸⁰ The message was clear to anyone paying attention, as Eden had been: the Soviet occupiers could accelerate the situation back to pre-crisis levels or worse anytime they wished. In his post V-J Day statement reminding foreign forces of their obligation to leave Iran, Sipahbodi added that "Now that the war is over Iran should have freedom of action in its northern territory, and the Soviets should stop their censorship and interference in our internal affairs." Previous efforts by the Red Army to block Tehran from exercising her authority in the north, he declared, would no longer be tolerated.¹⁸¹ The Tripartite Treaty had recognized right of the national government in Iran to police her own internal affairs but using the excuse of military necessity the Soviet occupation authorities had consistently inhibited the Shah's government from exercising its authority in the north of the country. With the war over, military necessity was no longer a credible assertion by the Red Army to prevent the deployment of Iranian national government authorities.

On November 19-20, 1945, Sipahbodi's implication that the central government would test the Soviet occupation authorities was implemented. Teheran dispatched an Iranian military column 1,500 strong toward Soviet occupied Azerbaijan ostensibly to bring the separatist Azeri and Kurdish movements under control. Tehran claimed that Red Army soldiers in *mufti* were distributing large amounts of arms to the local communist-separatist militias; national government officials who had remained in Azerbaijan and those locals who expressed sympathy for the Shah were under intense pressure or arrest while others "disappeared." *Izvestia* rebutted those reports and claimed they were British propaganda contrived to divert the world's attention from England's

Kremlin had only lowered the temperature after the pre-crisis of 1944 but had not ended it. They continued to assure their allies in northern Iran of their support for separatism and on a regional level.

¹⁸⁰ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton University Press, 1980), 273; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 92.

¹⁸¹ Sipahbodi quoted in Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR in Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 80-82; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 275

problems in Palestine. The British, however, were not the source of the reports from Azerbaijan and indeed London was at this point mostly silent on the tense atmosphere in the north –for their own reasons.¹⁸²

There had been a few minor probes by the central government into Azerbaijan in the fall of 1945 ostensibly to restore law and order.¹⁸³ All had been blocked by Soviet occupation authorities on the grounds that the presence of national government troops would only enflame the separatist minded Azeri and Kurdish peoples and make matters worse.¹⁸⁴ Although Tehran protested these incidents they had not yet caught the world's attention. The Iranian military column in November, however, was a more serious challenge. It would be halted at two points (Qazin and Karaji) on the road to Tabriz and turned back under threat of armed force from the Soviet army and communist militia of force. The Iranians were warned by the commanding Russian officer present that penetration of Azerbaijan province would be construed as an attack on the USSR.¹⁸⁵ Although the threat was from a lower ranking officer it is highly unlikely he would have done so without pre-approval from high ranks and it did reveal how the occupying Soviet

¹⁸² Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR in Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980). 84-85.

¹⁸³ Some post Cold War historians like Stephen McFarland have argued that the dispatch of the Iranian army column was more than just an effort at law and order or even an assertion of Iran's sovereignty over all its territory. For McFarland it was a furtherance of Tehran's strategy to involve the U.S. in Iran and thus act as counterweight to the USSR and UK. The Iranian column was more of a provocation that meant to stimulate a crisis or at least take advantage of one by advertising to America that the Soviets were still violating Iran's internal affairs and with no wartime justification. Thus, for example, Ambassador Ala, following the lead of his government, claimed that the Soviets had dispatched 6,000 Red Army troops to Qazin to block the 1,500 strong Iranian column. Ambassador Murray in Tehran warned the State Department that was gross exaggeration on Ala's part. The Soviets, he reported, had indeed sent a strong force to Qazin but hardly in the thousands. [Stephen McFarland, "The Iran Crisis of 1946" in Melvyn Leffler and David Painter (Eds.), *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (New York: Routledge Press, 1994), 249]. (Of course that the an Iranian military column of 1500 was without ceremony turned back and on their native soil by a much smaller force of Soviet troops no doubt tempted the Tehran government to exaggerate the Russian numbers to save face rather than simply to recruit the USA to an ongoing presence in Iran as McFarland would have it).

That Murray and the U.S. Embassy discounted the exaggerated numbers offered by Tehran's government and opted for a more realistic assessment of the numbers deployed by the Russians is, contrary to the Soviet interpretation and that of Western revisionist historians, another indication that Americans on the ground in Iran were not attempting to artificially enhance the Iranian case against the Soviets but where offering Washington realistic assessments and warnings to be cautious of the reporting from the Tehran regime. Washington was thus not a slave to official information from Tehran.

¹⁸⁴ Previous minor attempts by the Iranian *gendarmarie* to enter the Soviet occupation zone are detailed in Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 92.

¹⁸⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 279; Robert Rossow, "The Battle of Azerbaijan" in *The Middle East Journal*. Winter 1956, Vol. 10. 18.

authorities viewed their relationship with Azerbaijan province—a virtual member of the USSR.

On November 20, Ambassador Ala, acting on instructions from his government, met with Byrnes. He blamed the deteriorating state of affairs in Azerbaijan on the Soviet occupation. Speaking of the Red Army interdiction of the Iranian army column heading into Azerbaijan, the ambassador said “...we hope the Allies will take a serious measure. We hope that Moscow will desire ending these events. We also hope that the United States will influence Moscow.”¹⁸⁶ The issue was taken up at the November 23, cabinet meeting in Washington. At the Potsdam summit Truman had pledged to withdraw all American military from Iran within sixty days no matter what the Russians or British did or did not do. Slightly behind this self imposed schedule the PGC had none the less by mid November been reduced to approximately 5,000 from the high point of just over 30,000. The PGC was on track to be fully evacuated by New Years Day 1946.

In light of the Soviet army obstruction of the Iranian military column days earlier, some cabinet members questioned whether the withdrawal of the remaining PGC troops should go forward. Keeping them in place would presumably act as a deterrent if the Soviets were aiming to expand beyond their occupation zone. Byrnes and Secretary of War Robert Patterson disagreed and argued that the Soviet-Iranian confrontation was a reason to accelerate the withdrawal of the PGC not slow it down. “He [Byrnes] thought,” recorded Henry Wallace, “the only thing for us to do was to act at once and get our troops out... [Robert] Patterson agreed with Byrnes that we ought to get these men out at once.”¹⁸⁷ If the Soviets were intending to move southward Byrnes did not want American troops in the way nor did he even wish to chance employing them as a deterrent to Soviet aggression. Truman supported no change; the PGC would withdraw apace and not become a trip wire that might trigger greater American involvement if the Russians moved south.

Truman rejected a proposal for a formal protest but did authorize a communication to the Soviets to be delivered by Harriman the next day. In it he opted to give the

¹⁸⁶ Ala quoted in Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian-Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 104.

¹⁸⁷ John Morton Blum (ed.), *The Price of Vision. The Diary of Henry Wallace*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1973), 519.

Russians the benefit of the doubt and attributed the Soviet army officers' threat to open fire on the Iranian column at Qazvin and Karaji to be without the authorization from the Kremlin. The missive did put the Soviets on notice that the White House was aware of aggressive Soviet activities in northern Iran including the halting of the national government's military column. It stated that America still adhered to the Big Three Declaration on Iran of 1943 and that Truman expected to see all foreign forces out of Iran on schedule if not sooner. The PGC he said would be dismantled and out of Iran by New Year's Day, 1946.¹⁸⁸ Although the American note exhibited a renewed concern about Iran, the Eden-Bevin proposal of a phased and coordinated withdrawal of all foreign armies was still unattractive to Truman and Byrnes.

On November 29, the Soviets issued a reply stating that they too adhered to the Big Three Declaration on Iran but reminded the USA that Russian presence in Iran (unlike the American) was governed by two treaties: the 1921 treaty of friendship between Soviet Russia and Persia and the 1942 Tripartite treaty. Those treaties would determine when the Soviets would evacuate and not before. They also rejected accusations of aggressive activities in the Soviet zone saying such claims "did not correspond to reality." Indeed, the counter-charged that the shah's regime was provoking incidents and then blaming the Russians for aggression when they were merely trying to maintain law and order. Further, what Tehran and Washington called separatist activity in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan was nothing more than the indigenous peoples attempting to speak their own language and live their own cultures free of Persianification. The Russian reply admitted the Red Army had stopped the Iranian column but that the column had been sent to toward Tabriz to effect "not the cessation, but the increase, of disorders and likewise bloodshed which would compel the Soviet government to introduce into Iran further forces of its own for the purpose of preserving order and insuring the security of

¹⁸⁸ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 280-281. The government in Tehran sent formal protests to the USSR over the obstruction of their military column. Iranian Foreign Minister Abolqasem Najm sent a note to Ambassador Mikhail Maximov of the USSR demanding his country halt interference in Iranian internal affairs. Najm also sent notes to Washington and London asking for American and British assistance to pressure the Soviets to end interfering in Iran's affairs. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 92-93.]

the Soviet garrison.”¹⁸⁹ The Soviet reply then cited a variety of authorities to support its case: they opportunistically seized on the weakness in the Big Three Declaration on Iran pointing out that no limits on the size or composition of the Red Army in Iran was contained in that document; the American note ignored the time frame set out in the Tri-Partite treaty of 1942 and instead claimed (correctly) that the 1921 treaty between Tehran and Moscow that was initially invoked by Russia to justify the 1941 invasion had no time limit on the presence of their forces. Soviet troops could stay, according to that treaty, as long as a third party threat to Russia existed on Iranian soil.¹⁹⁰ The Soviets were not willing at this point to say who that third party was who posed a threat to Russia and thus warranted invoking the specter of the 1921 treaty. “Soviet intransigence,” concluded Bruce Kuniholm, “again had blocked an attempt to meliorate a situation of explosive character.”¹⁹¹

On December 8, the State Department took the rare step of releasing the Soviet reply of November 29 to the media. Although the Soviet statement dismissed the American concerns about Red Army abuses of power in northern Iran as something close to a fairy tale, it also said stated Soviets would adhere to their treaty obligations and the Big Three Declaration on Iran. That put Moscow on the public record with a renewed, if

¹⁸⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 280-281; Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR in Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 87; “(1) Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United States and the Governments of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom Regarding the Withdrawal of Foreign Troops from Iran. (a) Note from the Government of the United States to the Government of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, November 24, 1945. (b) Note from the Government of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics to the Government of the United States, November 29, 1945,” in Raymond Dennett and Robert Turner, (Eds.) *Documents on American Foreign Relations*. Vol. VIII, July 1945-December 1946, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 852-854.

¹⁹⁰ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 281; “(1) Exchange of Notes between the Government of the United States and the Governments of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics and the United Kingdom Regarding the Withdrawal of Foreign Troops from Iran. (a) Note from the Government of the United States to the Government of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, November 24, 1945. (b) Note from the Government of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics to the Government of the United States, November 29, 1945,” in Raymond Dennett and Robert Turner, (eds.) *Documents on American Foreign Relations*. Vol. VIII, July 1945-December 1946, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1948), 852-854; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 93.

¹⁹¹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 281.

unintended, reaffirmation of the USSR's previous commitments on Iran which Stalin and Molotov had been so reluctant to do at Yalta and Potsdam.¹⁹²

. The government in Tehran had not been the only one's disappointed by the London CFM sessions. Byrnes had bet heavily on the American atomic bomb monopoly leveraging concessions from the Russians at the conference table yet on the big issues he came away from London empty handed. Like others before him, Byrnes drew the incorrect conclusion that it was Molotov that was to blame for the lack of movement. Stalin, Byrnes came to believe, would be far more reasonable than his mulish foreign minister. In reality, Molotov was a dedicated Stalinist would did nothing that as not preapproved by the *Vozhd*. Byrnes believed he had to bypass Molotov and go directly to the source: Stalin. "I wanted," he explained, "to see the man who had the power to decide."¹⁹³ Consequently, Byrnes called a new session of the CFM to be held in Moscow during the Christmas holiday.

Like FDR before him, Byrnes did not avail himself of advice or briefings by America's Soviet experts and took only a small staff of three with him to Moscow.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² The full impact of the release was undermined by none other than Pat Hurley whom FDR had transferred from his post as special envoy in the Middle East to the same position in China. On December 8, Hurley publically accused the State Department of deliberately "losing" China to the communists. It was an explosive charge that would ripple through American politics for years to come yet coming as it did on that day it distracted media attention from the unusual State Department release of the Soviet note of November 29. Ironically, Hurley had done much to promote the cause of Iranian independence and yet in this moment he inadvertently ended up hurting it. [Richard Bernstein, *China 1945*. (New York: Vintage, 2014), 339-340; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 281].

¹⁹³ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 113. Byrnes' assistant Walter Brown recorded that his boss was "has no confidence in building peace with M[olotov], sees only solution for next to be held in M[oscow] where he can deal with Stalin." [Brown quoted in Robert Messer, *The End of an Alliance. James F. Byrnes, Roosevelt, Truman, and the Origins of the Cold War*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 134.]

¹⁹⁴ Kennan, George. *Memoirs, 1925-1950*, p. 284. Kennan, who attended the Moscow CFM sessions, detected more another problem that he believed inhibited the American efforts. Stylistically Byrnes was, Kennan thought, imitating many of Roosevelt's bad habits: arriving in Moscow with "no clear or fixed plan" and "no definite set of objectives or limitations" but relied instead on his political instincts and ability to opportunistically exploit tactical openings to carry the day. "He plays his negotiations by ear...he relies on his own agility and presence of mind..." rather than a well thought out strategy." [George Kennan, *Memoirs, 1925-1950*. (Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1967), 287.] Present as translator, Bohlen agreed with Kennan's assessment: It was a return to the bad old days of personal diplomacy and by an amateur at that, a style of doing business made worse when practiced by a man who lacked FDR's charisma. Bohlen was troubled by Byrnes' casual approach resulting in a "thoroughly disorganized" conference including his near total refusal to inform Truman of the doings in Moscow. For Byrnes, Moscow was a one man show and in another example of his poor opinion of Truman he thought it beneath him to bring the president in

Byrnes, like his old boss, was certain that he already knew what made the Soviets tick and how to reach them making the opinions of men who actually had extensive contact with Stalin and Molotov, who spoke the language, and studied the Soviet regime, superfluous. Observing one session of the CFM, Kennan noted that Byrnes, like FDR had, relied on his verbal agility and personal diplomacy skills rather than a "clear or fixed plan" with definite objectives and an understanding of the possibilities and limitations of what could be achieved. That failing was compounded by his failure to consult experts since Byrnes knew nothing of the countries likely to be discussed including Iran.¹⁹⁵

Thus far in his diplomatic career, Byrnes, unlike Eden at Yalta and Potsdam, had not demonstrated much interest in the Iran case considering it largely a British matter to solve. Once in Moscow, Byrnes probably would have preferred to avoid the matter altogether or leave it to Ernest Bevin. Byrnes did not even place Iran on the official conference agenda even though Ambassador Ala had requested it.¹⁹⁶ Instead, when it came up Byrnes suggested, and Molotov quickly approved, treating Iran as an informal point. Still the situation in Iran was growing more alarming by the day and confronting Stalin could not be delayed. "The Near East," a State Department briefing book said, "is rapidly developing into one of the vital danger spots in world relationships."¹⁹⁷ It was an assessment reinforced by Mark Etheridge's warning from the frontlines about Russia's aggressive intentions in the Near East in general and Iran in specific.¹⁹⁸ At one session,

on the act. When Bohlen mentioned his concerns to Byrnes, he was, in Bohlen's words, "put in my place" in "sharp tones." "Like Roosevelt," Bohlen said, "[Byrnes] went in perhaps too much for improvisation in dealing with subjects of considerable importance," Iran being among them. [Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 248-250.]

¹⁹⁵ Kennan quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *George F. Kennan. An American Life*. (New York: Penguin Press, 2011), 210.

¹⁹⁶ On December 10, Ambassador Ala in Washington, following instructions from Tehran, asked Byrnes to place on the CFM agenda (1) Immediate evacuation of Iran by all foreign troops; (2) Complete freedom of action by national government authorities throughout Iran. [Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 114.]

¹⁹⁷ Charles Mee, *Meeting At Potsdam*. (New York: Evans and Co., 1975), 163.

¹⁹⁸ Mark Etheridge was an American newspaper editor (*Louisville Courier-Journal*) dispatched by Byrnes to Eastern Europe and the Balkans in October 1945. He reported back that the occupying Soviet forces were frequently bullying the local populations. Under the guise of suppressing fascist and Nazi elements they were in fact liquidating anyone who might challenge communist rule including trade unionists, socialists, liberals, academics, religious figures and parties as well as old school conservatives. This ran contrary to Russia's many assertions during the war that they were only searching for security for their country (a limited goal that Etheridge endorsed and central to FDR's Soviet policy) not socialist revolution. Etheridge concluded that events were moving fast for the Russians and if the USA did not act soon to

Byrnes asked Stalin why the Soviet Union was hesitating to leave northern Iran now that the war was over, even fomenting separatist rebellions in the region. The Soviet dictator lamely replied that his country had legitimate security concerns on the border with Iran. The nearby oil producing center on the Soviet side of the border in Baku, Stalin maintained, was at serious security risk from the Iranians.¹⁹⁹ Byrnes pressed Stalin about the dictator's catch-all justification for almost anything—security concerns—suggesting that it was silly to think that the mighty Red Army, which had just torn the guts out of the *Wehrmacht*, was now afraid of the Iranian military which at the time amounted to little more than a glorified national police force.²⁰⁰ Stalin countered that the border region was rife with instability and the Iranian government under such circumstances might dispatch saboteurs to torch the oil fields in Soviet Azerbaijan. Privately, Byrnes called this the “weakest excuse” he ever heard the Russians make.²⁰¹ (In a conversation with the new

enforce the agreements made at Yalta it would be "too late." Indeed, Etheridge warned that Iran and Turkey were next on Stalin's menu—a conclusion that Truman would reach as well in his January 5 letter to Byrnes. Etheridge recommend a firm bargaining stand with Stalin.

At the Moscow CFM he revealed it to Stalin and threatened to release it to the public if the general-secretary did not agree to more balanced concessions. Stalin was not impressed with the report but Truman was. Once he returned to Washington, Byrnes found his boss furious that the report had been kept from him and worse yet that his secretary of state revealed it to Stalin. The report, Truman said in his January 5, 1946 letter to Byrnes, fully confirmed the hard line assessment that the Soviets were, and contrary to their many agreements and pledges to FDR, establishing "police states" in countries they occupied. [Robert Ferrell, (ed.) *Off the Record. The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman*. (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1980). 79; Hugh Thomas, *Armed Truce. The Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-1946*. (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 287; David Yergin, *Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War*. (New York: Penguin, 1990), 143-145.]

¹⁹⁹ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 119. The Soviets solemnly pledged at the Yalta conference that they had no territorial ambitions and only aimed at securing their borders from outside aggression. This had constituted the party line in Soviet foreign policy: what might appear as aggression to the outside world (especially the subject peoples) was in reality the search for reasonable border security. Accordingly it was becoming inevitable that Stalin or Molotov would always claim border security interests were at stake in any case involving Soviet expansionism. It was a convenient rationalization for any aggression Moscow might take and since Stalin, like Lenin before him, believed that the Bolshevik state lived in a world that was eternally hostile to its very existence, it would not be difficult to trump up constant threats to justify expansion. It had the further advantage of playing on world sympathy for Russia following the devastation of two invasions during the world wars. Indeed, in a confidential conversation with an American reporter in January 1946, Molotov's deputy and rival, Maxim Litvinov, confirmed such suspicions when he said that the Soviets were using over-hyped security claims as a cover for expansionism. (See Taubman, William. *Stalin's American Policy*, p. 118; Molotov, Vyacheslav. *Molotov Remembers* p. 6).

²⁰⁰ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 118-119.

²⁰¹ James Byrnes, *All In One Lifetime*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 333. Perhaps the surreal if not paranoid fears of Iranian arsonists creating chaos and anarchy in the oil fields of Baku were a projection by Stalin of his own days as a young Bolshevik agitator. During the 1905 rebellion that followed Russia's disastrous war with Japan, Baku became a center of revolutionary activity and sabotage including the torching of oil derricks creating what one witness called “Hell let loose.” Two-thirds of the industry was

American ambassador to Russia, Walter Bedell Smith, appointed during the 1946 crisis, Stalin could not resist advancing the same lame argument he had tried on Byrnes. Once again he asserted that even a lone saboteur sneaking into Russia from Iran armed with a “box of matches” could destroy vital Soviet oil production around Baku. This, Stalin claimed, justified Russia’s strategic-military interest in Iran and any measures necessary to secure the border region. As Eisenhower’s wartime chief of staff, Smith had simultaneously dealt with maddening, infuriating, and temperamental personalities like Bernard Montgomery, Charles de Gaulle, and George Patton, must have found Stalin at this moment to be even more trying than they had been. Like Byrnes before him, Smith found Stalin’s fears of pyromaniac Iranian based saboteurs to be pathetic.)²⁰²

Stalin was honest to this extent: instability was brewing on the Iranian-Soviet border but it was highly amplified and accelerated by the Soviets themselves when they encouraged and armed separatists—Kurds and Azerbaijanis—to challenge Tehran’s authority.²⁰³ Stalin, of course, did not advertise Soviet sponsored destabilization in Iran during his session with Byrnes, claiming instead it was all the work of the shah’s regime combined with left over fascist agents who apparently had not heard that the war was over and who had miraculously survived years of Red Army, SMERSH and NKVD occupation to become operational in late 1945. More worrisome was that Stalin’s justification had been the official rationale offered by the Soviets for the invasion and occupation of Iran in the first place under the 1921 treaty: to prevent sabotage of Russian

destroyed halting oil exports. According to energy historian Daniel Yergin it was the first time in world history oil production was used as a weapon and Stalin was on the scene. (Daniel Yergin, *The Prize. The Epic Quest for Oil, Money & Power*. (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 130-131). If this experience was the source of his postwar fears about Iran, Stalin failed to explain that to any Westerner or he wrongly assumed they knew more about Russian history than they did. It was another failure on his part to make the case for Russian security interests on the Iranian-Russian border.

²⁰² Walter Bedell Smith, *My Three Years In Moscow*. (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Co., 1950), 52.

²⁰³ Robert Rossow, the American vice-consul stationed in the provincial capital of Tabriz—the headquarters of the Russian occupation authority—had observed a common tactic in the northern region which established beyond all doubt that Soviet occupiers were creating much of the instability that Stalin cited. Azerbaijani militias loyal to the Soviets, Rossow reported, would attack an Iranian police station or even a whole village with Red Army units trailing close behind. Any attempt at resistance by the victims of the attack or intervention by the Tehran government would be prevented by the commanding Red Army officer claiming that the security requirements of the Soviet Army, which just happened to be coincidentally nearby, and the need to establish stability, precluded any armed activity and thus no resistance would be tolerated. If in spite of the warnings opposition was offered by those loyal to the national government then Tehran would be blamed for sponsoring instability. [Robert Rossow, "The Battle of Azerbaijan" in *The Middle East Journal*. Winter 1956, Vol. 10. 18.]

oil fields from fascist saboteurs in Iran supposedly harbored by Reza Shah.²⁰⁴ Stalin was in essence announcing that the very situation which led to offensive Soviet operations in 1941 against Iran was repeating itself in 1945. Although in his mind Byrnes dismissed Stalin's claims as absurd, left unasked by the secretary of state was this: if the huge Soviet occupation of northern Iran (Ambassador Murray estimated the size of Red Army forces in Iran at that point as 70,000 in all of the north and 30,000 concentrated in Azerbaijan)²⁰⁵ was not securing the border how far would the Red Army have to penetrate into Iran to do so? Would Moscow dispatch an even larger and better armed force into Iran if security was precarious on the border regions? Stalin had implied as much but Byrnes missed an opportunity to force the Soviet to say so explicitly. Byrnes said he came to Moscow to see the man who could decide—Stalin—and yet once in front of him Byrnes did not make good use of his presence to exploit the weak case Stalin was advancing and which would remain the Russian party line throughout the upcoming crisis.²⁰⁶ Stalin's fears expressed to Byrnes of saboteurs sneaking into Baku from Iran seemed to be implementing the same practice observed by Rossow in Eastern Europe but on grander scale.

During a December 19 interview with Stalin, Byrnes reminded him that the Tehran declaration of the Big Three on Iran "...expressly declared that they [the Big Three] were 'at one with the Government of Iran in their desire for the maintenance of the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iran.'"²⁰⁷ Byrnes then pointed out that when an Iranian military column tried to enter the northern Iran on November 19-20, for the express purpose of quelling armed separatist movements and restoring internal order, they were halted and turned back not just by Azerbaijani militia but Red Army troops. The Russian officer in command had even ordered his troops to open fire on the Iranian column if it proceeded any further and stated that if the Iranians crossed over into

²⁰⁴ Establishing an Allied line of communication to Russia through neutral Iran's warm water ports was not the officially stated reason cited for the Anglo-Russian invasion, although it was obviously the underlying cause.

²⁰⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 286; Stephen McFarland "The Iranian Crisis of 1946" in Melvyn Leffler, (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 249.

²⁰⁶ Peter Lisagor and Marguerite Higgins. *Overtime in Heaven. Adventures in the Foreign Service*. (Garden City, New York, 1964), 144-145.

²⁰⁷ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947). 118.

Azerbaijan it would be interpreted as an *act of war on the Soviet Union*.²⁰⁸ (Byrnes had received reports from Ambassador Murray in Tehran in November that American diplomats were being denied travel permits by the Soviet occupation authorities thus making it impossible for Americans to observe what was transpiring in Azerbaijan province. Further, the Soviet ambassador in Tehran had suddenly and unexpectedly returned to the USSR. Murray suspected the move was contrived to make it impossible for him to lodge a formal protest with his Soviet counterpart about the denial of travel permits to American diplomats.)²⁰⁹ Byrnes reiterated that the Tehran government had asked all foreign military to leave Iran ahead of schedule and that the United States had agreed to fully evacuate the PGC by January 1st and he urged the Soviets to do likewise.²¹⁰

Attempting to imitate FDR's trademark style of personal diplomacy, Byrnes appealed to Stalin's sense of fair play, such as it was, by asking him to recall that Iran and the shah had sided with the Big Three and allowed the use of Iranian territory by the Allies to funnel a flood of Lend-Lease supplies into Russian hands. Indeed, the Big Three Declaration on Iran recognized the vital contribution of Iran to the Allied war effort.²¹¹ In effect, Byrnes was asking that Russia repay Iran by accepting her request that they evacuate the Red Army from Azerbaijan province ahead of schedule. America and England had acknowledged her allied status and wartime contribution by agreeing to promptly leave Iran, a process that was well underway on the part of the PGC. Indeed,

²⁰⁸ Rossow, Robert. "The Battle of Azerbaijan" *The Middle East Journal*, p. 18; Kuniholm, Bruce. *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, p. 279.

²⁰⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 280. As Kuniholm noted earlier (page 155) this was common practice for the Soviet authorities. They (unlike the British in the south) required travel permits for entry into their occupation zone in the north even for American and British diplomats on official business with their respective consulates in Tabriz. Denial of those permits was frequent when the Soviets wished to conceal activities in Azerbaijan.

²¹⁰ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 118. On November 23 Truman authorized a message to the USSR (delivered by Harriman to Molotov on November 24) and England to urge them to leave Iran ahead of schedule. The English agreed (as they had since the Eden proposal was floated back at Yalta) but Molotov's November 29 reply said the Russians were only governed by the 1921 (which was situational but not date specific) and 1942 three party treaty although they also adhered to the spirit of the 1943 Big Three Declaration on Iran. Although Byrnes did not make a point of it, the United States could have claimed no deadline at all, Washington not being a signatory to any treaty with Iran and the Big Three declaration that FDR signed specified no time line but only a general endorsement of a restoration of Iranian sovereignty following the war. Indeed, the government in Tehran urged Washington to consider that they were under no treaty obligation (unlike the USSR and UK) to evacuate Iran at all and thus should remain in place.

²¹¹ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 118.

Truman had promised to fully evacuate the PGC by New Year's Day 1946.²¹² Tehran had requested a rapid departure and the Anglo-Americans were completing even though England could have, like Russia, insisted on the hard deadline agreed to at the London CFM. The magic of personal diplomacy, even had FDR been the practitioner, would no longer work on Stalin as it had, to a limited degree, at the Eureka summit. Replying to Byrnes plea that he refract on Iran's contribution to the Allied war effort, Stalin said that "since then much water has flood under the bridge," ominously implying that Iran could no longer be considered an ally by the USSR.²¹³

With the Soviet Union victorious in the war, Stalin's willingness to cooperate with the West or live up to past agreements that did not suit him now that his regime had not only survived but triumphed, was in steady decline. Moscow was counting on postwar loans from the USA but it was also helping itself to "war booty" in the countries it occupied.²¹⁴ The Kavtaradze mission back in 1944 implied that Russia was looking for war booty not just from the defeated Axis but allied countries as well. FDR's great gamble that American goodwill and accommodation were bankable in Moscow to be drawn upon after the war in the form of Soviet cooperation had proven to be a long shot.²¹⁵

Stalin insisted the 1942 treaty allowed Russia's occupation force to stay in Iran until March 15 (although previously March 2 was agreed upon by Molotov in London)

²¹² James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 118-119. Although Byrnes did not make a point of it, the United States could have claimed no deadline at all, Washington was not a signatory to any treaty with Iran and the Big Three Declaration on Iran that FDR signed specified no time line but only a general endorsement of a restoration of Iranian sovereignty following the war. The PGC was present at the invitation of the British not the Iranian government but it was now Iran's *official* policy to urge the Russians and the British out as quickly as possible but *unofficially* to urge the Americans to stay on at least until the other Great Powers had left but beyond as well as an insurance policy if nothing else.

²¹³ Stalin quoted in David Robertson, *Sly and Abel. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 466. In the water that was flowing under the bridge as Stalin put it was the Iranian rejection of the 1944 oil mission; the establishment of the American advisor program in Iran; etc. However, it is more likely that Stalin never considered the Shah's regime in Iran to be an ally and that his designs on Iran preexisted the 1941 Anglo-Soviet invasion or the establishment or the arrival of the PGC.

²¹⁴ In the case of northern Iran that meant food shipments back to the USSR long after the requirements of the war had ended and without consideration for the needs of the Iranian people.

²¹⁵ The alternative would have been to lock the Soviets into firm and highly detailed agreements during the early stages of the war when American leverage was the greatest rather than rely on the gamble that Stalin would repay the USA after the war in the form of cooperation and moderation of his trademark hyper-paranoia. If that had been the case then FDR would have pressed Stalin for a detailed Big Three Declaration on Iran at the Eureka summit conference that would have committed all parties to firm time tables for withdrawal and total restoration for Iranian sovereignty, etc.

and that the Soviets would not leave a moment early. Yet, even then, Stalin said Russia was still not obligated to leave and would await clarification of events before deciding when and if to withdraw. The decision to withdraw from Iran, Stalin said, would depend on the conduct of the Iranian government adding that the 1921 treaty with Persia allowed the Red Army to occupy northern Iran if a third party threat to Soviet security existed.²¹⁶ Byrnes could have asked if Stalin was implying that the PGC or British forces in Iran constituted a third party threat to the USSR (thus warranting the invocation of the 1921 treaty between the USSR and Persia) but the secretary, even though he had said he wanted the CFM held in Moscow so he could circumvent Molotov and approach Stalin directly, pulled his punches. Byrnes had received pleas from Dean Acheson and Ambassador Ala in Washington to show firmness and resolve on Iran. On December 20, Ambassador Ala met with Acheson, then acting secretary of state in Byrnes' absence, and made a strong plea for a hard-line stand couched in language designed to appeal to Americans: the role the policy of appeasement played in causing WWII. Soviet aggression in Azerbaijan province, he said, "[is] only the first move in a series which [will] include Turkey and other countries in the Near East...the history of Manchuria, Abyssinia, and Munich [will] be repeated and Azerbaijan [will] prove to [be] the first shot fired in [the] third world war."²¹⁷ Only a strong stand against Soviet aggression in Iran by the Americans could disperse the gathering storm centered now in Iran. It was a keen anticipation of the argument that was being circulated privately by Churchill and would be advanced by both himself and Truman in the coming months.

Stalin was proving to be as intransigent as Molotov on the Iranian question which undermined Byrnes' whole reason for being in Moscow—to outflank the Soviet foreign minister and reach a supposedly more reasonable Stalin directly resulting in new

²¹⁶ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, 118-119. Although Stalin correctly cited the 1921 provision that allowed Soviet military intervention in Iran to prevent a third party security threat to Soviet security, he failed to note (nor did Byrnes) the same treaty also excluded Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Iran. Invoking the terms of the 1921 treaty would prove to be a tricky maneuver for the Soviets at this point since that would require naming the third party threat to their security present in Iran. Only two candidates would qualify and both were Russia's Big Three partners: the U.S. and the British.

²¹⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 285.

agreements added by the magic of personal diplomacy. Indeed, by the end of the conference, Byrnes concluded that Stalin was just as intractable as Molotov and thus no differences existed between them.²¹⁸ In the face of that and the pleas from Acheson and Ala in Washington to establish firm stand on Iran lest he be accused of appeasement of an aggressive dictator, Byrnes asked Stalin for another private session. Stalin agreed and on December 23 they discussed Iran once again. Even without pressure from Acheson and Ala, Byrnes had not been satisfied with Stalin's claims of potential and grave threats from Iranian territory against Baku.²¹⁹ He had found Stalin's fears of match box armed saboteurs setting the Baku oil fields aflame and sneaking back into Iran to be laughable yet would he find Iran to be important enough to press Stalin on the matter and even more importantly present a united front with Bevin?

During this new session, Stalin continued to stonewall saying that Iranian accusations of Soviet misconduct and interference in their internal affairs were a "fantasy" and counter-claimed that it was Tehran that was menacing the Soviet Union not the reverse. Byrnes found it difficult to swallow that a well-trained and heavily armed Russian force of over 30,000 stationed in Iranian-Azerbaijan was threatened by a poorly armed and badly trained Iranian Army column of 1,500 that was travelling openly on a public highway. "The more I thought about Generalissimo Stalin's excuse for retaining [Soviet] troops in Iran, the less confidence I had in the Soviet position." Stalin told Byrnes that he would not evaluate the question of evacuation again until the official deadline for withdrawal had expired worrying Byrnes who now believed, albeit belatedly, that Stalin intended to violate the Big Three declaration on Iran and her other treaty obligations.²²⁰ Of course, it is not hard to see why Stalin would assert a security threat to

²¹⁸ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Borthers, 1947), 121.

²¹⁹ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Borthers, 1947), 119.

²²⁰ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*, 119. According to Jamil Hasanli, Byrnes also contacted Ambassador Murray in Tehran to confirm that Stalin's fears about the security of the Baku oil fields were exaggerated or even invented. Murray replied that indeed, Soviet fears of a security threat to Baku from Iran were baseless. [Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 134.] Although Byrnes was skeptical of Stalin's claims of security concerns on his border with Iran, George Kennan was more sympathetic to the Soviet point of view. During the pre-crisis in 1944, Kennan told the American secretary of state that "The basic motive of recent Soviet action in northern Iran is probably not need for oil itself but apprehension of potential foreign penetration into that area coupled with the concern for prestige. The oil of northern Iran is important not as something Russia needs but as something it might be dangerous for anyone else to exploit. The territory lies near the vital Caucasian oil center which so closely escaped complete conquest in the present war. The Kremlin deems it essential to its security that no

the oil fields in Baku. Such a threat, if it could be linked to a third party present in Iran, would justify the extended presence of Soviet troops in Iran under the terms of the 1921 treaty which, unlike the 1942 Tripartite Treaty, had no time limit. The rub for Stalin was finding the third party that was hostile to the USSR or at least one that he was willing to accurse of being such. Had Stalin done so with the USA or England it would be an unmistakable public announcement from the Kremlin was terminating and the Big Three. Herein rested one of Stalin's chief dilemmas in Iran and perhaps Soviet foreign policy in general: the gap between what he would like to do as a Bolshevik revolutionary and what he thought realistic as the *de facto* head of state.²²¹ He may have believed the Big Three came to an end with the death of FDR and certainly believed that by the time of the Potsdam conference. Yet to say so publically would place the blame on him and alienate an America still considering Russia's request for postwar loans and of course for the moment, with a monopoly on atomic weapons.

Byrnes informed Stalin that although reluctant to do so, America might be inclined to support a complaint by Iran at the United Nations if the matter was not resolved before the inaugural session of the Security Council. In a theme that would guide Byrnes in 1946, the secretary of state emphasized to Stalin that the implications were far greater than the immediate case of Iran. They involved the legitimacy of the United Nations and it's Security Council: "It was exceedingly important, I added, that the the great nations keep their pledges to the smaller powers."²²² Without that the smaller nations that

other great power should have even the chance of getting a foothold there. It probably sees no other way to assure this than by seeking greater political and economic control for itself." [Kennan quoted in Ervand Abrahamian, *The Coup. 1953, The CIA, and the Roots of Modern U.S.-Iranian Relations*. (New York: The New Press, 2013), 40.]

²²¹ Interestingly Iran had once before posed this dilemma to the Bolshevik leadership. In hot pursuit of the retreating White Army during the Russian Civil War the Red Army crossed into Persia and occupied the province of Gilan. A Soviet republic loyal to Moscow was soon established. In 1921 Lenin agreed to withdraw the Soviet forces from Gilan and thus leave the Soviet Republic of Gilan to the tender mercies of the new nationalist government in Tehran headed by the soon to be Reza Shah. In exchange the Soviets got the friendship and security treaty that allowed them to send their army back into Iranian territory if a third party was menacing the Soviet border from Iranian soil. Lenin believed that Iran was not ripe for a socialist revolution but Stalin rejected that realist interpretation and insisted on Soviet support for their comrades in Gilan. He even sent Soviet army reinforcements into Gilan against the wishes of the Politburo. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 133-134, fn. 9].

²²² James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 119-120. Byrnes had already contacted Ambassador Murray in Tehran on December 20 and told him to suggest to the Iranian government that they make some reasonable concessions to the Azerbaijani people like allowing the use of

constituted the bulk of the United Nations member states would lose confidence in the world body.

Stalin did not take Byrnes' threat seriously. According to Bohlen, present as the translator, with a shrug of his shoulders, Stalin cynically replied that Byrnes' warning that America might support an Iranian complaint in the United Nations "will not cause *us* to blush." Again Stalin cast the victim Iran as the victimizer claiming that the disturbances on the border (which he argued when it suited him were all a "fantasy" concocted by Tehran) could be resolved if Iran would cease her hostility toward the USSR. It was a bizarre circle of illogical that must have made Byrnes' and Bohlen's heads spin: Iran was responsible for stirring up anti-Soviet unrest on the border which at other times the Soviets said did not exist as during the pre-crisis when the November 29 reply missive from the Soviet Foreign Ministry stated that reports of lawlessness and disorder in Azerbaijan province did not correspond to reality. Returning from the Kremlin to their lodgings, Byrnes told Bohlen that he foresaw "real trouble over Iran" in the near future.²²³ Yet, inspired by that recognition Byrnes failed to move much beyond probing Stalin. Threats to release the Ethridge report to the media or support an Iranian complaint about the USSR in the Security Council were not likely to impress a man like Stalin. On the other hand, Byrnes had taken the issue up twice with Stalin indicating that he considered Iran to a growing sore sport with the Soviets. Byrnes privately told Bohlen

their native language in schools. Byrnes said this in no way would recognize the legitimacy of a separatist government but these measures would improve Iran's image. "Point out that the thought behind the suggestion," Byrnes instructed Murray, "is that the Iranian case before the UNO and world public opinion will be much stronger if Iran leaves no grounds for charges that people in any part of the country are being deprived of constitutional rights or otherwise unjustly treated by the central government." Murray replied that the Iranian PM had already dispatched Governor General Bayat to Tabriz with an offer to allow for the use of the Turkish language in schools. But Hakimi said he would not recognize any kind of "autonomous parliament" in Azerbaijan province but he might accept a provincial council. [Byrnes quoted in Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 135.]

²²³ Stalin and Byrnes quoted in Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 250; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 285. Byrnes recalled Stalin's retort slightly differently than did Bohlen giving Stalin a more positive spin: "We will do nothing," he remembered Stalin saying, "that will make *you* blush." Byrnes hoped this meant that Russia would not take any more actions in Iran that would cause further friction between the superpowers. [Stalin quoted in James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 120.] Bohlen's darker recollection of Stalin's response, however, should be the preferred one. Bohlen spoke Russian fluently and had translated Stalin's words at length on many occasions for high ranking Americans. It was he and not Byrnes who was in a position to better interpret what exactly Stalin said and meant. Moreover, Bohlen's interpretation of Stalin's attitude accurately reflected the future course of events.

that he sensed real trouble between Washington and Moscow over Iran was on the horizon but he failed to make that point where it would count the most: with Stalin. A central impediment in Byrnes pursuing a more vigorous approach on Iran at the Moscow CFM as had been urged by Acheson and Ala was that the secretary of state did not consider the subject as worthy of interfering with his main purpose in Moscow. “The heated arguments on Bulgaria and Iran were jeopardizing our agreements on other issues...” Byrnes concluded.²²⁴ Moreover, he continued his old boss' practice of not “ganging up” on Stalin by rarely consulting Bevin about Iran (or anything else) during their stay in Moscow.²²⁵

The implication of Stalin's citation of the 1921 treaty superseding the 1942 Tripartite Treaty may not have sufficiently registered with Byrnes but it did with Bevin. Already the British Foreign Office had voiced their concern following the Soviet reply to the American missive of November 29 when they noted Russian references to the 1921 Soviet-Persian Friendship treaty carried “ominous implications” since, if (re)invoked, it would provide a new lease of life for the Russian occupation well past the 1942 deadline agreed upon at the London CFM.²²⁶

Bevin approached Stalin on his own about Iran and was treated to the same *mantra* used on Byrnes: Russia had justified fears of attacks from Iranian saboteurs unless she maintained a large military presence in the north of that country. Stalin insisted that Tehran was perpetual hostile to the Soviets—“nothing friendly about it”—and, it what might be seen as a classic Freudian slip, he insisted Tehran had “plans of long standing” to invade Soviet Azerbaijan and incorporate it into Iran.²²⁷ Stalin did add, as he had with Byrnes, that Russia had no plans to annex Iranian Azerbaijan and, all though he did not refer to the Tripartite Treaty with its more detailed time frame for withdrawal, he did affirm the continued authority of the less specific Tehran Big Three Declaration on Iran of 1943. Unlike Byrnes but like Eden before him, Bevin came armed with a specific proposal: a Big Three commission to investigate the situation in Iran and

²²⁴ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 121.

²²⁵ Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 248.

²²⁶ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 286.

²²⁷ Stalin quoted in William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 125.

to assist Tehran in the restoration of her full independence. That implied investigating Iranian complaints that the Red Army was interfering in the internal affairs of Iran (including arming separatist militias, manufacturing protests, bullying supporters of the Shah, etc.) that was prohibited by both the 1921 and 1942 treaties. It might also uncover Soviet preparations to linger in Iran or worse yet launch an attack on Tehran. Not surprisingly Molotov turned a cold shoulder toward the proposal claiming it would prove fruitless which in his Orwellian world meant it would have proved fruitful. When Bevin approached Stalin with his proposal oddly the British foreign secretary found him receptive. It seemed a confirmation of Byrnes initial hope that there was indeed a gulf between the rejectionist Molotov and the supposedly reasonable Stalin. Within a day, however, Stalin had proved he was on the same wave length with Molotov. Stalin informed Bevin that a Big Three commission of inquiry on Iran was unnecessary and would be fruitless.²²⁸

In this, if nothing else, the Iranian parliament agreed with the Soviet leaders: even the most strident anti-Russians in Tehran rejected Bevin's proposed Big Three committee of inquiry. What was there to investigate they asked? The evidence of Soviet interference in Iran's internal affairs was overwhelming and evident to anyone paying attention. In any case, Iran was a sovereign country whose future could not be determined or managed by outsiders like a Great Power commission. Some also suspected that the social-democratic trade unionist Bevin was not as unsentimental about the British Empire as he appeared and that his commission was a means by the English to formalize Soviet presence in the north and their own in the south (a frequent suspicion in Tehran) or at a minimum drag the withdrawal process out past the agreed upon deadline while the "investigation" took place. Although Prime Minister Hakimi seemed inclined to reluctantly support the commission proposal, the Majlis rallied by Mossadegh, passed a resolution "refusing to permit the future of Iran to be the subject of committee decision by the three Allied powers." Further investigation and discussion, the Majlis said in

²²⁸ Why Stalin unlike Molotov was initially somewhat amenable to Bevin's proposal is open to question. It maybe that he thought it unserious because such a commission would expose British misdeeds (as he saw them) in the south of Iran. If so he misunderstood Bevin, who as a realist and a social-democrat was devoid of the intense emotional attachment an old Tory like Churchill displayed toward the imperial project. Or, it may be that Stalin was just indulging in upending his foreign minister perhaps to keep him off balance.

effective unnecessary and all that remained was to implement the terms of the Tripartite Treaty.²²⁹

In a strange display of goodwill in a society which officially denigrated religion, on Christmas day Molotov offered Bevin a holiday gift: his proposal for a Big Three commission to investigate Tehran's claims against Russia, prepare Iran for the postwar world, and then fix withdrawal benchmarks to measure progress, was acceptable to the Soviet foreign minister. The reversal seemed a breakthrough. Molotov insisted on several amendments which Bevin found all but one—the specific date for a withdrawal of all foreign forces—acceptable. Bevin reasoned that since the Tripartite Treaty of 1942 was relatively specific and had been made exact at the London CFM, it was not wise to sacrifice Molotov's unlikely new role as Santa Claus over this one point. Later in the day, Molotov informed Bevin that the outstanding point that the latter objected to would not stand in the way of establishing the proposed commission. The next day, however, Molotov withdrew his accommodation and reverted back to his original rejectionist stand evident from the transcript of their final discussion on the issue:

MR. MOLOTOV: stated that nothing had come of the Iranian discussions and that they should be dropped.

MR. BEVIN: inquired whether that was the Soviet government's decision.

MR. MOLOTOV: replied that this was the fact of the matter. He added that Iran was not on the agenda.

MR. BYRNES: said that Iran had been on the agenda as enumerated on the first day.

MR. MOLOTOV: recalled that Iran had been stricken from the agenda by agreement.

MR. BYRNES: said this was correct but it had also been agreed to discuss Iran.

MR. MOLOTOV: said that Iran had been discussed.²³⁰

²²⁹ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 120; Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 95-96; Noj Lederer and Wayne Vucinih (Eds.), *The Soviet Union and the Middle East*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institute Press, 1974), 59.

²³⁰ James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 120; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 290. Historians have been left to speculate what was beyond Molotov's zigzags on Bevin's proposal. First he opposed it and then accepted it and then rejected it again. The rejectionist would have been in character but why the temporary promise of accommodation sandwiched in between? The spirit of Christmas can be ruled out automatically; it is possible that he thought it was an instrument that could be used to advance Soviet interests and then thought twice about it and concluded it would be used only against the USSR in Iran; or, he might have just been trying to confuse the British and Americans with inconsistency. The more likely explanation is that Molotov had counted on Bevin rejecting his conditions and thus he would appear to have been reasonable and Bevin would have appeared to be the obstructionist. It could be argued that if Molotov and Stalin were maneuvering with Bevin and Byrnes on this point, the two master tacticians missed a good opportunity when they rejected a Big Three commission on Iran. Had they signed on, the

Molotov demanded that Iran not be included in the final communiqué of the conference: “It is sufficient that views have been exchanged. No decisions have been reached. The question was not on the agenda and there is no need to mention it in the communiqué.”²³¹ A bewildered Bevin asked his Russian counterpart “What is my next step?” “You know that well,” was Molotov’s cool reply.²³²

Bevin left the CFM more pessimistic than Byrnes. Speaking of the mood at Whitehall following the Moscow meeting, the *New York Times* correspondent wrote that “It is felt here that Americans are inclined to overlook the vital importance of Iran and the whole of the Middle East to the British Empire. What might have seemed a relatively minor question to Mr. Byrnes was a major one to Mr. Bevin.”²³³

*

Byrnes returned to America to generally favorable press coverage of his performance in Moscow and the cheers of soft liners who, like the secretary of state, believed that genuine negotiations with Stalin could still be fruitful if the spirit of the late FDR was channeled by his successor. Roosevelt partisans like Joe Davies and Henry Wallace fully endorsed Byrnes’ appraisal of the conference, the former praising the secretary’s break with atomic diplomacy and return “to the practical idealism of Roosevelt.”²³⁴ The response from hard-liners was unenthusiastic; they virtually accused Byrnes of a Munich style sell-out.²³⁵ For the most part the get-tough-with-Russia faction, whose influence was growing in government, was not yet well represented in the media. There were some exceptions however, like the pundit Arthur Krock. In the *New York Times* he asked “Why was nothing settled about Russia’s actives in Iran and its demands

Soviets would have earned credit for *appearing* cooperative when it came to Iran and still (most likely) have avoided the commission they did not want because the prospect of it being approved by the Majlis was very low. Instead Stalin insisted on delivering the *coup de grace* to the commission himself rather than allowing Mossadeq to do it, thus further alienating Washington and London

²³¹ Molotov quoted in Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go*. (London: Faber and Faber, 267; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 290.

²³² Bevin and Molotov quoted in James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 121.

²³³ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of The Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 93-94.

²³⁴ Davies quoted in Messer, Robert. *The End of an Alliance*. (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 155.

²³⁵ Byrnes, James. *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 122.

on Turkey?”²³⁶ Krock was not the only one asking this question; Truman, as Byrnes would soon discover, was also asking the same question but unlike Krock he could demand an answer.

Immediately upon his return from Moscow Truman ordered an instant briefing. Examining the conference *communiqué*, Truman zeroed in on the one subject: Iran. The president recalled in his *memoirs* that “There was not one word in the communiqué to suggest the Russians might be willing to change their ways in Iran—where the situation was rapidly becoming very serious—or anywhere else. Byrnes, I concluded, after studying the entire record, had taken it upon himself to move the United States in a direction to which I could not, and would not, agree. Moreover, he had undertaken this on his own initiative without consulting or informing the President.”²³⁷ Soon Byrnes would find himself called on the carpet by Truman.

In a letter dated January 5, 1946, marked “unsent” but which he said was read out loud to Byrnes in the Oval Office, Truman stated that he had just finished reading the Etheridge report combined with the papers of the Moscow CFM left with him by Byrnes. Truman was enraged about the lingering Russian occupation combined with subversion in Iran and thought Byrnes had not pushed Stalin hard enough for an immediate Soviet withdrawal. Instead Byrnes had opened a further dialogue with Stalin as if it were an issue to be negotiated and compromised not immediately implemented. (In this, Truman was closest to the views of Mossadegh and the Majlis when they declined to support Bevin's proposal for a Big Three commission of inquiry on Iran.) Truman noted he had not seen the conference joint *communiqué* in advance and once he did he did not like it at all: “There was not a word about Iran or any other place where the Soviets were on the march. We had only gained an empty promise of further talks.” Just as the Soviets were presenting her Western allies with a *fait accompli* in Eastern Europe and the Balkans that established a Soviet sphere now they were “on the march” in Iran, “another outrage if ever I saw one.” “Iran was our ally in the war,” Truman continued, “Iran was Russia’s ally in the war. Iran agreed to the free passage of arms, ammunition

²³⁶ Krock quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 294.

²³⁷ Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1955), 550.

and other supplies running into millions tons across her territory from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea. Without these supplies, furnished by the United States, Russia would have been ignominiously defeated. Yet Russia now stirs up rebellion and keeps troops on the soil of her friend and wartime ally, Iran.” Truman compared Soviet activity in Iran with the “high-handed and arbitrary” manner Russia was treating Poland and “parallel” to the Soviet program in the Baltic countries.²³⁸ Truman’s reference to the Baltic states was particularly ominous since the Soviets had annexed and incorporated them into the USSR based on the same claims of national security concerns now being advanced about Iran.

Truman concluded that Soviet interagency over Iran was yet another act of ingratitude by America’s estranged ally. The Soviets would present London and Washington with a new set of “accomplished facts” in Iran as in Eastern Europe, if America did nothing. Truman did not intend to do nothing: “I think we ought to protest with all the vigor of which we are capable against the Russian program in Iran. There is no justification for it.”²³⁹ That Truman said there was no justification for Soviet activities in Iran or a prolonged presence indicated he, unlike softs (e.g.: Joe Davies and Henry Wallace) did not take Moscow’s claims of security threats on their border with Iran seriously. Byrnes in Moscow had also thought there was no justification for Russian security concerns regarding Iran, even privately calling them “absurd” yet he had not taken the next step Truman now insisted upon: loud protest. Truman instructed Byrnes that it was time to let Russia know America’s position on Iran “in no uncertain terms.”²⁴⁰ Like the views expressed to Acheson by Ala, Truman said that Iran was only the start of a Russian plan of aggression in the Middle East and that a full scale invasion of Turkey was on Stalin’s agenda. In the end, concluded Truman, the Soviets only understood the language of force: “How many divisions have you?” Like so many others before him,

²³⁸ Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions.* (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1955), 551-552. Truman's point that Iran was a wartime ally who assisted the Allied cause with the use of her territory and labor force carried no weight with Stalin in 1946. When Byrnes made a similar point to Stalin at the Moscow CFM the Soviet ominously replied that "since then much water has flowed under the bridge." [Stalin quoted in David Robertson, *Sly and Able. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 466.]

²³⁹ Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions,* 551-552,

²⁴⁰ Robert Ferrell (Ed.), *Off the Record. The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman.* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1980), 80.

Truman realized that was all Stalin needed to know to reach foreign policy decisions—what counterforce can be deployed against Russia? From the Persian Gulf to the Baltic—Truman said in effect, that it was time to break FDR's soft line Soviet policy and adopt a "get tough" approach: "I do not think we should play compromise any longer."²⁴¹ Playing compromise, of course, had been Byrnes' game plan during the Moscow CFM. "Byrnes gave every indication," his biographer writes about the time of his appointment, "of attempting to continue Roosevelt's wartime policy of the 'Grand Alliance' of cooperation with the USSR."²⁴² Although not ready to say so publically, this was a policy by New Year's Day 1946, that Truman could no longer viable if it ever had been. "I am tired of babying the Soviets," is how Truman concluded the letter.²⁴³

Truman's anger at Byrnes upon his return from the Moscow CFM was genuine but not entirely fair. Truman knew what he was getting in Byrnes when he appointed him secretary of state so his performance as a one man show at the London and Moscow CFM sessions should not have been a surprise. And, although Truman's shift to the hard-line

²⁴¹ Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions.* (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1955), 551-552.

²⁴² Robertson, David. *Sly and Able. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 446. In his *memoirs* Byrnes denied he had been babysitting the Soviets as Truman implied and Byrnes' performance at the Moscow CFM meeting has had defenders among historians. Daniel Yergin, for example, concluded that Truman's accusation that Byrnes was "babying" the Soviets was unfair and without merit. Byrnes engaged in fruitful and legitimate bargaining with Stalin in Moscow, Yergin asserted, proving "...that force was not the only way to do business with the Soviet Union" and thus Roosevelt's approach was still viable. Truman had concluded the reverse, as he wrote in his letter: Moscow only understood the language of force not diplomacy. That distinction in approaches to Russia—the language of force vs. the language of compromise and crystallizing his thinking. Thus, implied Yergin, it was Truman and hard-liners in Washington not Stalin or Byrnes who had turned their back on improving relations with the Soviets through fair negotiation, the latter being willing to do so. Accommodation—became a central distinction between hard liners and siffs on Russia. Following the Moscow conference there was little doubt in which direction Truman was rapidly moving and that it was Iran that was [James Byrnes, *All In One Lifetime.* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 402; David Yergin, *Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War.* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 161-162.]

²⁴³ Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Year of Decisions.* (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1955), 551-552. For his part, Byrnes disputed Truman's version of reading the January 5 letter aloud to Byrnes. He said that the president had never called him on the carpet and scolded him as if he were an errant school boy. Byrnes he knew nothing of the January 5 letter until Truman published his memoirs ten years later. For his part, Truman never wavered from his claim that he had read "the real riot act" to Byrnes. [Truman quoted in David Robertson, *Sly and Able. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 456; Robert Ferrell (ed.), *Off the Record. The Private Papers of Harry S. Truman.* (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1980), 78.] Whatever the truth of the competing recollections it is clear that the January 5 letter represented a giant step on Truman's part toward the "get-tough-with-Russia" faction with the case of Iran as the bridge from FDR's soft Soviet policy and the new developing hard line version.

was apparent in retrospect over the weeks preceding the Moscow CFM, the president had not made it explicit to Byrnes that he expected a hard-line, even confrontational strategy in Moscow starting with the case of Iran. Indeed, Truman appeared to approve of Byrnes' softer approach to Moscow when the secretary of state left the USA in December,

Iran was prominent in Truman's dressing down of Byrnes. It was true that Byrnes had proven apathetic about the Iran case at the London CFM. At the Moscow sessions all indications are that Byrnes would have preferred to avoid the subject once again and even failed to place it on the official agenda instead saying, to the eager approval of Molotov, that the matter be considered informally. That frustrated Bevin yet it reflected Byrnes' view at the time that the issue was largely a British-Russian concern to be worked out between them. As events unfolded in early 1946 it became clear that these were significant failings in Byrnes' strategy at the London and Moscow CFM sessions. However, the formula for American missteps on the Iran issue had been made long before Byrnes became secretary of state. The failure to coordinate a common British and American approach to Russia was established FDR and extended by Truman at Potsdam. Thus, at Yalta and Potsdam, Americans only offered tepid support for proposals by Eden and Bevin to firm up the Big Three commitment to restore Iranian sovereignty. A joint Soviet policy by the Western democracies had been rejected by FDR early on as "ganging up" on Stalin and thus, Roosevelt believed, freighting him away from postwar cooperation. The consequences were the missed opportunities to jointly promote Eden and Bevin's proposals. A united front would have put Stalin on notice that there was no hope to manipulate differences between the USA and England on Iran (e.g. maneuver for a north-south split up of Iran between London and Moscow) and that Washington considered Iranian independence as vital. Indeed, with America committed to a rapid withdrawal of the PGC (which was a non-combat organization in any case) only joint pressure by London and Washington was likely to make an impression on Moscow. Moreover, without an Anglo-American united front, Stalin was undoubtedly encouraged to hold out in the hopes that he might woo London with the prospects of an Iranian version of the "percentages agreement" leading to a north-south split of the country between them. In the absence of any energy on the American side to support Iranian

sovereignty Whitehall might well have concluded that would be the best outcome possible outcome.

Chapter Two

The Grand Inquisitor in London

During the Moscow CFM sessions, the Iranian ambassador in London, Seyyed Hasssan Taqizadeh, had engaged in a mini campaign of public diplomacy to convince the British people and leadership that Soviet sponsored independence for Azerbaijan province was not, in spite of the weakness of Tehran and even America and England in Iran, a *fait accompli*. He issued a public statement saying that "one of the Allied powers" was blatantly interfering in Iranian politics and encouraging separatism among the Azeri people in his country. Although he included England in his indictment, the focus of his attention was clearly the USSR. "Iranians hope," he said, "that Great Britain will fulfill its duties and that at the Moscow conference, and the great powers will put an end to the ambiguous attitude of the Soviet Union to the territorial integrity of Iran." For most Britons this was the first they were hearing of the growing tensions with the USSR over Iran. "Events of the last days," Taqizadeh concluded, "made it necessary to inform the public that the seizure of power in Azerbaijan by rebels could in no case be represented as a complete fact."¹ It was a tactic of enlisting public support that Byrnes would himself employ within a month.²

On January 19, 1946, Taqizadeh went from public to institutional diplomacy and submitted a formal complaint to the two day old United Nations Security Council.³ Ceremonies over, it was the first business day of the Council. The complaint asked the

¹ Seyyed Hasssan Taqizadeh quoted in Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 136-137. The Iranian ambassador, as we have seen, need not have worried about Bevin at the Moscow CFM. The British foreign secretary was prepared to pressure Stalin on behalf of Iran. It was ineffective, however, without the support of the USA and Byrnes at this point was not willing to form a joint approach with Bevin on the issue.

² See Chapter Six, pp. 195-198.

³ Manucher Farmanfarmanian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of a Persian Prince*. New York: Random House. 1997, 179; For a complete list of the Iranian UN delegation see Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 187.

Council to investigate Russian interference in Iran's internal affairs contrary to the United Nations Charter as well as pledges, agreements, declarations and treaties between the USSR, England, the United States and Iran. The request referred to the ongoing military and civilian interference in the internal affairs of Iran by the Soviet Union against the expressed wishes of the sovereign government in Tehran culminating in the November 19-20, 1945 incident when the Iranian military column heading into Azerbaijan province to restore law and order, was stopped, threatened by Soviet soldiers and turned back. Addressing the Council, Taqizadeh spoke of Soviet "interference...through the medium of its officials and armed forces, in the internal affairs of Iran."⁴

The criteria for a complaint by a member state reaching the Security Council had yet to be established in practice. In theory a complaint had to involve a matter of grave threat to peace and security to be entertained by the Council. In other words, a dispute among member states that had likelihood to drag the great powers into conflict perhaps even a new world war was the eligibility requirement. The United Nations had been founded precisely to avoid disputes among nations especially those likely to lead to a third world war. The Iranian complaint alleged just that: the Soviet actions on November 19-20 threatened to destabilize the whole region and was a threat to world peace and security. The complaint submitted by Ambassador Taqizadeh did not specifically reference the Soviet military occupation of Iran since the deadline (agreed at the London CFM the previous year) for all party withdrawal had not been reached but everyone knew that was the underlying issue. The occupation made possible sustained and substantial pro-Soviet political agitation and armed separatism aided by Soviet regulars and advisors both civilian and military. Halting of the Iranian military column on Iranian territory was but the most recent example. With the war, however, the typical excuses by the occupying authorities of military necessity were no longer credible.

No doubt existed in Truman's mind that the criteria for Security Council acceptance of the complaint had been met: "In early 1946, Russian activities in Iran

⁴ Seyyed Hasssan Taqizadeh quoted in Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of a Persian Prince*. New York: Random House. 1997, 179.

threatened the peace of the world."⁵ Truman was certain but it was not firmly established in the embryonic Council just what specific instances would qualify to meet the standard set out in its' mandate. The developing case of *Iran v. the Soviet Union* would provide an important experiment to help determine the Council's authority and the scope of its jurisdiction, adding critical details to the lofty but vague principles that had thus far been supposedly agreed upon but not tested and without a test, the sincerity of the agreements was still in question. Above all the question posed by Iran was if small nations had as an equal voice before the Council as the great powers. Only when the details were fleshed out would it be apparent if true consensus could be reached by countries as disparate as the members of the United Nations--liberal capitalist democracies, communist dictatorships and post-colonial or emerging nations whose only previous communality was that they had opposed the Axis.⁶

Yet, many diplomats in London (like Loy Henderson in Washington) considered a face-off between the great powers over Iran's complaint not to be an opportunity to hash out the details of the Security Council's authority and the specifics of the application of its' mandate to maintain global peace and security, but an ill omen for the start of the new world body which had not yet learned to crawl but was now being asked by Taqizadeh to run. The Red Army blockage of the Iranian military column headed into Azerbaijan province on November 19-20 was Exhibit A in the Iranian's effort to substantiate their claim of substantial (in this case armed) Russian interference in their internal affairs. Although Tehran was probably challenging the Russian occupiers by sending their army

⁵ Harry Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman. Years of Trial and Hope.* (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1956), 93.

⁶ Ironically, and unlike the League of Nations, before it was designated a postwar global peace and security body the United Nations designated a wartime alliance: the Allies. Increasingly throughout the European War the Allies were referred to in official American communications as the United Nations. On V-E Day for example, Truman announced that "the forces of Germany have surrendered to the United Nations." In a rare case in which FDR one upped the master wordsmith Winston Churchill in December 1941, FDR coined the name "United Nations" because he found Churchill's "Associated Powers" uninspired. FDR announced his triumph in branding to the prime minister when the former burst in on him while bathing in a White House tub. The naked Churchill readily agreed to the name change. The Soviets, however, did object claiming United Nations was a wartime designation not suited for a new world body in peace time. They proposed World Union or International Security Organization. FDR wisely insisted on the United Nations. That name not only was more appealing to the public it provided a link to the Big Three wartime alliance that FDR projected into the postwar years. [Mark Mazower, *Governing the World. The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present.* (New York: Penguin, 2012), 197-198; Stanley Meisler, *United Nations. The First Fifty Years.* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 9-10.]

column toward Azerbaijan province, the Soviets had been continually approached over the issue of meddling in her internal affairs by the shah's government—inquiries and protests that were ignored by the occupiers. Consequently the Iranians did not think they were bringing a complaint to the Council prematurely since Moscow's indifference to their previous complaints implied bi-lateral talks were not likely to be fruitful and required the intervention of the world community.

The Iranian complaint exposed a certain embarrassing contradiction in the Soviet position. Moscow had on many occasions categorically denied they were interfering in Iran's domestic affairs and yet at the same point admitted they had halted the Iranian military column on November 19-20 as they tried to enter Azerbaijan, on the grounds that national government troops would create a civil disturbance in Azerbaijan. The security of their border lands, it was implied, trumped non-interference in Iranian affairs even though the Iranian military had not been given a chance to secure the border and quash any threats to the USSR from Iran, if they existed at all. In addition, the Soviets added that in the event of further civil disturbances in Azerbaijan, which they claimed would be inevitable if Iranian national troops entered the province, further Red Army deployments into Iran would be necessary to secure the border with Soviet Azerbaijan. The Soviets denied interference in Iranian domestic affairs and yet admitted interference to justify their presence in Azerbaijan to maintain law and order and indeed implied that their presence would only grow.

The Iranian complaint also stated the Soviets had attempted to excuse their blockage of the Iranian column on the grounds that they had a right to assist and support the "democratic aspirations" of the Azerbaijani people which could only be interpreted as an admission of intrusion into Iran's domestic politics. Moscow had little choice but to assert such a right even if it made their claims of non-interference appear ridiculous. Stalin had a constituency—the world communist movement—to satisfy and they expected such an assertion of Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy especially at a moment when it was clear the demands of wartime Big Three unity that had constrained their ideological inclinations toward revolution was rapidly coming to an end. Stalin had already told Milovan Djilas, a Yugoslavian acting as an unofficial ambassador for many in the world

communist movement, to convey to their mutual comrades that the Soviet alliance with the capitalist states had only been a shotgun marriage and that divorce proceedings were on the horizon. He further assured Djilas, who like many communists at war's end were concerned that Stalin had grown too chummy with his liberal capitalist allies, that wherever the Red Army stepped foot on foreign soil it would impose a socialist revolution on that land. That was the ideological legacy of Lenin and the historical duty of the USSR. "It cannot," Stalin concluded, "be otherwise."⁷ Direct material support by the USSR to Azerbaijani and Kurdish separatists was becoming undeniable and attempts by the Kremlin to do so would have offended the communist movement which, like Djilas, expected Russia to support their comrades wherever the Red Army occupied territory. All the more so given the immense prestige the Soviet enjoyed for the part they played in the defeat of the Axis. Taqizadeh thus asked the Security Council to accept the Iranian complaint against one of its permanent members: the Soviet Union.⁸ Simultaneously, in a memorandum to the Council he requested all foreign military to leave Iran although technically the deadline established in the Tripartite Treaty had yet to be crossed. At a minimum he expected the departure date to be not later than March 2.⁹ The justification for

⁷ Stalin quoted in Milovan Djilas, *Conversations with Stalin*. (Harmondsworth, UK: Penguin, 1969), 114. This a strategic agenda that Stalin failed to share with FDR and which FDR seemingly was not curious about it. Roosevelt made an assumption early on that Stalin's regime represented a Thermidorian (i.e. conservative) reaction that abandoned the theory and practice of world revolution in favor of Russia self interest and he never questioned that assumption.

⁸ Taqizadeh (The Head of the Iranian Delegation at the United Nations) to Jebb (The Acting Secretary General of the United Nations), 1/19/1946, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII; 304; Edward Stettinius (The United States Representative at the United Nations) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 1/26/1946, telegram #501BB/1-2646 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII; 314-315.

⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 306. Iran had always maintained that the time clock for withdrawal should have started ticking on V-E Day (which turned out to be May 8, 1945) whereas the Soviet argued the starting point should be V-J Day (August 14, 1945) the technical end of the Second World War. (Had it not been for the effective use of the A-bomb in forcing a Japanese surrender on American terms in the summer of 1945, a land invasion of their home islands was projected to achieve that objective. The American predictions were that campaign would last until mid 1947. If V-J Day was the starting point for calculating the withdrawal time clock from Iran as the Soviets insisted, then their working assumption would have been that clock would not have started ticking until sometime in the Spring of 1947 thus leaving their army free to stay in northern Iran until as late as the end of 1947 or even early 1948.) Although it was true that some Lend-Lease aid still flowed into Iran in preparation for the Soviet entry into the war on Japan, the focus of the invasion and occupation of Iran and the establishment of the "Bridge to Victory" had always been the war in Europe. The proximate cause for Operation Countenance had been to clear Iran of Germans; the tiny Japanese presence was not challenged, the USSR being at peace with Tokyo in 1942. Thus Iran had the stronger case for claiming V-E Day as the start date for triggering the time clock for withdrawal. The British and Americans accepted the Iranian position but conceded the later date to the Soviets at the London CFM. The Iranians asked for an accelerated all party withdrawal owing to their contribution to the Allied war effort

the complaint was the extensive interference of the Soviets in Iranian affairs with the unspoken underlining charge of Soviet occupation. It was Moscow which attempted to reverse the formula, to make the issue solely one of a time frame for their troop withdrawal which they said had yet to toll rather than the question of meddling in domestic issues which was forbidden by the 1942 Tripartite treaty and the 1921 Friendship Treaty.¹⁰ Even the narrow and focused Iranian complaint before the Council was enough to infuriate the Soviet delegation. It is not hard to understand why: rather than bask in the glow of the Soviet victory over the Axis they now had to defend their political agitation in Iran. The choice for Stalin was stark: either proceed in the open or withdraw from Iran completely; the middle course of creeping annexation of Azerbaijan followed by a *fait accompli* was excluded when Iran brought the matter before the Council and the court of world opinion. Stalin had warned FDR at the Yalta summit that he would not tolerate small nations challenging the great powers.¹¹ The suspense in London was how Stalin would make good on this threat.

The Soviets believed the demand for a public hearing before the Security Council did not originate in Tehran but was calculated by London and probably Washington as well, to provoke them. The Kremlin already assumed that her erstwhile allies in the West were maneuvering to deny their country the hard won fruits of victory, Azerbaijan province in Iran being yet another example.¹² Rather than publically announce their suspicions for the moment the Kremlin limited their finger pointing to hardliners, hawks and "warmongers" among their Big Three counterparts. Trygve Lie, the secretary-general of the United Nations and a career Norwegian diplomat, tended to agree with the Kremlin

etc. Truman agreed and asked all other foreigners to withdraw completely by New Year's Day 1946. Only the PGC met that self imposed dead line.

¹⁰ Article One of the 1942 Tripartite treaty committed the foreign powers who signed it to respect the political independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty of Iran; Article Five set a withdrawal of all foreign armies who signed the treaty not later than six months after an armistice or peace treaty between the Allies and Germany. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 143.]

¹¹ Diane Shaver Clemens, *Yalta*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1970), 129. FDR did not challenge Stalin on this point, perhaps because he was on the same wave length, but Churchill attempted to counter Stalin's great power cynicism with a poetic defense of small nations: "The eagle should permit the small birds to sing and care not wherefore they sang." [Churchill quoted in Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 183.]

¹² Of course Azerbaijan province, like Iran, was never part of the Axis but the way the USSR spoke of it during the occupation and Iran crisis they seemed to believe it was overrun with fascist agents throughout.

on this point (if no other) and implied in his *memoirs* that he suspected that Iran was being maneuvered behind the scenes by England and perhaps the United States as well.¹³ Lie's suspicions, however, were unfounded. Ambassador Murray in Tehran was informed on January 2, 1946 that Iranian Ambassador Ala in Washington did approach the United States hoping to secure a guarantee that they would support the Iranian complaint in London but he left the State Department empty handed. He had been assured of American sympathies and her intention to see the Big Three Declaration on Iran and United Nations Charter enforced but was told that the Washington could not make any commitments before the case was heard in London.¹⁴

In London Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh approached both Bevin and Byrnes separately for advice on how to proceed. He received the same polite brush off as Ambassador Ala in Washington. The British foreign secretary declined to offer advice of any kind and Byrnes was equally reluctant. Yet, like Loy Henderson back in Washington, Byrnes did tell the Iranian ambassador that the Security Council was just in its infancy with many procedural issues and rules still unclear. While he did not try to dissuade the Iranian from pursuing the complaint he added his opinion that only the most urgent matters should be considered by the new body implying he did not think the matter had

¹³ Lie would also appeal to the British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, to publically repudiate Churchill's "iron curtain" speech. Bevin declined to do so. [Hugh Thomas, *Armed Truce. The Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-1946*. (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 512.].

¹⁴ James Byrnes (Secretary of State) to Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran), 1/2/1946, telegram # 891.00/1-246 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, 292-293. Byrnes biographer David Robertson, has put it this way: "Byrnes had not ethical or legal reason to blush because of this request for an open hearing before the Security Council by the Iranian ambassador; that is, despite suspicions at the time by isolationist politicians and by revisionist historians later, there is no documentary evidence that the Iranian request for a Council hearing was a put-up job by Byrnes or that the Iranian ambassador had acted either at the insistence of Byrnes or in collision with him." Among the "revisionist historians Robertson cites are Lloyd Gardner and the husband and wife team Joyce and Gabriel Kolko. Robertson specifically challenges the claim of the Kolko's that from as early as November 1945 to throughout January 1946, the Iranians were "assured" by Byrnes "that Iran take its dispute with Russia to the UN it could count on United States backing." [David Robertson, *Sly and Able. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes*, (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 466-468]. Bruce Kuniholm agrees with Robertson that neither the USA nor England attempted to persuade Iran to file their complaint. Indeed, at the very least England attempted to dissuade the Iranians from that course at that time. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 304, fn. 2.] Even at the Moscow CFM, Byrnes had only threatened to *possibly* support an Iranian complaint if it was filled at the opening session of the Security Council in London, a threat Stalin clearly did not take seriously. [James Byrnes, *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 120].

yet to reach that level.¹⁵ This was hardly the posture of two men, "egging on" the Iranians as Stanley Meisler has put it, into a diplomatic quarrel Tehran did not voluntarily seek or initiate.¹⁶ It is likely London was anxious to avoid the Iran case in the world body partly because she feared (as we shall see not without reason) embarrassing counter accusations directed at imperial England from the Soviet Union (the unpopular old school imperialist Anglo-Iranian Oil Co. in the south of the country being a tempting target) and anti-British nationalist movements within the colonial world which could be inspired to lodge their own complaints against England in the Council.¹⁷ Thus both the anti-colonial USSR and imperial England had on this issue mutual interests in squelching Iranian complaints placed before the world community although London preferred a lower profile in that process.¹⁸ For his part, Byrnes was concerned with overloading the new world body with volatile complaints involving the great powers so early in its life. Further, in spite of what was an emerging new direction from the White House where hard-line influence was on the rise, Byrnes still seemed to hope that the Iran dispute would be resolved between Moscow and Tehran alone. This course preferred by the secretary of state Daniel Yergin called a "cloakroom" deal meaning outside the public eye between the two parties rather than an open duel with the USSR.¹⁹ Yergin's characterization of Byrnes' inclinations in London is confirmed by a memorandum composed by the Adlai Stevenson who at the time was the senior political advisor to the American delegation. Recording Byrnes views five days after the Iranians filed their complaint, Stevenson wrote that American policy considered a complaining member state like Iran to be acting in good faith on the face of it and entitled to be heard before the Security Council. "Applying this principle to the Iranian case, it should be our policy to support the right of Iran to present its case to the

¹⁵ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 96; Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield 2006), 187.

¹⁶ Stanley Meisler, *United Nations. The First Fifty Years*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 28.

¹⁷ Indeed, according to Abbas Milani, the British were so anxious to prevent the Iranian complaint from being filled, that Ambassador Reader Bullard backed by an armed escort stormed into Prime Minister Hakimi's office and insisted he send a telegram (via the British military) to Ambassador Ala in New York withdrawing the Iranian complaint. In yet another sly move, Ala said he received the telegram too late to avoid filling the complaint when he almost certainly had received it in time. In any case, he could claim the authority of the shah who favored filling the complaint. The shah was so angry at Bullard's attempt to derail the Iranian complaint before the Security Council he refused to meet with the ambassador for much of the rest of 1946. [Abbas Milani, *The Shah*. (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 119.]

¹⁸ Abbas Milani, *The Shah*. (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 119.

¹⁹ Daniel Yergin, *Shattered Peace. The Origins of the Cold War*. (New York: Penguin, 1990), 186.

Security Council. If the presentation is 'reasonable' we should actively support and speak for an investigation." "This policy is, however," Stevenson added, "*not intended to preclude a recommendation that bilateral negotiations between Russia and Iran be attempted first should the parties be disposed to proceed in that manner and should there be evidence of any reasonable likelihood of success.*"²⁰ He advised that before an investigation could be launched all efforts for the two parties to resolve the issue on their own must be tried. Since bilateral talks had not been attempted so far the Security Council should not launch an investigation at this point. However, Stevenson concluded and Byrnes agreed that even if bilateral talks began between Moscow and Tehran the matter should remain an ongoing concern of the Security Council.²¹ The bedrock principle that all member states had a right to be heard before the Council even if their complaint was against a permanent member should not be violated. Although Stalin ridiculed it, the Americans had fought for that principle at the Yalta summit having opposed Russian proposals that permanent members be privileged to veto even the consideration of complaints being placed on the agenda. In the Iran case, Moscow maintained that two party talks were all that was necessary to resolve the issue, talks in which, owing to their occupation of Iranian territory, they would have had a powerful upper hand. Stevenson and Byrnes agreed bi-lateral talks would be the preferred course yet by keeping it in the Council agenda preserved the rights of small nations to seek relief from the world body. The Kremlin vigorously objected to that condition which relegated them to the same status as Argentina or Poland. Still Byrnes seemed confident they would come around and settle the matter, as Yergin put it, in the cloakroom.

During the Moscow CFM, Byrnes had urged the government in Tehran to make concessions to the Azerbaijani people like allowing them to speak their own language in schools. Now in London, he still clung to the possibility that further cultural concessions would defuse the dispute and deflate the appeal of a separatist movement in Azerbaijan and thus presumably induce the Soviets to withdraw since the popular appeal of separatism let allegiance to the Soviets would have been diminished by timely reforms

²⁰ David Robertson, *Sly and Abel. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes.* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 468. Emphasis added.

²¹ David Robertson, *Sly and Abel. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes,* 468.

from the national state.²² Thus, Byrnes, unlike Truman, still did not see the Azerbaijani break-away government as part of a Soviet staging ground for further expansion into the region starting with Turkey but as something to be contained and turned back with concessions from Tehran. Soon, however, Byrnes would be disabused of any hope that accommodations by Tehran would appease the Pischevari movement or satisfying Stalin. In any case, Byrnes had a well-deserved reputation as a practical man; until the issue reached a boiling point, that is unless and until the Soviets refused to evacuate northern Iran or worse yet sent in reinforcements, he, unlike Truman, thought there were more pressing issues before him. He may have, as at the previous CFM meetings, continued to believe that Iran was primarily a British concern. In that case, if Bevin did not wish to advise the Iranian ambassador let alone provide assurances of support, why should he?

An unexpected change in political leadership in Tehran further complicated matters. It was unclear at first if the new government, headed by Ahmad Qavam, known to be on friendly terms with Moscow, wished to pursue the compliant.²³ Initially indications were that the new prime minister was living up to his Moscow friendly reputation: he was searching for ways to accommodate not confront Stalin. Early on it was clear his preferred course was to pursue bi-lateral talks with Moscow rather than press the case in an international forum. The Kremlin did not miss their opportunity and the day after he assumed office and before the Council considered the compliant

²² Thus, Ambassador Murray in Tehran met with the Prime Minister Hakimi on January 19 just as the issue was being presented in London. Murray reported back to Byrnes what had transpired. Murray had advised Hakimi to try to reach a settlement with the renegade government in Tabriz by initiating negotiations. Without such an effort the Pischevari government would have the pretext to separate and seek the protection of the USSR. Negotiations initiated by Tehran, Murray said would isolate extremists in Tabriz and allow moderates to emerge. Hakimi replied that the Tabriz government was a creature of the USSR and not legitimate as a result. He added that during the Moscow CFM, at the urging of Byrnes, the Teheran government had dispatched Bayat to Tabriz with an offer to allow the use of Turkish in schools but he was rebuffed by the rebels. Murray agreed with much of what Hakimi said but insisted that the effort at negotiating with “Prime Minister” Pischevari would pay off for the Shah’s government in the court of world public opinion—all the more so if Pischevari again negotiated in bad faith. [Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield 2006), 187.]

²³ Manucher Farmanfarmanian, *Blood and Oil. Memoirs Of a Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 182. Qavam was a veteran of Iranian politics and had been prime minister when the 1921 Soviet-Persian Friendship treaty with the Bolsheviks was signed. According to Abbas Milani, the Soviets virtually insisted on Qavam as the new prime minister. Nor was it a surprise to Qavam; he secretly met with members of the Soviet occupying commission *before* his election as the new PM and assured them of his pro-Soviet leanings. [Abbas Milani, *The Shah*. (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 117; 120.]

presented by Taqizadeh, Qavam was invited to Moscow for talks about unspecified outstanding issues between the two countries. That development alone, the Soviets argued, was enough to make the proposed Iranian complaint moot.²⁴ Pressing a complaint in the Security Council was certain to provoke the Kremlin leaving many in doubt that Ambassador Taqizadeh was in tune with the new leadership in Tehran when he advanced the matter to the Council. To the surprise of many, however, Qavam assured Ambassador Murray in Tehran that Taqizadeh had his support and that the complaint should *not* be withdrawn although he did not preclude successful bi-lateral negotiations with Moscow.²⁵ Withdrawal of the complaint was undoubtedly the minimum price Russia would have charged for bilateral talks probably couched in the excuse that two party talks could not be productive if a complaint against them was simultaneously before the Security Council. Yet, as long as Soviet troops occupied Iranian territory and even threatened aggression, Tehran did not enjoy the independence to pursue genuine two party talks. Indeed, such talks could hardly be said to be legitimate under those circumstances. Only the ongoing concern of the Council would make such talks legitimate. That the USSR would be embarrassed along the way having her foreign affairs scrutinized like any other country was a bonus for the hardliners in America but hardly the main motivation behind supporting the Iranian complaint. Stalin had always been suspicious of the new world body because it might become a means for the small powers to challenge the great ones. As we have seen, he had expressed that anxiety to FDR and Churchill at the Yalta summit. Now his fears were slowly coming true.

Qavam said he wanted to pursue bilateral talks but simultaneously press the complaint in the Security Council.²⁶ That was a signal to Moscow that although he preferred a two party solution he was not about to give up the safety net of consideration by the Council. Soviet suspicions (and those of Lie as well) that the complaint was not Iranian in origin but manufactured in Washington and London to interfere in what the Kremlin considered a purely bilateral affair between Tehran and Moscow, were not

²⁴ David Robertson, *Sly and Abel. A Political Biography of James F. Byrnes*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1994), 469.

²⁵ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 1/28/1946, telegram # 891.00/1-2846 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, p. 315

²⁶ Manucher Farmanfarmanian, *Blood and Oil. Memoirs Of a Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 182.

verified.²⁷ In reality, Byrnes and Bevin had subtly attempted to discourage Ambassador Taqizadeh from pursuing the complaint during the London sessions of the Council. Bevin had his own reasons but Byrnes preferred to see how matters played out in the weeks leading to the withdrawal deadline before turning to the Council for consideration of the Iranian case. Further indications that the Iranian complaint was far from a put up job by Washington and London rested in Soviet friendly Qavam's endorsement of Taqizadeh's actions.

At the Moscow CFM, Byrnes had tried nudge Stalin by warning him that Washington might look with favor upon a complaint filed Iran with the Security Council but Stalin, was unimpressed. Perhaps he sensed Byrnes' heart was not in that course and that he secretly hoped Moscow and Tehran would resolve the matter before it further soured American-Soviet relations. He might have also suspected that Byrnes did not want to jeopardize the embryonic Council with a great power conflict. If Stalin was gambling that the Americans would not overload the body in its infancy, it was not unreasonable. As we shall see some in the American foreign policy inner-circle argued just that: the Council would be crippled by the complaint of a small nation against a permanent member and thus American support for the Iranian complaint should be withheld. The secretary of state may have also feared an outright guarantee to Ala or Taqizadeh of American support as they had requested would only encourage the Iranians to over play their hand with the Soviets and become inflexible if bilateral talks did take place. If they could not be certain of American support Qavam might accept a compromise with Moscow that Iranians would otherwise reject. If so, then at this point Byrnes would have considered some Iranian concession to the Russians in exchange for the withdrawal of their army would be necessary. He had said as much at the Moscow CFM although he was then speaking of cultural concessions to the Azeri people. Contrary to Russia's skepticism and Lie's suspicions, Byrnes favored a resolution of the dispute through bilateral talks and did nothing to inhibit them. In spite of his halfhearted threat to Stalin at

²⁷ The Soviet contention that the issue of the Soviet presence in northern Iran was a purely two party one between the USSR and Iran is contradicted by the 1942 Tripartite Treaty which included England and the a lesser extent the Big Three Declaration on Iran (1943) yet (as we shall see) they could make the case for it being a bi-lateral issue between Iran and the USSR based on the 1921 treaty of friendship between Soviet Russia and Persia. Indeed, the two party 1921 treaty had been the legal basis cited by the Soviets for the 1941 invasion and occupation of northern Iran.

the Moscow CFM, he wanted to keep this matter off the Security Council agenda if at all possible, partly because he agreed with Loy Henderson that the Council was too immature to take on such a volatile matter. The Iranian complaint came before the Security Council as a result of independent Iranian action albeit with some minimum and noncommittal consultations with Byrnes and Bevin. Indeed, the American senior political advisor to the United Nations delegation, Adlai Stevenson, said in a late January memo that Washington indeed favored Iranian presentation of her grievances before the Security Council and supported any “reasonable” United Nations investigation. However, he continued, American policy did *not* preclude encouraging bi-lateral negotiations between Tehran and Moscow as long it remained a continuing interest of the Security Council.²⁸ This would remain the core of Byrnes' position throughout the crisis.

The Kremlin claimed that Security Council interest in the case was an attempt (fashioned by England and America) to interfere with what otherwise would have been fruitful two-party talks between Iran and the USSR. As he always suspected would be the case, the Security Council for Stalin was proving to be nothing more than a vehicle for Anglo-American imperialism. Byrnes, however, would eventually insist on the complaint remaining on the Council agenda not to further sour relations with the Russians but to establish the legitimacy of that body.²⁹ It was the failure to distinguish between these two objectives that led the Soviets to incorrectly judge Byrnes' motives. The issue for him would expand beyond that of Iran to include the viability of the United Nations itself as represented by its executive body: the Security Council. Without a credible Council with established legitimacy in the General Assembly, the new world body was doomed to the same fate as the ineffective League of Nations. The majority of the membership composed of smaller nations would consider the Council as illegitimate, that is, a rubber stamp to legitimize the machinations of the great powers undoubtedly at their expense. Seeing the Iran case as the means to establish a viable Council was ironic for Byrnes: at

²⁸ Memorandum by the Senior Advisor to the United States Delegation at the United Nations (Stevenson) 1/24/1946 in FRUS, Vol. VII, p. 309.

²⁹ Although it would have the effect (perhaps unintended) of further souring American-Soviet relations since the Soviet model for the Security Council, as we shall see in Chapter Six, was far different from that which Byrnes was promoting. Byrnes was advancing the rights of small nations to be heard in that body especially when they had a complaint against a permanent member whereas the Soviet model meant that the Council would be little more than a vehicle for the Great Powers run roughshod over the General Assembly.

first he, like Loy Henderson, feared the Iranian complaint would overwhelm the new executive body and sink it.³⁰ Instead, as events developed he came to see the Iranian complaint as the Council's lifeline. Even considering only the application of the Iranian situation and not the longer term prospects for the United Nations, Byrnes came to realize that Security Council interest in the matter could be justified as necessary because Tehran's judgment might be impaired by the presence on her soil of the combat equipped Red Army poised for action. It was not until mid-March, well after the deadline for withdrawal without Red Army compliance, and after the center of action had moved from London to New York, that the State Department was willing to guarantee American support for the Iranian complaint in the Council. Speaking of a conversation with Qavam, Ambassador Murray in Tehran informed Washington that "I also pointed out that in coming Council meetings Iran could act with advance assurance of American support *which it had not had at London meeting.*" He further suggested that rather than rely on the Iranian foreign ministry to keep Ala in the United States informed, Byrnes should keep the Iranian ambassador apprised of Qavam's views through Murray's own reports to Washington.³¹ The implication was that Murray was a more reliable channel for Qavam than his own foreign ministry.

Secretary-General Lie entertained other objections to the Iranian complaint besides his misplaced suspicions of a sly Anglo-American maneuver to embarrass the Soviets in the court of world opinion. Lie accepted that the Iranians were justified in their anger about Soviet interference in their domestic affairs and the continuing presence of Red Army troops on their soil (although not yet in technical violation of the 1942 treaty) yet he also believed a complaint before the Security Council was premature but not for the same reason as Henderson who claimed the Council was too immature. Lie's objection was one of protocol: direct negotiations between the parties of a dispute should always be attempted first. In this case he thought there was reason to believe direct bilateral talks between Moscow and Teheran would be successful. He cited the case of his native Norway as an example of fruitful direct talks with Moscow leading to a tardy

³⁰ See Chapter Five, p. 190.

³¹ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/11/1946, telegram # 861.24591/-1146 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 350-354.

but peaceful Red Army withdrawal.³² The implication was that the Security Council should not assert original jurisdiction but be the court of last resort if and when all other efforts at negotiations failed. This was the precedent he aimed to establish for the future of the Council starting with the Iran case. He thought bi-lateral talks between Tehran and Moscow had not been given time to work. Soft line critics of Byrnes and Truman in America seized on this line of argument by Lie, supported by the Soviet delegation, as putative proof that the Iranian government was not genuinely aggrieved but was being pushed into complaining in an international forum either by London or Washington or both, a claim that was pursued, for example, by Henry Wallace. Otherwise, the argument went the Iranians would have pursued bilateral negotiations with Moscow rather than attempt to embarrass the Soviets by bringing the matter before the Security Council which would make the Russians more likely to dig in their heels and less inclined to reach an agreement. Wallace, leader of the left-wing of the New Deal coalition summarized their case this way: "The tougher we get, the tougher the Russians will get."³³

The immense disparity in power between the USSR and Iran would have advantaged the former over the latter in any two-party talks. Consequently the Soviet delegation in London was livid over the Iranian complaint and request for a formal inquiry both of which might derail a bilateral settlement and instead invite the other great powers into the mix. The Iranians had attempted to placate them to some small degree by characterizing the issue at hand as a "situation" and not an outright conflict even though an Iranian army column had been interfered with and threatened with armed force by

³² Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*. (New York: Macmillan, 1954), 29-30. In hot pursuit of the retreating *Wehrmacht*, the Soviet Army had overrun parts of Norway in 1945. The comparison between Norway and Iran however was weak. There were significant German army formations in Norway but not in Iran where German agents had long since been rounded up. Unlike Norway the Soviets had reached a treaty with Tehran and made pledges her Big Three allies of a prompt withdrawal and non-interference. Indeed, the last point is the most important distinction: the Soviet Army did not attempt to seriously intervene in Norwegian politics in any significant way whereas Soviet meddling in Iranian affairs was rampant and designed with a strategic objective. Norway was not Poland--a reverse corridor to the West. Iran was, however, a corridor to expansion into the Persian Gulf. Moreover, Lie failed to recognize that the USA and England had already attempted to settle the Iran dispute in talks with the Soviets at the great wartime summits and at the postwar CFM meetings all without effect.

³³ Henry Wallace quoted in Walter Isaacson and Evan Thomas, *The Wise Men*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1986), 377.

Soviet soldiers and their Azeri comrades.³⁴ The chief Soviet representative in London was Molotov's deputy at the Foreign Ministry, Andrei Vyshinsky. Paranoid and vindictive, he was best known to the outside world not as a diplomat but as the Grand Inquisitor at the infamous Moscow show trials during the 1930s when defendants were judged guilty before the proceedings began. It was that same logic that Vyshinsky brought to the Security Council.

Vyshinsky came to the Soviet Foreign Ministry for the same reasons as he had been selected to run the purge trials: to protect Stalin from rivals real or imagined. As the war came to a close and Stalin's own paranoia reached inside his own inner circle, Molotov came under suspicion as pro-British and even a closet Zionist. Stalin had Molotov's wife arrested and held as hostage to ensure his loyalty and appointed Vyshinsky his deputy to keep an eye on the foreign minister.³⁵ During the discussion at the Yalta summit about the rights of small nations to enjoy an equal vote with the great powers as proposed by FDR, Stalin sarcastically asked if Roosevelt meant America should be regarded as no better than Albania? Charles Bohlen rallied to the president's defense telling Vyshinsky that the American people would never tolerate small nations being bullied by the great powers in the United Nations. The deputy Soviet foreign minister revealed he had not changed from his days as the state prosecutor of the show trials. "The American people," Vyshinsky replied to Bohlen, "should learn to obey their leaders."³⁶

Initially, Vyshinsky asserted the substance of the Iranian complaint was a gross distortion of the facts and an example of anti-Soviet "fascist propaganda" reminiscent of the deposed Reza Shah.³⁷ The mention of the old shah and his connection with German fascism posed threatening implications since the Soviet Union (along with England) had used armed force a few long years earlier to secure Iran from "fascists." The unmistakable implication from Vyshinsky was renewed Russian military action might be

³⁴ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 96.

³⁵ His boss need not have worried; Molotov was a die-hard Stalinist who proved his loyalty even after Stalin's death when he vociferously resisted the de-Stalinization reforms of Nikita Khrushchev.

³⁶ Vyshinsky quoted in Charles Bohlen, *Witness to History*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1973), 181. Bohlen replied to Vyshinsky that he would like to see the Soviet try to make the American people obey their leaders and Vyshinsky replied he would love to do so.

³⁷ Hugh Thomas, *Armed Truce. The Beginnings of the Cold War, 1945-1946*. (New York: Atheneum, 1987), 403.

warranted to squash alleged fascists in Tehran evidence of their fascism being that they protested Soviet occupation of the north of their country. He continued that Iranian charges of Soviet aggression in northern Iran were “anti-democratic and pogrom activity, hostile to the Soviet Union” inspired by reactionary forces in Iran, the ruling class, the shah, the police, the army, etc., all of them posing a grave threat to the Soviet oil producing region around Baku.³⁸ Just as he had painted Stalin as the victim of back stabbing traitors during the Great Purges, now Vyshinsky claimed it was the USSR and not Iran that was the victim in 1946. Now instead of the "Old Bolsheviks" who had supposedly turned on Stalin and the Soviet state they created it was erstwhile allies like Iran and by implication England and America that were the new double-crossers. The rationalization was thus advanced for a continued Soviet military presence in Iran based on the threat to Baku that Stalin had previously tried to convince Byrnes was genuine even if only from a few saboteurs armed with matches.

Allegations, Vyshinsky continued, of Red Army interference “in the internal affairs of Iran is not in accordance with the facts and is devoid of any foundation.” Whatever was happening in northern Iran, he maintained, was an inevitable and natural out pouring of the national aspirations of the Azerbaijani and Kurdish peoples that had nothing to do with the Red Army presence.³⁹ There was some truth to Vyshinsky’s point: the non-Persian minority populations in question did have historic national aspirations at odds with the central government and amplified by Tehran’s refusal to develop and modernize the region or respect the indigenous cultures. These were aspirations for national independence that predated the Soviet occupation and even the USSR itself. What was disingenuous was his claim that the current uprising was not connected to the Soviet occupation forces. In any event, he concluded, the Soviets were not obligated to leave Iran yet under the terms of the 1942 treaty. That, of course, was not the thrust of the Iranian complaint; interference in her internal affairs was the substance of the matter and such activity was clearly prohibited at any time by the 1942 Tripartite Treaty and the 1921 Friendship Treaty. Still, the Iranians had asserted their own interpretation of the

³⁸ Andrei Vyshinsky (Head of the Delegation of the Soviet Union at the United Nations) to Makin (President of the Security Council), 1/24/1946, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, p. 309-311.

³⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 307.

occupation and insisted that all foreign military were required to leave immediately irrespective of the actual deadline in the 1942 treaty. That was flatly turned down by Vyshinsky. He further cited the 1921 treaty that would, if invoked, allow the Soviet Union to militarily intervene in Iran without any time limits if a third party was using that country as a hostile base against Russia.⁴⁰ An implied question again went unanswered: who was that third party in Iran that Russia was now characterizing as a threat to the Soviet Union? In any case, no one was left in any doubt that Vyshinsky was claiming that Russia reserved to the right to station the Red Army in Iran based on the 1921 treaty which had, after all, been the legal basis for the 1941 invasion. At that time the third party was explicitly cited as pro-Axis agents. Nor would this be the last time during the crisis that Moscow would threaten to utilize this treaty to supersede the terms of the 1942 Tripartite Treaty or the spirit of the 1943 Big Three Declaration on Iran. Although everything Vyshinsky said indicated Iran had no cause for alarm and that (all reports to the contrary) Tehran's fears were exaggerated or pumped up by Washington and London, nonetheless he conceded that if Tehran did have a grievance they should take it up with Moscow directly and settle it through bilateral talks without troubling the Security Council. Yet, whether the Iranians accepted Russia's offer of bilateral talks in Moscow or not, the Iranian complaint did not concern the Council under any of the provisions of the United Nations Charter which required a threat to global security and peace for a matter to be placed on its agenda. In effect, Vyshinsky was saying the Council had no authority to consider the Iranian complaint. It was a strange logic; first he argued that dark forces in Iran were stirring up trouble on the border that posed a grave threat to Soviet security and thus could be interpreted as a threat to regional if not global peace (and this might require invoking the 1921 treaty to keep the Red Army in place) and yet he argued that the situation was so peaceful that the Security Council need not concern itself with the Iranian complaint. The Soviet government was "categorically opposed to the consideration of the above-mentioned appeal of the Iranian delegation by the Security Council."⁴¹ In a familiar pattern of over-heated rhetoric that was his trade mark,

⁴⁰ Andrei Vyshinsky (Head of the Delegation of the Soviet Union at the United Nations) to Makin (President of the Security Council), 1/24/1946, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, p. 309-311.

⁴¹ Andrei Vyshinsky (Head of the Delegation of the Soviet Union at the United Nations) to Makin (President of the Security Council), 1/24/1946, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, p. 309-311. Vyshinsky also submitted a

Vyshinsky could not rest his case on this point, which had some merit, but insisted on indulging himself. He claimed that those who objected to his presentation or rejected

letter to Norman J.O. Maykin, president of the Council, on January 24, 1946. The letter stated the Soviet's five main points the most important of which were: (1) That Iranian allegations of Soviet interference in the internal affairs of Iran "is in contradiction with reality and lacks any foundation... the statement of the Iranian delegation regarding the alleged interference on the part of the Soviet Union in the internal affairs of Iran is incorrect and groundless."; (3) The Soviet delegation objected to the Iranian delegations claim that the presence of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan presence was a violation of Iranian sovereignty or the cause of events there. "As a matter of fact, the presence of Soviet troops in the territory of Iran is quite legitimate, in so far as such a right was granted to the Soviet government by the Soviet-Iranian treaty of 26 February 1921, and the Soviet-British-Iranian treaties of 1942. The events in Iranian Azerbaijan have no connection with the presence of Soviet troops and this confirmed by indisputable and quite objective facts." The separatist movement, the Soviet said, was purely of domestic origin. (4) Anti-Soviet propaganda was rife in Iran and was encouraged by the national government. As always, the letter claimed such anti-Soviet propaganda was inspired by "fascists" and that nothing had changed in Tehran since the days of the pro-German Reza Shah. Like Stalin at the Moscow CFM, Vyshinsky restated the Soviet claim that Baku oil was at serious risk from "organized hostile action" originating on the Iranian side of the border, hostile action that is supported by the ruling calluses and police authorities. In a thinly veiled threat Vyshinsky wrote "Such a situation cannot be tolerated." Yet, he held an "olive branch" of sorts writing that the disputes between Iran and the USSR could be with bi-lateral negotiations." (5) He concluded that the complaint submitted by Iran was not fit for consideration by the Security Council because "...the conditions engaged by Articles 34 and 35 of the Charter of the United Nations Organization are not present," meaning no threat to world peace and security was at issue. "...the Soviet delegation regards the appeal of the Iranian delegation to the Security Council as lacking grounds and categorically opposes the consideration of the mentioned appeal of the Iranian delegation by the Security Council." [Full text of the letter from Vyshinsky to Maykin is in Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 190-191]. On January 26, the Iranian delegation replied to the Vyshinsky letter with an eight point letter addressed to the UN Secretary-General. Like the Vyshinsky letter, this one authored by Ambassador Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh, restated the Iranian position: that separatism in Azerbaijan was being orchestrated by the Soviets; that the Soviets were interfering in Iranian internal affairs as witnessed by the November 19-20 incident; and that the ultimate goal of the USSR was to annex Azerbaijan province if not more of northern Iran. The letter also restated Tehran's request that all foreign military leave Iran ahead of schedule. Like his Soviet counter-part, Taqizadeh cited the Tripartite Treaty of 1942 but also the Tehran Declaration of the Big Three which not surprisingly, was not mentioned by Vyshinsky probably because he believed it would enhance an American claim to an interest in the fate of Iran. "Prime Minister" Pishevari weighed in with his own appeal to the General Assembly. After detailing the long list of grievances the Azeri people had with the Iranian regime, he asserted the Atlantic Charter allowed for the self-determination of the Azeri people, He claimed by popular demand his nationalist government should be recognized by the UN. "The Azerbaijani people," he said, "appealing to the General Assembly of the UN ask them to recognize de facto the existing Azerbaijani national government and let it determine its fate without interference from others." [Pishevari quoted in Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 191-192.] Just as Vyshinsky's failure to include the 1943 Big Three Declaration on Iran in his letter was telling so too was Pishevari's inclusion of the Atlantic Charter. It was the credo of the wartime Grand Alliance and then the inspiration for the UN Charter but it was also the brainchild of Franklin Roosevelt; citing it as authority for his government's existence and appeal for recognition was undoubtedly an indirect appeal to American ideals and American opinion. Absent from his appeal were any references to the USSR or communism.

bilateral talks between Tehran and Moscow were part of a fascist conspiracy against the USSR.⁴²

Vyshinsky may have thought it a clever move to challenge the authority of the Security Council to consider the Iranian complaint but it quickly backfired. It was his first real misstep of the session. By raising this issue, the Russian had made it possible for the Americans to eventually cloak their support for the Iranian case in a broader endorsement of the United Nations Charter and securing the legitimacy of the Council rather than just the underlying issue of Soviet meddling in Iranian affairs or even the question of Soviet troop withdrawals. Infused with a higher purpose for the world community than just resolving a Soviet-Iranian dispute or pushing the Soviets back from establishing a Middle Eastern sphere of influence, the American advocacy of the Iranian complaint would be cast as one of the future of the Council itself. By raising the issue of what constituted a threat to global peace and security, the Soviets allowed Byrnes to turn the Iran case into an issue of concern to all the small nations in the General Assembly.

Initially the substance of the Iranian complaint was submerged in the procedural questions regarding the authority of the Security Council were debated. Would it simply be a rubber stamp for the great powers as Vyshinsky was implying and which had always appealed to Stalin, or should it be open to all countries, big and small, powerful and weak, rich and poor, to vent their grievances and seek relief from aggression or threats? The war ravaged world population had looked to the new world body as they had previously the League of Nations, as an idealistic and optimistic outcome of the most horrible conflict in history, one no one was anxious to repeat and which the United Nations was tasked with preventing. With reluctance Stalin and Churchill had signed onto the new world body yet they remained spheres of influence realists whom, if they had to be part of a world body, wished to use it to sugarcoat their international and imperial ambitions. The collective security that FDR came to regard as the United Nation's mission had, they believed, been tried and failed in the defunct League.⁴³ Henderson correctly observed at the time that *if* the Soviet Union and England had things

⁴² Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 305.

⁴³ Arthur Schlesinger, *The Cycles of American History*. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1986), 169-173.

their way, the United Nations would have become "...merely an instrument for the use of the Great Powers in carving up the world."⁴⁴ It was exactly that outcome Byrnes was trying to avoid during the Iran crisis by establishing the legitimacy of the Council to treat the grievances of the smaller nations fairly and equally even if they were lodged against a permanent member. Yet many Iranians were neither confident in his resolve nor in the untested world body. "You will see," a skeptical member of the Iranian delegation predicted prior to the London meeting, "it will be a farce. After all, how can you clarify a situation when the aggressor [Russia] is also one of the judges?"⁴⁵ Given Byrnes' performance in London the Iranian delegates had good cause to be skeptical. It was only after reports from American consulate in Tabriz as the withdrawal deadline passed without effect that Byrnes was persuaded to vigorously support the Iranian case. For Byrnes, the viability of FDR's foreign policy legacy was at stake, not just getting-tough-with-Russia. Even critics of FDR's Soviet policy like Henderson and Bohlen (but not Kennan who was a spheres of influence man who did not place much faith in the United Nations) believed it critical for the United States to attempt to avoid allowing the United Nations meet the same fate that had befallen the League of Nations. "I thought" recalled Byrnes in his memoirs, "...denying any country, large or small, the right of appeal to the [Security] Council, the United Nations would not and should not live."⁴⁶ Correcting this deficiency in FDR's preparations for the Security Council, in this case the procedure when a permanent member is asked to sit in judgment of themselves, became a vital task for Byrnes during the course of the Iran crisis.

On behalf of the American government, Edward Stettinius (assisted by Alger Hiss) countered Vyshinsky both on the specific issue of Iran and the implications for the future of the Security Council: "I wish to make it very clear that the United States government believes that any Member country of the United Nations which makes a complaint has a

⁴⁴ Henderson quoted in H. W. Brands, *Inside the Cold War. Loy Henderson and The Rise of The American Empire, 1918-1961*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 142.

⁴⁵ Manucher Farmanfarmanian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 179.

⁴⁶ James Byrnes, *All In One Lifetime*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1958), 351.

right to be heard at this table."⁴⁷ By claiming the Iranians had no standing to be heard and questioning the authority of the Security Council to even consider the complaint, the Soviets had lost important ground in the battle for world public opinion. Popular opinion hoped that a new peace and security organization would prevent yet another and almost certainly more horrific world war by allowing the nations of the world to settle differences that defied the normal course of negotiations, in an international forum and collectively act against those that did not. Vyshinsky had virtually said that his government did not share this vision for the United Nations. Following the Yalta summit, FDR reported to a joint session of Congress that the Big Three had found "a common ground for peace. It ought to spell the end of the system of unilateral action, the exclusive alliances...the balances of power, and all other expedients that have been tried for centuries--and have always failed."⁴⁸ Rather than the new diplomacy promised by FDR, Vyshinsky was implying more of the same old 19th century diplomacy that governed great power rivalry. For the Soviets, only the victorious Big Five wielding the veto should determine what countries could complain to the Council and when they should do it, if at all. From this opening session of the Security Council onwards, treatment of the Iran case would become a duel between Moscow and Washington over what the world body would be. FDR was mistaken when he told the joint session of Congress that these matters to have been settled at Yalta; in reality there had been no genuine agreement on what the United Nations would be. Just as Washington's concerns quickly exceeded the immediate issue of Iran to include the fate of the Council, so too did Moscow's concerns appear greater than the future of Azerbaijan province. With control over Eastern Europe and prospects for further additions to her new external empire in the Far East and the Middle East—moves bound to generate opposition among the subject peoples in question—it is not difficult to understand why Stalin was anxious to severely limit the ability of smaller nations to lodge complaints in the Council.

Even though he had set himself up in awkward position logically speaking in the long term, Vyshinsky had scored a clear tactical victory in London with his otherwise

⁴⁷ Edward Stettinius quoted in Raymond Hare (Memorandum by the Political Advisor to the United States Delegation at the United Nations to Edward Stettinius (the United States Representative at the United Nations), 1/23/1946, 501BC/1-146, in *FRUS*, pp. 307-312.

⁴⁸ FDR quoted in Jean Edward Smith, *FDR*. (New York: Random House, 2008), 633.

strange line of argument when he proposed bilateral talks with Tehran rather than a consideration by the Security Council of the Iranian complaint. If nothing else it bought the Soviets time to sort things out and test the resolve of Washington and the viability of the Security Council. Indeed, the Soviets could use the distinct possibility of derailing the United Nations at its inception over an issue like Iran as a weapon to force the United States to back away from pursuing the complaint and perhaps even establish its vision of the Council's mission as nothing more than a mouthpiece for the great powers. Even Henderson, who labored hard to convince his superiors of the gravity of Russian aggression in Iran, like Bevin and Byrnes, preferred the matter *not* be brought before the body and urged Ala to follow a different course. Henderson thought the Iran-Soviet dispute too volatile for the immature body and to do so, given the likelihood of failure, not because of the merits of the Iranian complaint but because of the absence of an American or British counterforce in Iran to compel the Soviets to do what they otherwise would not, might end the future of the United Nations then and there when it lost credibility with the smaller nations that constituted the bulk of the General Assembly.⁴⁹ As we shall see, Charles Bohlen would advance a similar position in March.⁵⁰

Because there was little if anything the USA could do protect Iran in military terms Bohlen advised the America not to advertise her weakness by challenging the Soviets on Iran. It would a bluff that would put the USA at a great disadvantage if Stalin called it.⁵¹ The implication was that the British had to work out an understanding with Moscow as best they could. Henderson offered the same analysis for the new world body: there was little the United Nations could do to help Iran in the face of Russian intransigence and do attempt to do so would only advertise the Security Council's weakness at a time when it could ill afford to be doubted and potentially written off as ineffectual, an outcome that would not have disappointed Stalin, himself a spheres of

⁴⁹ H. W. Brands, *Inside the Cold War. Loy Henderson and The Rise of The American Empire, 1918-1961.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 143.

⁵⁰ See Chapter Five, pp. 198-199.

⁵¹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East.* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 322.

influence man. "It is important to spare UNO," Henderson said, "this supreme test at the very outset of its existence, for it might not service such a test."⁵²

Instead Henderson proposed a secretive great power summit to hear and settle Iran's complaint *in lieu* of the Security Council.⁵³ Yet, it was precisely this kind of nineteenth century diplomacy that FDR had told the Congress the United Nations would replace with cooperation and collaboration among all the nations big and small and in an open forum. That Henderson's proposal was at odds with the very mission of the United Nations did not escape anyone's attention, even those desperately seeking a path to solve the Iran dispute without threatening the future of the world body. There was also a more recent memory to be considered: a great power summit on Iran that would almost certainly result in one sided concessions to Russia owing to her advantages on the ground in Azerbaijan province. It might have been the *realpolitik* course yet it would have smacked of another Munich "peace at any price" Conference. Given the shifting mood in Washington, the United States was not likely to be party to a new "sell out" to an aggressive dictatorship particularly when Churchill's anti-appeasement thesis about the origins of the Second World War was soon to be debuted in Fulton, Missouri. Only the higher purpose of saving the Security Council from a catastrophic overload would have justified Henderson's proposed course. In any case, Byrnes took the reverse position, that is, only by meeting this test at the outset of its existence could the Council find legitimacy among the small nation states of the General Assembly and thus survive. The credibility of the United Nations as conceived by FDR was at stake over Iran in early 1946 and denial was not the course that would save it. Roosevelt had predicted during the war that Iran would become a postwar headache for the United States; little did he suspect it would be the first headache for the United Nations and the vehicle that would realize his concept of the Security Council.

Henderson's proposal found little appeal in Washington and similar ideas fell flat in the world body for obvious reasons: it would have supplanted the United Nations and posed legitimate questions about its *raison d'etre*. More specifically, conferences of the

⁵² H. W. Brands, *Inside the Cold War. Loy Henderson and The Rise of The American Empire, 1918-1961*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 143.

⁵³ H. W. Brands, *Inside the Cold War. Loy Henderson and The Rise of The American Empire, 1918-1961*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 142-143.

Big Three (including the heads of government and the foreign ministers) had already attempted to resolve the issue and had produced no practical results. A closed great power summit would also have deprived Byrnes and the Iranians of one of their most powerful weapons: an international spotlight trained directly on the Kremlin. However, many agreed with Henderson's premise that the United Nations was too immature at this juncture to be thrust into a tense dispute both between a small nation and a permanent member of the Security Council particularly amid escalating tensions between Moscow and Washington. Consequently the idea of deferring the Iranian complaint to bilateral negotiations between Moscow and Tehran as a means, if nothing else, to avoid an implosion of the Security Council found considerable support including with Byrnes. Only in the coming months would he recognize that the Council would not become a viable and legitimate body by ducking the Iranian complaint. The Soviets, of course, wanted the matter terminated then and there based on their proposal to pursue direct talks with Tehran *sans* Security Council consideration. The compromise, proposed by the American representatives, allowed the Council to maintain a continuing interest in the issue, that is, it remained on the agenda pending the outcome of the proposed two party negotiations between Moscow and Tehran.

In spite of that qualification, Iranians and world public opinion in general assumed that the Soviets had successfully dodged a bullet in London with the added advantage of allowing them more time to pressure Tehran during the bilateral talks proposed by Vyshinsky and to creating facts of the ground by expanding the Soviet base of activities in Azerbaijan. In Tabriz, Rossow reported to Washington that the London sessions of the Council had been "interpreted as a Soviet victory" both in Pischevari's separatist government and on the streets of Tabriz. According to the American vice-consul, it was widely assumed that the Soviets had been encouraged by the outcome in London "to prosecute with even greater vigor their increasingly belligerent polices."⁵⁴ Rossow was not the only one to credit Russia with a victory in London. The coverage in *Pravda* treated Vyshinsky's performance as a *tour de force* of tactical maneuver that scored a big

⁵⁴ Robert Rossow (Vice-Consul in Tabriz) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 2/11/1946, telegram # 891.00/2-1146, in *FRUS*, pp. 332-334,

win for Soviet diplomacy.⁵⁵ Qavam apparently interpreted matters this way as well; now he felt free to pursue his natural pro-Russian inclinations by offering concessions to Moscow in the proposed two-way talks. In the absence of firm American guarantees of support, which had been requested by Ambassadors Ala and Taqizadeh and politely declined; with the British focus exclusively on the flow of Iranian oil to the Royal Navy; and with a policy of retrenchment prevailing in London, one could hardly blame the Iranian PM. Nonetheless there is an implication in Rossow's observations that had the Americans taken a firm stand in London in favor of hearing the Iranian's complaint at the Security Council then and there and had they given the Iranians the assurances of support they requested, Pishvari might have lowered the temperature in Azerbaijan or have been forced to by the Russians to do so. Meet with a soft ball response from Bynres and Bevin, the Soviets were encouraged to intensify the pressure on Tehran.

Although Vyshinsky had scored the first diplomatic goal of the Iran crisis it was not a total victory. Russia had maneuvered for an even bigger pay off, that is, to have the Iranian complaint removed from the Security Council agenda completely in deference to the proposed bilateral talks. This he did not achieve. Had the Soviets prevailed on this strategic objective, it would have amounted to a *de facto* veto by a permanent member of the right of smaller nations to bring a complaint and be heard before the Council. It was a goal that the Soviets advanced at the Dumbarton Oaks conference and Yalta summit and had lost both times. That it was being revived again in practice in London proved how crucial Moscow considered it for their foreign policy aims. Yet, once again they had failed to turn the Council into a rubber stamp for the great powers although they had not exhausted their efforts to achieve that goal. Negotiations between Tehran and Moscow would take place with the Council's blessing but the Iranian complaint would remain on its agenda.

On January 30, the American representative supported a Security Council resolution endorsing bilateral talks between Tehran and Moscow but he added the *proviso* that the matter stay on the Council agenda until the body determined otherwise and that both parties report back on the progress of their talks. Ernest Bevin, representing

⁵⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 308.

England, added a further qualification: that the Council could reconsider the Iranian complaint any time it considered the progress of negotiations to be unsatisfactory.⁵⁶ In other words, the Council did not have to wait for the parties to report back to consider the Iranian complaint. The two qualifications provided some succor to Iran yet the Americans had not embraced them with enthusiasm. Byrnes was still not entirely convinced that confronting Russia on this issue was either wise or necessary particularly in light of the appointment of Qavam as prime minister, who given his pro-Soviet sympathies, was likely to strike a deal with Moscow and terminate Iran's complaint. In that case, a great deal of energy and diplomatic capital would be expended to no purpose and America might even look not the idealistic guardian of a small nation's rights but a meddlesome, paternalistic and even amateurish on the world stage. The situation might be different, Byrnes told Kennan, if the anti-Russian Hakami was still in office but with Qavam now prime minister, Security Council interest was not so clear because it was not obvious that Qavam would stand behind the complaint.⁵⁷ Byrnes had good cause to question the new Iranian prime minister's commitment to his country's complaint against the USSR. Yet it was Byrnes who withheld a full throated support for the Iranian complaint for his own reasons not the least of which were his belief that Iran was largely a British concern and his fear that relations with the Soviets would be further soured over a matter America had little influence or national interest.

As we have seen, Truman did not see things that way. In his January 5 unsent letter to Byrnes, Truman said the United States should be protesting Soviet subversive activities in Iran in the loudest terms. Yet in London, Byrnes was maneuvering to get out of the way of the natural evolution of events: a Soviet-British division of Iran. Then, there was the question of preserving the United Nations which he, like Loy Henderson, believed too immature at this point to handle a dispute in which a permanent member of the Security Council was the defendant. This opinion would soon change when Byrnes concluded in early March, following the failure of Soviet withdrawal and instead reports

⁵⁶ Memorandum Calendar Notes on Iranian Matters prepared by Charles Noyes, Special Assistant to Stettinius, 1/29/1946 in *FRUS*, pp. 322-325; Edward Stettinius (United States Representative at the United Nations) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 1/30/1946, telegram # 761.91/1-3046 in *FRUS*, pp 325-326.

⁵⁷ James Byrnes (Secretary of State) to George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union), 2/26/1946, telegram # 761.91/2-2246, in *FRUS*, pp. 334-335.

of Russian reinforcements arriving in Tabriz, that what Qavam wanted or did not was not entirely relevant to the Security Council the task of which was to maintain global peace and security irrespective of what the initial parties to a dispute wanted. The Security Council and its responsibility were greater than the interests of any individual members. Moreover, bi-lateral talks could never be fair negotiations until the Soviet Army withdrew from occupying northern Iran, a conclusion Truman had reached in January when he penned a letter of reprimand to Byrnes. Until the evacuation there would always be a strong suspicion that any agreements reached between Qavam and Molotov were made at Russian gun point.

Other factors undoubtedly influenced Byrnes' decision in London to avoid a fight with the USSR over Iran to the greatest degree possible. At the time of the London sessions of the Security Council, British troops had yet to fully evacuate Iran although they were, unlike the Red Army, well on the way out and only a few hundred remained. Pushing the Iranian complaint at this moment could have potentially left America at odds with England even though the latter was not accused by Tehran of interfering in Iranian internal affairs, the substance of Iranian complaint submitted to the Security Council. Once the British military completed evacuation and if the Russians had not acted likewise, Moscow could not counter-charge the West with bad faith and the Council of applying a double standard. Byrnes also wished to wait until the official March 2 technical deadline had been reached before subjecting the issue to a public forum even though the Iranian complaint focused on Moscow's interference in Iran's internal affairs and objection to the ongoing presence of the Red Army was only implied. Reza Shah Pahlavi, who was anxious about America's resolve to support his country against Russia, agreed in retrospect with Byrnes' logic, that is, Iran's case would be simpler, sharper and more understandable to world public opinion once the technical deadline had passed, the British military had fully withdrawn and the Red Army remained in place.⁵⁸ Certainly a convincing case could have been made in London that the Soviets were consistently violating Iranian domestic affairs the halting of the Iranian military column on November 19-20 being Exhibit A. Yet the reluctance of the Red Army to leave Iran on schedule was

⁵⁸ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/11/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1146, in *FRUS*, pp. 350-354.

only implied at this juncture at that was the critical factor that made the case a matter for consideration by the Security Council. If it was possible the Soviets would leave in March as required then her inference in Iran's internal affairs although forbidden under *both* the 1921 and 1942 treaties would not have amounted to long lasting harm and not a threat to world peace and security as required for Council consideration. Only in light of a determination of the Soviets to continue their occupation of Iranian territory would her interfere in Iran's domestic affairs come into sharper focus and take on a more sinister appearance, exposed as it was, not just bullying but as part of a grand strategy to force Iran into the Soviet sphere and expand into the Persian Gulf.

Byrnes would also not rule out the possibility that a fair bilateral agreement might be produced by Tehran and Moscow obviating the need to test the Security Council or further stress American-Russian relations. The Soviets had told him an agreement was imminent; either because he believed them or didn't want to appear foolish if that became true while America was making pursuing the Iranian complaint in the Security Council, Byrnes decided, as the Soviets liked to say, to await further developments and a clarification of the situation. Informing Kennan of developments, Byrnes stated that although America was sympathetic to Tehran, he did not want to encourage them to adopt "an unreasonable attitude" in discussions with Moscow which all out American backing might have done. This again suggests Byrnes had not yet given up on the efficacy of a two party resolution outside the United Nations.⁵⁹ The implication of his message to Kennan was that if those talks were to be fruitful the Iranians could not automatically assume they could turn America as back up rather than makes concessions to the Russians or at least their Azerbaijani comrades. Byrnes had already advised Tehran to consider purely cultural concessions to the Azeri people either to convince them to reduce their connections with Moscow or as a peace offering to the Kremlin or both.

In spite of the poor reviews of his performance at the Moscow CFM by hardliners and the dressing down he may have received from Truman along with a directive to stiffen his approach to the Russians, Byrnes had not arrived in London to increase

⁵⁹ James Byrnes (Secretary of State) to George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union), 2/26/1946, telegram # 761.91/2-2246, in *FRUS*, pp. 334-335.

tensions with Moscow.⁶⁰ He intended to protect Iran's interests if it came to that but without antagonizing the Soviets especially on an issue he still regarded as largely a British concern. It was only under the evolution of events on the ground in Azerbaijan as the deadline for withdrawal past that he came to regard the issue as worthy of risking further erosion of American relations with the Soviet Union. In that process he came to realize the greater issue of the legitimacy of the United Nations itself was at stake.

Having failed to have their complaint immediately heard by the Security Council, the optimum result for Iran in London was that Stalin had been informed that detachment of Azerbaijan province and a possible Soviet sponsored coup in Tehran would not go unnoticed or accepted as a *fait accompli*. Both Tehran and Moscow were to keep the Security Council informed about their progress amounting to a continuing interest on the part of that body. Neither of these factors pleased the Soviets but on the whole they emerged from the first round in the Security Council slightly embarrassed, completely annoyed and exposed public scrutiny yet still in a strong position in Iran with time to prepare for their next move with no effective opposition on the ground. Most importantly the Iranian's complaint had not elicited significant support from Washington and even less so from London and it did not proceed to a hearing before the Council which seemed inclined to allow bilateral talks between Tehran and Moscow time to resolve the dispute. That left Tehran open to intense pressure from Moscow who enjoyed a grossly disproportionate advantage in bilateral talks. If it had been a test of American resolve, Stalin could be relatively confident that he could proceed although no longer outside the international spotlight.

For many in Tehran, it must have seemed like a sad repeat of history. During the Russian Civil War, the Red Army overran northern Iran in pursuit of the White Army. Then when the young Bolshevik government backed a break-away communist government in Gilan province, the Iranian government brought a complaint to the League of Nations which in June 1920 informed them that there was nothing the world body could do. Tehran was advised by the League to settle the matter as best they could with

⁶⁰ Unlike his one-man show at the London and Moscow CFM sessions, Byrnes brought along two certified Republican hardliners with him to London for the launch of the Security Council: Arthur Vandenberg and John Foster Dulles.

Moscow through bilateral negotiations.⁶¹ In 1933 when Iran again turned to the League for relief from the predatory practices of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company they were once more told to go it alone against a Great Power, “condemning the weak to the maw of the powerful” as Manucher Farmanfarmaian put it.⁶² Now once again a world body dedicated to peace and security was telling a small nation to hash out a settlement with a Great Power even though the power imbalance precluded fair negotiations. Leveling the playing field would require the participation of the Security Council which was not yet ready to play that role. In particular, Edward Stettinius, the head of the United States delegation to the United Nations, seemed oblivious to the implications. Like FDR, the former secretary of state’s main aim was preserving the wartime Soviet-American alliance and preventing a relapse of Stalin’s isolationist policies of the 1930s, by keeping the Kremlin engaged in the United Nations. Stettinius declared he was satisfied with the outcome of the Security Council’s consideration of the complaint. He, like Byrnes, did assert America’s position that small nations had as much right as Great Powers to present their cases to the Security Council yet he failed to follow the logic of that principle and apply it firmly to the Iran case. Molotov’s *protégé*, André Gromyko, had assured Stettinius that communist parties in Iran and separatist movements in Azerbaijan and the Kurdish zone were indigenous and spontaneous—without Soviet encouragement, sanction or assistance.⁶³ A bald face lie, Stettinius gullibly swallowed Gromyko’s version of events over that of the Tehran government or responsible Americans (e.g. Rossow) present on the scene in Iran. Indeed, the extensive and mounting record of Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe and the Balkans, detailed in part in the Etheridge report, alone warranted casting a jaundiced eye on any assurances of good behavior from Gromyko. Yet, Stettinius, a likeable but hapless man totally out of his depth in world affairs, was determined to follow the logic of FDR’s Soviet policy to the bitter end. Trusting Gromyko’s claim that the Soviets were mere innocent bystanders in Azerbaijan

⁶¹ The outcome was Lenin’s abandonment of the Gilan Soviet government in exchange for the 1921 friendship treaty that allowed for the return of the Red Army at will if a third party in Iran was jeopardizing Soviet security. Interestingly this was one of the few times Stalin openly disagreed with Lenin. Stalin believed that the Bolsheviks should have remained loyal to their comrades in Gilan province.

⁶² Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 179.

⁶³ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 307-308.

province, Stettinius left the Iran debate in London with a warranted confidence that the proposed Iranian-Soviet talks would resolve the quarrel quickly and fairly.⁶⁴

Vyshinsky had dutifully rebutted the Iranian charge s not with facts but with the party-line demonstrating the same loyalty to his boss in Moscow as he had a decade earlier at the infamous show trials. He had already advanced the familiar claims that the separatist movements in northern Iran were indigenous and without foreign support. He then cited the 1921 and 1942 treaties as sufficient to justify Soviet occupation of northern Iran even though the presence of the Red Army was not the basis of the Iranian complaint.⁶⁵ Vyshinsky ignored the fact that both treaties he cited forbade interference in Iranian internal affairs yet that made sense to him, if no one else, because he denied such meddling was taking place. Just as Mark Etheridge had documented in Eastern Europe, Vyshinsky dismissed all claims that contradicted Moscow's version of events as the work of "fascists." Yet that was not enough; recognizing the best defense is a good offense, he launched his own second front. He now claimed that the Soviet Union was being picked on by the Security Council and singled out by Western imperialist hypocrites and he intended to retaliate. Like any good defense counsel when all else failed he put someone else on trial. In effect he now asked "what of the other great powers?" Why are they not the subject of complaints?

On January 21, Vyshinsky filed a complaint from the Soviet Union demanding British withdrawal from Greece and the Ukrainian delegation filled a complaint demanding British withdrawal from Indonesia, then known as the Dutch East Indies.⁶⁶ Both complaints insisted that the British were interfering in the internal affairs of those countries. Probably this very action is what Whitehall feared and was a key reason Taqizadeh received a tepid reception from Bevin when he asked for a guarantee of

⁶⁴ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 307-308.

⁶⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 305.

⁶⁶ Unlike some in the State Department (see Chapter Five, 198) the Soviets did not seem terribly troubled by issues of standing when it came to filling unsolicited complaints on behalf of sovereign states. Moreover, the Soviet promotion of a British exit from Greece was more than disingenuous. During the war Stalin reached the so-called "percentages agreement" with Churchill that conceded almost all of Greece to a British sphere of interest in exchange of course for similar consideration from England for Soviet interests in the Balkans. While in the past Stalin was willing to cynically divvy up Greece with imperialist England, in 1946 he tried to promote the USSR as the champion of Greek independence.

support. Of course, British troops were in Greece at the request of the sovereign government in Athens who, in any case, had not submitted any complaint to the Security Council, whereas the Tehran government had definitely asked all armed foreign powers to leave their country and had presented a formal complain to the Council directly, that is, not via a proxy acting in her name. Relevant distinctions mattered little to a man like Vyshinsky who, reverting back to his role as Stalinist Grand Inquisitor referred to the Greek government (and a member state of the United Nations) as “fascist scum,” called the British a bunch of “hotheads” and charged them with "suspiciousness" and implied the Iranian diplomats were little more than imperialist stooges.⁶⁷ For his part, Bevin retorted that the Soviets were engaging in a “war of nerves” over Iran designed to break down resistance over time presumably because the Soviets could take the pressure and others could not.⁶⁸

If Vyshinsky was counting on a bandwagon effect he was not disappointed. Next Arab states joined in and formally complained to the Council about the British and French military presence and domestic political interference in Lebanon and Syria. On February 14 the Lebanese delegate charged that foreign troops in their country presented as great a threat to world peace and security as the Soviets in Iran which was at least an admission that the Russians were such a threat.⁶⁹ The Arab's complaint met with loud applause and approval from the Soviet delegation. If Byrnes had believed that not making much of the Iranian complaint prior to a full withdrawal of British forces from Iran would deprive the Soviets of a weapon highlighting the hypocrisy of the West, he was wrong. The Russians enjoyed the uncomfortable position this placed London, and Moscow may

⁶⁷ Vyshinsky quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 305-307. It might seem odd that if the Tehran government was little more than an imperialist puppet regime that the Soviets would wish to engage in bilateral talks with them. The Soviet ambassador did little attempt to explain it all except to say that in spite of it all, which included implying the Shah's government was fascist, two party talks would be fruitful.

⁶⁸ Bevin quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 305-307. “War of nerves” was an apt characterization by Bevin; the Soviet ambassador in Turkey was reproached by Ankara for his counties support to the breakaway Kurdish republic in northern Iran which was assumed would spill into Turkey which hosted its own sizable Kurdish population. “We waited [a] long time regarding [the] arrangement we wanted with Poland and we finally got it,” the Russian ambassador warned, “we can wait regarding Turkey.” [Soviet Ambassador in Ankara quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 315]

⁶⁹ Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: The First Fifty Years*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 28-29.

even have been hoping to revive the old common anti-imperialist bond between FDR and Stalin even if it meant logically classing the British and French colonial occupations with the Red Army occupation of northern Iran. If so it was an interesting Freudian slip. Yet, it was perfectly understandable that, because FDR had gone to great lengths during the war to give Stalin the impression that America and the USSR shared a common opposition to colonialism the Soviets might now test that claim.⁷⁰

Contrary to what the Soviets probably expected, the Americans agreed that no great power had the right to station troops in another sovereign nation (including Lebanon and Syria) without mutual consent.⁷¹ On February 16 after two days of debate, Stettinius introduced a resolution which expressed confidence that, at the earliest possible date, British and French troops would leave Syria and Lebanon and endorsed negotiations among the parties while preserving Security Council interests in the discussions.⁷² This resolution, fashioned by the Americans, was precisely the recipe for a resolution that Byrnes was cooking for Iran: bilateral negotiations but with the Council retaining the complaint on the agenda for future consideration if the bilateral talks proved fruitless. The Soviets, however, objected to the resolution presented by Stettinius claiming the language was not sufficiently aggressive because it did not demand an immediate British and French military retreat from Syria and Lebanon, which of course, they were unwilling to reciprocate in Iran where they insisted on no withdrawal until the deadline had been reached.⁷³ The Soviet delegation claimed the USSR was being treated with a double standard and insisted on resorting to an extreme measure to express their disapproval. They had little choice but to oppose the resolution no matter how blunt the language because it proposed keeping the matter on the Council agenda until the matter was resolved. The Soviets, correctly as it turned out, feared this would set a precedent for the Iran case. The resolution did not preclude bilateral talks over Lebanon and Syria but it did mean the Council considered it in the best interests of all parties if it stayed active on

⁷⁰ To emphasize his point, FDR had frequently made Churchill, the world's premier imperialist, the butt of his private jokes with Stalin.

⁷¹ The sovereign government in Greece, whatever else the Russians might have thought about it, had asked British troops be stationed in their country to counteract the communist insurgents. Thus, the Americans at the London sessions were correct not to class that situation with northern Iran.

⁷² Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: The First Fifty Years*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 28.

⁷³ Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: The First Fifty Years*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 28-29.

their agenda. Defying the will of the majority and the strong advice of Secretary-General Lie, the Soviets cast the first veto ever in the Security Council.⁷⁴ Their justification that the resolution was not sufficiently aggressive in its language (that is, too easy on France and England) was beside the point.⁷⁵ Moscow cared little about Syria and Lebanon; they had cheered their complaints before the Council for their value as push back against London and Washington and revenge for the Iran complaint. The real Soviet objection to the resolution was the precedent that would be set (that is, remaining on the Council agenda while bilateral talks took place) when it came to territory that they cared about: Iran and her complaint against the USSR.

The veto power of the permanent members of the Security Council is an essential feature of that body. It is one of the factors that make it a potentially strong executive body and not just a poor relation of the General Assembly. The *de facto* executive branch of the United Nations would be firmly under the leadership of the permanent members of the Council: the victorious Big Five. The League of Nations executive body accorded a veto for each of its members yet this was a formula FDR did not wish to repeat since he believed it had hobbled that body from the start contributing to its fecklessness during the gathering storm of the 1930s. Conversely, the Soviet Union was opposed to majority rule in the Security Council since they would always be at risk of being permanently outvoted by the liberal capitalist democracies particularly an alliance of England and the USA which Stalin feared had covertly contrived to deprive the USSR of the fruits of victory. Thus, he could not permit majority rule on the Council which would give England and America what Stalin assumed would be coordinated votes against the USSR. An undisputed veto, Maxim Litvinov told journalist Edgar Snow, "...was our way of demanding a guarantee of equality, a guarantee against combinations."⁷⁶ Granting the permanent members a veto was critical to keeping Stalin engaged in the United Nations project and a world body without one of the two superpowers seemed doomed to failure from the start. At Yalta the best FDR could do was to modify that Soviet insistence on a

⁷⁴ Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: The First Fifty Years*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 29.

⁷⁵ Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man. The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*. (New York: Random House), 2006, 52.

⁷⁶ Maxim Litvinov quoted in William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 88.

veto by proposing that the veto be used only on resolutions before the Security Council but not to control the agenda, that is, to control who would and would not be heard. Yet, as we have seen the Soviets never gave up pursuing this maxim demand.⁷⁷ The understanding that emerged from Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta meant a permanent member would have an absolute veto power over *substantive* matters but not *procedural* matters e.g. placing a member state's complaint on the agenda.⁷⁸ Had the Soviet position for an absolute veto over *both* substantive and procedural matters prevailed Iran almost certainly would not have even been permitted to bring their complaint to the Security Council since the Soviets would have vetoed placing it on the agenda. Everyone might be theoretically equal in the General Assembly but when it came to the questions of war and peace, committing troops and treasure, some were to be far more equal than others in the Security Council. For the Americans and British, however, that privilege did not extend so far that it meant silencing smaller nations. Although consensus decision making was a formula for a potentially stalemated executive body, the Americans agreed to the Soviet demand for permanent member veto power; refusal might have provided Stalin an excuse to withdraw from the whole project.

The Soviets had also insisted that a defendant nation named in a complaint before the Security Council need not recuse themselves from participating in the judgment of the complaint. This again privileged permanent members of the Council and further infuriated member states in the General Assembly that already resented their inferior status. Thus the Soviets would not have to surrender their veto of a resolution if and when Iran brought its complaint before the Council. The potentially Kafkaesque outcome of being both a defendant and a judge that triggered Stettinius to remark that in America husband and wives never get to judge their own cases in divorce court.⁷⁹ The absurdity was not lost on the Iranian delegation to the United Nations; one of its members said with their case being judged by one of the permanent members and the accused party—the

⁷⁷ Mark Mazower, *Governing the World. The History of an Idea, 1815 to the Present*. (New York: Penguin, 2012), 207-208.

⁷⁸ Stephen Schlesinger, *Act of Creation. The Founding of the Nations*. (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003), 193.

⁷⁹ William Taubman, *Stalin's American Policy*. (New York: W.W. Norton, 1982), 89.

Soviet Union—the hearing could only be farcical.⁸⁰ The outcome, like the infamous Moscow show trials would be predetermined. Thus, a serious flaw in the architecture of the Council was exposed almost immediately by the Iranians.

The Roosevelt administration attempted to put a positive spin on the veto saying it would force the permanent members to cooperate, compromise and reach agreements about peace and stability rather than remain hopelessly deadlocked in the face of aggression. That interpretation reflected, writes Paul Kennedy, the “hopeful Wilsonian notion that reasonable men should always be able to arrive at a peaceful solution by themselves or with some outside help.”⁸¹ That, however, assumed the Soviet Union wanted the United Nations to work and that a community of interests existed among the permanent members at least on the core question of war and peace. Realistically, however, the permanent members would not have it any other way than possessing a powerful veto if they were to remain great powers. The Soviets were not the only ones who preferred an absolute veto in the Council. England and France fully intended to defend their colonies against complaints whatever the source. FDR and Truman both recognized the absolute veto (on substantive but not procedural matters) was vital to win approval not just from the other nations (e.g. the USSR) but from the United States Senate where Republicans wanted a safeguard against foreign intrusion into America’s sphere of interests under the guise of a United Nation’s action. They also feared that without the veto America might well have surrendered the legislatures’ power to declare war making the constitutional requirement a mere technicality at best. The Congress was already anxious over the destabilization of the balance of power among the branches of government during the New Deal Era and then the Second World War. With the war ended they were eager to see a return of some to the legislature’s powers, especially on foreign policy, not deference to a world body. Indeed, although few in the United States were pleased by the Soviet veto and what it implied for the future of the United Nations, one prominent anti-Soviet hard liner, Senator Arthur Vandenberg, was positively enthusiastic. It set a precedent that a member state did not have to submit to any

⁸⁰ Manucher and Roxanne Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil. Memoirs puff a Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 179,

⁸¹ Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man. The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*. (New York: Random House, 2006), 36.

resolution which it deemed contrary to its national interests. The Soviet did it today but it established the option for America to do it tomorrow when her national interests were at issue.⁸² That was precisely why American skeptics of the United Nations and collective security had insisted on a veto. Vandenberg, a Republican senator jealous of his institution's role in foreign and war policy making and anxious to push back at any threat to it, may have been privately pleased with the precedent established by Vyshinsky's veto but in this case vital Soviet interests were *not* involved. The Soviets had no interests (security or otherwise) in the Levant and it was only by implication that Iran was an issue in their veto. Secretary-General Lie worked to dissuade Vyshinsky from casting a veto when no vital Soviet interest were at stake--the standard that FDR had proposed for the veto. For Lie it was dangerous to establish the use of the veto when the objection was one of style and not content.⁸³ The immediate cause mattered less to Vandenberg than that the trigger had been pulled and the veto worked without the Security Council falling apart. It was a weapon America could use if necessary in the future to protect her national interests when they were at odds with the collective. The irony in the precedent being set by the Russians did not matter to the stridently anti-Soviet Vandenberg.⁸⁴

A veto because a permanent member of the Council thought the language of a resolution but not the substance was insufficient established an unfortunate precedent and yet a considerable amount of ambiguity still existed about the circumstances under which the veto might be exercised. All that was supposedly settled was that the veto applied to matters of substance not procedure yet even then there was ambiguity since the two were not always easily separable as the Iran case would demonstrate. Technically any member state could bring a complaint before the Security Council without fear it would be vetoed

⁸² Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man. The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*. (New York: Random House, 2006), 52.

⁸³ Stanley Meisler, *United Nations: The First Fifty Years*. (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 29. That Lie considered the basis for the Soviet veto to be over the style of the resolution (i.e. not aggressive enough in condemning London and Paris over Syria and Lebanon) indicates that although he disapproved of their use of the veto in this case he accepted their justification that the language was not strong enough. The far more likely explanation, however, was their fear it would set a precedent for Security Council authority that would be applied to the Iran complaint.

⁸⁴ Stephen Schlesinger, *Act of Creation. The Founding of the Nations*. (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003), 193.

before being placed on the agenda.⁸⁵ Indeed, the Dumbarton Oaks and Yalta conference agreements on the matter prohibited the use of the veto to prevent the introduction of a complaint to the Security Council or cut off discussion. That clarified when the veto could *not* be used but did not establish when it could be used and the Yalta summit documents were fuzzy, imprecise, and uncertain about the use of the veto once a complaint was on the agenda.⁸⁶ Still, Edward Stettinius wrote that he had left Yalta with the impression that an unwritten understanding had been reached with the Russians that the veto would only be used when matters of vital national interests were at stake.⁸⁷ If so, he was either mistaken or the Soviets changed their minds. The use of the veto by the Soviets in London was hardly a matter of vital national interest. The more likely explanation is that the Soviets did not consider unwritten understandings worth the paper they were printed on. Thus, what constituted the substance was open to interpretation and the Soviets had by casting the veto established that substance could include insufficient intensity of words and not just vital interests as FDR and Stettinius believed was informally agreed on.

Secretary-General Lie labored hard to persuade the Russians to withhold their veto. Their objections, after all, were on the style not the heart of the resolution. To set a precedent over minor wording issues and not substance could possibly cripple the new world body leaving it mired in a swamp of vetoes over trivial objections resulting in stalemate and inaction. Like Stettinius at Yalta, Lie said he had hoped the veto would only be used when a permanent member's vital national interests were at stake and even then only in the case of immediate security threats.⁸⁸ Still it should have not have come as too great a surprise; every time the Americans had taken an action on Iran, no matter how minor, Stalin upped the ante. As Lie predicted and feared, a negative precedent for the capricious use of veto power in the Security Council was established. It would quickly become one of Russia's favorite Cold War diplomatic weapons casting fifty alone during

⁸⁵ Paul Kennedy, *The Parliament of Man. The Past, Present, and Future of the United Nations*. (New York: Random House, 2006), 35-36.

⁸⁶ Stephen Schlesinger, *Act of Creation. The Founding of the Nations*. (Cambridge, MA: Westview Press, 2003), 193-194.

⁸⁷ Edward Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1949), 296.

⁸⁸ Trygve Lie, *In the Cause of Peace*. (New York; Macmillan, 1954), 34. Lie was secretary-general between 1946 and 1952.

Lie's tenure.⁸⁹ The debate on the issue was more contentious than anyone had predicted and ended on June 30 with the Council endorsing bilateral talks between Moscow and Tehran to which the parties were to submit progress reports.⁹⁰ Contrary to the wishes of the USSR and their concept of the Security Council as little more than a rubber stamp to endorse whatever actions the great powers took to advance their own interests within their spheres of influence (essentially FDR's original "Four Policemen" model), the Iranian complaint remained on the Security Council agenda. Removing it from the Council's agenda became Gromyko's top priority.

Although the United States had preserved the Iran case on the Security Council's agenda, at the London sessions Byrnes had not gone further in pressing the Iran case by offering assurances of American support to Iranian Ambassador Seyyed Hassan Taqizadeh. Such an assurance of Washington's support probably would have enhanced Tehran's confidence during the two party negotiations in Moscow and placed the latter on notice that Washington had a strong interest in the outcome. In his January 5 letter to Byrnes, Truman had instructed his secretary of state to protest in the loudest possible terms the Soviet agenda in Iran, a directive Byrnes, still under the influence of FDR's Soviet policy, resisted at the London sessions of the Security Council relying instead on the prospects of the Qavam-Molotov-Stalin talks in Moscow. In contrast, Ernest Bevin

⁸⁹ Edward Stettinius, *Roosevelt and the Russians*. (Garden City, New York: Double Day and Co., 1949), 296.

⁹⁰ Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil. Memoirs of a Persian Prince*. New York: Random House, 1997, 179.

rhetorically asked "What is there to negotiate about?"⁹¹ It was a good question which the American delegation was not yet willing to ask.

⁹¹ Bevin quoted in Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 308; Harry S. Truman. *Memoirs. Year of Decisions*. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Co., 1955), 551-552.

Chapter Three

Mission to Moscow

On January 20, one day after they submitted their complaint to the Security Council, Iran abruptly changed heads of government. Although parliamentary elections could not be called because foreign armies remained on Iranian soil, a new head of government was possible. The conservative Prime Minister Hakimi was sacked by a razor thin vote (51-52) in the Majlis.¹ He was replaced by Ahmad Qavam. The new prime minister was slightly eccentric but experienced, having been prime minister three times in the past. Qavam was known to be on very friendly terms with Moscow and a friend of the Tudeh Party front group the Freedom Front, an organization that had been designed exactly for people like Qavam allowing them exhibit a respectable if indirect support for Russia.² Unlike less well connected businessmen, Qavam had successfully maintained his economic interests—tea plantations—inside the Soviet occupied zone of northern Iran without being molested. With one exception the cabinet he assembled was hostile to the shah.³ The Soviets often loudly denounced Qavam's anti-Soviet predecessor and insisted they could only deal with a “friendly” government in Tehran. Now they seemed to have one do in no small measure to intense communist pressure.⁴ The most charitable explanation for the Majlis elevation of Qavam was that if bilateral talks with Moscow were inevitable they wished to put their best foot forward with a Soviet friendly PM. Conservatives, the military and the shah were convinced that Qavam would only deliver a Munich like “peace at any price” sell-out of Iran to the Soviets. Qavam had in fact

¹ An October 1945 law passed by the Majlis prohibited new elections to the parliament until all foreign troops left Iran. It was passed out of fear that the Soviets would use their massive military presence in the north to fix any new elections with pro-communist candidates. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 320.]

² Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between the Two Revolutions*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 221-222; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 305.

³ The exception was General Mohammad Hossein Mirza who had worked closely with Col. Schwarzkopf in the *gendarmarie*. Most likely explanation was that Qavam did not want to antagonize the *gendarmarie*.

⁴ Kuniholm, Bruce. *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 305.

received the support of the Tudeh in the Majlis and Stalin sent him warm congratulations. As for Moscow, things were off to a propitious start: the Security Council had punted and there was now a prime minister in Tehran predisposed, at least by reputation, to cooperation with the USSR. Further, Byrnes had spent little energy in London when it came to Iran undoubtedly hoping that two party talks would resolve the issue.⁵ The Soviets had certainly not been treated to the loud protests over Iran that Truman had prescribed following the Moscow CFM sessions.

Qavam although soft on the Soviets was not a puppet.⁶ He had been a prime advocate of the policy of recruiting third parties—in this case the United States—to counterbalance Russia and England. That resulted in his sponsorship of the first and second Millspaugh missions and the Schwarzkopf mission to reform the *gendarmierie*. He had also invited Standard Oil to prospect for oil in the north of the country in the 1920s. Qavam, who wore dark glasses incessantly, was considered a master calligrapher and spoke his native language with great beauty. A past holder of the prime minister's office Qavam was not a populist like Mossadegh; he was an intellectual and an elitist. His house, along with his coinsurer's collection of Korans, calligraphy, porcelain and carpets, was burned down by an angry mob during bread riots in 1942 much to the delight of the shah who was never on good terms with Qavam.⁷ In the absence of vigorous American and British support and with no credible capacity to resist the Red Army, Qavam would have to develop a creative strategy to usher the Soviets out of his country with a minimum degree of pain for Iran. His tactic, said Manucher Farmanfarmaian, was to

⁵ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 101; Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 181. Of course, in all fairness to Byrnes the change of government in Tehran did pose the question of the viability of the Iranian complaint. Would the pro-Soviet Qavam press the complaint with any vigor? He said that his government supported the submission of the complaint to the Security Council but the degree of his support was open to question.

⁶ The British, however, did suspect Qavam was a Soviet dupe and a tool of the Tudeh. In April 1946 the Foreign Office expressed severe anxiety that Qavam was drifting "into the position of a Russian puppet." Further reports cited his courtship of the Tudeh party as proof that Qavam was under Moscow's thumb. By the summer of 1946 the British embassy in Tehran reported to London that "It now seems evident to all patriotic Persians that Qavam has definitely sold his country to the Russians." By the end of 1946, however, British fears proved unfounded when Qavam broke with the Tudeh party and allowed the Iranian army to overthrow the Pishavari regime in Tabriz. [Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 237.]

⁷ Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 181.

“seduce” Stalin.⁸ If so it was a dangerous tactic: Stalin had filled more than a few graveyards with men who thought they could seduce or trick him.

The Iranian prime minister told Ambassador Murray that he assumed accommodating Russian oil interests in northern Iran, demands that had been made during the 1944 pre-crisis, was the minimum price Stalin would demand to exit his army. Thus, it was realistic to concede the issue now if it helped to usher the Russians out of his country sooner rather than later. Privately, Murray agreed saying it was a difficult pill to swallow but allowing Stalin oil concessions was probably the only practical option under the circumstances. He agreed with Qavam that it was likely an inevitable course and putting it off was not in Iran’s interests.⁹ One could see their point: the longer the Red Army was on Iranian soil the stronger the Pishvari government became. Of course, the problem not recognized openly by either Qavam or Murray was that oil was only a means for Stalin to an end not an end itself. Indeed, had substantial oil concessions been granted the Soviets would have found more reason to linger on in Iran to protect their oil interests from alleged security threats. Stalin was concerned with saboteurs armed with packs of matches sneaking over the Iranian-Soviet border to set alight oil production in Baku, as he had told Byrnes at the Moscow CFM, would not that risk be more so with Soviet oil production in Iran itself?¹⁰ Indeed, this is exactly how Rossow interpreted the matter: “These [oil] concessions were sought not because of any serious Soviet need for the oil or for the air transport business involved but because of the opportunity such concessions would afford for further penetration and infiltration, as well as the excuse to maintain constant psychological pressure on the Iranian leaders.”¹¹ Granting oil rights to the Soviets in northern Iran would be a beginning not an end to their quest to bring the region under their control.

Qavam also assured Murray that America would be offered oil concessions as well albeit in the south of Iran. Oil in southern Iran, however, had been regarded by

⁸ Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 181.

⁹ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/23/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-2346 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 373-375.

¹⁰ James Byrnes. *Speaking Frankly*. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947), 119.

¹¹ Robert Rossow, “The Battle of Azerbaijan” in *The Middle East Journal*. Winter 1956, Vol. 10, 17-32. The reference to air transport was an additional Russian proposal for the establishment of regular air service between the USSR and Iran.

England as her sphere of influence and vital to the Royal Navy.¹² In any case, the United States had not asked for such a guarantee in 1946 and Murray told Qavam such an offer by Tehran would be a totally unsolicited offer and should have no connection with his talks with Stalin and Molotov. Murray was understandably concerned that the Soviets would use Qavam's offer to characterize American motives in the Security Council as self-interested.¹³

Whatever their motives in elevating Qavam to the prime minister's post, the Majlis had not given him *carte blanche* to deal with Moscow as he pleased.¹⁴ There were restrictions in place when bilateral talks with the Soviets began and Qavam was unwilling to break them proving, although inclined toward the Soviets, he was more realist than appeaser. He was also acutely aware of Iran's own severe limitations in talking with Moscow. Like Charles Bohlen in Washington, Qavam recognized it would be fruitless if not dangerous to challenge Stalin with words that could not be backed up by actions.¹⁵ True, at the insistence of the British and the Americans the Iranian complaint had remained on the Security Council agenda but Washington had not even offered strong words to back up Tehran. During the London Security Council sessions Bevin had asked what there was to negotiate since Russia's duty to leave Iran without condition was black and white.¹⁶ Yet, scoring rhetorical points was hardly sufficient to impress Stalin. Even

¹² On March 4, 1944, FDR tried to reassure an anxious Churchill that the USA was not trying to muscle in on England's oil interests in the Mid-East. "I am having the oil question studied by the Department of State" FDR wrote to Churchill, "and my oil experts, but please do accept my assurances that we are not making sheep's eyes at your oil fields in Iran and Iraq." The next day Churchill replied to FDR with some assurances of his own not that FDR was terribly worried: "Thank You very much for your assurances about no sheep's eyes at our oil fields in Iran and Iraq. Let me reciprocate by giving you the fullest assurances that we have no thought of trying to horn in upon your interests or property in Saudi Arabia." As the war progressed FDR was amused to learn that "sheep's eyes" had become a euphemism in British communications for the Churchill-Roosevelt understanding on the division of oil interests in the Mid-East. [Jonathan Daniels, *White House Witness*. (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1975), 222; Loewenheim, Francis, Langley, Harold, and Jonas, Manfred. (ed) *Roosevelt and Churchill. Their Secret Wartime Correspondence*, p. 459.]

¹³ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/23/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-2346 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 373-375; Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/25/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-2546 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 380-381.

¹⁴ According to the biographer Gholam Reza Afkhami, Reza Shah also had put in a bid for an invitation to negotiate with Stalin and Molotov over the fate of Azerbaijan but Qavam was preferred by the Soviets. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 94.]

¹⁵ See Chapter Five, pp. 198-199.

¹⁶ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 308.

those uneasy with Qavam's Russia friendly posture had to admit he was playing a weak hand: facing a formidable and hostile foreign army on Iranian soil for which he possessed no credible military deterrent; the British and American military had or were rapidly leaving Iran; the Soviets controlled a small but effective force of supporters in Tehran who might stage a Red Army backed coup and indeed, talked and acted as if that was exactly what was going to happen; neither England or the United States was offering direct assistance to help Tehran challenge Moscow and it was not at all clear that words and world public pressure would be sufficient; and the Soviets had a *de facto* puppet regime anchored in the Iranian "bread basket" of Azerbaijan province. Qavam's assessment, as related to Murray, that he had to cut a deal quickly, no matter how distasteful, was understandable under the circumstances. Matters could only get worse from Qavam's perspective and indeed that is exactly what happened.

Qavam's Russia friendly credentials did not help him when he was summoned to the Kremlin on February 19, 1946 to begin the bilateral discussions that Vyshinsky had proposed in London. Stalin, anxious to get matters underway, dispatched an airplane to fetch the Iranian prime minister who was greeted the airport by Molotov, out of his usual drab business suit and in a military style uniform, and an impressive (and perhaps intimidating) honor guard.¹⁷ Addressing assembled journalists, Qavam profusely thanked the Soviets for the opportunity to come to Moscow for a meeting with their leaders. Farsi speakers recognized, however, that was added by the Russian translator not words spoken by Qavam.¹⁸ It was not an auspicious start.

After several days of grilling by Stalin and Molotov, George Kennan was able to meet with Qavam. He found the prime minister "very depressed." "Stalin," he told Kennan, "...with some sadness, was very rough." Qavam further informed Kennan that he had formally protested the failure of Russia to evacuate Iran when the deadline mandated by the Tripartite Treaty passed, which had occurred while Qavam was still in

¹⁷ "Iranian Minister in Russia (1946)" *British Pathe* newsreel.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ErPDjRh6_Lg. That Molotov took the unusual step for a foreign minister (not to mention his personal preference for business suits) to don a military style uniform must have spoken volumes to the arriving Iranians.

¹⁸ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 95.

Moscow.¹⁹ Whatever illusions Qavam may have entertained about seducing Stalin were now at an end. Copious amounts of charm had barely worked on him when they came from a master like FDR; from Qavam they were only an admission of weakness. Even if a deal could be struck, the price would be very high and the process onerous. During his lengthy two and half week stay in Russia, Qavam would meet with Stalin twice and Molotov four times. Most foreigners, even of high rank, rarely rated multiple interviews with Molotov let alone Stalin. That an exception was made for Qavam indicated the Soviet leadership placed a high priority on Iran.

Stalin insisted that Iranians had been duplicitous and backstabbing when dealing with the Soviets.²⁰ He told Qavam that the Soviet Union had always tried to maintain good relations with his country but that Iran conversely had always turned to anti-Russian powers to challenge Moscow.²¹ There was a grain of truth in Stalin's point: Tehran had over time embraced a policy of *movazaneh* to counterbalance Russia by inviting another foreign power, be it Germany or the United States, into the equation.²² What Stalin left out was that the Iranian strategy of equilibrium was directed at England as well as Russia and that the United States, Iran's preferred third wheel, could hardly be called, even in light of the deterioration of relations with Washington, hostile to the USSR at this point. Shortly after Qavam left Moscow, *Izvestia* published an article claiming that Iranian "reactionaries" like Seyyd Zia were maneuvering the British and Americans into a clash with the Soviets over Iran.²³ Stalin's attempt to depict the Soviets as constant victims of Iranian intrigue while Russia struggled to maintain amicable relations was risible. It was true that the Bolshevik government of Lenin had renounced prior Czarist claims and interests in Iran supposedly reducing Moscow's imperial objectives of oil and warm water ports to the realist goal of border security from counterrevolutionaries using northern Iran as a haven. When Stalin thought of the past, however, it was before Lenin

¹⁹ George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State) 3/4/1946, telegram # 761.91/3-446 in *FRUS*, pp. 337-339.

²⁰ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 95.

²¹ The fact the Soviets had been *de facto* allies of Nazi Germany for two years and had discussed diving up the Persian Gulf with Hitler was not mentioned by Stalin. [See Chapter 5, p. 195.]

²² Stephen McFarland, "The Iranian Crisis of 1946, and the Onset of the Cold War" in Melvyn Lefler, (ed.) *Origins of the Cold War. An International History*. (London: Routledge, 1994), 240.

²³ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 111.

and he was reviving traditional Czarist aspirations in Iran and perhaps beyond, to form the basis of a Middle Eastern sphere to replace the retreating British.²⁴ If up to Stalin the Great Game, suspended to meet the threat of a surging Germany, would be turned on once more.

As he had previously with Byrnes, a straight faced Stalin told Qavam that the Soviet Union had legitimate fears of aggression against oil production in Baku launched from Iranian territory. The prime minister could no more credit this than Byrnes had yet Qavam correctly realized attempting to disabuse Stalin about his security fears was pointless. Paranoia was a symptom of the Soviet outlook on the world and rested at the core of Stalin's psyche. Now Stalin supplemented his wild claims of "Iranian plans for aggression" against Russia with historical evidence. The Soviet dictator lectured Qavam that at the Paris Peace Conference in 1919, which produced the controversial Treaty of Versailles, the Persian delegation demanded some Russian territory in the settlement. He now suspected that Iran would make similar claims in the aftermath of the Second World War. No such demands, however, had been made by Iran. When Qavam relayed this to Kennan, the American reassured him that the Security Council was not likely to take Stalin's suspicions seriously if the Soviets tried to vent them publicly.²⁵

Stalin told Qavam the new Soviet ambassador, Ivan Sadchikov, would carry his personal authority and would deal with the Iranians fairly. Even if the new ambassador was an improvement the fair treatment promised by Stalin would have been problematic at best with the Soviets occupying northern Iran and increasingly poised to strike at Tehran. Qavam made that point to Stalin on February 21 at their first meeting. Qavam told Stalin that his goal was good relations between Iran and the Soviet Union but that required evacuation of the Red Army. Stalin, however, was not in the mood for nurturing friendships. Backed up by Molotov, he told Qavam explicitly that Russia would be granted oil concessions in Iran and Azerbaijan province would be granted *de facto*

²⁴ Zubok and Pleshakov recognize this point when they affirm Stalin's interests in northern Iran reached back to pre-revolutionary Russia: "Since czarist times the northern part of Iran (Persia) had been regarded by Moscow as part of a legitimate perimeter of security." [Vladislav Zubok and Constantine Pleshakov, *Inside the Kremlin's Cold War*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), 121.]

²⁵ George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State) 3/4/1946, telegram # 761.91/3-446 in *FRUS*, pp. 337-339.

independence or the Red Army would dig in for a very long stay.²⁶ The man that Stalin promoted as his fair minded ambassador, Ivan Sadchikov, made exactly the same point to Qavam: oil for Russia and *de facto* independence for Azerbaijan province or no withdrawal of Soviet forces from Iranian soil. Of course, genuine independence was never an issue in any event for Azerbaijan since it was inevitable that the province, even if cut adrift by Tehran, would be trapped in the Soviet orbit immediately.

The one concession Stalin would entertain was to reformulate the demand for Soviet oil concessions in northern Iran as a joint Iranian-Soviet oil company with Russia, of course, holding 51 percent of the stock.²⁷ Like Vyshinsky in London, Stalin in Moscow threatened to re-invoke the 1921 treaty of friendship which, unlike the 1942 treaty had no time table for withdrawal; the Soviets could stay under the those terms as long as security threats from Iranian territory existed. Naturally Qavam objected that a third party had to be menacing Russia from Iranian territory in order for the 1921 treaty to apply.²⁸ Stalin made no reply to this point but the implication was obvious: it was his erstwhile allies the British and especially the Americans that constituted the alleged third party. When pressed by Qavam to name the third party threat in Iran against Russia the Soviets, Qavam later told Ambassador Murray in Tehran, "...ultimately fell back on bald and unexplained statement that their 'interests' required retention of troops in Iran."²⁹ Stalin urged Qavam not to take the whole thing too personally; after all his treatment of Iran was no different from what he was handing out in Eastern Europe, a point that the Iranian could hardly have found reassuring.³⁰

²⁶ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 314; Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 95.

²⁷ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 96; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 331; George Lenczowski, *Russia and the West in Iran*. (Ithaca New York: Cornell University Press, 1949), 296.

²⁸ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 313-314; Soviets had invoked the 1921 treaty in 1941 to justify their invasion of Iran the German colony in Iran being the third party thereat to Soviet security.

²⁹ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/11/1946, telegram # 851.24591/3-1146 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 350-354.

³⁰ Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 181.

Qavam attempted to stall the direction the discussions were going in by pointing out he was the Iranian leader most partial to the Soviet interests that Stalin could hope for as a negotiating partner. Thus, he implied, the Russians should not miss this opportunity to parley with him in good faith rather than face a less sympathetic prime minister should he fail. He had achieved office with only one vote to spare and if Stalin was hoping for a future Tudeh party prime minister he would have a long wait. If impugned during these talks the Majlis would almost certainly demand his removal and replacement with a hard liner.³¹ Moreover, he pointed out that a law passed in the wake of the pre-crisis of 1944 precluded his reaching an oil deal with any party as long as foreign troops remained on Iranian soil and not without prior approval of the Majlis. Violation of that law carried a heavy prison term.³² Molotov was not impressed by Qavam's plea and roared back: "Then change the law!" The prime minister attempted to explain that the law could only be altered by the legislature yet Molotov turned beat red and barked out another order: "Then change the Majlis!"³³ Undoubtedly a strong implication hung in the air that if Qavam did not follow Molotov's suggestion then the Soviets and the Tudeh party would take matters into their own hands.³⁴

On March 4, as Soviet tanks and reinforcements were crossing into Iran³⁵ several thousand Tudeh party members and supporters did indeed begin to take matters into their own hands. They surrounded the Majlis building in Tehran preventing the parliament from meeting. The objective was to allow the term of the Majlis to expire owing to a lack of quorum and thus remove any parliamentary scrutiny of Qavam while he was in Moscow. The next day, street brawlers recruited by the Tudeh appeared at the Majlis,

³¹ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/22/1946, telegram # 851.24591/3-2246 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 369-372. While Qavam was in Moscow, for example, the nationalist minded parliamentarian Mossadeq denounced the USSR in a speech in the Majlis for failure to leave Iran and Qavam's cabinet for acquiescence in Soviet violation of the 1942 treaty. [Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 315.]

³² Qavam expressed his fears to Amidi Nuri in Moscow: "they [the Soviets] want me to give them the oil. If I comply with their demand, Mossadeq will surely take me to court for breaking the law. I will try and forced to spend the few years that remain to me in jail. No thank you." [Qavam quoted in Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 95.]

³³ Molotov quoted in Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 102.

³⁴ According to Abbas Milani serious planning (although not necessarily in coordination with Moscow) by the Tudeh party for a "people's coup" was underway by the latter part of 1945. [Abbas Milani, *The Shah*. (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 122.]

³⁵ See Chapter Four.

roughing up members as they attempted to enter the parliament. The scene was repeated each day through March 11 when Qavam returned to Iran having at least protested to Stalin and Molotov the failure of the Red Army to leave Iran but having accomplished little else. That the Tudeh's intimidation tactics were a dress rehearsal for a Soviet sponsored *coup* in Tehran was considered a distinct possibility by many Iranians, the American embassy and the State Department.³⁶ George Kennan had been suspicious of Qavam and doubtful of his ability or even his will to counteract Soviet pressure. Yet, having interviewed Qavam in Moscow, Kennan concluded that the Iranian was holding up under the strain and in any case was unwilling to cross the Majlis and the restrictions regarding oil negotiations.³⁷ If a new election for the parliament were held, however, the Soviets probably assumed a pro-Qavam, Russian friendly majority would result given that Azerbaijani delegates would definitely be pro-Soviet and friendly to their comrades in the Tudeh and thus would swing the Majlis toward allowing Qavam the legal basis he said he needed to broker an oil deal with the Kremlin and possibly acceptance of Azerbaijan province entry in the Soviet orbit under the guise of border security.

At one point during his Kremlin sessions, Stalin had burst out "We don't care what US [sic] and Britain think and we are not afraid of them." Qavam would not relate further to the American ambassador exactly what provoked Stalin's outburst but Stalin's meaning was clear: Iran was alone in dealing with the Soviet Union.³⁸ Consequently when he met with Ambassador Murray in Tehran following his return from Moscow, Qavam asked how much support he could count on from Washington. Murray could not give him direct assurances without contacting his superiors but he told Qavam that America had issued the firmest protest ever to the Soviet Union since the reestablishment of relations and pointed out that in recent public speeches Byrnes had made it clear that his government would do all in her power to enforce the Charter of the United Nations and the will of the

³⁶ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 319-320; 324.

³⁷ George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/4/1946, telegram # 761.91/2-446 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 337-339.

³⁸ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/11/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1146, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, 350-354.

Security Council.³⁹ Murray made it apparent that Byrnes planned to take steps of “incalculable importance” for Iran in the Council.⁴⁰ Whatever the withheld details of Stalin’s threat, Qavam seemed reassured that Washington now considered the Iranian situation to be of serious consequence for all concerned and would stay engaged, at least on the diplomatic level, until the Soviet army evacuated. What the USA might be able to offer, however, if the Soviets attempted to detach Azerbaijan province or sponsored a coup in Tehran was far from clear. The new vigorous approach by Washington gave Qavam enough confidence to resume bilateral talks with the Russians but not at any price. He would encourage Washington—mostly through the American embassy—to turn up the diplomatic pressure on Moscow and use that as leverage to secure an evacuation of Soviet forces with a minimum amount of pain for his country. Having tried and failed (like so many before him) to charm Stalin, Qavam had little choice except to utilize American diplomatic pressure once he ruled out total capitulation.

Qavam further related to Murray that in addition to his other demands Stalin insisted on the permanent implementation of radical social and economic reforms in Iran—ironically at the same moment that the Kremlin was loudly proclaiming in public forums that the Soviet Union was not interfering in Iran’s internal affairs. At this point the official Russian news agencies began to publicly pressure Tehran for such reforms as a prerequisite for improved relations.⁴¹ The prime minister replied that he agreed with the need for reforms but that they would never be acceptable to the Iranian leaders and people if they came at the bayonet point of a foreign army. Nor would the other Soviet demand for virtual independence for Azerbaijan be favorably received in Iran if it was accompanied by more Soviet bullying.⁴²

Qavam also told Murray of the slight modification in one element of the Soviet demands: a joint oil company (with the USSR holding a controlling interest) instead of oil concessions and that he had informed Stalin and Molotov that Iranian law precluded

³⁹ Murray was referring to Byrnes' campaign of public diplomacy contained in two speeches: on February 28 to the Overseas Press Club and later on March 16 to the Friendly Sons of St. Patrick club. See Chapter Six, pp.194-198. The firm protest note Murray referred to was probably that of March 9, 1946. See Chapter Five, p. 200.

⁴⁰ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/11/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1146, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, 350-354.

⁴¹ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 112.

⁴² Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*. (New York: Barnes and Co., 1980), 350-354.

any oil deal as long as foreign troops were on her soil. The Soviets, however, said this was a limited time offer and if Qavam did not jump at it they would revert to their original demand of oil concessions similar to those of the British in the south no matter what the law was.⁴³ Here, Qavam saw a possible opening that might placate the Soviets (and thus usher them out of northern Iran) without breaking the Mossadeq inspired oil law and thus not usher Qavam into prison. During Qavam's mission to Moscow two Iranian parliamentarians accompanying him (Amidi Nuri and Javad Ameri) who were familiar with the law noted that it excluded oil concessions but said nothing of joint enterprises with foreigners. If the Soviets were proposing a jointly owned oil company they concluded Iranian law would not be violated. However, they also concluded the spirit of the law and likely reaction of the Majlis would require Iran to own the controlling interest. The Soviets had themselves already claimed majority share but at least a loophole had been discovered that would allow Qavam some room to maneuver. However, he maintained he would not have it officially linked to Red Army evacuation or recognition of a separatist government in Tabriz.⁴⁴

Stalin, Molotov and Sadchikov also tried to pressure Qavam to drop the Iranian complaint before the Security Council. Qavam said he would not withdraw the complaint until the Red Army left Iran. However, he told Murray he feared the Soviets would sponsor a *putsch* in Tehran to install their own puppets—a Tudeh party “popular front”—and then order Ala in New York to withdraw the Iranian complaint. In light of the Tudeh campaign of intimidation against the Majlis while he was in Moscow, it was a reasonable suspicion on Qavam’s part and a common assumption in Tehran.⁴⁵ The prime minister said he hoped London and Washington would pursue the complaint independently on Iran’s behalf if the elected government and the Shah were deposed in communist coup.⁴⁶ The prospects for such a maneuver engineered by Moscow and the logic of promoting the complaint irrespective of what a government in Tehran wanted would not escape Byrnes’

⁴³ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 96.

⁴⁴ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2009), 95-96.

⁴⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 324.

⁴⁶ Faramarz Fatemi, *The USSR In Iran*, 352-353; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 324.

attention. An American intelligence report on March 18 concluded that Stalin's treatment of Qavam in Moscow revealed the Soviets were "harsh, uncompromising, unwilling to negotiate, and possessed the intention to do what they pleased."⁴⁷ On the other hand, once Qavam's newly discovered loophole in the Mossadeq's oil law reached Stalin his mood brightened somewhat. He informed the prime minister that Sadchikov would pursue this line of thinking once Qavam was back in Tehran.⁴⁸

Qavam's fear of a pro-Soviet coup in Iran was shared by Reza Shah Pahlavi, Wallace Murray and Reader Bullard.⁴⁹ In late March the shah considered moving the seat of government out of Tehran and as far away from menacing units of the Red Army as possible.⁵⁰ Their anxiety came amid the intimidating mix of fresh Red Army deployments into Azerbaijan province; Tudeh demonstrations to protest the Iranian complaint in front of the Security Council; the roughing up of Iranian Majlis members; the heavy handed treatment of Qavam in Moscow; and accusations in *Izvestia* that "fascists" in Iran were launching anti-Soviet activities and that the "feudal" and "reactionary" rule of the old shah had not been eliminated. George Kennan in Moscow agreed that the primary goal of the Soviets at this point was the installation of a puppet government in Iran that would withdraw their complaint before the Council and instead "invite" the Red Army to make themselves welcome right down to the warm water ports of the Persian Gulf.⁵¹ Equally alarmed by these developments Byrnes nonetheless strongly advised Tehran against moving the seat of government. The defeatist message, he probably reasoned, would be a gift to Stalin, possibly encourage more aggression and certain to cause a loss of confidence among the Iranian public. Byrnes, however, did tell Murray to have plans ready to evacuate the embassy in case of a Red Army march on Tehran or a Tudeh *coup*

⁴⁷ John R O'neal, *Foreign Policy Making in Times of Crisis*. (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1982), 99

⁴⁸ Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California, 2009), 96.

⁴⁹ Abbas Milani, *The Shah*. (New York: Palgrave, 2012), 121. Unlike Byrnes, Reader Bullard had no confidence in bilateral talks between Moscow and Tehran would yield a fair outcome. "It is regrettable, but a fact," he wrote at the time Qavam was in Moscow, "that the Persians are ideal Stalin-fodder." [Bullard quoted in Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between the Two Revolutions*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 236.]

⁵⁰ George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/15/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1546 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 356-358.

⁵¹ George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/17/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1746 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 362-364.

or both, adding that "...we would not recognize a new Government brought about by duress."⁵² On March 14, the Russian embassy in Tehran informed Qavam that any further consideration of the Iranian complaint to the Security Council "would be regarded as unfriendly and hostile act and would have unfortunate results for Iran." The obvious implication was that avoiding these "unfortunate results" meant withdrawing the complaint.⁵³ For the Soviets, phrases appearing in *Izvestia's* commentary like "an unfriendly act" as well constant references to "fascists" and "feudal reactionaries" had proven on many occasions to be not just overheated rhetoric but an implied threat of military action usually combined with support for internal subversion. Indeed, *Izvestia* waged a virtual anti-Iran campaign at this time including numerous accusations of harboring "fascists" and "reactionaries" and claims of extensive wartime cooperation with the Nazis while ignoring the vital contribution of Iran to the Allied victory and specifically the survival of the USSR.⁵⁴ The Soviet newspaper of record also accused Tehran of violating the 1921 treaty and claimed Iran was plotting against the Soviet Union.⁵⁵ Mark Etheridge had already concluded in his report to Byrnes that the Soviets had used accusations of "fascism" and "reactionary feudalists" in Eastern Europe as a pretext to harass and then suppress liberals, social-democrats, traditional conservatives, trade unionists, etc. and establish exclusive Soviet authority on foreign territory. The use of that language in reference to Iran thus carried an ominous implication.

In the face of the rough treatment he received in Moscow; agitation by domestic communists; the campaign by *Izvestia* to discredit the Tehran government; Stalin's increased pressure in Azerbaijan province; etc., Qavam embarked on a campaign to appease the pro-Soviet domestic factions. Although he banned demonstrations in Tehran in mid-March which negatively impacted the Tudeh party the thrust of his crackdown was against pro-British factions and anti-communists. Newspapers and parties critical of Qavam and the Soviets were intimidated or closed down and some pro-Western

⁵² James Byrnes (Secretary of State) to Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran), 3/23/1946, telegram # 891.00/3-2046 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 375-376.

⁵³ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/15/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1546, in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 356-358.

⁵⁴ Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War. The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941-1946*. (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 236.

⁵⁵ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 325.

politicians arrested.⁵⁶ Still on the main issue Qavam would not succumb to Moscow's coercion, a point noted by Murray who said that although his dealings with Stalin in Moscow were "strained" the prime minister still had not agreed to withdraw the Iranian complaint from the Security Council agenda.⁵⁷

The day following the Soviets failure to evacuate, Tehran presented an official protest to Moscow; London followed suit, asking the Soviets for an explanation for the delay. These were followed by the two notes from the United States⁵⁸ and Qavam's reassurance that his country's complaint before the Security Council should remain alive in spite of the abrupt change in leadership that brought him to power. On March 18 the Qavam government asked the Council to continue considering the Iranian complaint which had, at American and British insistence, remained on the agenda. Indeed, the Iranians asked the Council to schedule a hearing of their complaint.⁵⁹ In the past the Soviets strongly implied that Ambassador Ala was acting at the behest of London and probably Washington as well and without authorization from Tehran. This time there could be no question that Ambassador Hussein Ala was acting on the authority of his government and one headed by an otherwise Russia friendly premier. The following day Ala filled a note with the Council which expanded Iran's initial complaint to now include Soviet subversion not just in the north but throughout all Iran: "Furthermore, the U.S.S.R. is continuing to interfere in internal affairs in Iran through the medium of Soviet agents, officials and armed forces."⁶⁰ At a press conference to explain the continuing appeal to the Council, Qavam reiterated his position that there would be no new elections to parliament while foreign troops occupied Iran and thus there could be no oil deals (which required legislative approval) and, although he could not say so publicly, no new

⁵⁶ Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between the Two Revolutions*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 236; Manucher Farmanfarmanian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 182; Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 326. Sayid Zia ed-Din Tabatbai was one such pro-British and anti-communist politician arrested by Qavam.

⁵⁷ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/11/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1146 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 350-356.

⁵⁸ See Chapter Four, p. 173 and Chapter Five, p.197; 200.

⁵⁹ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 326.

⁶⁰ Arthur Millspaugh, *Americans in Persia*. (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1946), 198.

possibilities for the communists to gain more seats in the Majlis from Azerbaijan province.⁶¹

Although Qavam's mission to Moscow had proved a failure from his perspective, some options still presented themselves to Tehran. Before Stalin and Molotov, the Iranian prime minister had maintained that it would be criminally illegal under Iranian law for him to reach an oil agreement of any kind with the Soviets while their (or any foreign) troops were occupying Iranian territory. However, there might be a means to maneuver around the Majlis law if Moscow was willing to play along. The possibility existed of promising an oil deal to Russia to be formalized only after the Red Army fully withdrew from Iran. In that way it could not at least technical be said to be linked to the withdrawal nor could it said that it was a violation of the Majlis law since it was only a promise to negotiate a deal. The same maneuver could apply to a promise to consider autonomy or semi-independence for Azerbaijan province after the Soviets completely withdrew. If it effected the withdrawal of the Soviet forces it would be unlikely the Majlis would register too many objections over a clever maneuver that violated the spirit but not the letter of the legislation. Moreover, in the absence of American military support or a much stronger Iranian armed forces and excluding total capitulation, it is difficult to see what other course the Iranians could pursue. The only question would be this: would Stalin agree to surrender his leverage (the occupying Soviet forces) in exchange for a promise? Earlier, the realist Qavam had already told a sympathetic Wallace Murray that he probably would have to find a way to make an oil deal with Stalin as the price of withdrawal. The question now was making that possible in the face of obstacles both in Moscow (demands for formal deal *before* the Red Army evacuated) and Tehran (the law which prohibited oil deals while the country was under occupation and required parliamentary approval.)⁶²

Normally Stalin, who regarded himself as the toughest negotiator in the world, would not entertain an *iffy* proposition like Qavam had in mind in which he gave up his leverage (the occupying Red Army) on the front end and accept only a *promise* of reward

⁶¹ Clarmont Skrine, *World War in Iran*. (London: Constable and Co., 1962), 236.

⁶² Manucher Farmanfarmaian, *Blood and Oil: Memoirs of A Persian Prince*. (New York: Random House, 1997), 182.

on the backend. Yet, Stalin was still counting on massive postwar reconstruction loans from Washington and with the prospects of a premature falling out with the United States in the offing and an international and embarrassing spot light shining on his activities in Azerbaijan province as long as the Iranian complaint was on the Security Council agenda, finding a graceful exit from Iran might be tempting. Stalin rightfully regarded himself as a man of great tactical skill, having out maneuvered all the old Bolsheviks (including giants like Lenin and Trotsky) and then parlayed his near death experience in 1941 to hold a winning hand among the Big Three by 1944. He never accepted a deal without good prospects for a payoff and convincing him to do so now with Iran would require a skillful strategy and an adroit politician. Whether Qavam would succeed where FDR had failed to outmaneuver Stalin would soon be posed but for the moment he could only buy time. Ambassador Murray apparently sensed this when he told Washington that Qavam "...feels his responsibility keenly and would be glad of any loophole to escape Soviet wrath while at same time protecting interests of Iran."⁶³ Washington was able to offer a diplomatic and public pressure campaign, however, and without it Iranian diplomacy, subtle and skillful though it was, would have lacked the heft necessary to impress Stalin.⁶⁴ Ambassador Murray understood this well and so too did the Iranians. He relayed to Washington about the impending showdown at the Security Council that "Iranians realize that if Russian troops leave Iran it will be solely due to our action and they are immensely grateful."⁶⁵

The Secretary of State initiated a new course by assuring Tehran that, contrary to what Stalin had told Qavam in Moscow, the Iranians were not alone facing their Russian neighbors. Byrnes campaign of public diplomacy sent a message both to Moscow and Tehran that Iran could expect Washington to use America's considerable weight, be it diplomatic or even military, to support a return to her of full sovereignty. A total break with Roosevelt's foreign policy, however, was not part of the change in direction.

⁶³ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/15/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-1546 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 356-358.

⁶⁴ Abbas Milani note that the shah had his own sources in American officialdom who assure him that the Truman White House would not allow the Soviets to move on Tehran and would keep up the pressure until the Red Army withdrew. The shah claimed to have relayed this to Qavam upon his return from Moscow. [Abbas Milani, *The Shah*. New York: Palgrave, 2012), 120-121.]

⁶⁵ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/23/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-2346 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 373-375.

Operating through the United Nations, Byrnes pursued the course that Roosevelt envisioned for the postwar world. His goal would become legitimizing the Security Council in the eyes of the General Assembly and world community by making that body something more than just a rubber stamp of approval for the permanent members. By doing so he would realize what FDR undoubtedly assumed would be his neo-Wilsonian legacy in world affairs.⁶⁶ FDR had once said he thought that Iran would be an important test for American altruism and then later it would also be a perfect project for the United Nations.⁶⁷ In a sense he was right and wrong about both. The Security Council did prove to be a useful forum to present Iran's case to the world community yet it was almost exclusively due to American persistence and Byrnes' campaign of public diplomacy—not cooperation from the Soviets—that Iran's complaint was not lost in the rush to paper over grave differences about what kind of Council that body should be. As we shall see, some in the foreign policy establishment would have preferred the Iran case be avoided to protect the embryonic Council whereas Byrnes viewed it as vehicle to make that body functional.⁶⁸

On March 10, Qavam safely returned from Moscow with nothing to show from the bilateral talks except a severe case of brow beating and a long list of Soviet demands.⁶⁹ The joint communiqué issued as he left stated that talks with the Soviet ambassador would continue once the Iranian PM was back in Tehran. Byrnes informed him that, in accord with Ala's request of March 18, the American representatives at the United Nations would place Iran's grievances on the Security Council agenda scheduled for March 25. At a minimum Byrnes and Qavam could now say that talks with Stalin had

⁶⁶ Ted Morgan. *FDR*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 773. Of course the legacy FDR wished to leave was only partly Wilsonian. Like Wilson he envisioned a postwar world of international relations regulated by a world peace and security body. Unlike Wilson, however, FDR not only did not shun the USSR but went to great lengths roll out the welcome mat for the Soviet Union.

⁶⁷ Bruce Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 168.

⁶⁸ See Chapter Five, p. 192-193.

⁶⁹ Summarized as following: Soviet troops would stay on Iranian soil as long as necessary; Tehran would recognize Azerbaijan province as semi-independent; Seventy percent of taxes collected in Azerbaijan would stay in the province; the USSR and Iran would establish a joint oil company with Moscow enjoying a controlling interest. As concessions the Soviets would drop their demand for oil concessions in exchange for the joint enterprise; Pishavari would give up the title of prime minister and accept that of governor-general; the Azerbaijan government would disband their ministries of war and foreign affairs. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 96-97.]

been tried and all the Iranians got was a laundry list of demands and promises from the Soviets about living up to their treaty obligations to evacuate the Red Army. André Gromyko asked Lie to postpone any Iranian request to consider their renewed complaint until mid-April, the earliest he claimed the Soviets would be ready to respond. Hussein Ala and Edward Stettinius both insisted that consideration by the Council proceed on March 25 as requested by the Iranians and, in spite of several reservations by Lie, not the least of which was a suspicion that Hussein Ala represented the hardliners in Washington more than his own government, the secretary-general refused to oblige the Soviets. Lie's skepticism about Ala was supported when the Soviet news agency *Tass* reported that Qavam had told the press that the dispute was resolved; the Security Council need no longer consider the matter; and that Ala was acting without authorization from Tehran.⁷⁰ That amounted to a complete contradiction of Ala's position in New York that the Iranian complaint was alive and the debate should continue in the Security Council as scheduled. Murray was contacted by Washington to determine if the *Tass* report was accurate. Qavam assured Murray that what the Russian media reports distorted what he had said; he believed the Security Council debate on complaint should proceed and that Ala was accurately representing his government. "Qavam said he had not sent any new instructions to Ala regarding presentation of Iranian case to Security Council and that he did not intend to do so unless and until he reached some satisfactory agreement with Soviets here." Ambassador Murray suspected Qavam's translator, Mozaffar Firuz, had deliberately mistranslated the prime minister's words when Russian journalists were present. When Qavam held a new press conference to endorse Ala's actions at the United Nations, Murray sent his own translator to ensure an accurate record was made. Qavam also assured Murray that he had not agreed to a joint oil company with Russia—or any other accommodation—as inducement for the Soviets to leave Iran although he suspected some such agreement would eventually be necessary.⁷¹ The Iranian complaint,

⁷⁰ George Kennan (*Chargé* in the Soviet Union) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/25/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-2546 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 378-379; Bruce Kuniholm, *Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 327. Ala was also somewhat reassured that Reza Shah supported him. [Gholam Reza Afkhami, *The Life and Times of the Shah*. (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2009), 97.]

⁷¹ Wallace Murray (Ambassador in Iran) to James Byrnes (Secretary of State), 3/24/1946, telegram # 861.24591/3-2446 in *FRUS*, Vol. VII, pp. 376-378; Bruce Kuniholm, *Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 327.

in spite of Andrei Gromyko's vigorous requests for a delay until mid-April, was placed at the top of the agenda for March 25. This session would also mark the movement of the United Nations to her new permanent home in New York City. While the new United Nations headquarters was under construction the Security Council would take up temporary residence in the Bronx at the Hunter College women's gym. Yet, an ominous threat hung in the air. Gromyko had stated that unless the Iranian complaint was dropped from the agenda the Soviets would not participate in the Council meetings.⁷² He was threatening a boycott.

⁷² Bruce Kuniholm, *Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 326-327.