
CONTROLLING
SMALL WARS:
A Strategy for the 1970's

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coming north in droves. . . . On May 5 Tabriz itself was evacuated to the accompaniment of a brass band."² Evacuation of Soviet troops from Iranian territory was completed sometime in early May, probably by May 10.

Sub-Phase D: May 10–October 19, 1946

Despite its withdrawal of troops, the Soviet Union vigorously pursued its objectives in Iran through nonmilitary means. On May 22 the Security Council voted to retain the Iranian question on its agenda indefinitely, in view of conflicting reports concerning Soviet evacuation. But this was the last time the council was to discuss the conflict.

On June 14 Premier Qavam concluded an agreement with the Ja'afar Pishevari regime in Azerbaijan which preserved the nominal authority of Tehran over the province but made concessions to the Azerbaijanis in many important areas—election laws, land distribution, choice of the governor, and ultimate incorporation of Azerbaijan's army and irregular soldiers into the national army and gendarmerie.³ The Azerbaijanis thus were in a position to infiltrate the Iranian army and to send Tudeh representatives to the next Majles. At the same time, for the immediate future they retained their army and *de facto* control over the province.⁴

The main Soviet effort during this period went into an attempt to gain control of the Iranian government at the cabinet level. On August 2 Qavam reshuffled his cabinet to include three members of the Tudeh; this "popular front" government was formed while violent riots provoked by the Tudeh broke out in Khuzistan.⁵ Then the British entered the conflict actively. On August 3, the day after the new cabinet was announced, British troops were moved to Basra in Iraq, near the Iranian border, "to protect British interests."

A tense period followed the British move. Soviet troop concentrations were reported north of the Azerbaijan border, and anti-Tudeh tribal unrest developed. Qavam's arrest, on

² Rossow, op. cit., p. 24. ³ Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 302.

⁴ Rossow, op. cit., p. 25.

⁵ Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 303; Rossow, op. cit., pp. 26–7.

August 18, of a number of Tudeh leaders did not ease the tension. On September 23 an open tribal rebellion broke out in Fars. The several rebellious tribes demanded the ouster of Tudeh ministers from the cabinet, local self-government for the southern provinces, and an increase in parliamentary representation.⁶ According to General Arfa, on October 3 a confederation of western tribes joined the southern tribes in their demands, and the army was "lacking in enthusiasm for a fight on what they considered the Tudeh side." Arfa says that during the period of the tribal uprisings, the Tudeh and the government of Azerbaijan offered to allow the Azerbaijani forces to assume garrison duties in Tehran and other towns in order to allow the regular forces to be sent to the south.⁷

The Soviets accused the British of sponsoring the tribal rebellions; and, in response to Soviet allegations, the Tehran government requested the recall of one British consul. It cannot be definitely established that the British instigated or supported the tribal rebellions, but there is no question that the rebellions were favorable to British policy. In mid-October the central government signed an agreement with the tribes, meeting most of their demands. Following an interview with the Shah, Qavam reformed his government on October 19, eliminating all Tudeh members.

Sub-Phase E: October 19–December 10, 1946

Following the appointment of his new cabinet, Qavam announced on November 21 that elections for the new Majles would begin on December 7. He further stated on November 23 that they would not be held unless the government could supervise them in all areas of the country, including Azerbaijan. On November 24 he announced that central government troops would march into Azerbaijan for that purpose.⁸

The Soviet government informed Iran that it would take a serious view of disturbances in Azerbaijan and advised that the central government troops not be sent. At the same time, in

⁶ Lenczowski, op. cit., pp. 304–5. ⁷ Arfa, op. cit., pp. 374–5.

⁸ He also arrested approximately one hundred Tudeh leaders in Tehran.

Tabriz, the Soviets informed the Azerbaijani regime that it was on its own militarily.⁹ At this juncture the U.S. ambassador in Tehran made a public statement in support of Iran's right to send its troops into Azerbaijan. Premier Qavam, thus supported, notified the UN Security Council of the Soviet protest and of the fact that Tehran had not yet established control over Azerbaijan but intended now to do so.¹

PHASE III₂

December 10–15, 1946

On December 10 minor hostilities broke out when forces of the central government entered Azerbaijan. On December 13 the government forces entered Tabriz and arrested several Azerbaijani leaders, although Pischevari and many of his followers had already fled across the border into the Soviet Union. Pischevari's army put up little resistance and the fighting ended with a complete victory for Tehran.² On December 15 the government troops also took control of the Kurdish People's Republic of Mahabad.

PHASE IV₂ *December 15, 1946–October 22, 1947*

During this period there were no further hostilities or threatened hostilities, either between Iran and the Soviet Union itself or between Iran and Soviet-supported rebel forces. With the issue of control over Azerbaijan resolved, however, there remained the question of the Soviet-Iranian oil company agreement.

Following the re-establishment of its control over the entire country, the Tehran government took vigorous action against the Tudeh, raiding its Tehran headquarters, arresting 150 of its leaders, and suppressing its newspapers.³ In the elections held

⁹ Rossow, op. cit., p. 30.

¹ Lenczowski, op. cit., pp. 307–8; Van Wagenen, op. cit., pp. 84–5.

² Rossow, op. cit., p. 30; Lenczowski, op. cit., pp. 308–9; Roosevelt, op. cit., p. 268.

³ Lenczowski, op. cit., p. 309; Fatemi, op. cit., p. 323.

during January and February 1946 only two Tudeh members were sent to the new Majles.

On October 22, 1947, by a vote of 102 to 2, the Majles passed a bill sponsored by Qavam himself declaring null and void his earlier negotiations with the Soviet Union for an oil agreement. Before the vote, the Soviet ambassador had pressed hard for ratification; the U.S. ambassador had made a public statement to the effect that Iran was free to accept or reject the oil agreement and could count on U.S. support against any Soviet threats or pressure.⁴

SETTLEMENT

From October 22, 1947

With the refusal of the Majles to ratify the oil agreement that had been extracted from Qavam while Soviet troops were still in Iran, the conflict passed into Settlement. The *status quo ante* World War II was re-established, insofar as Azerbaijan and Soviet oil interests were concerned. The opposing forces were, however, stabilized at a higher level than before the outbreak of the conflict: the Soviet army was a much more powerful instrument than in pre-World War II days and the Iranian army continued to receive direct and indirect U.S. aid and support.

⁴ Lenczowski, op. cit., pp. 310–11.