

THE AZARBAIJAN CRISIS OF 1945 - 1946

On June 22nd, 1941, Hitler attacked and invaded the Soviet Union. Resistance was poor and the Blitzkrieg was devastatingly effective.

Although Anthony Eden had already twice warned Ivan Maisky the Soviet Ambassador in London, of Axis intentions, and even proposed a delegation to Moscow in order to estimate Russian needs at least 20 days before Hitler's invasion, this was dismissed as rumour. Pathological suspicion of Britain was paramount in Stalin's mind, and remained so until Roosevelt's death in 1945.

Churchill and Eden, witnessing the rapid advance of German forces, feared for their interests in Persian oil and India. They reasoned that support for Russia would diminish pressure on Europe; would save Britain, and would be the likeliest cause for a German defeat. The Murmansk 'run' was too hazardous due to submarines and the forbidding ice-packs for six months of the year. The best conduit for conveying war materiel to the beleaguered Russians was therefore via the Persian Gulf, using Reza Shah's railway and new roads to the Caspian, where armament could be shipped to Volga ports and Stalingrad.

Although Iran had already twice declared her neutrality (Sept. 4th, 1939, and June 6th, 1941), a convenient 'Casus Belli' was constituted by the much-exaggerated 'Fifth Column' in Iran, and Reza Shah's German proclivities, which by the way, were shared by most of the Iranian ruling class. After all, Iran had suffered decades of bullying by both the Bear and the Bull-dog (the 1907 Russo-British division of the country into 'zones of influence', as well as the more recent Curzon-inspired 1919 proposals which would have turned Iran into a British protectorate), and now an alternative, highly successful potential saviour was looming from the West. In fact, while the Russians claimed there were 7,000 Germans working in Iran at the time, a more realistic, unbiased estimate by a US observer put the figure at no more than 700 to 900.

Incidentally, while in 1932, only 8% of trade was from Germany, by 1939, this portion had grown to 45%. Indeed, the north-south railway created by Reza Shah (paid for from taxes on sugar and tea), and built by the Danish company Kampsax,

was largely German – the rolling stock, training bursaries, cadre of engineers were all German.

Churchill accordingly put his proposals to Franklin Roosevelt who, as a devoted Wilsonian, shrank from the invasion of a neutral country. The more pragmatic Churchill (*Inter arma silent leges*) arguing that only the USA could aid Russia and relieve Europe, effectively persuaded FDR to participate, and the two leaders met in August 1941, on a naval ship in mid-Atlantic to discuss future strategy.

At this historic meeting, the **Atlantic Treaty** was agreed, and became the main pillar of new international relations; condemning the use of force and supporting the independence and security of all nations, effectively becoming the basis for the future UN Charter.

Joint notes from the British and Russians were delivered to the Iranian Prime Minister Ali Mansour in both July and August, demanding the internment and expulsion of all German citizens. Mansour's vague and dismissive responses were not deemed to be satisfactory.

On August 25th, the Allies invaded Iran: 40,000 Soviet troops from the north (which grew to 60,000 by 1946), and 19,000 British troops from the south. Tehran was occupied on September 17th, 1941, and Reza Shah was forced to abdicate in favour of the Crown Prince, Mohammad Reza.

Lend-Lease supplies to the hard-pressed Soviets by road and through Reza Shah's beloved railway line began immediately, and this 'Bridge of Victory', as it came to be known, delivered altogether 7,000,000 tonnes of armaments, comprising 750 tanks; 4,800 planes; and 80,000 trucks to the USSR over the ensuing four and a half years.

It was through the insistence of Roosevelt and Cordell Hull, his Secretary of State, that a **Tripartite Agreement** was drawn up and signed on January 29th, 1942 – a legal 'fig-leaf' upon which to base the occupation of a neutral country, which guaranteed preservation of the territorial integrity and independence, as well as the post-war evacuation of Iran. Stalin was reluctant to subscribe to this agreement, but in his hour of need, he had little choice but to comply.

The Iranian government at this point, was in total disarray: impotent both economically and politically; unable to relieve the inflation and famine which

prevailed, or to maintain order among its rebellious tribes. My class at the Community School was flooded with war refugees, many of them gifted musicians and artists, from Eastern European shtetls, mostly Jews of Polish or Czechoslovakian origin, bringing with them the usual afflictions of war: crowding, malnutrition and misery, together with louse-borne typhus, which reached epidemic proportions, and killed three of my school-mates. There was an acute shortage of wheat as the Russians were requisitioning grain, and supplies were being diverted to refugees; hoarding and black marketeering were rife. US humanitarian efforts to alleviate these shortages were effectively blocked, when Britain insisted that all materiel must be channelled through the United Kingdom Commercial Corporation (UKCC), and that Iranians were much given to exaggeration. I clearly remember seeing an example of the coarse, grey bread on sale in bakeries, which contained bits of tarred sacking, and even the remains of a cockroach!

The Communist Party had been outlawed by the Majles in 1937, but on January 30, 1942, immediately after the Tripartite Agreement was signed, the former communist leaders, who had been languishing in prison for four years, were released, and formed the Tudeh Party, headed by Mir Jaafar Pishevari (a Soviet-trained operative, known by a variety of pseudonyms – Seyed Jaafar, Javadzadeh or Soltanzadeh), which was soon to become the most disciplined and effective political force in the country, and the agent for the acquisitive post-war policies of the USSR.

The mortal Russian winter, over-extended German supply lines, and the heroic Soviet defence of Stalingrad, broke the Wehrmacht, and with the end of Nazi aggression in sight, the **Tehran Conference** was organised on November 28th, 1943, bringing Marshal Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt together to discuss the future.

I recall my father telling us upon returning home one evening at the time, that he had been summoned to see Mr. Churchill at the British Embassy that morning, where the great man had received him in his bath without a trace of embarrassment – round and pink like a baby, smoking his cigar, with a glass of brandy at his elbow!

It was Patrick Hurley, among FDR's most trusted if eccentric aides (who came to Tehran wearing a cowboy 'ten-gallon' hat), who proposed that Iran declared war

upon the Axis Powers on December 9th, 1943, and signed on as a member of the new-found United Nations Organisation. The President overtly disparaged traditional Russian and British behaviour towards Iran in the past, and urged the implementation of the principles of the Atlantic Charter with support for Iran after the war.

The Tehran Conference Declaration (most reluctantly signed by Stalin, who was promised a free hand in the Baltic States and Eastern Poland in exchange), recognised Iran's contribution to the war effort, guaranteed her independence and territorial integrity, and made firm commitments to the evacuation of foreign troops, together with financial assistance at the end of hostilities.

By May, 1944, the Normandy landings had been successful; the Soviets were advancing west, and the war's end was in sight, stimulating the aspirations of Shell, Standard Oil and Sinclair who sent their emissaries to bid for concessions in the autumn. Not unexpectedly, the Tudeh Party protested vociferously.

The USSR Central Asian Military Engineering Corps had already covertly investigated potential oil reserves in northern and eastern Iran in 1942, and their report went to Commissar Vladimir Dekanozov and Lavrenti Beria (Deputy Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars). It was he who passed the survey to Joseph Stalin in 1944, urgently proposing that as a great power, the USSR had every right to assert its economic interest in possessing oil fields in the Middle East, particularly since Britain and the USA were secretly seeking to further their own interests. Accordingly, a high-level delegation headed by Assistant Commissar for Foreign Affairs Sergei Kavtaradze, arrived in Tehran in October '44, demanding oil concessions in five northern provinces of Iran. Despite much bluster and bullying by Kavtaradze, Prime Minister Sa'ed, refused, deferring all such discussions to the war's end.

Soon after, in December, 1944, Parliamentary Deputy Dr. Mossadegh proposed a law forbidding Prime Ministers and members of their cabinet from negotiating commercial concessions of any kind, without express Majles approval. The law was almost unanimously adopted by Deputies, and proved to be highly significant in the months to come, as we shall see.

After several weeks of fruitless discussions, Kavtaradze left Iran in disgust, and empty-handed, and storms of anti-Iranian propaganda from the Soviet press and the Tudeh Party followed.

At the **Yalta Conference** in February 1945, Iran was desperate for some discussion of the evacuation of occupying forces to be on the agenda, and most particularly, the cessation of Soviet interference and aggression in her north-western provinces, but Molotov succeeded in preventing any mention of Iran. Roosevelt was very sick by this time, and he was reluctant to initiate any discussions which might undermine his efforts to persuade Stalin to support the Dumbarton Oaks Conference resolutions for establishing the United Nations' Charter; the right of veto, the voting system, free elections in Eastern Europe, etc...Indeed, he died not long after on April 12th, and was succeeded by Vice-President Harry Truman.

Only a few months after Germany's unconditional surrender in May, at the **Potsdam Conference** (July 17th), the hopes of Iran were frustrated yet again. Harry Truman and 'Jimmy' Byrnes his Secretary of State were new and inexperienced, as were Atlee and Bevin, who replaced Churchill and Eden – they were certainly no match for the Soviet leader. Consequently, Stalin got his way in dividing the world as he desired at both these meetings, and their only success was in obtaining Soviet agreement to the meeting of Foreign Ministers in April after much insistence, to finalise the UN Charter and define the powers of the Security Council in San Francisco.

The USSR was a great power now, and Joseph Stalin was flushed with his outstanding success in breaking the back of German aggression, and obtaining most of the post-war concessions he wanted from the United States and Britain at the Yalta and Potsdam conferences, which even the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki early in August, 1945, could not dampen.

On November 15th, 1945, the **Azərbaycan Demokratik Respublika** (ADR) was declared by Ja'afar Pishevari, and a month later Qazi-Mohammad, head of the Kurdish 'Kumeleh' Party also announced the formation of an autonomous **Kurdish Republic**. All protests by the government in Tehran, and requests that troops be allowed to restore order, were ignored by the Soviets.

By January, 1946, Prime Minister Ebrahim Hakimi had resigned, but not before deciding that unilateral discussions with the Soviet authorities would lead

nowhere, and that Iranian complaints had no hope of success unless they were internationalised. He had therefore instructed Iran's Ambassador in London, Hassan Taqizadeh to raise the government's protest at the forthcoming first session on January 10th, 1946, of the fledgling United Nations General Assembly, the "...arbiter of complaints, equally accessible to all nations, large and small, powerful and weak..". This was the first complaint of one UN member against another, and of a weak nation against a victorious super-power, which was to be one of the permanent members of the Security Council, with the right of veto.

Taqizadeh's presentation was measured, and highly documented, referring to a 'situation', rather than a grievance, and putting the case that Soviet armed forces were fostering secessionist elements, disrupting life, brow-beating Iranian authorities, and generally interfering with Iran's sovereignty, in contravention of the Tripartite Agreement and Article 14 of the UN Charter, and that this situation constituted a threat to world peace. Andrei Vyshinsky gave an indignant, bad-tempered and ill-considered rebuttal, suggesting the Azari crisis had nothing to do with their armed forces, and merely reflected popular dissatisfaction with the poor governance of a reactionary Iranian government and, of course 'foreign' influence. Indeed, he even invoked the 1921 Concordat, suggesting that admitting Iranian forces to Azarbaijan might not only pose a threat to Soviet interests in Baku, they might also cause further disorder and bloodshed in the province, necessitating the despatch of further Soviet troops. In the event, despite Vyshinsky's every effort to prevent Iran's complaint from being tabled, discussed or included in the Agenda, the Assembly voted to formally adopt the case – a highly significant achievement. It also encouraged both parties to resolve their differences through negotiation, and reserved the right to be informed of the state of these negotiations at any time. Vyshinsky's clumsy and often absurd claims alienated other member nations and exposed the acquisitive and less endearing aspects of 'Uncle Joe' to the world.

Stalin felt confident that Iran's grievance against the Soviet Union could be presented to the world as a minor disagreement between neighbours, which would easily be resolved through bilateral negotiation. He accordingly instructed Vyshinsky and Gromyko in the United States, that they must prevent Iran's complaint from being included in the UN Security Council Agenda at all costs. The Iranian delegate must under no circumstances be allowed to address the sessions of the Security Council, and the Soviet-supported secessionist movements in

Azərbaycan and Kordestan were to be presented as an entirely internal Iranian matter, merely reflecting the legitimate aspirations of the 'down-trodden' peoples of these provinces, for freedom and autonomy. There was some justification for this point, which made the governing elite in Tehran particularly vulnerable to Soviet propaganda among its rural populations.

So soon after the end of war, the Kremlin had already succeeded in building a security buffer in Central Europe and the Far East- Poland had become a Soviet satellite state with hardly a murmur of protest from Harry Truman, and it was now intent upon changing its focus towards the Black Sea area, the Dardanelles and eastern Turkey. Hegemony in this region would turn the USSR into a Mediterranean power – one of the cherished dreams of Peter the Great.

These expansionist energies were particularly directed towards oil-rich Iran, where the chances of success were high. After all, northern Iran was still occupied by the Soviet army, Stalin's greatest asset, and while it was still in control, it would be a relatively easy matter to foster Azari nationalist sentiment by manipulating the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party, and creating popular pressure for the 'reunification' of Soviet and Iranian Azərbaycan – the Azari Motherland, which incidentally was said to extend as far as Tehran.

In July, 1945, Stalin had accordingly sanctioned the organisation of national autonomous movements in the provinces of Azərbaycan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Kordestan and Khorasan, together with the provision of armaments, printing presses and money. The local administrative apparatus of the Tehran government was rapidly dismantled by NKVD and Soviet Azərbaycani officials; a revolutionary 'Azərbaycan Democratic Party' was established; Iranian troops and gendarmes were disarmed and confined to barracks; landowners were intimidated and dispossessed; judges arrested, and local Azari militia – 'muhajers' in Russian uniform, were armed and trained. Mir Jaafar Baqerov, the First Secretary of the Soviet Azərbaycan Communist Central Committee in Baku, was put in charge of these initiatives, and took great pains never to employ weapons of Russian manufacture. The 'tool-marks' of overt Soviet interference were to be carefully effaced. In consequence, arms were only from foreign sources: Colt, Brno and Browning. Repeated protests from the Iranian Ministry for Foreign Affairs that the Soviet Union was in breach of all its commitments, were ignored or given short shrift. All efforts by the central government to send troops to Azərbaycan or

Kordestan to quell the disorder created by the separatists, were blocked by the Red Army at Zanjan, west of Tehran. Again, the Politburo justified adoption of this policy “for fear that the presence of Iranian troops would cause violence and bloodshed, requiring the despatch of further Soviet reinforcements”. The Kremlin was short of time, and needed to hurry to implement its programme, and to bully the Iranian government into granting an oil concession in northern Iran as soon as possible. In accord with the 1942 Tripartite Treaty of Alliance between Britain, the USSR and Iran, and the Tehran Conference Declaration of December 1943, Iran was guaranteed its “territorial integrity, sovereignty and political independence”, and all foreign troops were to be withdrawn by March 2nd, 1946, six months after the cessation of hostilities.

The patrician, subtle and highly experienced Ahmad Qavam (Qavam o-Saltaneh), who always treated the young Shah with some contempt as a novice, was appointed Prime Minister on January 26th, 1946 – not without his careful solicitation of the post with the Soviets. Among the first actions of his premiership was to fly to Moscow in a Soviet military plane with a delegation, to seek a resolution of what was now an international crisis, directly with the Soviet government. He was most lavishly received, met for discussions with Stalin no less than three times, and with Molotov four times, and remained for altogether three weeks. Under pressure to grant an oil concession, Qavam could only say that his hands were tied by law, as the Majles had forbidden direct negotiations without their express consent.

Little of any substance resulted from all these meetings and negotiations however, and Qavam was merely advised by Stalin at the magnificent ‘Last Supper’ held in his honour, that all further discussions would be deferred pending the arrival of the new Soviet Ambassador Vasilyevich Sadchikov in Tehran. However, even before Qavam left, a radio Moscow announcement on March 1st that Soviet forces would only ‘partially withdraw from peaceful areas’ of northern Iran, while the rest would remain for an ‘indeterminate’ period caused acute anxiety in Tehran and Washington, where Ambassador Hossein Ala was already sounding the alarm in the US Press and among influential members of the Administration.

Even before Qavam’s return empty-handed on March 11th, Tudeh manifestations in front of the Majles at Baharestan had reached a climax, preventing deputies from entering and reaching a quorum in the dying days of the 14th Majles. With

the Majles dissolved, Qavam was left in sole charge of government, to cope with both a chaotic internal situation, and an obdurate, menacing Soviet neighbour.

Indeed, when Robert Rossow, US Vice-Consul in Tabriz reported on March 11th that, rather than evacuating Iranian soil, fresh Soviet armoured columns had poured across the Iranian border, some of which were heading west towards the Turkish border, the image so fondly fostered by Roosevelt, of a benign 'Uncle Joe', a valiant ally in the struggle against the evil Axis powers, was finally shattered.

With Harry Truman as President, United States policy was undergoing a radical change at this time, and following George Kennan's advocacy of a 'Containment Policy', and Churchill's famous 'Iron Curtain' speech in Fulton Missouri in March, confrontation replaced cooperation in American strategic and military thinking. The decades of 'Cold War' and Soviet isolation which followed, were probably initiated by Stalin's diplomatic mistakes and the openly acquisitive, aggressive stance he adopted in the Iranian case. In addition, after Roosevelt's death, the USSR had progressively lost most of its influential friends in the Administration: Harry Hopkins, Henry Morgenthau, Ickes and other exponents of New Deal politics.

After the unsuccessful Moscow talks, it was almost certainly Taqizadeh, and Hossein Ala, whose previous experience at the League of Nations had made him a strong supporter of such international agencies, who persuaded Qavam o-Saltaneh to appeal to the United Nations Security Council once again. Qavam accordingly instructed Ala to take up Iran's case with the Security Council on March 17th, 1946.

The United Nations in New York

As soon as Ala had arrived to take up his post as Ambassador to the US, with accreditation to the UNO in September 1945, he had already been immersed in the preliminary stages of taking up Iran's case against the Soviet Union at the recently constituted UN Security Council, on his own initiative, for he had not yet been instructed by Qavam to formally lodge a complaint.

Already, he was being endlessly interviewed by an increasingly sympathetic US press (most particularly by the influential James Reston of the NY Times); endeavouring to win the support of President Truman, Jimmy Byrnes at the US State Department, as well as representatives of France, Britain, and other 'free'

nations. At first, Ernie Bevin and UN Secretary Trygve Lie, were reluctant to alienate a recent ally and a prestigious permanent member of the Security Council, and they were agnostic about the chances of achieving redress for Iran through the UNO. Indeed, there is some evidence that Britain might even have been prepared to consider compromise with the USSR, leaving them free to exploit northern Iran, provided Britain's oil interests in the south were safe – echoes of 1907!

In his March 18th letter to the Security Council, Ala set out Iran's grievance, protesting the presence of Soviet troops beyond the March 2nd deadline, in breach of the 1942 Tripartite Agreement, and the Tehran Conference Declaration in 1943, and accusing the USSR of gross interference in Iran's internal affairs, fostering insurrection and separatism, all of which constituted a threat to world peace and the security of all small, vulnerable nations of the world, in direct contravention of the principles of the UN Charter, to which the Soviets had subscribed. Like Taqizadeh before him, he nevertheless emphasised Iran's desire for friendly relations with her powerful neighbour.

“If a strong stand were not taken now, the United Nations Organisation would lose all significance as an instrument for preserving peace based on justice; the history of Manchuria, Abyssinia and Munich would be repeated, and Azarbaijan would prove to have been the first shot fired in the third world war.” (Iranian Ambassador to the US, Hossein Ala, 20 December, 1945. FRUS, Dec. 21, 1945, p.508)

In response, Gromyko once again raised the time-worn objections voiced by Vyshinsky in London, but in more cool and measured tones. However, he pretended that successful negotiations **were** taking place in Iran at that time, and requested a delay in discussions of the 'Iran Case' until April 10th. This was clearly calculated to buy time while Qavam was being 'tenderised' by Sadchikov.

Ala countered by stating that no such negotiations were taking place and that there was nothing to negotiate anyway, since the Soviets had clearly reneged on their commitments by outstaying the deadline of March 2nd. He added that this was a matter of great urgency, as the situation in Iran was deteriorating every day, and threatening world peace.

Ala's problem was not confined to marshalling support for Iran among influential members of the US government, or other members of the Security Council, nor was it merely facing down Gromyko and Lange, the sarcastic representative of Poland, now a USSR client state. A further difficulty was dealing with plots against him in Tehran, hatched mainly by the openly Russophilic Deputy Prime Minister Mozzafar Firouz, who worked tirelessly to undermine Ala's position at the UN by issuing false press releases, and deliberately distorting Qavam's instructions. But his main problem was coming to terms with the prevarications of his cousin Prime Minister Qavam and his contradictory instructions.

On March 27th, Gromyko once again insisted that agreement had been reached in Tehran, and referred to a March 23rd Associated Press interview with Qavam, where the Prime Minister had ostensibly declared that he had no objection to deferral of Council discussions of the case to April 10th, or even later. The Soviet delegate persisted in claiming that there were differences between Qavam and Ala, who was exceeding his brief, and misrepresenting his government's views ("..whom are we to believe, the Prime Minister or his so-called representative..?"). Gromyko then reiterated his request for a delay in discussions of the case, and refused to countenance allowing Ala to address the Security Council directly. However, James Byrnes, the US Secretary of State, who was present at the session, deplored Gromyko's quoting an uncorroborated press report, and provided evidence from the US Ambassador in Tehran, that no agreement had been concluded with the USSR. He went on to correct Gromyko's misinterpretation of Qavam's interview. In effect, it was Qavam's Deputy and Press Officer, Mozzafar Firouz, who had deliberately altered the tenor of Qavam's remarks in translation. In the event, a majority of Council Members voted to turn down Gromyko's request.

At this dramatic juncture, Gromyko and the entire Soviet delegation **walked out** of the chamber in protest – a red-letter day for the assembled world press!

After many frustrating weeks of waiting in the wings, Hossein Ala was finally invited to take his place at the horse-shoe table at Hunter College in the Bronx, and was given the opportunity to present his case to the members of the Security Council at last!

On April 3rd Gromyko reported in writing that agreement had been reached with Iranian authorities and that Soviet troops would be leaving Iranian soil within 6 weeks, **“provided that no unforeseen circumstances arise”**, adding that troop evacuation was entirely unrelated to the desire of the USSR for an oil concession, and that there was no longer any need for retaining the ‘Iran Case’ on the SC Agenda.

The following day, Ala expressed his concern regarding Gromyko’s caveat ‘unforeseen circumstances’, which he considered quite unacceptable. A further SC resolution proposed by the US was eventually adopted unanimously, supporting this view, and requiring both parties to report to the Security Council as to whether Soviet troops had actually evacuated **all** of Iran on May 6th.

In Tehran, on April 4th, Qavam signed an agreement with Ambassador Sadchikov for the formation of a 51%/49% joint-stock oil company, contingent upon future Majles approval. Gromyko immediately took advantage of the opportunity to assert that since complete agreement had been reached in Tehran, the proposed May 6th session should be cancelled, and the Iranian complaint permanently removed from the SC Agenda. Ala responded on April 9th that Iran’s stance remained as previously reported, and formally requested that the Council remained **“seized”** of the case. Worried about Qavam’s repeated vacillations, Ala saw this as a key point, which would ensure continued UN SC support, even if Iran failed to prosecute its plea. In the opinion of Harold Minor, a US diplomat quoted by Bruce Kuniholm (‘The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East’, Princeton University Press, 1949; p. 340), had it not been for Ala’s personal initiative and his persistence at this crucial juncture, the Iran Case would almost certainly have been dropped from the Security Council’s agenda.

As if to confirm his worst fears, on April 15th, in a further diametrically opposed letter, Ala reported that he had been instructed by the Prime Minister, to withdraw the case from the agenda in the light of a complete Iranian accord with the Soviet Union. Gromyko triumphantly returned to the chamber having overcome his pique, claiming previous SC resolutions were invalid, and reiterating his previous demands.

Much uncertainty and debate ensued: can a government’s request for removal of a complaint be valid when foreign forces are still in occupation? Once the Security

Council has formally taken up a complaint, is it not the SC itself which must decide on retention or removal of an issue on the Agenda? Trygve Lie even expressed his anxiety lest the moral authority of the United Nations would be damaged by this seemingly insoluble conflict.

In the end, a majority of members voted in favour of the Security Council remaining 'seized' of the case, until it could be confirmed on May 6th that Soviet troops had completely left the country. Once again, Gromyko angrily vowed he would no longer take part in future discussions about Iran.

On the appointed day however, Ala wrote that "most Soviet troops have apparently left the northern provinces, but since access has been denied to Iranian officials since 1945, it is impossible to be certain whether or not this is also true of Azarbaijan." Due to this incomplete report, the Council voted to defer the question till May 20th.

On May 20th, the Council received a first letter from Ala saying: "...I cannot ascertain complete Soviet departure; they continue to cause disorder, and Russian soldiers in civilian dress are arming separatists. The situation remains a threat to world peace."

On the Same day, a further entirely contradictory letter was received from Ala with new instructions from Qavam, and a report stating: "...a commission to western Azarbaijan could find no trace of Soviet forces, which departed on May 6th". Agnostic members of the Security Council took this to be an indication of discord between Ala and the Prime Minister, probably caused by overwhelming Soviet pressure on the PM in Tehran. In Gromyko's sulky absence, it was Poland's Oskar Lange who aggressively cross-questioned Ala: "...if no Iranian officials had been able to get to Azarbaijan, how did they inspect the province – from the air, or through a telescope...?" Ala countered by saying that he knew nothing of microscopes or telescopes – all he was certain of was that Iranian officials, chosen by the Azarbaijan Democratic Republic, had been flown to selected areas of Azarbaijan in a Russian military plane. All these inconsistencies and contradictions caused much confusion and further anxiety among Security Council members.

Ala openly expressed his belief in the continued covert interference of Soviet agents in north-western Iran, and his doubts about the true intentions of his

government to the media, attributing Qavam's astonishing volte-face to extreme pressure from Sadchikov in Tehran.

At this point, Prime Minister Ghavam publicly **reprimanded** Ala for causing him embarrassment and exceeding his brief, instructing him to remain in Washington, and forbidding any further representations at the Security Council – an exceptionally humiliating experience for a senior diplomat! Indeed, only US Ambassador George Allen's intervention, prevented his recall. At home in the Embassy, I well remember that my father told us we should be prepared to pack, as he anticipated being recalled for not following the Prime Minister's express instructions. He was meanwhile comprehensively vilified by Pravda as "the well-paid representative of Wall Street and the City of London".

The US diplomat Harold Minor (quoted by B. Kuniholm) dismissed rumours that Qavam had colluded with Ala in appearing to demand withdrawal of the Case, while secretly instructing him to persist with his complaint at the Security Council, in order to assuage Soviet threats. He asserts that Ala had shown considerable courage in expressing his personal opinion without Qavam's sanction, and in accepting the potential consequences of his action.

The Course of Events in Tehran

In fact, Soviet troops did leave Iranian soil on May 6th. There is an amusing, ironic anecdote from Robert Rossow, US Vice-Consul in Tabriz, who reported that as Russian tanks departed in clouds of diesel smoke, they suddenly ground to a halt after travelling for only a few kilometres – they had run out of fuel!! Anglo-Iranian Oil Company tankers had to be hastily rounded up to refuel Stalin's armoured vehicles, before they changed their mind!

Following the signature of the Qavam/Sadchikov agreement in April '46, the USSR waited impatiently for a 15th Majles to sanction the oil accord, which was beginning to take precedence over Azarbaijan autonomy in their mind. Meanwhile, the boldness, demands and influence of the ADR and Pischevari grew considerably, and Qavam's beleaguered government chose the path of conciliation and appeasement:

1. First of all, three Tudeh Party members were included in Qavam's cabinet;

2. On April 28th - Qavam held talks with Pischevari's "autonomous government" in Tehran, to discuss ADR demands, and reach some compromise compatible with the Constitution.
3. June 14th – Mozaffar Firouz signed a 10-point agreement with Pischevari in Tabriz (in the presence of the Soviet Consul!), where he conceded most of the ADR requests. Firouz was also sent to assuage the demands of striking oil industry workers in Khuzestan, and to seek reconciliation with Qashgha'i and Bakhtiari tribal leaders in revolt.
4. Finally, Qavam held negotiations with Qazi Mohammad's Kordestan autonomous republic, granting many of their demands.

Hitherto, the Shah had merely been a passive, but acutely anxious observer of his country's deteriorating situation, and his all-powerful Prime Minister's handling of these critical events. Now, in mid-October, he summoned Qavam to an audience, ordered the organisation of fresh parliamentary elections, and asked for Qavam's resignation and the formation of a new cabinet free of Tudeh Party members, but above all, free of Mozaffar Firouz and his insidious influence. "Firouz must either face the Courts for treason or he must be exiled" he insisted. Although Ghavam still astonishingly sought to defend his deputy, he eventually complied, and Firouz was appointed Iranian Ambassador to the USSR – "...they will treat him like a dog in Moscow...", the Shah added.

Upon hearing of these decisions, Sadchikov hurried to Qavam's office in protest, and threatened dire consequences for this "unfriendly act". Qavam hesitated, fearing that Soviet troops might re-occupy Iran, but after consulting with George Allen, the new US Ambassador, the Shah adamantly insisted that his troops were immediately despatched north to Azarbaijan.

In October, the Shah issued his 'Farman' calling for elections to the 15th Majles; Iranian armed forces commanded by General Razmara entered Zanjan on November 16th, and Tabriz on December 13th, meeting with little resistance, and to a tumultuous public welcome. Mianeh was also taken soon after, ending both the Independent Republics of Kordestan and Azarbaijan almost exactly 12 months after they were first formed. Qazi Mohammad was publicly hanged, and Pischevari escaped to Baku, having been cynically dropped "...for greater revolutionary reasons...", as Stalin wrote to him.

The 15th Majles (carefully packed with members of Qavam's newly created 'Democratic Party') overwhelmingly rejected the Qavam/Sadchikov oil agreement in October 1947, and Qavam was formally 'forgiven' for signing the agreement in contravention of Mossadegh's Law. The United Nations Organisation was immensely strengthened by the peaceful resolution of this first, highly significant case brought before the new-found Security Council. However, this also represented the start of a near half-century of Cold War, which persisted until the Soviet Union foundered, essentially for economic reasons, in 1991.

Qavam o-Saltaneh, ever an accomplished self-publicist, claimed a lion's share of the kudos for "hood-winking" or duping Marshall Stalin, and resolving the Azarbaijan crisis virtually single-handed, despite the manifest inclination for compromise and accommodation he had shown throughout his premiership; his vacillation and the repeated concessions he had granted this menacing neighbour for fear of reprisals. Indeed, to this day, he is credited with such masterful manipulation of events, that he alone achieved this diplomatic success, without due recognition of the immensely significant roles, the courage and perseverance of Ala and Taqizadeh in helping to change the world perception of Soviet post-war designs, and ensuring the sometimes reluctant support of the United States, the UN Security Council, Britain and other influential members of the international community.

After the resolution of this crisis, which had placed an immense strain upon his mental and physical resources, my father became feverish and lost weight, and he was found to be suffering from a recurrence of an old pulmonary tubercular lesion. Many years later, not long before he died in 1964, Ala was asked by an interviewer to describe what he considered to have been the most challenging and demanding episode in his entire 60 years of service to Iran. Without hesitation, Ala replied : '...representing my country at the Security Council in 1946, to prevent the dismemberment of Iran...'

It is still a mystery to me to know how and why such a patriotic, perceptive, crafty and experienced politician as Qavam o-Saltaneh, supported Mozaffar Firouz, and allowed him so much power and freedom to strive against the interests of his country, for so long. Even though Firouz had previously shown his allegiance to Britain as editor of Seyed Zia'adin's newspaper Ra'ad, his subsequent and unexpected Russophilia may have been motivated by a vengeful desire to destroy

the Pahlavi dynasty, which had harmed his family in the past*, even at the cost of Iran's integrity and sovereignty.

Why, despite its enormously dominant position and its success in creating a 'cordon sanitaire' of client states in Eastern Europe, the USSR abruptly decided to drop its ambitions in Iran, must await the full availability of the relevant Soviet Archives, which have only been partially opened so far. In his memoirs, written many years after the event, Truman claimed that he had issued an ultimatum, threatening the USSR with nuclear attack, and that it was this which led to Stalin's 'climb-down'. There is no evidence that he ever issued such a threat however, in any of the writings of his aides and contemporaries.

*Nosrat o-Dowleh Firouz was murdered in prison by order of Reza Shah, in 1938.

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