

CHAPTER 3 - STRANGULATION, STAGNATION AND WAR

a. STRANGULATION. During the reign of the last king of the Qajar Dynasty, (Ahmad Shah - 1909-1925), the strangulation of Iran was quite apparent as a period of passive rivalry now dawned during which Iran was ruled by the terms of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907. It is difficult to realize the strong position of the Russians in Iran, for they had a virtual military control of the northern part of the country. Iran, however, had fallen into a deplorable state of poverty, stagnation, and disorder. By 1910, the Majlis had come under the leadership of men who, as patriots and progressives, sincerely desired to make constitutional government a success. They rightly viewed the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 and the attitudes and actions of the British and Russians as threats to the country's independence. They also realized that unless they put their own house in order their weakness and insolvency would keep them, as in the past, at the mercy of the British and Russians; they knew likewise that financial reform was a condition precedent to internal development and progress. So, in 1911 they made another attempt to restore order and stability within Iran's political fabric, and in an effort to solve the economic difficulties, they quite logically asked for an American financial expert. Iran considered America a wealthy country, which certainly had no political designs in the Middle East. Early in 1911, W. Morgan Shuster, who was a U. S. Treasury official, came to Iran in a private capacity with a group of assistants. He was given by the

Majlis a law conferring on him certain essential powers in the financial field. Shuster worked energetically and courageously along sound lines and with complete devotion to the interest of Iran. The Russian government had informally protested to the American government against the appointment and promptly undertook to discourage Shuster's mission. One of the measures of Shuster that antagonized the Russians was his establishment of a special treasury gendarmerie under his own orders to ensure the collection of taxes. He offered the appointment as head of the gendarmerie to the Military Attache' of the British Legation, Major C. B. Stokes, whose four year term of service in that capacity would shortly expire. He was an officer in the British-Indian Army, and spoke, read, and wrote Iranian with facility. There was a rumor that he was a spy of the British government. To this the Russians violently objected as not compatible with their interests. In the midst of these events occurred the attempt of the ex-Shah to regain his throne. With the connivance of the Russians, he left his retreat in Russia and landed in the northern part of Iran. With the failure of this attempt, the Majlis ordered the confiscation of the estates of the ringleaders in the plot, including those of the ex-Shah's brother. The Russian legation declared a protectorate over these properties and posted a guard. This guard Shuster had the temerity to remove. There promptly followed a Russian ultimatum demanding an apology from the government, which was given. In November a second ultimatum followed, demanding Shuster's dismissal. A national uprising was provoked by the ultimatums, the second of which the Majlis rejected with the cry of "Death or Independence", but Russian troops began to march toward Teheran, massacring several hundred people

as they advanced. The Iranian government was too weak and too divided to resist. When neither threats or bribes availed against the Majlis, Russia undertook to destroy the government by force, and on 24 December 1911 engineered a coup d'état by which the Majlis was dispersed. Shuster and his staff had no course open to them except to leave Iran (1912), his task unfulfilled. In the south, the British had not been inactive in maintaining their interests against the Russians. While the Russians were marching about in northern Iran, the British had, on 10 October 1910, complained of the insecurity of the roads in the south. They practically demanded that a number of officers of the British-Indian army be placed in charge of the policing of these roads under the general supervision of the British government, the expense to be met from the Iranian customs revenues. The British enjoyed the advantage of bigger financial and commercial resources, better diplomacy, and more influence on the leaders of the new Iranian democratic regime.

Following the terms of the oil concession D'Arcy founded the first Exploitation Company, which undertook prospecting work. The first geyser of oil burst out in 1908 and as a consequence the Anglo-Persian Oil Company was created. The new company set to work energetically, and by 1912 quantities of oil began to be exported from Iran. One of the largest oil refineries in the world was constructed in Abadan at the head of the Persian Gulf. This created another important interest for the whole British policy in the Persian Gulf area. The British government for its part, was becoming oil conscious. Mr. Winston Churchill, speaking as the First Lord of the Admiralty in the House of Commons on 17 July 1913, said:

"In the year 1909 the first flotilla of ocean-going destroyers wholly dependent upon oil was created, and since then, in each successive year, another flotilla of (oil-only) destroyers has been built. There are now built and building more than 100 destroyers - I purposely leave the number rather vague - including coastal destroyers, which are solely dependent upon oil fuel. Similarly, during the last five years, oil has been employed in coal-burning battle ships and cruisers, to enable them to realize their full powers in an emergency."

Churchill's statement was designed to prepare Parliament for the British government's participation in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, so as to assure the Admiralty a substantial share of its oil requirements on reasonable terms under an agreement signed on 20 May 1914. The British government purchased a controlling interest in the Anglo-Persian-Oil Company and amended the company statutes, enabling the government to veto any policy deemed inconsistent with the national welfare. So the British Fleet, gradually converting from coal-burners to oil, entered into a long-term contract for the supply of fuel oil at a price very much cheaper than other markets offered. So, to watch the Company's operation and to maintain friendly relations with the local potentates, a number of able public servants had to be employed by the British in these regions. This meant deeper penetration of British consular and intelligence authorities into the area, the establishment of certain customs and usages, and generally a greater influence..

b. STAGNATION.

Under these circumstance, Iran was frantically and unsuccessfully trying to shake off foreign interference and to reform her internal affairs.

"Only the pen of a Macaulay or the brush of a Versetchagin, could adequately portray the rapidly shifting scenes attending the downfall of this ancient nation, scenes in which two powerful and presumably enlightened Christian countries played fast and loose with

most barbarian cruelties to accomplish their political designs and to put Persia beyond self-regeneration."

So wrote Morgan Shuster when he was obliged to leave Iran. After Shuster's departure, the Iranian government engaged Swedish officers to organize and direct the gendarmerie, but this force proved insufficient to cope with the difficulties and disorder. The country remained in financial straits, was disorganized and hopeless, and economic stagnation and decay continued.

Meanwhile, Germany as an imperialist competitor, appeared on the horizon of Iranian politics. From the time of Kaiser Wilhelm, Imperial Germany made persistent efforts to secure a place in the Persian Gulf area. In 1903 the Deutsche Bank obtained the famous concession to construct the railroad that would link Berlin with Baghdad. The Berlin-Baghdad railway was to be the main artery for German influence in Mesopotamia and the Persian Gulf. This railway development was accompanied by the establishment on the Gulf shores, including the territory of Iran, of a number of German import-export firms with many branches in the shore cities. In 1907 a service was inaugurated between the ports of Germany and the Persian Gulf. This introduced a dangerous element of competition to the hitherto unchallenged position of British shipping in these waters. In the same year the Deutsche Orient Bank obtained from the Iranian government a concession to open branches in Iran with the privilege of issuing silver bullion. However, the German attempts at penetration caused considerable anxiety and alarm in Great Britain. On May 5, 1907, the British government felt compelled to issue a warning to Germany. In reply to an interrogation in the House of Lords, Lord Lansdune, Foreign Secretary, declared that the establishment of a naval base or of a fortified port in the Persian Gulf by a foreign

power would be considered a grave menace to British interests "We should certainly resist it" he said, "with all the means at our disposal." The Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 temporarily concluded the rivalry between these two powers. But as a result of the 1907 agreement, the traditional British influence exercised on Iranian Constitutionalists waned. This feeling of disappointment and resentment against British and Russia imperialism was exploited by German diplomacy. She supported the Iranian Democratic party, which was composed of liberal intelligentsia and merchant classes. This party grew steadily more and more pro-German and at the same time gained ascendancy in the Majlis. Consequently, a large part of the Majlis, including its president, became pro-German. The same was true of a number of important ministers in the cabinets that preceded the first World War.

When the war broke out, Germany's preparatory activities in the Middle East were crowned with a large measure of success, for the Ottoman Empire followed the lead of Berlin and Vienna. If Iran were won to the same cause, Germany's strategic triumph would have been complete. Hence, after the beginning of the war, feverish efforts were made to induce Iran to side with the Central Powers.

The outbreak of war found the British and the Russians in agreement to prevent German penetration toward the Caucasus and the Persian Gulf. Iran, generally pro-German, since Germany was an enemy of their traditional foes, proclaimed neutrality, but soon became a theatre for the operation of German agents and a battleground for the Turks, Russians, and British. Devastation spread through the Northwest, while

throughout the country insecurity increased and governmental authority virtually vanished. In fact Iran's independence was severely curtailed as a result of Russian-British cooperation. Russian troops were stationed in several parts of Iran's northern provinces, and British-Indian detachments guarded the oil fields in the southwest. The only two efficient military formations - the Persian Cossack Brigade and the Gendarmerie Corps - were officered by the Russians and the Swedes, respectively, and were subject to foreign influences. The tribes in the provinces were armed, and to a marked degree remained independent of the central government. Ahmed Shah, hardly sixteen years old, was too young and too weak to conduct the affairs of State with wisdom and determination. Under these conditions, Iran's officially proclaimed neutrality meant little and could not deter the big powers from using her territory as a battlefield should their interests so dictate.

In 1951, German activity in Iran was both diplomatic and **military**. With respect to the first, Prince von Reuss, German minister to Iran, maintained very cordial relations with the leaders of the Iranian Democratic Party. He tried to influence the government and parliament, and the elections of the Majlis, which were held in that year, gave a majority to the pro-German Democratic party. This party and the Majlis as a whole, strongly protested against the violations of Iranian territory and neutrality by Russian and British troops. The Government less openly leaned to the German cause. Von Reuss's diplomacy bore fruit; the prime minister of Iran, Mustofiel-Mamalek, concluded a secret alliance with the Germans in return for certain political promises. These promises included a guarantee of **Iran's**

independence and integrity and a supply of money, arms, and munitions. Von Reuss now proceeded to secure the co-operation of two other most important elements of strength in Iran: the Swedish - officered gendarmerie and the nomad tribes. The gendarmerie was the only independent and relatively efficient Iranian military formation. The Swedish officers of the gendarmerie showed definitely pro-German pro-clivities and eventually decided to side openly with Germany. As to the tribes, which constituted roughly one-fifth of the Iranian population, they were armed and had an organization well suited to guerrilla warfare. In order to enlist the full co-operation of the tribes and of the local governors, the German military attaché in Teheran, Count Kanitz, traveled extensively throughout the country, making lavish promises of German assistance. To aid him the German General Staff dispatched to Iran a number of military special missions for diversionary and sabotage purposes. Of these missions, three deserve special mention, namely, those conducted by former Consuls Wassmuss, Zugmayer, and Niedermayer. Wassmuss, whose daring exploits gained him the nickname of "The German Lawrence," by extraordinary feats of energy and shrewdness managed to provoke a rebellion of Tangistani tribes in the south, to enter into alliance with the powerful tribe of Qashgais in Fars, and to win over a number of traditionally pro-British Bakhtivari chieftains. German consuls and commercial agents in southern Iran co-operated with him. Wassmuss, leading a force of tribal warriors, attacked Bushire and immobilized in this port British Resident Sir Percy Cox and a force of eight hundred Indian troops. He entered Shiraz, and there captured the British Consul to-

gether with the manager of the Imperial Bank of Iran and fourteen other British subjects. The expedition led by Zugmayer and Niedermayer was actively supported by German consuls in Kermanshah and Hamadan. Like Wassmuss, these agents managed to win over to their cause some tribes, and were particularly successful among the Kurds who, as followers of the Sunni sect, cooperated with the Turks and their allies. Niedermayer's mission was not limited to Iran, and he was instructed to proceed to Afghanistan and to extend his activities was to stir up anti-British and anti-Russian feelings among the people, and in this way to harmonize them with the pro-German attitude of the Teheran authorities. Further, in the south the aim was to sabotage the supply of oil to the British navy and to divert British forces from their main campaign in Mesopotamia in order to weaken them in the face of the Turko-German adversaries. By November 1915, the mood of the country was so pronouncedly anti-Entente that only a signal was needed to start the avalanche moving. The Russian and British ministers in Teheran were well informed of the state of affairs in Iran and, to forestall a coup, decided to act quickly. Strong warnings were issued to the Iranian government of the dire consequences of a precipitate pro-German action. Simultaneously, Russian troops stationed 30 miles north of Teheran, moved toward the capital, threatening its occupation. Faced with such a contingency, the Iranian cabinet decided to transfer the seat of government to Isfahan in the center of the country, defying Allied pressure. Evacuation of the government offices began hastily. The German, Austrian, and Ottoman legations moved southward in a hurry, and established themselves temporarily at Qum. This evacuation, despite the necessity of abandoning the capital,

actually was well suited to German plans because it meant the burning of bridges between Iran and the Entente powers. Yet, the operation was not entirely successful, since at the last moment the young and weak-willed Shah succumbed to strong Russo-British representations to remain in the Capital. Faced with this turn of events, the Cabinet decided to remain as well. As a result, only the outspoken pro-German leaders of the Democratic party left Teheran.

It was not exactly what the Germans wanted. Prince von Reuss did his best and promptly proceeded to create a rival Iranian government in Qum. It was, however, dangerous to remain there because of the proximity of Russian troops. The latter did not occupy Teheran, but they were near enough to cause uneasiness. Eventually, the separatist government moved to Kermanshah, where it was close to the Turkish border and where it could count on the protection of Ottoman forces in Mesopotamia. In Kermanshah the rival government was re-organized under the presidency of Nizam es-Saltaneh, the governor of Luristan. In December 1915, Nizam concluded a treaty of alliance with Germany promising to levy 40,000 troops in the area under his control. In return he was promised weapons and munitions, German instructors, a monthly subsidy, and a guarantee of his treasury. A German legation was formally accredited to Nizam's government, and a German military mission was dispatched to train his forces. Thenceforth, the political destinies of Nizam's government were linked with the fortune of the Ottoman army in Mesopotamia, but Nizam's contribution to the Turkish-German effort was altogether negligible. To the British, German intrigue in Iran was very embarrassing. Some of

the British troops in Mesopotamia had to be diverted to southern Iran to protect the oil fields, and such an extension of military commitments was most inconvenient. Southern Iran was a traditional British preserve, and it was there that the British authorities decided to make a bold move to stop the Germans and to restore peace and order.

In March 1910, a British military mission under Brigadier General Sir Percy Sykes was sent to the Persian Gulf port of Bander-Abbas. The object of this mission was to organize an Iranian force and with it to restore normal conditions in the country. The force, named the South Persian Rifles, was promptly recruited, and was reinforced by the troops from India. Before long Sykes was in a position to begin a number of forced marches into the interior. Within six months he secured control of Kerman Yazd, and Isfahan where he joined with the Russian Cossacks sent from the north. He had to wage fierce battles with the German-influenced tribes, segments of the gendarmerie, and other pro-German elements. The Cabinet in Teheran was of no help and vacillated between recognition of the South Persian Rifles and intrigue against it. By 1917, despite all the difficulties, Sykes managed to restore order and safety for the British in southern Iran. In 1917-1918 most of the German agents operating in this area fell into his hands. Even Wassmuss was eventually captured.

The account of wartime Iran would be incomplete if mention was not made of two further violations of neutrality by the belligerents. The northwestern province of Azerbaijan was invaded by Turkish and Russian troops early in the war. The province had to undergo all the

vicissitudes of the war on the eastern Anatolian front, and was also profoundly affected by Turkish operations in Trans-Caucasia toward the end of the war.

Eastern Iran also was not immune to the penetration of foreign troops. The Russian and British forces established what was known as the East Persian Cordon along the Afghan border. The reason for this operation lay in the fear that some German or Turkish military detachments might traverse Iran and penetrate Afghanistan.

With the defeat of the Swedish-officered gendarmerie by British forces there disappeared the last military force at the disposal of the Iranian government. By 1917, Iran was in effective occupation by the Russian and British forces and had for all purposes ceased to be an independent nation. Thus, during World War I, the sovereignty of Iran was violated, with great loss of life and property and disorganization of society, the most fertile province in all Iran was devastated, hundreds of prosperous villages depopulated, the orchards cut down, the water canals broken in, and a hundred thousand refugees left to wander about the country.

c. EFFECT OF RUSSIAN REVOLUTION IN IRAN.

The defeat of Tsarist Russia by Germany made possible the Russian Revolution and in March of 1917, the democratic government of Lvov and Kerensky succeeded the autocratic monarchy in Russia. The new regime was pledged to democracy and honest parliamentarianism. Echoes of this event and the momentary weakness of Russia presented to the subject nations of Empire a unique opportunity for emancipation.

On July 9, 1917, the Socialist Kerensky regime ordered Baratoff, the Russian commander, to withdraw the Russian forces in the Iran provinces. This revolution put an end to the victory march against the Turks and the disintegration of Russian forces in Iran was swift. Only the weakness of the Ottoman army kept the Turks from immediately advancing into northern Iran. By the end of 1917 the military situation in the north of Iran and in the Caucasus had changed in favor of the Central Powers. The Turks moved into Azerbaijan and defeated weak Armenian forces who had taken the place of the **retreating** Russians.

At the beginning of the war the responsibility of containing the eastern Turkish front had been divided between the British and the Russians. The northern sector of Armenia and Kurdistan had been the Russian responsibility; the southern, involving the invasion of Mesopotamia from the Persian Gulf had been the British assignment, and as long as Tsardom existed, this plan was fulfilled by both allies. But the collapse of the Russian front created an entirely new problem to the British. The task before the British Headquarters in Baghdad was to prevent the Turks and the Germans from penetrating the Caucasus and establishing a stronghold on the Caspian Sea. The difficulty of the British task becomes evident if we recall that the **former** Russian sector had been held by several excellent divisions. It was clear that the British, faced with German concentration on the French front in Europe as a result of the Soviet German Armistice, could spare few troops for the Middle Eastern campaign, yet the situation demanded urgent measures. In January 1918, an expeditionary force was organized in Mesopotamia under Major General L. C. Dunsterville. He was ordered to proceed via Khanagin on the Mesopotamin-Iranian border, Kermanshah,

Hamadan, Qazvin, and the province of Gilan to the Iranian port of Enzeli (now Pahlevi), on the Caspian; thence it was to move to Tiflis and there organize a native Trans-Caucasian force for resistance to the Turkish-German troops.

To fulfill these orders, the Dunsterville force obviously had to pass through the neutrality territory of Iran; the British command had no compunction about transgressing on Iranian soil, since that country's neutrality had previously been violated by the Turks, Russian and Britain herself. So, the British troops moved from Baghdad northward by way of Iran, thus progressively filling the political and military power vacuum in northern Iran created by the Russian departure, so that by the end of World War I the British were left in sole occupation of the entire country.

The events described in the preceding section make it clear that at the end of World War I Iran found herself in an unusual position. Russia, convulsed from a revolution and civil war, relaxed her traditional pressure. The new Soviet government had to fight for its life against foreign intervention. So, fortunately, the Russian revolution relieved Iran of pressure from the North.

Even the revolutionary government in Moscow voluntarily renounced all the privileges and concessions that Tsarist Russia had secured in Iran. It also stated that Russia considered the 1907 treaty as no longer binding. On January 12, 1918, the unofficial representative of the new regime, Karl Bravin, arrived at Teheran with the following message from Lenin:

"The Workers and Peasant Government of Russia has instructed Comrade Bravin to engage in discussion with the Government of his Majesty the Shah of Persia, with a view to the conclusion of trade and other friendly agreements. The purpose of this is not only the buttressing of good neighbourly relations in the interests of both nations but, together with the people of Iran, the joint fight against the most rapacious imperialistic Government on earth - England, the intrigues of which have hitherto disturbed the peaceful people of Iran and destroyed their great country.

"The Workers and Peasant Government is prepared to repair the injustice done by the former Government of the Russian Tsar by repudiating all Tsarist privileges and agreements that are contrary to the sovereignty of Persia. The future relations between Russia and Persia are to be based upon a free agreement and mutual respect among nations."

At that time, in contrast, Britain's strength appeared increased. British troops were in occupation of the neutral state of Iran. They were stationed throughout Iranian territory, using it freely as a transit ground for their expeditions to the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia, which were stationed throughout Iranian territory, using it freely as a transit ground for their expeditions to the Caucasus and Trans-Caspia, which were occupied by the British. British forces were stationed in the oil district (Baku), in Tifilis, and in a few other cities of Transcaucasia. General Thompson was placed in charge of the British troops in Caucasia and General Dunsterville continued to command the British troops in northern Iran, safeguarding the lines of communication. This was an obvious violation of neutrality and of the principle of self-determination, especially after evacuation of the Russian army and repudiation of the treaty of 1907. In fact, England not only now dominated Iran, but also extended her control to most of the surrounding region and consequently, considered Iran as her own preserve. Britain influenced the Allies to refuse to seat the Iranian delegations, under Foreign Minister Mushavor ul-Mamalek, when they appeared at the Peace Conference in Paris (1919), and demanded abrogation of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Agreement, abolition

of the capitulations and consular guards, restoration of Transcaspia, Merv, and Khiva, the Caucasus and Derbent including Erivan, Baku and those territories that Iran had lost in the past to Russia, to the Euphrates River. There was a strong temptation in British official circles to round out their possessions by including Iran in the British-influenced protective zone adjacent to India and Persian Gulf. Would the British insist on staying in Iran and subject her to a colonial regime similar to that in India? The reply was in the negative. As early as December 1918, the British Cabinet was in favor of a speedy evacuation of troops from Iran. However, Britain's foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, instructed Sir Percy Cox in Teheran to negotiate a treaty that would assure Britain political ascendancy in Iran. The treaty was signed on August 9, 1919 in London. Its provisions included British assistance to Iran through military and financial missions which would have extensive powers in the reorganization of the Iranian army and treasury. A number of British advisers were to assist in the work of various Iranian government departments and a loan of two million pounds was to be made to Iran. A committee of experts was to study the revision of the existing customs tariff. Although it left the fabric of Iranian government and society untouched, the treaty was in fact a disguised instrument for a protectorate, and produced widespread resentment among Iran's democrats and nationalists. Curzon, an old imperialist of the nineteenth-century Indian school, had not realized that the Iranians were suspicious of British policy in 1919, and had never forgiven her for the disguised partition of their home in 1907 and in 1915. He was greatly underestimating the strength of postwar Asiatic nationalism and hoped that it would be possible to extend Britain's influence with-

out committing his country to direct colonial administration and responsibility. Events proved him wrong. The Iranian Majlis refused to ratify the treaty, which did not represent the desires of the people of Iran and which was negotiated only by the pro-British Prime Minister and his secretary Prince Firuz Mirza.

The two British missions - the military under General W. E. R. Dickson and the financial under Armitage Smith - were eventually compelled to leave Teheran after a period of inactivity. Nothing could be done about the treaty unless force was used - Britain was understood!

The question of British troops in Iran remained, and when most of the British detachments were withdrawn from Russia in 1919, British forces in Iran shrank also. The unrivaled supremacy of the British in Iran was doomed to be short-lived. In 1920 the successful Bolshevist revolution, together with the new Soviet drive toward the South and landing at Enzeli, was armed with two weapons which imperial Russia had lacked - class revolt propaganda, appealing to the proletariat of the world, and the quasi-religious fanaticism of Lenin, which infused a vigor and zeal unknown to the officials and emissaries of the Tsar. This complicated the problem of evacuation of British troops and created a disaster for Iran. British troops remained in most parts of the country through 1920.

As discussed previously, in contrast to Anglo-Iranian relations, Iran's dealing with Soviet Russia augured well. In 1918 the revolutionary government in Moscow voluntarily renounced all the privileges and concessions that Tsarist Russia had secured in Iran. Consequently,

on June 26, 1919, a more detailed definition of Soviet attitude was contained in a longer note sent by Deputy Foreign Commissar Leon Karakhan and delivered by Kolomyetsev, unofficial representative of Moscow in Iran. The note announced that (a) the Iranian debts to Tsarist Russia were annulled; (b) the Russian privileged position in the Iranian customs, post, and telegraph administration was to be ended; (c) all Russian public and private concessions in Iran were renounced; (d) the Russians Discount Bank in Iran was to become the property of the Iranian people; (e) all the railroads, harbor equipment, highways, and similar establishments constructed and owned by Tsarist Russia were declared Iranian property and; (f) the capitulations were declared null and void. The new Russian regime was eager to secure collaboration with her southern neighbors - Iran, Turkey, and Afghanistan.

In its proclamation "to the toiling Moslems of Russia and the East" the Soviet government declared itself a staunch friend and ally of the exploited peoples of Asia and at the Conference of the Peoples of the East, held in Baku in September 1920, it launched a great anti-imperialist propaganda offensive. Also in 1920, negotiations for the conclusion of a treaty of friendship began in Moscow between Iranian and Soviet representatives.

Treaty arrangements with southern countries such as Iran were highly desirable to the Soviets, as they would put an end to Soviet diplomatic isolation and would constitute a victory over the Western powers in Asia and the Middle-East.

Unfortunately, these initial friendly moves were marred by an

episode which caused many people to question the sincerity of Soviet protestations.

As we have previously seen, after the November 1917 revolution in Russia, the Russian troops that had been in northwestern Iran were evacuated. The independence or counterrevolutionary movements of Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia in Trans-caucasia and Transcasia and the presence of British troops constituted a guarantee against possible expansion of the Soviet State Southwards. This created for some time a protective belt between Iran and Russia. During 1919 only the British troops were in Iran; however, in 1920, Soviet troops were pursuing the remnants of the counter-revolutionary armies of General Denikin and his White Russians after defeating the three independent Republics of Caucasia. The Soviet fleet and the expeditionary force under Commissar Raskolnikov landed in the Iranian port of Enzeli (Pahlevi) on May 18 and opened fire on the British and the White Russians, who had escaped and encamped at Enzeli under British protection, bombarded the British land installations. The British Commander, General Champlain, entered into a parley with Raskolnikov, who declared that the Soviets were not fighting against the British nor against the Iranians but were trying only to recapture the White fleet and troops. Eventually the British, too weak in numbers and equipment, withdrew to Qazvin, and the Red Army units disembarked in Enzeli.

The dream of revolution in neighboring countries was a mirage that helped sustain the Bolshevist political machine during that time. To promote revolution and unrest in Iran, the Soviet representatives set up an elaborate and expensive apparatus for propaganda among the Kurds,

Azerbaijanis, Turkomans and other inhabitants of northern Iran.

The Bolsheviks received some unexpected assistance toward their aims as a result of an earlier revolt in northern Iran. This revolt had begun as early as 1915, when a number of the progressive-minded middle-class Iranians had elaborated a program of reform for the Iranian State at a meeting held in Teheran. The program was directed against the prevailing reactionary system in the country and against the nefarious influence of foreigners in the affairs of Iran. Taking the program very seriously, these people, under Mirza Kuchik Khan and Ehsanulla Khan, eventually started agitation among the peasantry of Gilan province and by 1917 found themselves heading an open rebellion of Jangalis (so called for their practice of meeting in the jungle, or Jangali, in Gilan) against both the government and the British influence in Iran. In the course of that year a revolutionary committee, called Ittihad-i-Islam (unity of Islam) was formed by them under the Slogan of "freedom from foreign influence and the independence of Iran under the banner of Islam." Headed by Mirza Kuchik Khan, it was composed of Ehsanulla Khan and a few other men, all of whom were either merchants or petty landed gentry. Their program was above everything nationalistic; Ehsanulla Khan represented the most radical tendency inclining toward socialism. The committee engaged as instructors of its armed forces a number of German and Turkish officers, among whom von Pachen acted as a close military advisor to Kuchik Khan. The Russian November Revolution added to the impetus of the Jangali movement, and Ehsanulla insisted that the element of class struggle should be stressed. The year 1918 was passed in strengthening Kuchik's hold on Gilan and

intensified agitation among the local population. A newspaper, Jangal, was printed as the organ of the committee. The movement expanded to Mazandran, Asterabad, and other Caspian regions. The Jangalis managed to capture a few Britons, among them Captain Noel, an intelligence officer who was on his way back from Baku, Maclaren, the British consul in Resht, and the manager of the British bank there, Oakshot. The latter two were captured in a reprisal for the arrest by the British of the Iranian socialist leader Suleiman Mirza, who had been sent to London. All these men were kept as hostages. In July 1918, British troops under General Dunsterville passed through Gilan on their way to Enzeli and Baku, and several skirmishes took place. An agreement was made between Kuchik Khan and the British in August 1918, by recognizing his authority in Gilan and even his right to appoint the Governor of Resht. In return, Kuchik Khan promised to suspend hostilities against the British, to expel his German and Turkish military instructors, and to release Captain Noel, Consul Maclaren, and Mr. Oakshot. This deal was very convenient for the British because it made safe their line of communications between Mesopotamia and the Caspian. Moreover, the more conservative members of the Kuchik committee began a lucrative trade in rice with the British. These developments produced a definite split between the left and right wings of the committee and weakened the whole movement so much that by the summer of 1919, Jangali forces were dispersed by 20,000 fresh government troops. Kuchik and Ehsanulla escaped to the woods of Gilan. Thus ended the first act of the rebellion.

The next few months were devoted to making contact with the Bolsheviks. Both Jangali leaders came to the conclusion that the revival and further success of the Gilan revolution would depend upon the degree

of assistance from Soviet Russia. Following this line Kuchik Khan went to Lankoran, a province of Russian Azerbaijan. There he learned that Kolomyetsev, the unofficial Soviet representative in Teheran, who had been obliged to flee from Iran, was trying on his own initiative to get in touch with the Jangalis. The two failed to meet, however, owing to the rout that the Bolsheviki suffered at the hands of the Mussavatists in the Moghan steppe. Eventually contact was established through secret emissaries. In 1919, Kuchik Khan rallied some of his dispersed forces and reorganized his committee, and the winter of 1919-1920 witnessed a revival of the movement.

Before the defeat of the German and Hungarian Communist parties, the Soviet method of operation was based on Lenin's belief that each foreign Communist party could and would make its own revolution. Toward this end the function of the Presidium of the Comintern, which sat in Moscow, was to plan and coordinate various moves in each foreign country for the purpose of stimulating the revolution. But after the failure of the Russia First's and Communist elements, Lenin decided on a policy of implementing force for political warfare. According to this new policy the role of making the revolution in Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Iran and Afghanistan, was assigned to the Red Army. They were not to attempt a full-fledged revolution on their own. They were to act as auxiliaries to the Bolshevik soldiers.

In the early spring of 1920, the Jangalis received a letter from a Bolshevik commander in the Caucasus informing them that the Bolsheviks would soon capture Baku and would soon invade Iran. Eventually, the Soviet forces were seeking closer liaison with Iranian rebels in

anticipation of their invasion of Iran. Kuchik Khan then met Raskolnikov, commander of the Soviet troops that disembarked at Enzeli, and on the morning of May 18, 1920, the Communists fulfilled their promise and invaded Iran. The Red forces promptly forced the British to withdraw, and occupied Resht, while Soviet political agents concentrated their attention on Kuchik Khan and his movement without much delay a meeting took place in Resht, during which the Soviet Republic of Gilan was proclaimed. Kuchik dispatched the following telegram to Lenin; (the text of the telegram as quoted by Abikh)

To Comrade Lenin, R. S. F. S. R.

"We greet you and all your comrades at the time of your brilliant successes achieved against the enemies of socialism.

"We Persian revolutionaries, have for a long time cherished the same hope, fighting against the evil and the hated English and Persian oppressors. Now is fulfilled the long-expected and happy act of the formation of the Persian Socialist Soviet Republic, which we proclaim before all the world. We consider it to be our duty to draw your attention to the fact that there are a number of criminals on Persian territory - Persian oppressors. English traders, and diplomats supported by English troops. As long as these enemies of the Persian people are in Persia, they will prove to be an obstacle to the introduction of our just system over all our country. In the name of humanity and the equality of all nations the Persian Socialist Soviet Republic asks you and all the socialists belonging to the Third International for help in liberating us and all weak and oppressed nations from the yoke of Persian and English oppressors. Bearing in mind the establishment of brotherly union and full unanimity between us, we expect from the free Russian nation the assistance that may prove indispensable for the stabilization of the Persian Socialist Soviet Republic. Mindful that all nations liberated from the yoke of capitalism should be united into one brotherly union, we request you to include in this union the hearts of the Persian nation, liberated from a centuries-long yoke, so that our holy revolution may be fulfilled till the end.

"We have a firm faith that all the world will be governed by one ideal system of the Third International Representative of the Persian Socialist Soviet Republic proclaimed in the city of Resht Mirza Kuchik."

In addition to Kuchik and Ehsanulla, the new Soviet had as prominent

leaders, Khalu Qurban and Hasan Khan. Raskolnikov brought in Ja'afar Pishavary to take charge of the Gilan Commissariat of the Interior. The old Tabriz revolutionary, Haidar Khan, also joined the Soviet. Several Russians acted as advisers or as outright executives, among them Jacob Blumkin, famous for his assassination of the German Ambassador in Moscow; Commissar Abrahamov, who installed himself at Resht, ousted the Iranian governor of the city, and issued inflammatory proclamations to the population. The Russian Wireless Press on June 6, 1920 announced the following news:

"In Resht, on the night of Jun 5, a revolutionary Government of Persia was formed, consisting of the following members:

- President and War Commissar - Mirza Kuchi K-Khan
- Commissar of Finance - Mohammed Ali Pirahazari
- Commissar of Trade - Abdul Kazim
- Commissar of Justice - Mohamed Aga
- Commissar of Postal and Telegraph Services - Nasrullah
- Commissar of Education - Hadji Jaafar
- Commissar of National Economy - Ali Khumani
- Commissar of Interior - Seyd Jaafar (Pishavary)."

Most of the Russian newspapers welcomed the establishment of the Revolutionary Government of Gilan and Iran vigorously protested. Moscow explained that Raskolnikov's expedition was the work of the newly established Soviet republic of Azerbaijan over whose actions it had no control, and later insisted on retaining the Red Army there as long as the British kept their troops in Iran. These two explanations failed to convince the Iranians.

This was considered an excellent demonstration against Britain. The British public and press now realized that the danger threatening Iran was very serious and that the fire that had been started in the woods of the Caspian Sea could easily reach the jungles of India. They also realized that events of the Red Republic of Gilan were

directly menacing British hegemony in Iran. In the face of these developments, which coincided with a rising tide of labor unrest in England, the rise of the spirit of nationalism in Egypt, India, Iraq and Ireland, Lloyd George urged his cabinet colleagues, including Curzon, to liquidate British commitments in Iran and the Caucasus.

Meanwhile, in answer to a question in the House of Commons, Churchill disclosed that on April 1, 1920 there were 70,603 British and Indian troops in Mesopotamia and northwest Persia, these figures not including the staff. At the time of the invasion of Iran, by Churchill's own count, there were 79,500 troops in the territories named - the British press asked why? If these troops were not in that region to defend Iran and Mesopotamia, should British taxpayers spend £50,000,000 on a force which unable to stop a few hundred ill-fed and ill-clothed Bolshevists? The Times asked for a strict and independent investigation by the members of the House of Commons.

However, the revolutionary Soviet Government of Gilan extended its influence to the province of Mazanderan as well. As time went on, the pro-Soviet elements asserted themselves openly in the midst of Kuchik's movement. On one occasion Ehsanillah addressed an appeal to the Kremlin asking for more help in order to complete the conquest of the northern provinces. The telegram appeal is illustrative of the prevailing trends:

"The laboring masses of Mazanderan appeal to the Soviet Republics. The population of Mazandran awaits the help of the Third InternationalLong Live the world's Revolution. Long live the Third International."

The Gilan Soviet was in control of the Caspian provinces for about a year and a half, from the spring of 1920 till the fall of 1921. During

this time the British troops had received orders not to engage in combat; they destroyed the Menjil Bridge and retreated under pressure of Soviet troops to within a few miles of Kazvin, general headquarters of the British. Teheran, the capital, was therefore in danger from the north, from the west, and the east for the city of Teheran had only a division of Cossacks (6,000 strong) to defend it. The English exercised no supervision or authority in the Caspian provinces and seemed, moreover, to be disinterested in the struggle. The Shah and his Court, meanwhile, had decided to leave Teheran for Isfahan.

On the other hand the events in the Iranian province of Azarbaijan and in Khorassan were very instructive in Soviet tactics toward an Eastern country with which, on the surface, correct if not cordial relations existed. Early in 1920, a revolt against the central government broke out in Tabriz which was led by Khiabany, a man of a great oratorical ability, who engaged vigorously in political activity. Khiabany, formerly a deputy to the Majlis, had emigrated to the Caucasus in 1911 and there established contacts with Russian revolutionaries. In 1914 he returned to Tabriz and started underground activity with the aim of liberating Iran from foreign influences. Various radical elements rallied around him. His work was interrupted by the Turkish invasion of Azerbaijan during the war, which resulted in his temporary arrest and confinement in Kars. Released, he returned to Tabriz and after the end of the war, before the authority of the Iranian government was adequately restored in Azerbaijan, he gathered together some one thousand armed partisans and struggled against the "reactionary" central government of Vossug ed-Dowleh, who was the Chief architect of the Anglo-Iranian

treaty of 1919. Khiabany founded the National Democratic Party of Azarbaijan. His forces disarmed government troops and expelled all of the Central Government officials and he allied himself with Wustrow, the German Consul at Tabriz. His party's chief organ, Tajadded (Renaissance), printed his speeches and echoed his demands for radical reforms. He demanded a basic transformation of the Iranian state system, greater freedom, better morals, and greater educational facilities. As a result, the province of Azerbaijan was separated from the rest of IZAN and assumed the name of Azadistan (country of freedom).

To Soviet Russia these developments were of great interest and importance, especially since Soviet troops simultaneously landed at Enzeli and joined hands with Kuchik-Khan. There was a strong temptation to establish contact with the Tabriz separatists and by one bold stroke, secure Iran's Caspian provinces for the Soviet Republic. Consequently, the Bolshevik forces operating in Gilan turned toward the town of Zanjan, ready to invade Iranian Azerbaijan. At that moment, however, to the disappointment of Soviet leaders, the Azerbaijan separatists did not prove co-operative. The National Democrats in Tabriz, instead of joining hands with the Bolsheviks, declared that they disapproved of the Soviet landing at Enzeli and, in a sudden upsurge of patriotism, denounced the pact that had been concluded between the Russians and Kuchik-Khan. Khiabany also addressed the people of Iran, stating that he considered the interest of his country and countrymen above everything; to him foreigners, whether British or Russians, were all the same and they had no right to interfere in the domestic affairs of Iran. But, the Azadistan experiment was, in any case, nearing its end and a stronger

contingent from Teheran arrived on the scene. The Governor of Azerbaijan, Mokhbar as-Saltaneh, freshly appointed to that post by the new cabinet of Moshir ed-Dowleh, started energetic negotiation with the rebels, negotiations which were soon to be followed by military action. By the middle of September 1920, the Iranian Cossak Brigade defeated the National Democrat forces. Khiahany himself was killed and the restoration of order and authority by the central government prevented any further direct action by Soviet forces, unless the Soviet government was resolved to repeat the Gilan experiment in Azerbaijan. This was not, however, the case and instead of direct action, Moscow preferred to play on the local nationalist feelings of the Azerbaijan population, exploiting any manifestation of discontent against the central government. It was at this stage that internal dissension broke out within the ranks of the Gilan Soviet, thus frustrating the Russian plan for the conquest of Iran. The schism between Kuchik-Khan, who was always a moderate socialist, and the outright Communists was widened to such an extent that it brought about the collapse of the existing regime. Ehsanullah and his communist friends dwelt on the idea that there could be no real reform without a violent struggle. "Give the masses the opportunity," said Ja'far Pishevary, "to show their authority and their prestige. Let them give free course to their passions and take revenge for their misery on their masters." They declared that it was not enough for the people to be informed of the rigorous fate awaiting the enemies of the revolution. The people must also participate actively in the liquidation of the bourgeoisie. Furthermore, they declared that anyone who desired to participate in the Soviet of Gilan

must accept the complete authority and supremacy of the Third International, while Kuchik believed that the object of the new government of Gilan was to establish a concensus through give and take among the various interest and opinions of the population as expressed through their elected representative, who were dependent for re-election on the satisfaction of a majority of their constituents. This schism led eventually to the arrest and execution of Haidar Khan, and several other Comintern agents, by Kuchik-Khan.

On August 12, 1920, the Bolshevists, after quarreling with Kuchik Khan, and being defeated by his men, looted and burned a great part of Resht. They captured the city and camped outside Enzeli. They proclaimed a general mobilization and unsuccessfully endeavored to conscript all peasants between the ages of 18 and 45. All food in Resht and Enzeli was requisitioned.

Reports from Resht received in Teheran and London indicated friction between Kuchik Khan and the Bolshevists at Baku.

The Iranian Government viewed these events in Gilan with concern, because the presence of Soviet troops in the northern provinces and the establishment of a Soviet Government in Resht signified something more than a military occupation as a safeguard against possible new British intervention. The Bolshevists were bent upon forcible change of the economic and social structure of Iran's Caspian provinces; the hasty proclamation of the Soviet Government did not augur well for a speedy evacuation of Soviet troops. Moreover, it was difficult event to discuss these matters with Moscow owing to its stubborn pretense that the blame, if any, should be put on independent Soviet Azerbaijan.

Mushir ed-Dowleh, the premier, was enraged at the looting and the destruction of the city of Resht and he called the Bolsheviks of Gilan traitors and insurgents. He appealed to the Army and the people to rally round the Shah and the flag in order to drive the invaders out of Iran. He reminded Moscow that he was not blind to the intrigues proceeding between Baku and Resht. "The Persian," said the Prime Minister, "wished to live in amity with Russia, but the attempt to make Persia a springboard for the Bolsheviks armies in the interest of world Revolution, would be resisted even if the bloody insurgents of Gilan inaugurated their fresh victories on the bodies of our people. We shall draw from the heart of suffering itself the means of inspiration and survival."

Meanwhile, in Gilan the rift between Kuchik Khan and the Bolsheviks, who were led now by Ensamullah and Pischevary, became wider. Kuchik refused to be a spectator to the massacre of his compatriots. He warned the Bolsheviks and the extremists that any further moves would be retaliated by the masses of the people in Gilan. The Talish Tribes under Amir Mugtader, in response to the Prime Minister's call to arms, attacked the Bolsheviks.

The Iranian Government troops also came into contact with the Reds and after suffering tremendous losses Bolsheviks retreated toward Enzeli.

The reverses on all fronts made the Bolshevik situation difficult and encouraged Mushir-ed-Dowleh the Premier, to adopt a hold policy toward Moscow. The Moscow Government realized, after alienating the Iranian masses, that in Iran there was an entrenched feeling of nationalism. The actions of Khiabany in Tabriz and Kuchik's defection in

Gilan were a profound shock to her, and throughout the Middle East it had repercussions which were making things difficult for the Bolshevist agents. On November 12, 1920, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Iran declared that the revolution in Iran was possible only after a bourgeois evolution should have been accomplished. Two days later, on November 16, 1920, Izvestia admitted that attempts by the local Soviet Government in Gilan to introduce the Communist regime into Persia had been met with antipathy or indifference on the part of Persians. Rebellious tribes and dissatisfied farmers accepted support and arms from the Soviet of Gilan, but were obstinate in the face of a Soviet program. (The intellectuals wore their hearts on the left and their pockets on the right.) It was evident that the odds were too great and Iran, having no industry and no organized labor, was not ripe for a Soviet regime. So in that case Soviet Russia had to choose between two methods, either the cultivation of good relations with the central government and the gradual infiltration of Iran with communist propaganda through the Soviet Embassy in Teheran, or highhanded direct action aiming at the sovietization and detachment of several Iranian provinces in connivance with discontented elements of Iran. Moscow apparently came to the conclusion that the first method would better suit its purposes. So, she showed a conciliatory attitude to the bold policy of Mushir-ed-Dowleh, and notified the authorities at Teheran that they were prepared to receive the Iranian Mission and start negotiation for a political and commercial treaty.

On October 25, 1920, an Iranian Mission headed by Mushaver-el-Mamalek, Iranian Ambassador at Constantinople, arrived in Moscow and

and opened negotiations with the Soviet Government with a view to concluding a treaty of peace and friendship between Russia and Iran. During the Soviet-Iranian negotiations for the conclusion of a treaty, Leon Karakhan, Soviet Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs, informed the Iranian government on November 28, 1920, of the appointment of Theodore A. Rothstein as Soviet envoy to Iran. This announcement was followed by an exchange of notes between Russia and Iran concerning the evacuation of Soviet troops, and on January 22, 1921, Kara Khan, in a note addressed to the Iranian Ambassador, made the Red Army evacuation dependent upon the evacuation of British troops from Iran. According to the note these troops were supposed to guard the borders of Azerbaijan against the British aggression. The unofficial Iranian representative at Moscow, Assad Bahador, was also told by the Russians that Soviet Russia required an independent Iran as a buffer between the British Empire and the Caucasus. They further regarded British military occupation of parts of the Caucasus from 1918 to 1920 as an attempt to secure control of the Caucasian oil-fields.

Unfortunately for Iran, the British were slow in removing their remaining troops and this delay gave the Bolsheviks an excuse to continue their rule around the Caspian.