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**British Policy in Iran, 1941–1946: The Role of the Tudeh Party**

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## Abstract

### **British Policy in Iran, 1941–1946: The Role of the Tudeh Party**

*D.Phil. Oriental Studies, Michaelmas 2020 (resubmitted with corrections June 2021)*

This is a study of British policy during the British–Soviet occupation of Iran from 1941 to 1946, as understood through British attitudes towards and opinions of the Tudeh Party. This thesis makes two main arguments. Firstly, that British policy was robust and flexible enough to withstand and adjust to changes in circumstance when seeking to prioritise its interests at any given time during the occupation. Secondly, that the Tudeh occupied an important position in British policy, both in and outside of Iran. Key to the analysis is the question of how the Tudeh went from being regarded as an asset to becoming a threat to British interests. By touching on changes in Britain’s global position, how the Tudeh featured within its major policies in Iran will be placed alongside wider Second World War and early Cold War histories. This positioning of the Tudeh is filtered through Britain’s key interests, which were impacted by the outcome of the Second World War, relations with the Soviet Union, relations with Left-wing parties, the importance of oil and Britain’s strategic position in the early Cold War. By focusing on the views of British officials, the Tudeh is seen in a different light, as interrupts the Soviet–Tudeh paradigm that has long-dominated discourse and historiography. While British primary sources are mainly used here, where relevant and possible Iranian (including Tudeh) and Soviet views are introduced. Each chapter covers a specific era of the occupation, as corresponds to a specific set of strategic interests being held. These, in turn, are analysed to identify how they affected the way the Tudeh, and its members were viewed and treated.

## Introduction

This thesis focuses on how the Tudeh Party featured in British policy during the Allied occupation of Iran from 1941 to 1946. This study argues firstly that British policy and policymakers were flexible and robust enough in utilising, accommodating or hindering the Tudeh depending on British needs and interests. Secondly, it demonstrates that the Tudeh held a significant place in British decision-making, albeit at varying degrees, in correspondence with the wider policy interests possessed at the time – thus linking Britain’s entanglements with the Tudeh and Iran within global histories of the Second World War and early Cold War. By choosing the Tudeh as a case study, this thesis establishes the party as an important factor in British policymaking in a way that scholars have not done before. In addition, by examining the Tudeh’s role, British policy in Iran can be analysed and understood in a novel way. The occupation years were chosen for three main reasons. Firstly, it was a distinctive era during which the British had the authority and mandate to assume considerable say in Iran’s political affairs. Secondly, it was during this period that the British directly interacted with and confronted the Tudeh. Thirdly, British policy in Iran during the occupation is a matter of growing relevance, namely in light of the increased scholarship on this period and the ongoing interest given to twentieth century British–Iranian relations.

As a study of British policy, it is the attitudes and opinions of the British government and diplomatic service in Iran that are largely scrutinised in this research. In contrast to the body of literature which has mainly focused on British attitudes towards the Qajars, Reza Shah or the southern tribes, this thesis turns the spotlight on Britain’s attitudes towards one of the most controversial parties in Iran’s modern political history. The Tudeh continues to mystify scholars with its many guises, from Soviet tool to a freedom front,

either villain or hero. As this thesis shows, the party was regarded as all of these things, and British policymakers treated them accordingly. The British understanding of the party is foregrounded not only to show the flexibility of its policymaking, but also to illustrate how the patterns adapted in Iran and towards the Tudeh were intrinsically linked to the global trends of the time. Such attitudes and policy decisions will thus be contextualised alongside the international developments of the war and the political environment British policymakers faced in Iran and Britain. This thesis establishes the main drivers of policy, here listed as: the Second World War; the beginning of the Cold War; Britain's alliance with the Soviet Union; British relations with Left-wing entities; British interest in Iran's political development; Britain's relations with the Iranian government; and oil. In light of these concerns, the way the British regarded and treated the Tudeh reveals the anxieties felt by policymakers over Britain's place in the world at a time of war and great change.

### 1. Primary research questions

This thesis is driven by four primary research questions. Firstly, which factors laid the foundation for British policy in Iran during the occupation period. Secondly, how policymakers structured British attitudes and policies toward the Tudeh, thereby resulting in how the party was viewed at different points of the occupation. Thirdly, who drove British policy in Iran and how did opinion towards the Tudeh shift within the diplomatic and political structure, between the Foreign Office and the local consulates. In this regard, the professional and personal backgrounds of key British figures are delved into as much as possible to further understand individual attitudes during this period. Fourthly, and finally, to what extent can the policy given towards the Tudeh be

contextualised in the global histories of the Second World War and the early Cold War. For example, to what extent did British attitude towards the popular front in Europe and Southeast Asia reflect its attitude towards Tudeh. By addressing these questions, this thesis achieves three aims: to situate the Tudeh within British policymaking in a systematic way; to reveal how this positioning was affected by the evolution of British priorities in Iran and globally; and to identify how the British were able to adjust its policy towards the party based on changing circumstances, differences of opinions and global shifts without compromising on interests.

## 2. Organisation of chapters

This thesis is made up of four chapters, in addition to an introduction and a conclusion. This introduction presents the main research questions. A comprehensive literature review is then provided alongside the thesis' contributions to the field. This is followed by an overview of the primary sources consulted. Each chapter deals with three distinct timeframes of the occupation, as correspond to a particular set of British policy interests, which are examined against the attitudes held towards the Tudeh – immediately after the invasion when the war was still uncertain for the Allies (1941 to 1943); the months after Stalingrad that saw a shift in the war and the Alliance (1943 to 1945); and finally, the war's end until the start of the Cold War (1945 to 1946).

Chapter 1 provides the main keys to understanding British policy in Iran during the occupation. This era sits on the cusp of great change in the international system, which saw the defeat of German domination of Europe, the ascendancy of American global power, the decline of British imperial grip, and the rise of the two opposing ideological

camps of communism and liberal democracy, that would dominate the post-war era. In order to make sense of how these changes affected policy towards the Tudeh, a conceptual framework of the global histories of the Second World War and Cold War will be provided. This is followed by an examination of the structure of British power, as spanned London and Iran. It will examine how the shift from Churchill's wartime government to Attlee's Labour Cabinet affected policy. This section further acknowledges the roles played by the different arms of the British Empire – such as the Government of India and the Political Residency in Bushire. Traditionally India had jurisdiction over many of the consulates in Iran but as will be shown here, the war forced a shift of power to London and the Foreign office, which saw the emergence of the British legation/embassy in Tehran as the leading policymaker in the country.

A summary of British policy towards Iran from 1921 until 1941 is then given, therein revealing that until the outbreak of the war, British interest and presence in Iran was limited. The war renewed Britain's interest in Iran while the occupation presented a new opportunity for Britain to become more involved in the country. The four main policy interests, which form the main frameworks within which British attitudes towards the Tudeh are examined, are then introduced. Firstly, policymakers were concerned with the war, as initially embodied by the fear of a German attack. The decisions behind the occupation itself convey how real this threat was felt, and how Iran was viewed as capable of being mobilised as part of the wider war effort, as a source of oil and supplies and as a land route to the Soviet Union. Linked to this was Britain's attitude towards the Left during this period. Out of practicality, alliances were formed with communist, socialist groups and exiled national governments to fight fascism. However, as the fascist threat decreased, the fear of the Left increased. Secondly, the oil factor is introduced. In addition

to being a prime wartime resource that needed to be protected, the Iranian oil industry was also a major British asset. Threats to it quickly became a threat to the British government, and indirectly, to Britain's position in the oil-rich Persian Gulf. Thirdly, against the backdrop of the occupation, the British developed an interest in supporting political reform and controlling political developments in Iran. On the one hand, such a policy lent some legitimacy to the occupation of a neutral country while, on the other hand, it revealed Britain's desire to remain influential in Iran. Fourthly, Britain's relations with the Soviet Union will be examined, namely as patterns within the relationship have a direct correlation with the attitudes held towards the Tudeh. While acknowledging the historical relationship and rivalry between the British and Russian empires, this thesis understands the British-Soviet relationship within the context of the war and the early Cold War, thereby focusing on the British perception of Soviet policy.

The novelty of examining British policy in Iran through its attitude towards the Tudeh can only be fully appreciated by understanding the significance of the party's presence in Iran's political development. Chapter 1 continues with a summary of the development of Iran's social democratic movement, as contextualises the Tudeh's political and ideological roots. The party's foundation is then presented alongside a discussion of its early ideology and positioning – as clearly had Marxist leanings but which was regarded by the British as part of the anti-fascist resistance.

Chapter 2 comprises the height of the war, from the start of the occupation until January 1943. During this period, the British regarded wartime concerns as the most important factor in its policy in Iran and, as such, policy was catered to respond to wartime needs.

The chapter reveals that the Tudeh Party was utilised by policymakers as a valuable wartime asset.

Chapter 3 marks a shift in the occupation, covering the battle of Stalingrad until early 1945. The turn in the war changed the dynamics of the occupation. In the mindset of the British, the earlier concerns of the occupation to fulfil wartime needs were replaced by concerns over its political image and position in Iran. Its rivalry with the Soviet Union became more apparent and permeated into many aspects of its policies, resulting in more emphasis being given to enacting propaganda and placing increasing reliance on Tehran to protect its interests. Attitudes and policy towards the Tudeh were affected and the party's positioning as a Soviet asset reflected the subtle ways in which the dynamics of the occupation had changed.

Chapter 4 looks at the final phase of the occupation, which saw many key events occur in a short space of time; the end of the war, the Azerbaijan crisis and the Khuzestan strikes. This period of great change also saw the election of the Labour Party to lead the British government. The impact of this is discussed in Chapter 4, alongside Britain's changing global presence and role at the dawn of the Cold War, aspects which contributed to the decision to concentrate on political distancing in Iran. Despite acknowledging that the Tudeh represented a significant threat to British interests, this chapter establishes that due to the realistic approach of the Labour government, the Tudeh was undermined through covert means while support for Tehran was prioritised. Finally, the conclusion presents the key findings and implications of the thesis, as well as suggestions for further study.

### 3. Literature review

The British–Soviet occupation of Iran has received significant attention by scholars who have focused on various aspects, from the military to labour issues. Some texts have focused on the military strategies of Britain and the Soviet Union – such as the works of Richard A Stewart, Ashley Jackson and Nikolai Kozhanov.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the various writings of Ervand Abrahamian, Abbas Amanat, Touraj Atabaki, Fakhreddin Azimi, Cosroe Chaqueri, Stephanie Cronin, Louise Fawcett, Jamil Hasanli, Homa Katouzian, Annabelle Sreberny and Massoumeh Torfeh have examined the occupation from the perspective of Iran and Iranians.<sup>2</sup> Collectively, their work forms a well-established narrative of the occupation, covering the reasons behind the invasion of Iran in 1941, the relationship between the Allies, their strategic interests and the day-to-day activities of the occupiers and ordinary citizens. Such discourses further place Iran within the narrative of the Second World War and the Cold War. These works provide important

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<sup>1</sup> Richard A Stewart, *Sunrise at Abadan: The British and Soviet Invasion of Iran, 1941* (New York: Praeger, 1988), Ashley Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command: A History of the Second World War in Iran and Iraq* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), and Nikolay A Kozhanov, 'The Pretexts and Reasons for the Allied Invasion of Iran in 1941', *Iranian Studies*, Vol. 45(4) (July 2012); For an Iranian account, with Persian official documents, see Muhammad Torkman, *Asnad-e naqz-e bitarafi-ye Iran dar Shahrivar 1320: Siyasat-e khareji dar astanah-ye eshghal*, (Tehran: Kavir, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> Ervand Abrahamian, *Iran Between Two Revolutions* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1983), Abbas Amanat, *Iran: A Modern History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), Touraj Atabaki, *Azerbaijan: Ethnicity and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 2000), Fakhreddin Azimi, *Iran, The Crisis of Democracy: From the Exile of Reza Shah to the Fall of Musaddiq*, Paperback Edition (London: IB Tauris, 1989), Cosroe Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran, 1941–1957* (2011: Merlin Press, Pontypool), Stephanie Cronin, 'Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Reza Khan', in *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, Vanessa Martin (Ed.) (New York: Routledge, 2005), Louise Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War: The Azerbaijan Crisis of 1946* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), Jamil Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War: The Soviet-American Crisis over Iranian Azerbaijan, 1941–1946* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006), Homa Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran: Despotism and Pseudo-Modernism, 1926–1979* (Hong Kong: Macmillan Press, 1981), Homa Katouzian, *Musaddiq and the Struggle for Power in Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 1999), Homa Katouzian, *Iranian History and Politics: The Dialectic of State and Society* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), Homa Katouzian, *The Persians: Ancient, Mediaeval, and Modern Iran* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), Annabelle Sreberny and Massoumeh Torfeh, *Persian Service: The BBC and British Interests in Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 2014); See also E Lotfi and M Dehqan-Nezhad, "Kambud-e mavad-e qazaya va shuresh-ha-ye mardom-e Iran dar sal-ha-ye jang-e jahani-ye dovvom, 1940–1945/1320–1324", *Pazhuhesh-ha-ye Tarikh-e*, Vol.6(1) (2014) which examines the food shortages during the war and the role of the Allied forces in the country.

information as to how Iran experienced the occupation and have contributed greatly to our understanding of the era from a domestic perspective. Focusing on different aspects of the period, they all agree that while the occupation was necessary to support the Allied forces, it left a bitter taste in the country towards foreign interference.

Significantly, these scholars have established that the occupation was an important period for the Tudeh and its development in Iran's political space. This is usually seen as an example of the political freedom the occupation brought, free from the shackles of Reza Shah's oppressive regime. Writing in the 1940s, Ann Lambton and L P Elwell-Sutton were the first to academically establish the occupation era as such – although the latter was quick to point out that the Allies did not take advantage of the “young and enthusiastic”, preferring to rely on the old political elite.<sup>3</sup> Both served as press attachés in Tehran during the occupation period. The literature on Iran's occupation has generally followed suit and continues to support this narrative. In their respective works, Ali Ansari, Amanat, Atabaki and Azimi explain how this period affected Iranian politics and how the war also encouraged nationalist sentiments, resulting in support for the Musaddiq movement.<sup>4</sup> While this thesis focuses on the occupation and acknowledges its impact on all aspects of Iranian society and politics, it is mainly concerned by the dynamics surrounding the Tudeh's early interactions with the British and how their relationship became caught up in Britain's international concerns. The narrative of the occupation is vital to the trajectory of their intertwined history, as it encompasses a specific time frame spanning the foundation of the party to the outbreak of the Cold War.

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<sup>3</sup> Ann K S Lambton, 'Persia', *Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society*, Vol.31(1) (1944) and L P Elwell-Sutton, "Political Parties in Iran, 1941-1948", *The Middle East Journal*, Vol.3(1) (1949), 46.

<sup>4</sup> Ali M Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1797: Reform and Revolution*, Third (Oxon: Routledge, 2019), 178-179, Amanat, *Iran*, 502; Atabaki looks at the link between the war and the rebirth of the Azerbaijan national identity Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 63-85, Azimi, *Iran*, 30-31.

Thus, by charting the evolution of the Tudeh's position within British policy, this thesis makes a unique contribution to the existing body of literature on the occupation.

This thesis is not a re-telling of British-Iranian diplomatic relations, but nonetheless relies on a substantial number of English-language books that have examined British-Iranian relations from the nineteenth to the twentieth centuries. The historical narrative of Britain and Iran from the Qajar Era<sup>5</sup>, the Great Game,<sup>6</sup> the First World War,<sup>7</sup> and the reign of Reza Shah<sup>8</sup> is well-told. Scholars such as Atabaki, Maysam Behraves, Cronin, Katouzian, Firuz Kazemzadeh, Vanessa Martin and Malcolm Yapp have established Britain's imperial interests in Iran and the wider Persian Gulf region<sup>9</sup>. They captured the various shifts and major events that impacted on Britain's strategic interests in Iran – for example, Britain's relationship with the Russian Empire, oil, the German threat, India and control over Iran's political direction. Cronin in her work on the role played by Britain in the modernisation of the Iranian military and the rise of Reza Shah establishes the notion that British influence reached its height during in the 1920s but declined throughout the following decade.<sup>10</sup> Her work, and that of Martin, has helped to establish that while

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<sup>5</sup> H Lyman Stebbins, *British Imperialism in Qajar Iran: Consuls, Agents and Influence in the Middle East* (London: IB Tauris, 2016).

<sup>6</sup> Malcolm Yapp, *Strategies of British India: Britain, Iran and Afghanistan, 1798–1850* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

<sup>7</sup> William J Olson, *Anglo-Iranian Relations during World War I* (London: F. Cass, 1984); Homa Katouzian, *State and Society in Iran: the Eclipse of the Qajars and the Emergence of the Pahlavis* (New York: IB Tauris, 2000).

<sup>8</sup> Ali Asghar Zargar, *Tarikh-e ravabet-e siyasi-ye Iran va Englis dar dawreh-ye Reza Shah* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Parvin, Entesharat-e Mo'in, 1993), Mohammad Gholi Majd, *Great Britain and Reza Shah: the Plunder of Iran, 1921–1941* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001), Cronin, 'Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Reza Khan', and Touraj Atabaki and Erik Jan Zürcher, *Men of Order: Authoritarian Modernization under Ataturk and Reza Shah* (London: IB Tauris, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> In addition to the works already mentioned, Maysam Behraves, 'The Formative Years of Anglo-Iranian Relations 1907–1953: Colonial Scramble for Iran and Its Political Legacy', *Digest of Middle East Studies* Vol.21(2) (2012), Firuz Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia, Imperial Ambitions in Qajar Iran* (London: IB Tauris, 2013), Vanessa Martin (Ed.), *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Cronin, "Great Britain V. British Influence During the Reza Shah Period, 1921–1941", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, February 2012.

British presence declined, it still saw itself as a leading power and as an example for Iran to follow. While the narrative of British interests in Iran until the occupation is well established, only a handful of scholars, including Ansari, Azimi, Behraves, Cronin, Fawcett, and Jackson, have examined British–Iranian relations during the occupation and beyond.<sup>11</sup> Azimi can be singled out here for his detailed work on Iranian prime ministers during the occupation, wherein Britain’s role in Iran’s political development is detailed. This thesis thus expands upon such works and contributes to our understanding of British interests in Iran in the twentieth century through the placement of the Tudeh in relation to these policies. This thesis also shows how the 1941 occupation introduced a renewed era of British influence and presence in the country in light of the global war in Europe and Asia. In addition, this work is a new way to understand the British experience in Iran, moving away from strictly government-to-government relations and instead giving consideration to the micro-politics of British presence by focusing exclusively on the Tudeh within major decisions about Britain’s presence and actions in Iran.

The role of individuals in British policymaking appeared in the works of Cronin, Jackson, and H Lyman Stebbins. These authors have shown how the individual attitudes of British policymakers and diplomats formed a substantial aspect of the policymaking undertaken.<sup>12</sup> Martin’s observation as to how nineteenth-century British diplomats in Iran went out of their way to be informed on most aspects of Iranian life and politics rings

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<sup>11</sup> Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1797*, Azimi, *Iran*, Behraves, ‘The Formative Years of Anglo-Iranian Relations 1907–1953’, Cronin, ‘Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Reza Khan’, Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, and Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*.

<sup>12</sup> Cronin looked at the role played by General Edmund Ironside in the rise of Reza Khan, Cronin, ‘Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Reza Khan’; Jackson looked at military figures in policy throughout his book, Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*; Stebbins looks at the role played by consuls in establishing relations with the tribes and maintaining British presence in late Qajar Iran. Stebbins, *British Imperialism in Qajar Iran*.

true well into the period covered in this thesis.<sup>13</sup> This “devil is in the detail” approach is seen in the comprehensive British consular and legation/embassy reports sent to London that provide valuable insight into the presence of the Tudeh throughout the country. Indeed, they reveal that surveillance on the Tudeh was not accidental or enacted in passing but rather was approached systematically and deliberately. This thesis will delve deeper by differentiating those voices and contextualising them within the occupation era. While Jackson and O’Sullivan have looked at the role played by individual military and intelligence figures, they have neglected the role played by diplomats.<sup>14</sup> By presenting these voices and their views on the Tudeh, this thesis provides valuable insight into the workings of the British diplomatic service in Iran at the time, and further contextualises their attitudes within wider events.

The complicated relationship and rivalry between Britain and the Soviet Union with regards to Iran constitutes one of the main frameworks within which attitude towards the Tudeh was measured. Victor Madeira, Haslam, and Kazemzadeh have provided important background to this rivalry, addressing the imperial competition which arose during the nineteenth century, as well as their ideological clash following the Bolshevik revolution.<sup>15</sup> These works help establish the historical tensions that existed throughout the occupation era. Atabaki and Fawcett have highlighted the international implications of the Azerbaijan crisis, emphasising on the intricacies within British policy in relation to

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<sup>13</sup> Martin (Ed.), *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, 2.

<sup>14</sup> Adrian O’ Sullivan, *Espionage and Counterintelligence in Occupied Persia (Iran): the Success of the Allied Secret Services* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>15</sup> Victor Madeira, “‘Because I Don’t Trust Him, We Are Friends’: Signals Intelligence and the Reluctant Anglo-Soviet Embrace, 1917–24’, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.19(1) (March 2004), Victor Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear* (Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2014), Jonathan Haslam, *Russia’s Cold War: From the October Revolution to the Fall of the Wall* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), and Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*.

its alliance with the USSR. Such works demonstrate that the occupation was an important moment in British–Soviet relations, which saw cooperation give way to conflict over power and control in Iran. However, the approach of these authors has been largely bilateral and limited, consequently confining our understanding of their relationship to the Azerbaijan crisis (only at the end of the occupation). This thesis expands the narrative by examining the trilateral relationship of the Tudeh, Britain and the Soviet Union from the start of the occupation, thus charting the changes within the British–Soviet dynamic and how they impacted on British attitudes towards the Tudeh.

There are a number of key works written in English and Persian on the Tudeh and the communist movement in Iran. Abrahamian, Atabaki, Chaqueri, Katouzian, Maziar Behruz, Yassamine Mather, Afshin Matin-Asgari, Miron Rezun, Ashgar Shirazi and Sepehr Zabih<sup>16</sup> have not only shaped our understanding of the development of Marxism and communism in the early twentieth century but have also established a well-accepted history of the party's early years, spanning its foundation, ideological development and its relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>17</sup> Most of these studies barely take into account the party's early relations with Britain. Nonetheless, they help shed important light on the Tudeh and

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<sup>16</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, Touraj Atabaki, 'The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran', in *Iranian–Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions since 1800*, Stephanie Cronin (Ed.) (Oxford: Routledge, 2013), Cosroe Chaqueri, 'Did the Soviets Play a Role in Founding the Tudeh Party in Iran?' in *Cahiers du Monde Russe: Russie, Empire russe, Union soviétique, États indépendants*, 40:3 (1999), Homa Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki: The Human Face of Iranian Socialism*, (London: Oneworld, 2018), Maziar Behruz, *Rebels with a cause: the failure of the Left in Iran*, (London: IB Tauris, 1999), Yassamine Mather, 'Iran's Tudeh Party: A History of Compromises and Betrayals', *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*, Vol.39(4), Afshin Matin-Asgari, 'Twentieth century Iran's political prisoners', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.42(5), Miron Rezun, *The Soviet Union and Iran: Soviet policy in Iran from the beginnings of the Pahlavi dynasty until the Soviet invasion in 1941*, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1988), Ashgar Shirazi, *Moderniteh, shobheh va demokrasi* (Tehran: Akhtaran, 1384), Sepehr Zabih, 'Communism ii. In Persia from 1941 to 1953,' in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, October 2011.

<sup>17</sup> Regarding the role of the Soviet Union in the development of communism in Iran in general, some studies have looked at the policies and activities employed widely in the Middle East and within the spectrum of the Cold War but focusing narrowly on Iran. See Pezhmann Dailami, 'Bravin in Tehran and the Origins of Soviet Policy in Iran', *Revolutionary Russia*, 12:2 (1999) for an introduction to early Soviet policy in Iran; Martin Sicker, *The Bear and the Lion: Soviet Imperialism and Iran* (New York: Praeger, 1988).

establish it as a significant political force in Iran and within the country's social democratic history.

The works of Atabaki, Chaqueri, Reza Ghods, David Nissman<sup>18</sup>, Pezhmann Dailami<sup>19</sup>, Rezun and Zabih, have all examined and established the importance of the Soviets in the development of the Iranian Left in general alongside the foundation and direction of the Tudeh in particular. Shirazi and Behruz have provided thoughtful contributions to the party's links with the Soviet Union, however, Mather and Abrahamian have somewhat downplayed the Soviet role in the party's early activities – which may make it difficult to reach a definitive answer towards how central Soviet influence was. Yet most historiographies are in agreement that the Soviets were involved and influential in the founding and direction of the Tudeh and denote this as a key weakness of the party. This thesis does not refute this conclusion, but instead considers this from the perspective of the British. On the one hand, this research contributes to the existing literature by showing how the British contributed to the narrative that the Tudeh was a tool of the Soviets through its suspicions over Soviet political activity in Iran and the constant depiction of the Tudeh's communist and pro-Soviet personas. On the other hand, the discussions of this thesis breaks the dominance of the Soviet angle in the party's narrative, achieved by presenting the Tudeh's brief alliance with Britain against fascism and by considering the party within British interests in Iran.

In addition to the literature on the Soviet-Tudeh relationship, other works have focused more on specific aspects of the Tudeh, further establishing the party's far-reaching

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<sup>18</sup> David B Nissman, *The Soviet Union and Iranian Azerbaijan* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1987).

<sup>19</sup> Pezhmann Dailami, 'The Bolshevik Revolution and the Genesis of Communism in Iran, 1917-1920.', *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.11(3) (1992).

influence over many aspects of Iranian society and politics. For instance, Osamu Miyata's article has focused on the military network of the party<sup>20</sup>, Siavush Randjbar-Daemi's recent piece examines the party's attempts to galvanise the peasant population in its first decade<sup>21</sup>, Cronin's edited book on the Iranian Left brought together different viewpoints and aspects of the party<sup>22</sup> and Katouzian's works have demonstrated how Khalil Maliki's break with the Tudeh is able to highlight the party's early years and struggles.<sup>23</sup> These works provide important background to the party's workings and complexities while establishing a well-accepted narrative of the Tudeh's relationship with the Soviets and its significant role in Iran's political and social landscape. This thesis analyses the Tudeh from a significantly new dimension – within the wider sphere of British decision-making. Novel in its approach, this thesis complicates the widely-accepted notion that the Tudeh was a Soviet tool in Iran and attempts to view the party in a more nuanced light, thereby offering a new way of presenting the Tudeh's early history.

Works on British relations with other Left-wing movements have proved insightful in placing the Tudeh within the global fight against the fascist powers during the Second World War and within a wider pattern of Britain's interaction with Left-leaning entities during this period.<sup>24</sup> The general literature available on this subject has focused mainly

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<sup>20</sup> Osamu Miyata's article, "The Tudeh Military Network during the Oil Nationalisation Period" in *Middle Eastern Studies* Vol. 23(3) (1987) provides a detailed narrative as to the military network's development and its relationship with the main party's apparatus.

<sup>21</sup> Siavush Randjbar-Daemi, 'The Tudeh Party of Iran and the Peasant Question, 1941–53', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.56(6) (2020).

<sup>22</sup> Stephanie Cronin (Ed.), *Iranian–Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions Since 1800* (London: Routledge, 2013).

<sup>23</sup> In addition to briefly relating the party's establishment, Homa Katouzian, *Khaterat-e siyasi-ye Khalil Maliki* (Tehran: Entehsarat 1989/1990) charts Khalil Maliki's career and his relationship with the Tudeh in depth; see also Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*.

<sup>24</sup> Craig Johnston, "The 'Leading War Party': Communists and World War Two", *Labour History*, No.39 (Nov 1980), André Gerolymatos, *An international civil war: Greece, 1943–1949* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), Gavin Bowd, "The French Communist Party and Britain in the Second World War", *Irish*

on Britain's involvement in Europe – particularly France<sup>25</sup>, Yugoslavia<sup>26</sup> and Greece.<sup>27</sup> Such works highlight an important trend within British policy, one that quickly abandoned the Left as an asset and saw it as a threat once the war's end was in sight. However, despite being a Left-wing party, the Tudeh has never been examined within this area of study. This neglect may be due to a lack of interest but also an assumption that the Iranian experience was less important when compared to that of Europe and Asia. Furthermore, more cynically, it could be determined that the history of the resistance against Nazi and Japanese occupations was at odds with the invasion and occupation of neutral Iran by Allied forces, as it is able to disturb the British national narrative of resistance and victory over fascism. Alexander Shaw's article comes closest to this by addressing the Tudeh within British policy during the Azerbaijan crisis, where it was already regarded as a threat.<sup>28</sup> This thesis thus sheds necessary light on the occupation and examines the relationship with the Tudeh alongside Britain's relationship with the Left during the war, thus placing the case study of the Tudeh within the global histories of the Second World War and the early Cold War. Here the Tudeh is presented alongside British policy towards other groups, showing the ebb-and-flow of Britain's attitude towards the Left and how they quickly went from allies to rivals.

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*Journal of French Studies*, Vol.14(23) (2014), Michael McConville, "Knight's move in Bosnia and the British rescue of Tito: 1944", *The RUSI Journal*, 142:6 (1997), Cheah Boon Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya: Resistance and Social Conflict During and After the Japanese Occupation, 1941-1946*, Second edition (Singapore: Singapore University Press, 1987).

<sup>25</sup> For a detailed study of French communists and the British, see Bowd, "The French Communist Party and Britain in the Second World War", while for a more focused study of the French resistance, see Matthew Cobb, *The Resistance: The French Fight Against the Nazis* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2009) and Robert Gildea, *Fighters in the Shadows, A New History of the French Resistance* (London: Faber & Faber, 2015).

<sup>26</sup> McConville, "Knight's move in Bosnia and the British rescue of Tito: 1944".

<sup>27</sup> Nikos Marantzidis, "The Greek Civil War (1944-1949) and the International Communist System", *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol.15(4) (Fall 2013), 27-37; see also Alexandros Nafpilotis, *Britain and the Greek Colonels: Accommodating the Junta in the Cold War* (London: IB Tauris, 2013), and Georgios Kritikos, "From Labour to National Ideals: Ending the War in Asia Minor – Controlling Communism in Greece," *Societies*, Vol.3(4) (2013).

<sup>28</sup> Alexander Nicholas Shaw, "'Strong, United and Independent': The British Foreign Office, Anglo-Iranian Oil Company and the Internationalization of Iranian Politics at the Dawn of the Cold War, 1945-46", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.52(3) (2016).

More widely, the scholarly exploration of British global imperialism has paid close attention to the loosening of Britain's imperial grip<sup>29</sup> in the Persian Gulf and South Asia<sup>30</sup>, but has devoted minimal attention to Iran. Nonetheless, works by John Darwin and Paul Kennedy have helped to contextualise the importance of Iran within Britain's wider imperial vision. In addition to these works, Ronald Hyam has established how the deflating of the British empire at the end of the war and the added concern of economic instability contributed to a reduction of commitment to its formal and informal empire. Britain's imperial grip in Iran in the context of the occupation, was mainly focused on oil. Works by Atabaki, James Bamberg, Rasmus Elling, Katayoun Shafiee, and Anand Toprani depict oil within the sphere of Britain's imperial and economic interests, establishing the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (AIOC) as a proudly British entity and control over Iranian oil as key to its presence and influence in the country.<sup>31</sup> They also helped to construct a narrative that Britain needed to protect this resource from firstly foreign interests (such as German encroachment and Soviet demand) and secondly from the influence of labour activists (such as the Tudeh). Scholars including Atabaki, Shafiee, Elling, and Kaveh Eshani<sup>32</sup> have focused on the social and political history of the oil complex, focusing on

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<sup>29</sup> Steven G Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East: Sterling and Postwar Imperialism, 1944–1971* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), John Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation: the Retreat from Empire in the Post-War World* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1988), Anne Deighton, *Britain and the First Cold War* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1980).

<sup>30</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation* and John Darwin, *Unfinished Empire: the Global Expansion of Britain* (London: Allen Lane, 2012).

<sup>31</sup> Touraj Atabaki, 'Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', in *On the Road to Global Labour History: A Festschrift for Marcel van Der Linden*, Karl Heinz Roth (Ed.) (Leiden: Brill, 2017), James Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2 The Anglo-Iranian Years, 1928–1954* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), Rasmus Christian Elling and Rowena Abdul Razak, 'Oil, Labour and Empire: Abadan in WWII Occupied Iran', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies Online* (expected publication July 2021), Katayoun Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil: An Infrastructural History of BP in Iran* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2018), Anand Toprani, *Oil and the Great Powers: Britain & Germany, 1914–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

<sup>32</sup> Kaveh Eshani, 'The Social History of Labor in the Iranian Oil Industry: The Built Environment and the Making of the Industrial Working Class (1908–1941)' (Leiden, University of Leiden, 2014).

the agency of workers and the Tudeh's activities within the oil industry. This thesis largely agrees with this literature, that the occupation brought hardship to oil workers, pressured workers and revealed tensions between Britain's control and the growing sense of Iranian self-awareness. It establishes British stakes in the oil industry and its prime importance during and after the war, consequently addressing Britain's reactions to the Tudeh's leadership over unions and the oil industry in the post-war era when Britain faced anxieties over its legacy in Iran and was handicapped by its economy and loosening imperial grip at the end of the occupation. This study thus highlights the Tudeh as an element of British policymaking, something that had been acknowledged in passing but not expanded upon sufficiently within the literature on this period.

#### 4. Primary sources

Focusing primarily on British policy and attitudes towards the Tudeh, this thesis mainly relies on primary sources from the National Archives at Kew Gardens. This includes British Foreign Office documents, correspondence to and from the British legation/embassy in Tehran, individual political diaries from consuls stationed in the different provinces, as well as Cabinet papers. In addition, the papers of the Government of India and of the Political Residents in the Persian Gulf held in the Indian National Archives in New Delhi and in the British Library were consulted, especially with regards to the Tudeh's far-reaching influence in the Raj and the Gulf. These all constitute a vast collection of documents which was examined to construct a narrative of the Tudeh's position within British policy. These archives are a rich resource that show the extensive work of British diplomats and politicians, wherein they revealed their confidence, anxieties, opinions and recommendations. Mostly held-back and professional, the flashes

of personal opinion make for interesting insight into the psyche of key decision-makers such as British minister Reader Bullard and Cabinet minister Ernest Bevin. A year-by-year charting of reports and correspondence is produced in relation to how British officials reported and acted upon Tudeh activities in a few key areas – particularly Azerbaijan, Fars, Isfahan and Khuzestan. Finally, Cabinet and Foreign Office papers are used to show how London took an omniscient approach and dictated general policy in Iran, with the effect that, for most of the occupation, British officials in Iran were given considerable power in implementing and designing policies protecting British interests. This was particularly so under the coalition government spanning the Second World War. Cabinet directions began to carry more weight after the war, with Bevin playing a more interested and stronger role in dictating Britain's post-war position in Iran.

The British Petroleum Archives in Warwick which holds the main archives for the AIOC, were further mined for evidence of oil's central position in the war. Although the AIOC was an important entity, it is clear that both the coalition and Labour governments had much say in oil matters during this period. As oil was a key resource for the war, its production and protection were key British interests, and this is reflected in the measures taken by AIOC personnel in preparing for a possible attack by Germany and in countering Tudeh influence. Where relevant to British policy, this thesis considers the company's actions and policies but prioritises focus on British governmental actions and concerns over the oil.

The International Institute of Social History in Amsterdam was consulted as it holds several reports and documents written by various Iranian ministries on the Tudeh from 1943 to 1948. These documents provide insight into the Iranian response and attitude

towards the party, which were incorporated where relevant and when there were overlapping concerns with the British. This thesis brought in the Tudeh perspective where relevant through references to its narratives. As this is primarily a study of the Tudeh Party within the sphere of British policy, the Iranian side was purposely left out in order to prioritise British understandings and perspectives. Similarly, where possible and available, this thesis utilised translated Soviet documents from the period, sourced from translated diaries, papers and from the Cold War International History Project website. These were particularly useful regarding Soviet activities in Azerbaijan and the Soviets' early relationship with the Tudeh.

Private papers and memoirs written by those who worked and lived in Iran at this time were also consulted. The autobiography<sup>33</sup> and personal letters of Bullard<sup>34</sup>, covering his time as the British minister during the occupation, have been published. Reflective in nature, these books are utilised to illustrate Bullard's personal views on his career in Iran. However, they do not provide much insight on his personal attitude towards the Tudeh. Similarly, his personal papers, held at the Middle East Centre of St Antony's College, do not add much to what has already been published. This collection also holds personal letters written to his family in England, as well as notes for his autobiography, *The Camels Must Go*. Clarmont Skrine wrote a detailed memoir of his time during the occupation, going into great detail about his position as consul-general in Mashhad.<sup>35</sup> The unpublished memoirs of Thomas Rapp, the consul in Tabriz, also held in the Middle East Centre, were consulted. General Hasan Arfa's memoirs<sup>36</sup> relate various crackdowns on

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<sup>33</sup> Reader Bullard, *The Camels Must Go: An Autobiography* (London: Faber & Faber, 1961).

<sup>34</sup> Reader Bullard, *Letters from Tehran: A British Ambassador in World War II Persia* (Charlbury: Day, 2000).

<sup>35</sup> Clarmont Skrine, *World War in Iran* (London: Constable & Company, 1962).

<sup>36</sup> General Hassan Arfa, *Under Five Shahs* (London: John Murray, 1964).

high-ranking Iranian officials who were suspected of harbouring pro-Nazi tendencies, while the memoirs of Iraj Eskanderi and Yusuf Eftekhari provide some insight into the communist movement in Iran at the time. A collection of Ann Lambton's writings in Durham University was also examined. Albeit uncatalogued, these research notes, diaries and personal communications (the latter mainly directed to her aunt and uncle in England) reveal her personal opinions on her time in Iran. They reveal her fondness and personal friendship with Bullard, but little on the nature of her work and even less on her personal insights into the Tudeh. The private papers of Irene Ward, the MP who visited Iran to report on labour members, held in the Bodleian Library, were also examined and reveal her personal thoughts and experiences during her trip.

#### 5. Note on transliteration

The transliteration used in this thesis is based on the *Iranian Studies* system. However, the original spelling in British sources were not changed; for example, while the spelling of Khuzestan is used, when appears it in British sources, it is kept as Khuzistan.

## Chapter 1: Historical framework

This chapter establishes the historical and conceptual frameworks of British policy and attitude towards the Tudeh during the occupation. It does so by firstly placing British policymaking within the global histories of the Second World War and the Cold War. Secondly, it looks at how policy was derived by considering the structure of the diplomatic service in Iran and its place within the British government and empire. Thirdly, it lists the main interests that drove British policymakers in shaping policy. After the invasion and occupation of Iran is related, the chapter turns the spotlight onto the Tudeh. It is placed within Iran's legacy of social democracy in order to appreciate its significant place in the country's political landscape and as a basis to understanding the party's membership, leadership, and ideology.

### 1. Understanding British policy in Iran

At the start of the occupation, Britain's position in Iran was not the same as it was at the start of the twentieth century. In the aftermath of the Great War and with the rise of Reza Shah, Britain's political influence was in a state of decline and its political influence in Tehran was limited. It will be argued here that despite a decline in British presence, Iran maintained an important geopolitical space for Britain, due to Britain's stake in Iranian oil, its close location to the Soviet Union and the Persian Gulf, and its proximity to Britain's wider empire. This formed the basis of Britain's interests during the occupation, which saw additional interests arise. The inherently flexible nature of British policymaking here meant that these interests could be addressed and accommodated. Its robust policy structure was driven by London, backed by the well-informed and extensive diplomatic

service in Iran. These pillars, although not always in complete agreement with each other, were dedicated to upholding and protecting British presence and interests.

The nature of British policymaking was also subject to the ever-changing international situation, be it the war or the growing tensions between the three major powers of the alliance. By contextualising these patterns of policy within the wider framework of the global histories of the Second World War and the early Cold War, the changes in attitudes towards the Tudeh can be better understood. After establishing this framework, the structure of British power will be provided, followed by a brief narrative of British presence in Iran until the eve of the occupation. Britain's main political interests during the occupation are then introduced; namely, the rise of the German threat, the importance of a cross-ideological resistance front, the significance of Iran's oil, attitudes towards the Soviet Union in Iran, and interest in Iran's political development. These were the main issues that affected how the Tudeh featured in British policy and will be returned to systematically in each chapter of this thesis.

## 1.1 Conceptualising British policy

British policy was driven by a number of political and economic interests that led to the decision to invade Iran in 1941 and sustained British strategic thinking throughout the occupation. While these factors illustrate the attitudes and policy changes enacted towards the Tudeh, they alone do not form a complete picture. These strategic interests were linked to wider trends in British policymaking and related to what was happening internationally during the Second World War and the early Cold War. Both conflicts were felt in almost every corner of the world and involved a cast of international actors. By

establishing Iran within this wider context of the global histories of these two conflicts, British policy towards the Tudeh can be directly connected with policy patterns observed in other parts of the world. In addition, it also shows the evolving nature of Britain's position in the international context and how this affected its policies towards Iran in general and the Tudeh in particular.

The history of the Second World War is inextricably linked to that of the Cold War. Ingredients for the clash that would dominate the second half of the twentieth century were sown in the first half. Even while Britain was fighting the Axis powers, they were already preparing for their confrontation with communism (as an ideology) and with the Soviet Union (as a power). Anne Deighton, the foremost historian of Britain and the Cold War, saw evidence for this in the British government's various post-war planning committees instituted during the war. They assessed for Soviet capabilities and ambitions, harnessing an anti-Soviet mindset that would prevail in the intelligence and foreign affairs communities. The Foreign Office did not see the confrontation as a simple bilateral one but rather as one that permeated British interests everywhere.<sup>37</sup> Still, the path for confrontation was not always straightforward and the balance of seeing the Soviet Union as an ally and as a threat during the war resulted in incoherent and contradictory policy. This outcome is probably best highlighted by Prime Minister Winston Churchill's "uncomfortable coexistence of his own anti-Communism with his personal respect for Soviet leader Josef Stalin."<sup>38</sup> This contradicting mindset of the Second

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<sup>37</sup> Anne Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1955', in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Melvyn P Leffler and Arne Westad (Ed.), vol. 1 Origins, 3 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 115-116.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 116.

World War had global implications and imparted on relations with the Left in Europe and Asia.

In his history of the Second World War, Gerhard Weinberg described the conflict as a struggle for control of the globe's resources and people, underpinned by battling ideologies and world visions.<sup>39</sup> It was a war fought on such an international scale that most accounts of the war have simply been unable to encompass its entire reach. In many ways, this thesis on the Tudeh in British policy can be regarded as a microscopic research interest. However, once placed within the field of global history, it forms part of a wider narrative. Drawing from Dominic Sachsenmaier's approach, each chapter examines a particular timeframe of the occupation which "accentuates particular aspects and developments of global and transnational history."<sup>40</sup> Throughout the thesis, British attitudes towards the Tudeh are examined in relation to other external happenings and are charted within the evolution of certain policies. For example, by situating attitudes towards the Tudeh alongside British relations with the Greek and Malayan communist parties, we can see that the party's evolution from asset to threat can also be understood alongside British policy towards the global anti-fascist movement.

The Cold War tensions that saw the superpowers, namely the US and the Soviet Union, pitted against each other was also global in dimension. Described by Odd Arne Westad as "an international system", the conflict shaped the foreign policies of nations and dominated domestic discourses.<sup>41</sup> He further explained that Cold War confrontations

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<sup>39</sup> Gerhard L Weinberg, *A World at Arms, A Global History of WWII* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 2.

<sup>40</sup> Dominic Sachsenmaier, *Global perspectives on global history: Theories and approaches in a connected world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 9.

<sup>41</sup> Odd Arne Westad, *The Cold War: A World History* (London: Penguin, 2017), 1-3.

were linked to broader trends in social, economic, political and military developments of “the longer term”<sup>42</sup>. This is a useful phrase when thinking of the time and space this thesis covers, which saw Cold War tensions develop even while the Second World War was ongoing. The occupation of Iran saw the unfolding of tensions between the Soviet Union and the Western powers, which affected how the occupying powers behaved. This in turn can be understood in global terms. Bruce Kuniholm originated the conflict in the region back to the traditional rivalry between Britain and Russia during the nineteenth century, colouring their interactions and clashes in the twentieth century.<sup>43</sup> Westad further summarised how historians of the 1950s regarded the wartime alliance as an “aberration” that quickly gave way to confrontation between the superpowers. In response, he narrowed his focus to show that the shift of emphasis towards communism as the main cause of the Cold War derived from the cessation of cooperation between the Right and the Left movements in the West, a phenomenon that can be observed in the relationship between the British and the Tudeh.<sup>44</sup>

While Kennedy has talked about the inevitability and dominance of the Soviet-US confrontation after the war, he did not neglect Britain’s place. In their case, the question of empire was closely linked with how it would be able to respond to the unfolding conflict. In this regard, “the continued appearance of their nation and empire as one of the Great Powers of the world also disguised the new strategical balance – as well as making it psychologically difficult for decision-makers in London to readjust to the

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<sup>42</sup> Odd Arne Westad, ‘The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century’, in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Melvyn P Lefler and Odd Arne Westad (Ed.), vol. 1 Origins (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>43</sup> Bruce Robert Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East: Great Power Conflict and Diplomacy in Iran, Turkey, and Greece* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980), 3–4.

<sup>44</sup> Westad, ‘The Cold War and the International History of the Twentieth Century’, 4.

politics of decline.”<sup>45</sup> This view captures the dilemma faced by British policymakers in Britain and Iran in regards to their position in the international system – a dilemma which played out over the course of the occupation and which affected the decisions and approaches in Iran and towards the Tudeh. In the post-war era, Britain was committed to securing the world against communism and maintaining the British empire, falling to the Labour government to respond to “a rapidly changing period of fresh ideological and power-political challenges.”<sup>46</sup> By situating this thesis within the global histories and historiographies of the early Cold War, we are better placed to understand the British political mindset at the end of the war and its response to the diminishing power and resources faced.

The occupation brought the three main Allied powers together and witnessed how a strategic partnership evolved into a global conflict. In the Near East region, Iran was an important arena where early Cold War policies were implemented. Kuniholm in his book explained how containment policy was developed in Turkey, Greece and Iran at the end of the Second World War.<sup>47</sup> Westad saw the occupation of Iran as part of the wider division of Asia between the three powers, in line with their post-war vision of control and power.<sup>48</sup> Jackson placed Iran at the centre of Britain’s Middle East theatre of war, and thus an important arena in which its political, military and economic interests were concentrated on, but also where many of its post-war anxieties were played out.<sup>49</sup> As elaborated by Fawcett, “the war effort provided the pretext for the pursuit of the different

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<sup>45</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (London: William Collins, 2017), Online, 893.

<sup>46</sup> Deighton, ‘Britain and the Cold War, 1945–1955’, 113.

<sup>47</sup> Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, xx.

<sup>48</sup> Westad, *The Cold War*, 131.

<sup>49</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*.

national interest of the three great powers and turned Iran into one of the earliest non-European theatres of the Cold War.”<sup>50</sup> As seen here, Kuniholm, Westad and Fawcett have placed Iran at the starting point and as a relevant case study from which historians can witness international tensions develop and relations evolve. This thesis adds to this framing of Iran and further places it within the international histories of the Second World War and the early Cold War.

## 1.2 The structure of British policymaking

Here the structure of British power in Iran will be presented to better appreciate how policy was derived and how different arms of the British government and empire impacted on the decision-making and attitudes regarding Iran in general and the Tudeh in particular. To begin with the general policy outlooks of the coalition and Labour governments will be discussed. This will be followed by a presentation of the different arms of the British diplomatic service in Iran. The legation/embassy and its consuls played important roles in setting the tone of the occupation and in shaping opinions. Furthermore, information travelled between the consuls and Tehran before going on to London. This multiway flow system meant that at times, British officials in Iran, whether in Tehran or the provinces, usually had their own independent attitudes and often acted accordingly. Policy recommendations and opinions moved quite freely within this power structure, with officials bringing their own unique views and experiences to their posts. Although London was the ultimate decision-maker in policy areas, there were other stakeholders to consider – such as the Government of India and the Political Residency. While it would be an exaggeration to say that these parties were dominant in Iran’s affairs, their presence did have some bearing and affected the structure of the diplomatic

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<sup>50</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 1.

service in Iran. Notably, military officers from India filled a number of diplomatic roles, while Indian soldiers and drivers worked in Iran, thereby indicating the intertwined relationship between the Foreign Office and the Government of India. The relationship between the military and the diplomatic service will also be explored. A list of the main military bases, legation, consuls, notable members of staff can be found in the appendix.

The policies of the wartime coalition and Labour governments had a huge impact on the British experience in Iran and how the Tudeh was featured in policy in relation to the war and its aftermath. Churchill's coalition government brought together the major political parties who put aside ideological differences to prioritise the war. In his study on the coalition, Kevin Jeffreys showed that disagreements were suspended and discussions on domestic matters avoided – including ownership of industry and universal health care.<sup>51</sup> The British unity government thus was on a complete wartime footing, concentrating solely on war strategy, from the alliance to securing resources.<sup>52</sup> While the coalition government concentrated on achieving victory, once achieved, it fell to Labour leader Clement Attlee to begin reconstructing post-war Britain and its empire. Already in 1941, the Labour Party had set up a committee to address issues surrounding post-war reconstruction, implementing a global vision to guarantee social security.<sup>53</sup>

Labour's victory in 1945 brought trade union leaders such as Ernest Bevin, minister of labour and national service, and Walter Citrine, the general secretary of the Trades Union

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<sup>51</sup> Kevin Jeffreys, *The Churchill Coalition and Wartime Politics, 1940–1945* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, Online, 393, 407.

<sup>53</sup> Andrew Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, Fourth edition (London: Palgrave, 2015), 112.

Congress, into Cabinet with their vision of social reform.<sup>54</sup> This coincided with Britain asking serious questions about its place in the world, in addition to facing financial strain, which was described by the economist John Maynard Keynes as the country's 'financial Dunkirk'<sup>55</sup>. While this did not mean that the empire was to be abandoned, the end of the war saw Britain's retreat from occupied or colonised lands. The imperial grip was loosening, but the "illusions of Great Power status lingered on" which saw the Labour government trying to "grapple with... irreconcilables." Here Kennedy captured the contradictory nature of Attlee's vision – emphasising the improving of living and working standards while still being an imperial power.<sup>56</sup> This may explain why Attlee and his Cabinet were driven by the belief that the conservation of the empire and the commonwealth were important to achieve during post-war reconstruction.<sup>57</sup> Faced by limited resources, the Labour government sought practical ways of maintaining influence in its areas of interest.<sup>58</sup> In Iran, the desire to maintain influence and political presence did not diminish but with the end of its military occupation, the Labour government adopted new ways to safeguard its position. As will be seen, these two governments had their own unique attitude towards the Tudeh and couched the party within their own world views, dictated by different strategic needs.

Implementation and shaping of policy were driven largely by the diplomatic staff in Iran, made up of the legation/embassy in Tehran and the consulates throughout the country.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945: British Politics and the Second World War*, Revised edition (London: Random House, 1994), 8.

<sup>55</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, Online, 895.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 896.

<sup>57</sup> Kathleen Paul, "'British Subjects' and 'British Stock': Labour's Postwar Imperialism", *Journal of British Studies*, Vol.34(2) (1995), 234–235.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 236.

<sup>59</sup> The difference is summed up by John Pownall Reeves, the British consul in Macau, during World War II: "there are many features of interlock between Services or rather of the component parts of H.M. Foreign

With the minister/ambassador at the head of the structure, below were the chargé d'affaires and counsellors, who were tasked with writing reports, gathering information and coordinating. The legation housed not only diplomatic staff, but also those seconded from the military and the Ministry of Information, such as the staff of the Public Relations Bureau (PRB) and Military Intelligence. The consular system in Iran was large, spanning consulate-generals, consulates and vice-consulates, each with considerable say in their respective provinces.<sup>60</sup> With the consul (or at times vice-consul) at its head, the running of the consulate was left to its semi-permanent staff. During this period, political vice-consuls came and went, observed the main political happenings in their respective provinces and were tasked with liaising with their Soviet counterparts. There were additional vice-consuls tasked with other duties, such as managing the office, assisting or deputising for the consul or even acting as head of an office in a different part of the province. The main Persian correspondence usually went through an Indian assistant, who also acted as the consul-general's aide-de-camp, an interpreter and dragoman for visitors.<sup>61</sup>

Bullard and his staff set the tone of the occupation and had substantial influence, often with the trust and blessing of the Foreign Office in London. With Bullard and the legation/embassy overseeing the day-to-day affairs of the occupation, the consulates served as the eyes and ears on the ground.<sup>62</sup> This created an image of a strong united and

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Service. A consulate will take up a case locally and, if it exhausts all resources for reaching a solution, will refer the matter to its embassy for heavier metal to be brought to bear. Similarly, an embassy and hence the Foreign Office must depend to a great extent for its political decisions on information from the consular services, who cover a wider field". John Pownall Reeves, Colin Day and Richard Garrett, *The Lone Flag: Memoir of the British Consul in Macao during World War II* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014), 4–5.

<sup>60</sup> British consulate Kerman (Falconer) to British legation Tehran, 22 July 1942, PRO, 332/15/42, FO248/1415.

<sup>61</sup> Skrine, *World War in Iran*.

<sup>62</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 193.

homogenous British presence in the country. During the occupation, they exercised power over the monarchy, the country's political development and the economy in addition to guiding wartime policies and shaping and coordinating policy towards the Tudeh.<sup>63</sup> These individuals brought their own experiences and views to their postings. Some showed appreciation for Persian life, such as Clarmont Skrine, consul at Mashhad, who was drawn to Persian history and culture and cultivated friendships with high-ranking Iranians including the governor of Khurasan, Ali Mansour.<sup>64</sup> Captain James Charles Edward Bowen, who held several posts in occupied Iran, went on to become a prolific translator of Persian poetry into English.<sup>65</sup> Although he never displayed any particular bias towards Iran, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden had read Persian at university and was familiar with Persian literature as well as Iranian history and politics.<sup>66</sup> On the other hand, Bullard was more familiar with the Arab world, holding posts in Baghdad, Jeddah and Rabat. While carrying out his duties as minister/ambassador, he maintained a distance and did not enter into any known personal relationships with Iranians.<sup>67</sup> Indeed, his view of Iranians as "grown-up children" was noted by his American counterpart Louis Dreyfus.<sup>68</sup> His successor John Le Rougetel, after his retirement went on to become the treasurer of the British Institute of Persian Studies (BIPS) and was an active member on the council until his death. Overall, however, despite these personal thoughts and experiences, British policymakers in

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<sup>63</sup> The British set up a tribal lands commission to help re-distribute the lands to local chieftains. PRO, FO248/1416.

<sup>64</sup> Skrine, *World War in Iran*, xv-xvi, 111.

<sup>65</sup> Biographical sketch of John Charles Edward Bowen, Oberlin College Library Special Collections, <https://www2.oberlin.edu/library/special/BowenBiographicalSketch.pdf>

<sup>66</sup> D R Thorpe, *Eden: The Life and Times of Anthony Eden, First Earl of Avon, 1897-1977* (London: Pimlico, 2003), 48.

<sup>67</sup> Skrine, *World War in Iran*, 121.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted from Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*.

London and Iran maintained a level of professionalism to the point that their personal opinions (and preferences) were kept to a minimum in favour of implementing policy.

The complex and vast British imperial structure meant that diplomats in Iran reported to not only the British minister in Tehran, but also to the Foreign Office in London, the Government of India, the India Office and the War Office. Furthermore, within each of these entities, specific departments and individuals handled matters pertaining to Iran, such as the Eastern Department in the Foreign Office and the External Affairs Department of the Government of India. This link with India was strong as many of the diplomats in Iran were either born in India or came from families with a history of serving in the colonial administration. Some British diplomats, such as Skrine, who served in occupied Iran came from the Indian Civil Service (ICS) and had gained experiences from across the foreign services. The vice-consul in Mashhad in 1942, Reginald Michael Hadow was also from the ICS but received additional training at Kuibyshev, the wartime headquarters of the British and other diplomatic missions to Soviet Russia.<sup>69</sup>

To add to an already expansive and complex political and military structure, Bushire was also home to the Political Residency of the Persian Gulf. Since 1763, the Political Resident was tasked with protecting British political and economic goals in the Persian Gulf region. In essence a representative of the Government of India, he came under the jurisdiction of both London and India. He held authority over political agents who were technically employed by the rulers of Bahrain, and Kuwait and Muscat but, in reality, served the British government and upheld British policy. During the Second World War, much of the control over policy was relegated to London, but the Residency continued to oversee

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<sup>69</sup> Skrine, *World War in Iran*.

maritime affairs and relations with the Arab countries of the Persian Gulf.<sup>70</sup> Although this web meant that many could have vied for power and control over Iranian affairs, during the occupation wartime needs were prioritised, and London took precedent over India, as reflected in the restructuring of the diplomatic service.

Since the nineteenth century, the structure of the diplomatic service went through several changes. At the height of the Great Game, it was expanded by the Viceroy of India, George Nathaniel Curzon, and the British minister in Iran at the time, Sir Mortimer Durand, increasing the influence of the Government of India in British affairs in Persia. Consulates were established in the vast areas bordering Afghanistan and India, staffed by political officers from the ICS which, as explained by Stebbins, connected the interests of Britain, Iran and India, dictating knowledge production and the dissemination of information.<sup>71</sup> The central position of India meant that much of the British power in Iran was concentrated in the south.<sup>72</sup> Originally, these consuls served several functions. Firstly, to expand and protect British political and commercial interests. Secondly, to diversify their local allies to include tribes, which helped to undermine Qajar central power. Thirdly, to collect intelligence of the hinterlands of the country, and fourthly, to counter Russian expansion and protect India.<sup>73</sup> All of these functions would re-appear during the occupation, which is not surprising as many diplomats in Iran were trained under the ICS. However, under the leadership of the Foreign Office in London, they were no longer couched within the narrative of defending India but rather were absorbed into Britain's overall war and post-war strategy to maintain influence in Iran.

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<sup>70</sup> Jeffrey R Macris, *The Politics and Security of the Gulf: Anglo-American Hegemony and the Shaping of a Region* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), 13–15.

<sup>71</sup> Stebbins, *British Imperialism in Qajar Iran*, 2.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 11–12.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 14–15.

The British diplomatic service went through a substantial change after the First World War. The MacDonnell commission was launched in 1912 to address the elitist nature of the diplomatic service and Foreign Office. The reforms suggested were finally implemented in 1919,<sup>74</sup> which allowed those from outside of the British elite to enter diplomatic service. One of the early beneficiaries of this was Bullard, the son of a dock labourer, who was able to enter the foreign service. Diplomats were also required to rotate their assignments, gaining exposure and experience. Due to these reforms, many diplomats in wartime Iran had experienced postings in multiple countries, including the Soviet Union – an experience that clearly left them with poor opinions and suspicions towards their Soviet colleagues. As will be seen in the following chapters, this exposure impacted on their views on and attitudes towards the Tudeh.

By the time of the occupation, the diplomatic system had changed considerably. Throughout the Reza Shah era, British power shifted from the periphery, flowing away from the consulates under India's control to the legation in Tehran. This shift coincided with a reduction in British power in Iran during the 1920s and 1930s. The invasion and occupation saw a revival of British consular reach in the country, supported by a number of structural changes during the course of the occupation. New vice-consulates were opened in the south, some were enlarged by the absorption of others, while others were upgraded depending on their importance. For example, in the heart of the Soviet zone, Tabriz was elevated to consulate-general in October 1942.<sup>75</sup> Before the war, Bandar Abbas was an outpost of the Political Agency in Bahrain but during the occupation, it was

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<sup>74</sup> Michael Hughes, 'The Peripatetic Career Structure of the British Diplomatic Establishment, 1919–39', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, Vol.14(1) (2003), 29–32.

<sup>75</sup> Government of India Political External Department, 'Tabriz: elevation of Consulate to Consulate-General', IOR/L/PS/12/3673, Coll 29/97.

converted into a vice consulate under Kirman. It was later upgraded to a consulate in 1944. Towards the end of the war, authority over Ahwaz was formally transferred from the Government of India to the Foreign Office.<sup>76</sup> Such changes suggest the increasing authority of the legation/embassy in Tehran and the Foreign Office over India as well as the changing nature of the British power structure in Iran.<sup>77</sup> These shifts are significant examples of the evolving nature of Britain's imperial structure and showed how London became the dominant decisionmaker in that structure.<sup>78</sup>

Historically, military interests regarding Iran came under the purview of India Command. At the start of the war, the British Army formed its Middle East Command in Cairo in 1939. It was from here that the invasion of Iraq and Iran were planned. The invasion of Iran was carried out by military forces stationed in Iraq.<sup>79</sup> As described by Jackson, Iran and Iraq "presented a command headache for Whitehall and the Chiefs of Staffs," mainly because they were caught between two arms of Britain's imperial military power: the Middle East Command, which covered Egypt and its surrounding area, and India Command, which historically defended the empire's interests in Arabia and the Persian Gulf. The issue of authority was solved when the dedicated Paiforce, which covered military matters for Iran and Iraq, was formed in August 1942. Jackson pointed out that this new outfit still did not solve the fundamental issue that faced British policymakers in London at the start

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<sup>76</sup> Government of India Political External Department, 'Tabriz: elevation of Consulate to Consulate-General', IOR/L/PS/12/3675, Coll 29/98(2).

<sup>77</sup> Though, the India Office still retained substantial control over appointments of consuls, and clerical staff, even in Tehran. IOR/L/PS/12/3638, Coll 29/62; The appointment of an additional counsellor was done through the India Office. IOR/L/PS/12/3687, Coll 29/109.

<sup>78</sup> The expansion of the consulate system lasted as long as the occupation. After the war, many closed or were reduced in size. IOR/L/PS/12/3700, Coll 29/118(1); IOR/L/PS/12/3706, Coll 29/118 (7); The vice-consulate in Birjand was closed and included in Zabul consular district. IOR/L/PS/12/3669, Coll 29/93.

<sup>79</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 151.

of the war, namely that there were simply too many interests in the Middle East to be protected.<sup>80</sup>

Indeed, in Iran, the military was tasked to fulfil many different tasks. From security to intelligence gathering, the British military, which included the ground, air, and sea forces, played multiple roles in Iran. The Tenth Army, made up of British, Indian and Polish troops, was designated to guard the oilfields in Iran and Iraq under the command of General Maitland Wilson. From March 1943, under the command of General Henry Pownall, the Tenth Army was disbanded but they continued to operate, expanding their duties to concentrate on preserving internal security. The bulk of military support in Iran came from the Indian Army, through divisions and brigades raised in India, and sent to the British zone of the occupation to perform a number of duties, from security to maintenance. The military worked to maintain the occupation and at times worked together with diplomats and local authorities to preserve British interests in the country.<sup>81</sup> Military officers occupied diplomatic posts as well, particularly in consulates based in the south. These officers traditionally would have come from the Indian Army to serve as political officers and consuls, as was the case with the military attaché Herbert John Underwood and Bowen, both of whom served in the Indian Army and occupied diplomatic positions in occupied Iran. During the occupation, the military attaché in Tehran worked closely with Bullard, while military officers were appointed as area liaison officers in the consulates as well as vice-consuls. Outside of the diplomatic sphere, the military followed its own orders and kept a separate record of its activities, known as war diaries.

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<sup>80</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 30–31.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 266–267.

As can be seen here, the British power structure was complex and expansive, going through a number of changes in organisation and jurisdiction. The occupation saw London emerge as the main voice in directing general policy based on national needs and demands, while individual diplomats brought their training, experience and opinions to shape the tone and attitudes of the British presence in Iran. They helped to support the occupation and cooperation with the other Allied powers yet were also instrumental in creating attitudes towards Iranian politics, including towards the Tudeh. The diplomatic service was thus an important driver in placing the party within British policy during the occupation and in the immediate post-war months. As will be seen, these diplomats did not exist in a vacuum and were subject to structural demands and changes within overall British national strategy.

### 1.3 British presence in Iran in the Reza Shah era

In order to appreciate the extensive and expansive nature of British policymaking in Iran during the 1941 occupation, it is necessary to show the status of British political presence in the two decades prior, which saw decreased control over Tehran, the deterioration of relations with the tribes, and the loss of unhindered say over oil terms. This era was characterised by the re-shifting of British interests as a response to Reza Shah and the concurrent changes in the international political landscape. By examining this era of decline, it is possible to offer some counterintuitive examples to show that British policy in Iran was robust in its ability to withstand changes and in moving into a position capable of protecting its assets in Iran.

It could be argued that the peak of British influence and interests in Iran was the involvement of British personnel in the 1921 coup. While there is a lack of consensus by historians as to the importance of British involvement in the coup, it appears that the British role was nonetheless key to Reza Khan's rise. Cronin has argued that the British manoeuvring in Iran was crucial for the coup's success<sup>82</sup>, citing the role played by Major-General Sir Edmund Ironside who had arrived in Qazvin in October 1920 to lead the British North Persia Force (Norperforce).<sup>83</sup> Based on recent evidence presented by Katouzian, it seems most likely that British figures on the ground were indeed implicit in the events but acted independently of London. They occupied a supplementary role to the main players of the coup, Sayyed Zia Tabatabai and Reza Khan.<sup>84</sup> Both Cronin and Katouzian are in agreement that the British in Iran showed initiative in British involvement in the 1921 coup, exercising agency to ensure that their political interests were protected.

In 1921, British policy concerns primarily related to controlling oil in the south, and limiting the threat posed by the Bolsheviks, who supported the Jangali movement in Gilan and Mazandaran.<sup>85</sup> While they were not communist or Bolshevik in outlook, the Jangalis benefited from Soviet support and were used as a way to establish a political platform in Iran. With the Qajars regarded as ineffectual<sup>86</sup>, the coup brought the relatively obscure figure, Reza Khan to the forefront of Iranian politics. Initially appointed as an army

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<sup>82</sup> Cronin, 'Britain, the Iranian Military and the Rise of Reza Khan', 119.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>84</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 198–199.

<sup>85</sup> Cronin, 'Britain, the Iranian Military, and the Rise of Reza Khan', 116; see also Majd, *Great Britain and Reza Shah, the Plunder of Iran, 1921–1941*, 54–55.

<sup>86</sup> Nasrollah S Fatemi, "Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919", in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, December 1985.

commander and minister of war, under the premiership of Sayyed Zia<sup>87</sup>, a power struggle resulted in Reza Khan successfully persuading Ahmad Shah to exile his former co-conspirator to Switzerland.<sup>88</sup> From this strong position, Reza Khan scored a major victory against the Jangalis, successfully defeating them in October 1921. Reza Khan thus demonstrated his ability to defeat Bolshevik presence in Iran, especially in the absence of Norperforce, which had been disbanded shortly after the coup.<sup>89</sup> Reza Khan further secured his position in Iran by manoeuvring the Qajars out, crowning himself shah and establishing his own dynasty, the Pahlavis.<sup>90</sup> In a short amount of time, he established himself as a formidable powerhouse of Iranian politics in a position of absolute control.

This control extended to repositioning Iran's relationship with Britain. Following his ascendance to the throne, Reza Shah reduced British presence in two symbolic ways. Firstly, he brought British tribal clients in the south under central control. The lack of British support for former allies such as Shakyh Khaz'al of Khuzestan<sup>91</sup> and for the tribal revolts of the early 1920s<sup>92</sup> indicated that their role and policy positions in Iran had indeed decreased. Secondly, in 1928, Reza Shah founded the National Bank of Iran to take over the functions and domination of the British-controlled Imperial Bank of Persia.<sup>93</sup> As

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<sup>87</sup> Nikki R Keddie and Farrokh Ghaffary, *Qajar Iran and the Rise of Reza Khan, 1796–1925* (Costa Mesa: Mazda Publishers, 1999), 78–79.

<sup>88</sup> Then on his own accord, Sayyed Zia left for Palestine in May 1921. *Ibid.*, 81.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 78–79.

<sup>90</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 205–207.

<sup>91</sup> The relationship with the Arabistan tribes dated back from the opening of the Karun River in 1888. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company had negotiated with Khaz'al over the building of the Abadan refinery. Michael P Zirinsky, "Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the rise of Reza Shah, 1921–1926", *International Journal of Middle East Studies* Vol.24(4) (1992), 653–655; see also the PhD dissertation by William Theodore Strunk, "The Reign of Shaykh Khaz'al Ibn Jabir and the Suppression of the Principality of Arabistan: A Study of British Imperialism in Southwestern Iran, 1897–1925" (PhD Diss., Indiana University, 1977).

<sup>92</sup> For more, see, Kaveh Bayat, "Riza Shah and the Tribes, An Overview" in *The Making of Modern Iran: State and Society under Riza Shah, 1921–1941*, Stephanie Cronin (Ed.) (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003), 213–216; see also Stephanie Cronin, "Riza Shah and the Disintegration of Bakhtiyari Power in Iran, 1921–1934" in the same edited book, 241–268 for the case of the Bakhtiyari tribe.

<sup>93</sup> Zirinsky, "Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the rise of Reza Shah, 1921–1926", 652.

guaranteed since the Qajar era, British nationals in Iran benefitted from low taxes, low customs rates and special courts. Reza Shah's abolition of capitulatory privileges on 10 May 1927 forced the British to seek a new agreement for trade and on the treatment of British nationals.<sup>94</sup>

These policies re-oriented British presence but as pointed out by Cronin, Britain was already winding down its commitments in Iran.<sup>95</sup> Upon his arrival as minister in Tehran, Sir Percy Loraine<sup>96</sup> actively reduced British involvement in the country in favour of better relations with Tehran.<sup>97</sup> While evidence does show that there was a general winding down of British influence, there was still a lot at stake.<sup>98</sup> Disagreements arose with the Iranian government and throughout the 1930s, the following factors began to emerge as the foundations of a renewed interest and determination to re-establish British dominance in Iran. As the following chapters will show, these factors also determined how the Tudeh was regarded and positioned in wider British strategy.

#### 1.4 The German threat

Historically, Britain regarded German presence in Iran with deep suspicion and in both world wars, it was used as a reason to invade and occupy the country. In the 1930s, the Germans in Iran became a policy concern for the British and after the invasion, this

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<sup>94</sup> Chelsi Mueller, "Anglo-Iranian Treaty Negotiations: Reza Shah, Teymurtash and the British Government, 1927-32", *Iranian Studies*, Vol.49(4) (July 2016), 581.

<sup>95</sup> Significantly, the South Persia Rifles were disbanded. British officers serving with the Cossacks were dismissed, while British financial advisers all had their contracts terminated. Cronin, "Great Britain V. British Influence During the Reza Shah Period, 1921-1941."

<sup>96</sup> For London, the Qajars had lost their usefulness and the new Pahlavi dynasty offered new opportunities, at least at the start. Zirinsky, "Imperial Power and Dictatorship: Britain and the rise of Reza Shah, 1921-1926", 655-657.

<sup>97</sup> For more on Loraine's role in dictating British policy at the time, see Cronin, "Great Britain V. British Influence During the Reza Shah Period, 1921-1941."

<sup>98</sup> Rashid Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran Before World War II* (London: IB Tauris, 2013), 107-109.

became a framework within which the Tudeh featured in British policy. In this section, the nature of German presence in Iran will be assessed, as well as the different policy approaches Britain initially had to it. This thesis places the Tudeh alongside Britain's anti-fascist (German, Italian, or Japanese) platforms in Europe and Asia, offering a more global approach to understanding how the Tudeh was used to counter German influence in Iran during the occupation.

During the 1930s, the bilateral relationship between Berlin and Tehran was strengthened. While Hitler was generally indifferent towards the Middle East<sup>99</sup>, his government saw benefit in improving economic relations with Iran particularly in the second half of the 1930s. It has been convincingly argued by Jennifer Jenkins and Oliver Bast that the economic benefits for both Germany and Iran were numerous.<sup>100</sup> The presence of German companies in Iran – including Lufthansa, Siemens and Thyssen Krupp – indicated the economic importance Germany placed on Iran.<sup>101</sup> At a time of German rearmament, Iranian resources were essential to their military ambitions.<sup>102</sup> For Reza Shah, strengthening economic and commercial ties with Germany contributed to his own project to industrialise the country while simultaneously disengaging from Britain and the Soviet Union.<sup>103</sup> By 1939, Iranian exports to Germany made up 42.09 percent of the country's overall exports, reflecting Germany's prominent position in the Iranian

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<sup>99</sup> Alfred Rosenberg, head of the Nazi Party's Foreign Affairs Department, developed plans for a German sphere of influence that stretched over the Balkans, Turkey and Iran up to the borders of India. Oliver Bast, "Germany I. German-Persian Diplomatic Relations", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, February 2012.

<sup>100</sup> See also Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran Before World War II*.

<sup>101</sup> Jennifer Jenkins, "Iran in the Nazi New Order, 1933-1941", *Iranian Studies*, Vol.49(5) (September 2016), 728.

<sup>102</sup> The Reich economics minister, Hjalmar Schacht, was the main driver in this endeavour, gaining raw materials from Iran for Germany's industrialisation and rearmament programmes. He was the only high-level Nazi official who had a systematic plan for the expansion of German influence in the Middle East, making an official visit to Iran in November 1936. *Ibid.*, 733-737.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 735.

economy.<sup>104</sup> As war broke out in Europe, Germany was poised to become the third foreign power involved in Iran, after Britain and the Soviet Union, repeating the power dynamics witnessed during the First World War.

Initially, Iran's closeness with Germany was not regarded suspiciously. After all, Britain's own appeasement policy towards Nazi Germany meant that Hitler's regime was not treated as an immediate threat and his annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia was not challenged. Many British politicians, including Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain regarded German rearmament and territorial expansion as a fair price for the poor treatment of Germany at Versailles and even offered economic concessions for Germany.<sup>105</sup> More widely, Britain had stayed away from the fight against fascist governments in Europe. Both British prime ministers during the Spanish Civil War, Stanley Baldwin and Chamberlain, stood by the policy of non-intervention as a way to avoid wider conflict with Italy and Germany. This was also supported by Churchill, who did not hold any political positions at the time but was known for his anti-communist sentiments.<sup>106</sup> In contrast, the Soviet Union declared the formation of the Popular Front, or the People's Front to counter the rise of fascism (in Europe), which established the first coalition of the Left and Liberal forces.<sup>107</sup>

In 1936, the Spanish Civil War saw the collaboration between the Spanish communists and volunteers from different socialist and radical backgrounds, creating an international

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<sup>104</sup> Jenkins, "Iran in the Nazi New Order, 1933–1941", 739.

<sup>105</sup> P J Cain and A G Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2015*, Third edition (Oxford: Routledge, 2016), 514–515.

<sup>106</sup> Glyn Arthur Stone, "Neville Chamberlain and the Spanish Civil War", *The International History Review* Vol.35(2) (2013), 378–379.

<sup>107</sup> Marc Mulholland, *Bourgeois Liberty and the Politics of Fear: From Absolutism to Neo-Conservatism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 196–201.

cross-section front against General Francisco Franco's fascist forces. Duncan Hallas, in his work on the Comintern, views Soviet efforts as a way in which Stalin could consolidate power internationally while countering the rise of fascism.<sup>108</sup> It should be noted that there is no evidence that the Soviets wanted to encourage the specific development of an Iranian popular front at this time.<sup>109</sup> As British policy was not initially geared towards fighting fascism in any shape or form, it did not have any concrete policy towards German presence in Iran for most of the 1930s.

This changed by 1938 when the danger of war had grown stronger. Britain too started rearming but seemed isolated and vulnerable when compared to Germany's military advancement.<sup>110</sup> Moreover, the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact, which was signed in August 1939 saw the Soviet Union and Germany at peace with the promise that neither side would ally itself with the other's enemy. This effectively suspended the anti-fascist platform from 1939 to 1941, holding back European communists from actively fighting the invading German or Italian armies.<sup>111</sup> Thus, when Poland was invaded in September 1939, Britain found itself without Soviet backing in the fight against fascism and initially was unable to fully rely on any European communist forces.<sup>112</sup> Until the abrogation of the treaty two years later, Stalin and the Comintern encouraged communist parties in Europe to cooperate as much as possible with the occupying German Army or at the very least, to refrain from openly opposing the war.<sup>113</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Duncan Hallas, *The Comintern: A History of the Third International* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 145–146.

<sup>109</sup> David Priestland, *The Red Flag: A History of Communism* (New York: Allen Lane, 2009), 194–195.

<sup>110</sup> Daniel Todman, *Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937–1941* (London: Penguin, 2016), 120.

<sup>111</sup> Silvio Pons, 'The Soviet Union and the International Left', in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War, Volume 2: Politics and Ideology*, Richard Bosworth (Ed.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 74.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 68–71.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, 72–73.

With most of Europe falling under German occupation with little resistance, German economic activities and presence in Iran became more serious and threatening.<sup>114</sup> For the British government, they faced two specific threats:<sup>115</sup> a military intervention by the German Army or the establishment of a pro-German Iranian government.<sup>116</sup> By mid-1940, the British legation viewed the shah's regime as becoming vulnerable to a pro-German coup. This view was taken by Bullard who arrived in Tehran to take his position as minister in December 1939. He was a senior diplomat, having served throughout the Middle East and the Soviet Union. He came with a poor impression of Iran and an apparent disdain for the Iranian ruling elite.<sup>117</sup> His frustration towards Reza Shah was visible from the start and had significant bearing on British policy, tinting the shah's relations with Germany. After war was declared in September 1939, Reza Shah was anxious regarding Iran's position. Due to hostilities with Germany, Britain had seized German goods bound for Iran.<sup>118</sup> When Reza Shah protested, Bullard regarded his behaviour as an indication that Iran was leaning towards the Axis powers.<sup>119</sup> As a result,

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<sup>114</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 13.

<sup>115</sup> Victor Rothwell, *War Aims in the Second World War: The War Aims of the Major Belligerents, 1939–45* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2005), 66.

<sup>116</sup> There is evidence that Iran had already begun to reduce the number of Germans even before Britain demanded their removal. Moreover, the exact number of German personnel and tourists remains hard to determine, due to conflicting reports. For example, in July 1941, the British command in India estimated that there were between 2,000 and 3,000 German residents in the country. However, according to George Lenczowski and the German ambassador in Tehran, in August 1941, there were only 2,000 Germans. Kozhanov, "The Pretexts and Reasons for the Allied Invasion of Iran in 1941", 485.

<sup>117</sup> His posting just prior to Tehran was as a minister in Jeddah. Tehran was to be his last diplomatic posting. After retirement, he went on to hold a few academic posts and wrote extensively about his life and career. He died in Oxford in 1976.

<sup>118</sup> Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Halifax), 17 January 1940, PRO, E584/584/34 in Malcolm Yapp (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, vol. 3 Persia and Afghanistan, January 1940–December 1941, B Near and Middle East (University Publications of America, 1997).

<sup>119</sup> Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Halifax), 2 March 1940, PRO, E987/621/34 in Malcolm Yapp (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, vol. 3 Persia and Afghanistan, January 1940–December 1941, B Near and Middle East (University Publications of America, 1997).

Britain started to monitor German movements and activities in Iran closely.<sup>120</sup> In the space of a few years, British policy had moved from accommodating German rearmament to regarding it as a threat, while Bullard's views encouraged British policy in Iran to become more active.

Even before the invasion of Iran, Britain was already laying the foundations of the anti-German movement in Iran, mainly through the gathering of information and a burgeoning propaganda campaign. The British legation was aware of the strong anti-British sentiment felt by many Iranians and the concomitant pro-German feelings that existed.<sup>121</sup> In 1939, Ann Lambton the press attaché, wrote of Iranian sympathy towards the Nazi cause but was careful to point out that Adolf Hitler himself was unpopular.<sup>122</sup> She had arrived in Tehran that year as an employee of the Ministry of Information after studying Persian at the School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) in London.<sup>123</sup> Soon after arriving, she launched a propaganda campaign to counter existing German propaganda, which accused Britain of supporting the shah's iron grip over the country. Anti-British sentiment was also spread through a picture paper called *Signal* and through Persian-language broadcasts from Berlin.<sup>124</sup> Although MI5 in Cairo felt that the Germans were not experienced enough to produce effective propaganda for Iran, it was still in their interest

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<sup>120</sup> Appendix A on the Nazi Organisation in Iran in Intelligence Summary (Underwood) in Bullard to Halifax, 11 July 1940, E1862/124/34 in Dr R M Buttell (General Editor), Robert L Jarman (Research Editor), *Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965*, Volume II: 1939–1942 (Wiltshire: Archive Editions Limited, Antony Rowe, 1997), 177–180.

<sup>121</sup> Since the 1920s, several German-medium schools were founded, including one in Tehran that was built in 1932. German literature was also popular in Iran. For more, see Christl Catanzaro, "Germany VIII. German Cultural Influence in Persia", *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, February 2012.

<sup>122</sup> Tehran (Lambton) to Ministry of Information (Williams), 14 November 1939, PRO, FP1/30, FO930/166.

<sup>123</sup> She was later involved in the 1953 coup that overthrew Musaddiq. She went on to have a prominent career in Iranian studies in the United Kingdom until her death in 2008.

<sup>124</sup> Intelligence Summary (Underwood) in Bullard to Halifax, 4 September 1940, E2461/124/34 in Dr R M Buttell (General Editor), Robert L Jarman (Research Editor), *Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965*, Volume 11: 1939–1942 (Wiltshire: Archive Editions Limited, Antony Rowe, 1997), 193.

to counter it.<sup>125</sup> Rashid Khatib-Shahidi argued that the influence of the German threat was low and probably would not have erupted in the way that the British feared.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, the presence of *a* threat was enough to move policy. An anti-fascist propaganda campaign was thus launched and, more substantially, was accompanied in January 1940 by troop mobilisation to safeguard oil.<sup>127</sup>

As the Tudeh later formed an important component of this propaganda campaign, it should be noted that on the eve of the occupation, the Left in Iran had been severely suppressed under Reza Shah and therefore was absent from Britain's early campaign. Elsewhere however, Britain already regarded the Left as an important aspect of the anti-fascist resistance and were prepared to aid such groups out of pragmatism. For instance, following the fall of France, for instance, the Special Operations Executive (SOE) secretly allied with the communists in France to organise the clandestine resistance<sup>128</sup> which was further assisted by MI6.<sup>129</sup> After the Soviet entry into the war, the Foreign Office pursued an even more open attitude about its support of the Left against the Axis powers, while the Left became more open about its alliance with Britain.<sup>130</sup> When the war expanded to Asia and to the rest of Europe, more and more communist parties were aided. In his study of the popular front movements, Marc Mulholland described the alliance of Britain, the US and the Soviet Union as a popular front in itself.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, it broke ideological and historical barriers, coming together to face a common threat. After he became prime

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<sup>125</sup> O' Sullivan, *Espionage and Counterintelligence in Occupied Persia (Iran)*, 4.

<sup>126</sup> Khatib-Shahidi, *German Foreign Policy Towards Iran Before World War II*, 185.

<sup>127</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 494.

<sup>128</sup> Christopher J Murphy, "The Origins of SOE in France", *The Historical Journal*, Vol.46(4) (2003), 940.

<sup>129</sup> Keith Jeffrey, *MI6: The History of the Secret Intelligence Service, 1909–1949* (London: Bloomsbury, 2010), 524–526.

<sup>130</sup> Gerolymatos, *An international civil war: Greece, 1943–1949*, 52.

<sup>131</sup> Mulholland, *Bourgeois Liberty and the Politics of Fear: From Absolutism to Neo-Conservatism*, 214.

minister in 1940, Churchill made his position clear by stating that the aid given to communists was not unconditional and was temporary.<sup>132</sup>

The next chapters will show how the intertwined relationship between the German threat and reliance on the Left affected British policy towards the Tudeh. At the start of the occupation, the British propaganda campaigns and the arrests of pro-German Iranians helped to justify the Allies' occupation of the country. The mobilisation of an anti-fascist movement among Iranians, which included the Tudeh, showed that local resistance against the German threat was present. But as the proceeding chapters will also demonstrate, the nature of the German threat changed over the years of the occupation. As the fear of a German takeover in Iran gradually disappeared, the nature of Britain's anti-fascist campaign evolved, resulting in the conflation of a German threat with a communist one. As the alliance with the Soviets dissipated, the Left came to occupy its place as an existential threat to Britain. In his study on the Second World War, David Reynolds noted this shift within the Grand Alliance, observing the growing suspicion of Stalin and Soviet intentions as the war moved more and more in the Allies' favour.<sup>133</sup> By drawing upon the experiences of the Malayan and Greek Left, placing Iran within the global history of the Second World War helps explain the shifts in policy towards the Tudeh.

As has been demonstrated here, the German threat in Europe and in Iran propelled Britain to take on a more interested role in Iran. Under the care of Bullard, this new policy concern was adopted and expanded to accommodate an increased British presence. This

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<sup>132</sup> Cobb, *The Resistance*, 92.

<sup>133</sup> David Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War: Churchill, Roosevelt and the international history of the 1940s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 236.

was also supported by its practical policymaking, that was ready to aid communist parties in the fight against the Axis forces. In addition to demonstrating the flexibility of British presence, such interests and policy movements contextualise how the Tudeh was regarded and utilised in the first few years of the occupation.

### 1.5 The oil factor

Oil was a critical factor in London's policy towards Iran and was often the main reason for Britain's increased involvement in the country. Oil became a necessary asset after its discovery in 1908, especially when oil became a prime source of income for the British economy and military power.<sup>134</sup> As the Tudeh's activities in the south brought the party in direct confrontation with the British authorities towards the end of the occupation, it is necessary to first establish that oil was a symbol of British dominance in Iran and thus needed to be secured, protected and controlled. Britain's historical experience of confronting the socialist movement in Iran over oil had repercussions during the 1946 strikes in Khuzestan. In the years before the war, Britain's dominance in the south came under attack, resulting in tense disputes between the AIOC and the British government on the one hand, and the Iranian government and the nascent communist movement on the other.<sup>135</sup> These tensions became more acute during rearmament, general economic weakness, and eventually, the outbreak of war. The oil was a serious consideration for policymakers, encouraging them to maintain political influence and control in Khuzestan during and after the war. While the threat of a German takeover was successfully thwarted, the Tudeh threat had wider and deeper implications for both Britain's balance of payments as well as its political reach in Iran and throughout the Persian Gulf.

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<sup>134</sup> Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1797*, 9.

<sup>135</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 3–4.

Until the late nineteenth century, the defence of India, particularly from Russian aggression, was central to Britain's imperial policy towards Iran, birthing their rivalry, (popularly known as the 'Great Game').<sup>136</sup> However, from the start of the twentieth century, this traditional imperial interest towards Iran was supplanted by geological concerns.<sup>137</sup> The change in technology with the switch from coal to oil<sup>138</sup> meant that oil began to play a central role in Britain's economic affairs and in its position in Iran.<sup>139</sup> The British government became the majority shareholder of the AIOC a few months before the outbreak of the First World War, giving London a place on the company board and the power to rule over any questions relating to British national interests.<sup>140</sup> Bamberg drew attention to the uniqueness of this arrangement, particularly how the British government's position in the company reflected the "strategic importance assigned to oil".<sup>141</sup> By having such substantial say, London gained a key role in dominating and steering Britain's position in the oil industry generally and over Iranian oil in particular.

Concerns over oil were usually driven by wider economic and political worries, which can be observed during and after the occupation era. In the interwar years, the British government was confronted by a declining economy and pressure to make way for US oil

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<sup>136</sup> Kazemzadeh, *Russia and Britain in Persia*, 13.

<sup>137</sup> Although India still played an important economic role as Britain's largest export market. John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British world-system, 1830–1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 213.

<sup>138</sup> Britain was at the time engaged in a naval arms race with Germany, increasing further the value of oil. Matthew S Seligmann, "The Anglo-German Naval Race, 1898–1914", in *Arms Race in International Politics: From the Nineteenth to the Twenty-first Century*, Thomas Mahnken (Ed.), Joseph Maiolo (Ed.), David Stevenson (Ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 32.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>140</sup> Mohammad Malek, 'Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars', in *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, Martin (Ed.), 128.

<sup>141</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 174.

companies.<sup>142</sup> This was compounded by other international concerns for Britain. Following the Great Depression, Britain's financial standing was shaken; the pound sterling had come off gold, its balance of payments was in deficit and its inability to lend rendered it weak on the global economic stage.<sup>143</sup> Iran was the main source of the AIOC's oil, but access to it was subject to arbitrary Iranian action and foreign competitors.<sup>144</sup> Already under general economic stress, Britain became embroiled in disputes with Reza Shah. As per the concession agreement, Iran received payments of 16% of the net profit annually, an amount regarded as emblematic of Britain's exploitation of the country's resources. Indeed, Shafiee argued that this can also be regarded as a dispute over property rights between an oil company and a sovereign government.<sup>145</sup> Negotiations led by Reza Shah's court minister Abd al-Hussain Taymurtash stagnated until Reza Shah dismissed him and cancelled the concession in November 1932.<sup>146</sup> A new oil agreement was signed on 30 April 1933, which reduced the area of the concession, increased Iran's share and extended the concessionary period by 30 years.<sup>147</sup> At a time of financial instability, the British legation had proposed to militarily pressure Iran during the negotiations but this was rejected in favour of a peaceful and cheaper solution.<sup>148</sup>

When oil royalties further dropped in 1938, the shah protested to the AIOC and demanded financial compensation, doing so at a time when Britain was overstretched

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<sup>142</sup> Malek, 'Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars', 128.

<sup>143</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2015*, 513.

<sup>144</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 12.

<sup>145</sup> Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil*, 24.

<sup>146</sup> This at a time when Iran's royalties were significantly reduced. Malek, 'Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars', 131.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, 132–133.

<sup>148</sup> The British minister at the time, Reginald Hoare suggested to move some military units to the Persian Gulf and to publicise this in order to pressure the Iranian government. Hoare to Simon, Tehran, 29 November 1932, in Robin Bidwell (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, vol. 26, Persia XI, January 1931–October 1933, B Turkey, Iran and the Middle East, 1918–1939, Near and Middle East (University Publications of America, 1994), 229.

and on the brink of war with Germany.<sup>149</sup> Negative press for the company in Iran and the shah's accusation against the British government for the decrease in oil royalties all impacted Britain's standing in Iran.<sup>150</sup> The British minister in Tehran at the time and Bullard's predecessor, Sir Horace Seymour regarded Reza Shah as impossible to deal with.<sup>151</sup> Furthermore, with the British government strongly linked with the AIOC, these tensions became more than mere commercial disagreements. For example, since 1929, Tehran banned the AIOC from making any separate agreements with the tribes, Britain's traditional allies.<sup>152</sup> Such changes sent a clear signal that British control of the oil was not absolute and was, in effect, limited.

Britain's dominance over oil was also confronted by Iran's labour activists, as will be seen in Chapter 4 when the Tudeh spoke out against British hold over the oil during the strikes of 1946. Historically, working conditions were a source of tension between the company and the workforce. British and Indian workers were favoured above Iranian workers, manifesting in a stark disparity of salary, food, accommodation and services.<sup>153</sup> Bamberg highlighted the blurring of the boundaries between corporate and municipal responsibilities, which led to the company being held responsible for the lack of development and services and therefore a convenient target for grievances.<sup>154</sup> Responding to these grievances, the Iranian Communist Party (ICP) and the oil workers'

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<sup>149</sup> Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism, 1688–2015*, 513.

<sup>150</sup> Malek, 'Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars', 134.

<sup>151</sup> Seymour to Halifax, 11 February 1938, E1095/1095/34, in *Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965, Volume 10: 1935–1938*, Dr R M Buttell (General Editor), Robert L Jarman (Research Editor) (Wiltshire: Archive Editions Limited, Antony Rowe, 1997), 453–454; see also Seymour to Halifax, 30 January 1937, E1435/1435/34, in *Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965, Volume 10: 1935–1938*, Dr R M Buttell (General Editor), Robert L Jarman (Research Editor) (Wiltshire: Archive Editions Limited, Antony Rowe, 1997), 277.

<sup>152</sup> Cronin, "Great Britain V. British Influence During the Reza Shah Period, 1921–1941."

<sup>153</sup> Ehsani, 'The Social History of Labour in the Iranian Oil Industry', 227–228; see also Touraj Atabaki, "Far from Home, But at Home: Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry", *Studies in History*, Vol.31(1), 2015, 110.

<sup>154</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 11.

trade union during the 1920s helped to politicise the workers. An Iranian graduate of the Communist University of the Toilers of the East in Moscow,<sup>155</sup> Yusuf Eftekhari<sup>156</sup> and another activist, Rahim Hamdad, organised union activism among the oil workers in the refinery and oilfields of Khuzestan. This bubbled into the major strike of May 1929, marking an important moment of labour union activism in Iran.<sup>157</sup> As established by Atabaki and Cronin, this uprising was a landmark in Iran's political history and in Iranian-British oil relations.<sup>158</sup> Such an impact was not lost in the Tudeh's own narrative. Writing about the late 1920s, the party identified that the "struggle of the Iranian working class in general, and those employed by the oil industry in particular, was gaining momentum against the ruling reactionaries and British imperialism".<sup>159</sup> The uprising forced the AIOC to move towards improving working and living conditions as well as providing an increased daily wage. The chairman at the time, Sir John Cadman also recognised that the oil workers, if left unheard, could disrupt the industry.<sup>160</sup> The complex oil industry was thus an identifiable arena for communist activities, trade union activism in Iran, and also a target against British imperialism.

Due to the imminent war with Germany, Britain's oil industry faced another serious threat. Once Hitler was poised to use Germany's military strength more aggressively, the British government started to make provisions to protect the oil. In March 1939, the

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<sup>155</sup> For more details about this early relationship, see Dailami, "The Bolshevik Revolution and the Genesis of Communism in Iran, 1917-1920".

<sup>156</sup> He was heavily involved in the communist movement during the Reza Shah period and was acquainted with many of the early followers. Yusef Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e doran-e separi shodeh: Khaterat va asnad-e Yusef Eftekhari, 1299-1326* (Tehran: Entesharat-e Ferdows, 1991).

<sup>157</sup> Atabaki, 'The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran', 316.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 316, and Stephanie Cronin, 'Popular Politics, the New State and the Birth of the Iranian Working Class: The 1929 Abadan Oil Refinery Strike', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.46(5) (2010), 699.

<sup>159</sup> M Omidvar, "Brief History of the Tudeh Party of Iran", The Tudeh Party of Iran, March 1993, <https://www.tudehpartyiran.org/en/documents/2148->

<sup>160</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 78-80.

British government summoned the oil companies to form the Petroleum Board, which homogenised the oil industry and placed it on a wartime footing.<sup>161</sup> The outbreak of the war in September forced the AIOC to cut down on operations in Iran due to the disruption in shipping and the sudden fall in demand. Investment and employment were reduced, and those who remained in the south were subject to restrictions placed by the declaration of neutrality by Reza Shah.<sup>162</sup> There were further conflicts over the decreased price of oil when the British government reduced the official rate of gold. A dip in income from oil exports worried Reza Shah who was reliant on its steady income. Tehran protested and demanded that Britain pay the difference, which it did, demonstrating initially the practical nature of British policy.<sup>163</sup>

Underneath the surface however, Britain was planning a stronger response. These conflicts with Iran arose at the same time as the Allies' retreat from Dunkirk and the start of the Battle of Britain. Bullard presented Reza Shah's demands to London as an indication that Iran was taking advantage of Britain's waning fortunes.<sup>164</sup> Although it was willing to placate Reza Shah to gain access to the oil, policy had to be adjusted if the British government wanted to secure unhindered access and secure its position in the region. Such a notion was brought to the fore during a British War Cabinet meeting on the eve of the invasion of Iran:

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<sup>161</sup> Todman, *Britain's War: Into Battle, 1937-1941*, 67.

<sup>162</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 238-239.

<sup>163</sup> Malek, 'Oil in Iran between the Two World Wars,' 134.

<sup>164</sup> Intelligence Summary (Underwood) in Bullard to Halifax, 4 September 1940, E2461/124/34, PRO in Iran Political Diaries, 1881-1965, Volume 11: 1939-1942, Dr R M Buttell (General Editor), Robert L Jarman (Research Editor) (Wiltshire: Archive Editions Limited, Antony Rowe, 1997), 191.

Our occupation of the oilfields would only be a first step in the direction of establishing the control in Persia which we needed to secure our position in the Middle East.<sup>165</sup>

Even before the invasion of Iran, policy was already shifting. First and foremost, security and protection over the AIOC was improved during the spring of 1941. The Cairo-based Middle East Command and the AIOC in Iran installed measures in the event of an attack or sabotage operations by either the Germans or before the summer of 1941, the Soviets. The Royal Engineers were equipped to demolish the oil wells and to block the railway.<sup>166</sup> Secondly, light espionage was encouraged by Cairo where AIOC staff provided the vice-consul at Khorramshahr with any information that would be of interest to the military authorities.<sup>167</sup> As established by Elling, these measures militarised the refinery and its staff, ominously preparing them for occupation. The AIOC was also concerned about “presenting the British cause in the correct light”.<sup>168</sup> In this endeavour, they worked closely with the local British consul to create illustrated weeklies that were read by the Iranian employees. Even before the occupation, the AIOC and the consulate worked together to distribute pro-British war propaganda in the south and to encourage employees to make positive connections with Iranians.<sup>169</sup> These measures were evidence of the adaptability of British policy to unfavourable circumstances (both in Iran and in the war) and indicated the central position that the British placed on oil security.

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<sup>165</sup> War Cabinet Minutes, 9 August 1941, PRO, FO371/27205, E4538/9.

<sup>166</sup> Elkington (AIOC) to Gass, 25 April 1941, ArcRef 59017, Barcode: 55108, British Petroleum Archives.

<sup>167</sup> Notes of Meeting Held at Walton-on-Thames, 13 May 1941 in Elkington (AIOC) to Gass, 25 April 1941, ArcRef 59017, Barcode 55108, British Petroleum Archives.

<sup>168</sup> Elkington (AIOC) to Gass, 25 April 1941, ArcRef 59017, Barcode 55108, British Petroleum Archives.

<sup>169</sup> Elkington (AIOC) to Gass, 25 April 1941, ArcRef 59017, Barcode 55108, British Petroleum Archives.

Oil was both an economic and political interest for Britain in Iran. This resource played a crucial strategic role during economic difficulties and was an essential military resource. The oil disputes with the Iranian government and with Iranian labour activists challenged Britain's control and dominance over the oil, which is where the Tudeh featured considerably at the end of occupation. As the following chapters will further show, the continued importance of oil meant that the British government and the AIOC went to considerable lengths to protect their position in the south, shifting policy and approach to accommodate this vital asset.

### 1.6 Expanding political influence

In the months leading up to the 1941 occupation, the British government and diplomatic service in Iran started to explore ways through which they could expand their political influence. This new approach stemmed from a growing frustration with Reza Shah, who they regarded as difficult, arbitrary and anti-British. The legation in Tehran presented him as pro-German, which further pushed London to see him negatively and to opt for a more aggressive approach in order to ensure that their interests were protected. Britain's change in policy also resulted in a growing interest among the British diplomats in Iran towards influencing Iranian politics. Before the occupation, efforts came in the form of encouraging political reform and the promotion of British education and culture. The British legation in Tehran, in presenting this new policy to London, noted that "Great Britain could hardly recover the position which she formerly held in Iran unless such successes are accompanied by an improvement in the general condition, both economic

and political, of the masses".<sup>170</sup> However, this belief that it needed to promote political changes to reinstate its position and influence laid at odds with the forced occupation of Iran. Throughout the occupation, their political interest in Iran evolved from backing reform-minded politicians to reverting back to traditional figures who could maintain Britain's image and interests. This in turn reflected Britain's changing place and role in Iran as the dynamics of the war evolved. It is within this paradigm that attitude towards the Tudeh developed which, during the occupation, manifested a representation of the political change Britain sought to promote and as a threat to its political legacy in Iran.

Criticism towards Reza Shah and his government became more apparent in British legation and consulate reports from the mid-1930s. In the eyes of the Tabriz consulate writing to London, the Iranian government was scandalous and dishonest while Reza Shah was amassing personal wealth at the expense of his country.<sup>171</sup> These accusations of corruption came from all over the country. The British consul in Shiraz in November 1938 described Iranian officials as inefficient and susceptible to bribery<sup>172</sup>, while accusations of mismanagement and corruption came from the British consulate in Ahwaz.<sup>173</sup> These complaints encouraged the legation to think that there were deep-rooted issues in the running of Iran, stemming directly from Reza Shah's rule.<sup>174</sup> Lambton,

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<sup>170</sup> Intelligence Summary (Underwood) in Bullard to Halifax, 23 May 1940, E1547/124/34, PRO in Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965, Volume 11: 1939–1942, Dr R M Buttell (General Editor), Robert L Jarman (Research Editor) (Wiltshire: Archive Editions Limited, Antony Rowe, 1997), 171.

<sup>171</sup> Extract from Tabriz Diary No 7 for August 1935 to Foreign Office, 7 October 1935 in Robin Bidwell (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, vol. 28 Persia XIII, September 1935–December 1939, B Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East, 1918–1939 (University Publications of America, 1994).

<sup>172</sup> Shiraz to Tehran, 21 November 1938, PRO, 239/3/38, FO248/1403.

<sup>173</sup> Ahwaz to Tehran, 4 January 1938, PRO, 239/1/38, FO248/1403.

<sup>174</sup> For instance, this was the case with regards to the forced unveiling of women. British Indian subjects had to be protected by the British legation and consulates. Tabriz (Urquhart) to Tehran (Butler), 3 February 1936, E1155/405/34 in Robin Bidwell (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, vol. 28 Persia XIII, September 1935–December 1939, B Turkey, Iran, and the Middle East, 1918–1939 (University Publications of America, 1994).

in assessing Reza Shah, later described him as a dictator, power-hungry and depriving the population of political say and experience. She described that he had “failed to create a situation in which the unimpaired faculties of the people could find scope in effective and creative social action”.<sup>175</sup> In this regard, her statement represented British indignation towards the lack of political freedom under Reza Shah and that he was hostile to the British. Writing in 1943, Lambton was likely trying to re-emphasise the need for the occupation by showing that it had freed Iranians from Reza Shah’s oppressive rule. From July 1940, Bullard presented the Iranian government as anti-British to the Foreign Office.<sup>176</sup> These intertwined elements of a poor opinion of Reza Shah and wanting to improve British presence presented an opportunity to promote British political values in Iran.

With growing anti-British sentiment being witnessed, the British masked their anxiety about their position in the country behind ostensible concern regarding Iran’s political direction. In their work on imperialism and democracy, James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer described democracy as a “convenient ideological cover that provides the agents of imperialism with the means of justifying their interventions and other projections of imperial power”.<sup>177</sup> It is thus insightful here to draw upon Indian colonial administrators, who highlighted the importance of an English education to promote modernity, democracy and political change.<sup>178</sup> Although this was anachronistic even at

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<sup>175</sup> Lambton, ‘Persia’, 13–14.

<sup>176</sup> Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Halifax), 29 July 1940, E2325/621/34 in Malcolm Yapp (Ed.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, vol. 3 Persia and Afghanistan, January 1940–December 1941, B Near and Middle East (University Publications of America, 1997).

<sup>177</sup> James Petras and Henry Veltmeyer, “Imperialism and Democracy: Convergence and Divergence”, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol.42(2) (May 2012), 298.

<sup>178</sup> Stanley Kurtz, ‘Democratic Imperialism: A Blueprint’, *Policy Review* 118 (2003), 6–7.

the time of Reza Shah, it still held some value for policymakers who were trained in the ICS and revealed the British mindset in Iran.

British policymakers continued to pursue similar approaches and policies even after 1941. In Iran, the intentional spread of British culture and language were tools through which a British way of life and politics could be promoted. Within the British legation in Tehran, these activities were coordinated by the office of the press attaché. The British consulates were also tasked with spreading propaganda to the local population.<sup>179</sup> Before the occupation, the *Journal de Téhéran* was a vehicle for carrying daily news items from the empire programmes of the BBC.<sup>180</sup> Morteza Nouraei has further described how British political culture influenced some of the earlier constitutionalists, who were inspired by the British parliamentary system.<sup>181</sup> The promotion of British political culture in Iran was vital to instigating changes susceptible to British influence. As the next chapter will show, this propaganda was increased substantially and even led to some Tudeh members helping to translate a range of these programmes.

It has been demonstrated here that the British became more interested in the political development of Iran before the occupation, a shift driven by a concern over position and influence. Thus, it is no coincidence that the inability to control the Pahlavi monarch and a shift in approach about their political position resulted in an increased interest in Iran's political development. Even before the occupation, the British government, aided by the

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<sup>179</sup> Morteza Nouraei, 'Ordinary People and the Reception of British Culture in Iran, 1909–1941', in *Anglo-Iranian Relations since 1800*, Martin (Ed.), 74–75.

<sup>180</sup> Seymour to Eden, 30 January 1937, E1435/1435/34, PRO, in *Iran Political Diaries, 1881–1965*, Volume 10: 1935–1938, Dr R M Buttell (General Editor), Robert L Jarman (Research Editor) (Wiltshire: Archive Editions Limited, Antony Rowe, 1997), 283; see also Sreberny and Torfeh, *Persian Service*, 7–12.

<sup>181</sup> Nouraei, 'Ordinary People and the Reception of British Culture in Iran, 1909–1941', 75.

diplomatic service in the country began to encourage changes in Iran that relied on British direction. Britain's political legacy changed considerably during the occupation and as will be shown, when British interests were again protected by Tehran, it wound down its need to be political influential. These changes were concurrent with fluctuations in attitudes towards the Tudeh.

### 1.7 Relations with the Soviet Union

British perceptions of Soviet policy in Iran greatly impacted on attitudes towards the Tudeh, from being treated either as a useful ally or a Soviet political tool. In addition, British perceptions depended on the status of the British–Soviet relationship. When Axis might was at its height, Soviet and British relations were cordial and geared towards the war effort, while the Tudeh was not re seen as a part of a Soviet agenda; but after 1943, with the re-emergence of suspicions over Soviet intentions, the Tudeh was treated as a vehicle of Soviet influence. The adaptability of British policy in Iran easily accommodated both views and attitudes toward the Soviet Union and the Tudeh. As will be seen, British diplomats were able to see the Soviets as a strategic ally, when necessary, despite underlying tensions. Key to understanding these shifts is the historical trajectory of British attitude towards the Soviets. Soviet policy and activities in Iran until 1941 will be briefly presented here, followed by a discussion about British attitude towards the Soviet Union from the Bolshevik revolution until the eve of the occupation.

The October revolution was welcomed by many Iranians as it loosened Russia's military grip on the country. Following the conclusion of the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the Soviets

agreed to evacuate their armies from Iranian territory,<sup>182</sup> breaking Russian domination in Iran possessed since the constitutional crisis of the early twentieth century.<sup>183</sup> The new relationship was enshrined by the Russo-Persian Treaty of Friendship, signed in February 1921.<sup>184</sup> In addition to abandoning Russian imperial concessions, economic interests and unpaid loans, it recognised Iranian national sovereignty and called for negotiations in disputes. However, it contained a clause that the Soviet Union could militarily intervene in case it was threatened by a third party, which would be enforced during the Second World War.<sup>185</sup> Indeed, despite the new terms, Martin Sicker has argued that the Soviets continued to enact Russian imperialist policy over Iran, as seen through their support of the Jangalis in Gilan.<sup>186</sup> Conversely, Oliver Bast has presented Soviet policy as more nuanced, describing it as inconsistent at times and subject to contradictory approaches within the Bolshevik party.<sup>187</sup> Indeed, this explains the decision by the Soviets to withdraw support from the Jangalis in 1921.<sup>188</sup> What does emerge here is that the Soviets quickly abandoned their plans to spread the Bolshevik revolution into and across Iran in exchange for peace with Tehran. Subsequently, the Soviets pursued policies to support better relations with Reza Shah and abandoned ambitions of expansion. While they wanted to support Iranian Left-wing parties and local trade unions, Moscow

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<sup>182</sup> British and White Russian forces occupied Hamadan, Kermanshah and Qazvin. Amanat, *Iran*, 401–402.

<sup>183</sup> This was in part sanctioned by the British, with whom the Russians had signed an agreement in 1907 to end their rivalry in Iran: with the north in Russian hands and the south under British control. In it, they formalised their dealings in each of those territories. With regards to Persia, they agreed to respect its integrity and independence. Firuz Kazemzadeh, “Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907,” *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, II/1, 68–70.

<sup>184</sup> Iran formally recognised the Soviet Union in 1918, one of the first countries to do so. Amanat, *Iran*, 421.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*, 421 – 422.

<sup>186</sup> Sicker, *The Bear and the Lion: Soviet Imperialism and Iran*, 3.

<sup>187</sup> Oliver Bast, “Duping the British and Outwitting the Russians? Iran’s Foreign Policy, the “Bolshevik Threat” and the Genesis of the Soviet–Iranian Treaty of 1921’, in Cronin (Ed.), *Iranian–Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions since 1800*, 265.

<sup>188</sup> The Soviet representative in Tehran at the time, Theodor Rothstein wanted to normalise relations with Iran and sanctioned the evacuation of Soviet troops from Gilan in February 1921. The majority of the Jangali movement surrendered, forcing Kuchik Khan to flee into the Caspian Mountain region where he died of exposure in October 1921. Amanat, *Iran*, 425–426.

prioritised better relations with Tehran.<sup>189</sup> Even when Reza Shah began a series of repressive policies towards the Left in Iran during the 1930s, Moscow pursued a non-violent approach to protect its interests.<sup>190</sup> Stalin's government instead concentrated on strengthening economic ties.<sup>191</sup>

Another important element of Soviet policy was its attitude towards the British. Officially, they were committed to undermining British presence in the Middle East, especially in regions close to the Soviet Union.<sup>192</sup> However Bast's research showed that the Soviets wanted to bluff the British by appearing aggressive.<sup>193</sup> Indeed, Soviet criticism of the British never bubbled into direct confrontation over Iran.<sup>194</sup> The proceedings of the first and last congress of the peoples of the east, held in Baku in September 1920 enshrined the Soviet Union's interest in fighting British imperialism.<sup>195</sup> To support this, the Soviets vehemently condemned the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919. On 28 August 1919, Foreign Minister Georgii Chicherin vocalised criticism towards the British government<sup>196</sup> and directly spoke to the workers and peasants of Iran, where he reiterated the Soviet government's rejection of the agreement.<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>189</sup> Afshin Matin-Asgari, "Twentieth Century Iran's Political Prisoners", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.42(5) (September 2006), 382.

<sup>190</sup> Atabaki, "The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran", 312–313.

<sup>191</sup> N M Mamedova, 'Russia li. Iranian-Soviet Relations (1917–1991)', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, July 2009.

<sup>192</sup> Madeira, "Because I don't trust him, We are Friends", 30.

<sup>193</sup> Bast, 'Duping the British and Outwitting the Russians? Iran's Foreign Policy, the "Bolshevik Threat" and the Genesis of the Soviet-Iranian Treaty of 1921', 265.

<sup>194</sup> Initially, this was to avoid opening a new front while being involved in the Russian civil war. Robert Service, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century* (London: Penguin, 2009), 102

<sup>195</sup> Atabaki, "The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran", 300.

<sup>196</sup> Cosroe Chaqueri, 'Communism i. In Persia to 1941', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, October 2011.

<sup>197</sup> Rezun, *The Soviet Union and Iran*, 15.

Nonetheless, the British harboured suspicions of Soviet intentions from the beginning and portrayed it as ever-present.<sup>198</sup> Britain's immediate reaction to the October revolution in 1917 was one of concern and panic as it removed a key ally in the war against the Central Powers. They were also worried about how it could inspire Britain's own labour movement. The Wilson government in the United States voiced similar concerns.<sup>199</sup> Policy towards the Soviets was derived from what little information the British government could obtain, which was usually either unreliable or presented through the prejudices of the intelligence and diplomatic services.<sup>200</sup> The intelligence services in Britain harboured strong bias which pervaded into its reports, exaggerating the Soviet threat as a way to encourage the government to develop more hard line policies.<sup>201</sup> There thus existed a gap between the Soviet "realities" of subversion and the British official perceptions of it.<sup>202</sup> It should be noted that these suspicions were not one-sided and the Soviets were also weary of British policy in Iran and anti-British sentiment existed among Soviet diplomats and intelligence officers.<sup>203</sup>

Due to the war and the practical nature of policymakers, these suspicions were suspended for a wider purpose. After Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Soviets joined in an alliance with Britain and pursued policies in tandem with British war aims, enshrined in a military agreement against Germany signed on 12 July

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<sup>198</sup> Madeira, "Because I don't trust him, We are Friends", 30.

<sup>199</sup> R G Suny, "Reading Russia and the Soviet Union in the twentieth century: how the 'West' wrote its history of the USSR" in *The Cambridge History of Russia, Vol. III The Twentieth Century*, Dominic Lieven (Ed.) (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006), 9.

<sup>200</sup> They looked down on the Bolsheviks and sneered at the prospect of a similar occurrence in Britain; this prejudice toward proletarian action permeated governmental policy. Madeira, "Because I don't trust him, We are Friends", 29-30.

<sup>201</sup> Madeira, "Because I don't trust him, We are Friends", 31.

<sup>202</sup> Madeira, *Britannia and the Bear*, 1.

<sup>203</sup> Nikolay A Kozhanov, 'The USSR and the Allied Occupation of Iran in August 1941: The Untold Story of a Difficult Decision', in *Russians in Iran: Diplomacy and Power in the Qajar Era and Beyond*, ed. Rudi Matthee and Alena Andreeva (London: IB Tauris, 2018), 310.

1941.<sup>204</sup> Jackson has pointed out the correlation between the Soviet entry into the war and the decision to invade and occupy Iran.<sup>205</sup> Britain had already refused Reza Shah access to protection and arms, who initially feared a possible Soviet invasion.<sup>206</sup> His suspicions were further heightened when Stalin demanded the use of Iranian airfields and access to oil, while also calling for the release of Iranian communists.<sup>207</sup> However, with regards to Iran, the Soviets expressed concerns over British actions and were suspicious of their military ambitions in Iran before the occupation, especially if Iran were to be occupied completely and only by British troops.<sup>208</sup> In his thorough study of rivalries in world politics, William Thompson described how strategic rivalries can emerge despite incompatibility, unacceptance of the other's belief system and dispute over territory, influence and status. Indeed, as can be seen, these characteristics existed within the British-Soviet rivalry over Iran as also seen through the Soviets' initial concerns over British designs in Iran. They eventually came together because of overlapping goals and the emergence of a common enemy, but not without tensions.<sup>209</sup>

The material benefits of Iran were not lost on either and the securing of Iranian resources was vital for the war effort. Jackson accurately pointed out that geography and resources increased the Persian Gulf's strategic prominence in the war.<sup>210</sup> In a letter to Stalin, Churchill outlined British interests: "Our only interests there [in Iran] are: first as a

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<sup>204</sup> Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of Great Powers*, Online, Chapter 7.

<sup>205</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 133-134; Immediately following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Soviets warned Tehran of an impending pro-German coup. Rezun, *The Soviet Union and Iran*, 356-357.

<sup>206</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 16-17.

<sup>207</sup> In addition, in March 1940, Soviet forces amounting to 5 infantry divisions, a cavalry division and 3 tank divisions arrived in Baku. *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>208</sup> Kozhanov, 'The USSR and the Allied Occupation of Iran in August 1941: The Untold Story of a Difficult Decision', 310.

<sup>209</sup> William R Thompson, 'Identifying Rivals and Rivalries in World Politics', *International Studies Quarterly*, Vol.45(4) (2001), 559-560.

<sup>210</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 5.

barrier against German penetration eastwards; and secondly, as a through route for supplies to the Caspian basin".<sup>211</sup> Under Reza Shah, extensive road construction had occurred throughout Iran alongside the Trans-Iranian railway that connected the Caspian Sea with the Persian Gulf.<sup>212</sup> The Soviets knew that Iran offered the best overland military and supply route from the Persian Gulf to the Soviet border<sup>213</sup>, especially as the alternative route through the Arctic was deemed too difficult.<sup>214</sup> Initially however, Stalin considered pursuing a non-military policy with regards to achieving this access.<sup>215</sup> As already established, the oil resource in Iran (and the rest of the Persian Gulf) was vital for Britain's wartime strategy and was needed for its armies, ships and air force. In addition to this, the need to prevent Hitler from capturing Iran's oil wells and the refinery of Abadan was paramount.<sup>216</sup> With Iran holding the largest proven oil reserves accessible to Britain<sup>217</sup>, it was estimated that 25% of Britain's military capabilities would be lost if the oilfields of Abadan and Bahrain were captured.<sup>218</sup> A combination of these factors propelled Britain to pursue a strategic alliance with the Soviet Union despite previous inhibitions.

The occupation and alliance placed them in a position of cooperation, whereby suspicions were put on hold, which was necessary to effectively and successfully occupy Iran together. In preparation, the Soviets were portrayed positively in Britain, and concerns

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<sup>211</sup> David Reynolds and Vladimir Pechatnov (Ed.), *The Kremlin Letters: Stalin's Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 59.

<sup>212</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 222.

<sup>213</sup> Kozhanov, "The Pretexts and Reasons for the Allied Invasion of Iran in 1941", 490.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, 480.

<sup>215</sup> Kozhanov, "The USSR and the Allied Occupation of Iran in August 1941: The Untold Story of a Difficult Decision", 304.

<sup>216</sup> For a concise discussion on the importance of oil in British policy, see Behraves, "The Formative Years of Anglo-Iranian Relations 1907-1953".

<sup>217</sup> Kozhanov, "The Pretexts and Reasons for the Allied Invasion of Iran in 1941", 493.

<sup>218</sup> Martin Gilbert, *The Second World War*, n.d., 348.

of Soviet intentions seemed to have disappeared or, at the very least, were disguised by positive language.<sup>219</sup> Although the British press were careful to make the distinction between support for the Soviets and support given to communism, the Soviets were portrayed as the most important part of the war effort in the media.<sup>220</sup> Britain thus still regarded the Soviets as ideologically different but saw the strategic benefits of alliance against the Axis powers. Notably, Churchill remained anti-Bolshevik under the surface and while he never abandoned his fear of Soviet expansionism, a policy of cooperation was prioritised.<sup>221</sup>

Here it has been demonstrated that although there were historical tensions between Britain and the Soviet Union, they came together against a common enemy, Germany. While Britain was preparing to increase its presence and reach in Iran, the Soviet factor determined the course for a joint invasion and occupation of the country. While this drew on the precedence established during the previous world war, the new occupation witnessed larger dimensions and introduced an ideological element, an inclusion which British policymakers remained cautious of. These existing suspicions later impacted on British attitudes towards the Tudeh but in times of war, the alliance was prioritised to promote cooperation, which also had its own implications on how the Tudeh was viewed.

In sum, the nature of British policy with regards to Iran was fluid enough to respond to changing circumstances, to maintain interests and to adopt new priorities when the need arose. The main policy factors mentioned in this chapter brought Britain on to a path

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<sup>219</sup> Claire Knight, 'The Making of the Soviet Ally in British Wartime Popular Press', *Journalism Studies*, Vol.14(4) (2013), 487.

<sup>220</sup> Knight, "The making of the Soviet ally in British wartime popular press", 487-488.

<sup>221</sup> Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 238.

which sought to restore its dominance and influence after the outbreak of the Second World War. The Tudeh featured within all of these policy interests throughout the occupation. Such nuances within British policy showed that it was always able to pursue different methods to protect their position and interests. As will be seen in this study, the flexible and adaptable nature of British policymaking is key to understanding how different attitudes were adopted towards the party in response to shifts in the war, the occupation and the emergence of policy concerns over the Soviet role in Iran.

## 2. Invasion and occupation

The final decision to invade and occupy Iran came after the Soviet Union entered an alliance with Britain. Justifications for the invasion were already in existence: Germany's perceived closeness with Iran, Britain's growing frustration at Reza Shah, and oil disputes. These came to the fore when Iran was earmarked for its suitability as a land route for supplies to the Soviet Union. For the British, the Soviets were necessary allies, but underlying suspicions remained. The new cooperation was managed by the diplomatic service in Iran, supported by a flexible attitude that could mask apprehension in favour of collaboration. This section illustrates the circumstances leading up to the invasion and occupation of the country, which formed the immediate circumstances within which the Tudeh emerged and first featured within British policy.

In 1941, the war was not going well for Britain. Most of western Europe had fallen and the German army in North Africa was inching closer to Egypt after capturing Cyrenaica in eastern Libya in April 1941.<sup>222</sup> Eastwards in Iraq, the Hashemite Monarchy had broken

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<sup>222</sup> Gilbert, *The Second World War*, 168.

off relations with Germany, but the Italian legation remained open in Baghdad and became a regional centre of Axis propaganda. In March 1941, pro-German politician Rashid Ali Gilani became prime minister, cut off Britain's access to Iraqi oil and concluded a treaty with Italy.<sup>223</sup> He directly challenged Britain's supply line, prompting the British army in the Persian Gulf to deploy a military force to Basra.<sup>224</sup> By May 1941, Baghdad was surrounded. Rashid Ali together with German and Italian officials and the ex-Mufti of Jerusalem Mohammed Amin al-Husseini fled first to Iran and then to Europe under the protection of the Axis powers.<sup>225</sup> The Rashid Ali coup deeply troubled the British government and served as a warning that the security of their position in the Middle East could be destabilised should nearby Iran turn pro-German. Their armed intervention in Iraq thus created an immediate precedent as to the effectiveness of military intervention in neutralising a pro-German government in the Middle East.

Due to the mutually beneficial motivations held by Britain and the Soviet Union, it was thereby highly advantageous for these powers to invade and occupy Iran, thus securing the oil and access to the infrastructure and resources Iran had to offer. Stalin was however hesitant at first about asserting force against Iran and in the summer of 1941, continued engaging with Iran over diplomatic matters. It was only with the joint efforts of the British ambassador to Moscow Richard Stafford Cripps and Eden that the Soviets were eventually persuaded to agree to a joint military operation.<sup>226</sup> This suggests that the

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<sup>223</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 55–63.

<sup>224</sup> For a detailed discussion of this, see *Ibid.*, 66–107.

<sup>225</sup> An armistice was signed, and the regent was reinstated. Britain was able to reoccupy the country. Winston Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume III Their Grand Alliance* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2014), 440; see also Stefanie Katharine Wichhart, "Intervention: Britain, Egypt, and Iraq during World War II" (PhD Diss., The University of Texas at Austin, 2007), 105–146.

<sup>226</sup> Kozhanov, 'The USSR and the Allied Occupation of Iran in August 1941: The Untold Story of a Difficult Decision', 306–307.

Soviets did not have a definitive policy towards Iran prior to the occupation. While Daniel Todman highlighted the pressures faced within the British government to support the Soviet war machine<sup>227</sup>, he failed to address the awkwardness surrounding the decision to militarily occupy a neutral country. Reza Shah had declared neutrality soon after the war started and wanted to form ties with the Allies, but, as Amanat pointed out, this had no effect as Reza Shah proposal for a defence pact with Britain was rejected.<sup>228</sup> The decision to invade was made quickly. The Soviets used the pretext of self-defence, as stipulated in Article 6 of the Soviet–Iranian Treaty of 1921,<sup>229</sup> while the British government’s official pretext for the August 1941 invasion was Reza Shah’s refusal to expel German personnel.<sup>230</sup> It was a swift campaign, with the British Army invading from across the Iraqi border and with the Soviets from the north, both facing little resistance from the Iranian Army. On 9 September, the Iranian government surrendered and, a week later, Reza Shah abdicated<sup>231</sup> and was sent into exile.<sup>232</sup> By the end of the military campaign, Stalin’s optimism over the joint invasion was clear: “The Iranian affair in fact turned out not at all badly. The common operations of British and Soviet troops secured the issues in advance. So, will it be always in the future wherever our forces act together”.<sup>233</sup> His statement captured the sense of optimism surrounding Soviet–British cooperation. Indeed, the success of the occupation and the war relied heavily on their ability to maintain the alliance, despite the evident underlying tensions. Subsequent

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<sup>227</sup> Todman, *Britain’s War: Into Battle, 1937–1941*, 690–697.

<sup>228</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 494–495.

<sup>229</sup> When the Bolshevik government came to power, they declared the 1907 Agreement null and void. Soli Shahvar and Emil Abramoff, “Russian Archival Sources for the Study of the Iranian Communist Party: The Pre-Tudeh Years, 1917–1942”, *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.43(3) (November 2015), 380.

<sup>230</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 497.

<sup>231</sup> The abdication of Reza Shah has often been portrayed as a product of Allied design. However, the circumstances that led to this relinquishing of the throne were more complicated. According to Bullard, the Allies never made a formal request for the abdication. Moreover, by this point, Reza Shah did not enjoy the support of either society or the Majles. Katouzian, *The Persians*, 230.

<sup>232</sup> Ali Ansari, *Modern Iran: the Pahlavis and After*, Second edition (London: Harlow, 2007), 103.

<sup>233</sup> Reynolds and Pechatnov, *The Kremlin Letters*, 41.

chapters will track the progression of their relationship, the occupation and the war, thus placing the Tudeh's standing in British policy within the wider framework of the war itself.

### 3. Historical background of the Tudeh Party

This thesis would not be complete without an understanding of the political and historical context within which a party like the Tudeh emerged. The party went through a number of ideological phases during the occupation, affecting how the British regarded it. At the start, it had to appear as part of the war effort, initially staying away from an overtly communist label. Nonetheless, the party still had a distinctly Marxist make-up: its founders were either Marxist-inclined, had been exposed to Left-leaning workers or were part of the early social democratic movement. Its first programmes proclaimed liberal values but, as the war progressed and their popularity increased, they adopted more Marxist causes, embodied by their focus on workers' rights in Iran. Looking back on its own history, the Tudeh was keen to draw links with Iran's social democratic past where social democracy was tantamount to Marxism. The party was not the only one to do so, in hindsight, both British and US diplomats and intelligence services also drew trajectories between the party and Iran's socialist past. Here, an overview of Iran's social democratic movement will be provided to understand the intellectual development of the Tudeh and to show that while direct links were tenuous, the party was still a part of Iran's social democratic heritage.

### 3.1 History of Iranian social democracy

In order to fully appreciate the significance of the Tudeh Party, a history of Iranian socialism in the twentieth century will be recounted here. Years later, the Tudeh regarded themselves as “the heir of the Social Democratic Movement... and later the Communist Party of Iran [ICP]”<sup>234</sup> as a way to strengthen its political heritage. However as will be shown the Tudeh represented a new phase of social democracy and while its early founders had some links with the nascent socialist movement in Iran, it is hard to draw a straight line from the Constitutional Revolution to the ICP to the Tudeh. Nonetheless, the Tudeh was still a product of Iran’s social democratic heritage. Ghods argued that the ICP strongly influenced the Tudeh in terms of its organisation and ideology, claiming that Reza Shah’s repression of exiled or imprisoned ICP members helped to shape the nucleus of the future Tudeh.<sup>235</sup> While these links were mostly exaggerated, in reality, some early Tudeh members were indeed a part of the nascent socialist movement, either in Iran or abroad. By presenting a history of this movement, the party’s ideological development during the occupation, as well as British understanding of the party, will be better appreciated and understood.

Behruz described the nature of social democracy in Iran as evolutionary and adaptable. Indeed, the movement went through many phases and was affected by local and international developments.<sup>236</sup> At the start of the twentieth century, a social democratic faction within the Democrat Party took part in the Constitutional Revolution,

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<sup>234</sup> Tudeh Party of Iran, “44 Years of Struggle Against Imperialism and Reaction: A Brief History of the Tudeh Party of Iran,” London, October 1985, People’s History Museum.

<sup>235</sup> M Reza Ghods, “The Iranian Communist Movement under Reza Shah”, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol.26(4) (1990), 506.

<sup>236</sup> Maziar Behruz, *Tarikh-e shureshiyan-e armankhah dar Iran* (Tehran: Akhtaran, 2006), 97. This was echoed in Ashgar Shirazi’s assessment of communist development in the country. Shirazi, *Moderniteh, shobbeh va demokراسi*, 319.

subsequently expanding and developing throughout the 1920s, and ultimately forming the basis of social democracy and Marxism in Iran.<sup>237</sup> These ideas and movements initially arrived in Persia in the early 1900s through Persian oil workers in Baku, who had crossed the border in Azerbaijan to seek employment.<sup>238</sup> Both Atabaki and Chaqueri have emphasised the importance of the Iranian northwest and beyond (Azerbaijan, Gilan, Mazandaran, Baku, the Caucasus) as the gateway for socialist and communist ideas to enter Iran.<sup>239</sup> Through the Constitutional Revolution, social democracy found a platform to expand. Atabaki has described these early social democrats as the “pioneers in forming and organising parties as a political institution in Iran”.<sup>240</sup> Their impact on the political landscape of Iran was significant and novel, especially when juxtaposed with the autocratic Qajars. The Tudeh later drew upon this legacy and placed itself as part of this historical continuation, establishing itself as the rightful heir of social democracy, emerging after the authoritarian regime of Reza Shah.

In 1906, the Iranian constitutional code was signed into law and the first Majles was opened.<sup>241</sup> In addition to the Social Democratic Party of Iran which was founded in Baku in the same year, the social democratic arm of the Democrat Party were the main parties seen to espouse Marxism.<sup>242</sup> The social democrats were made up of intellectuals who

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<sup>237</sup> Behruz, *Tarikh-e shureshiyan-e armankhah dar Iran*, 101.

<sup>238</sup> Kamran Matin, ‘Democracy without Capitalism: Retheorising Iran’s Constitutional Revolution’, *Middle East Critique*, Vol.21(1) (2012), 51; see also Janet Afary, *The Iranian Constitutional Revolution 1906–1911: grassroots democracy, social democracy and the origins of feminism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 22.

<sup>239</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan and Cosroe Chaqueri, The Russo–Caucasian Origins of the Iranian Left: Social Democracy in Modern Iran* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001).

<sup>240</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 35.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>242</sup> The Democrat Party was one of the two most important blocs in the Majles, alongside the Moderates. According to Mansoureh Ettehadieh, they were “the most powerful party in the Second Majles”. Mansoureh Ettehadieh, ‘Constitutional Revolution v. Political Parties of the Constitutional Period’, in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2011.

were influenced by European liberal ideas and Russian socialism who wanted to introduce land reforms, public education, social reform and the political inclusion of women.<sup>243</sup> Suleiman Mirza Eskanderi, the first leader of the Tudeh, took on the leadership of the social democrats in 1910.<sup>244</sup> As such, in terms of policy and leadership, there were indeed direct links between the early social democrats and the Tudeh.

Another important moment for the social democratic movement in Iran was the 1917 Bolshevik revolution. The emergence of Bolshevism under Lenin's leadership introduced international revolution and a vanguard leadership that controlled the direction of the state.<sup>245</sup> With the creation of the Soviet Union, they wanted to export communist revolutionary ideology abroad.<sup>246</sup> The manifesto of the Comintern, founded in 1919<sup>247</sup>, embodied this shift: "Sweeping aside the half-heartedness, lies, and corruptions of the outlived Socialist Parties, we Communists, united in the Third International, consider ourselves the direct continuation of the heroic endeavours and martyrdom of a long line of revolutionary generations..."<sup>248</sup> In a pamphlet about their history, the Tudeh wrote of the Bolsheviks' role in promoting socialism from early on: "Between 1901 and 1902, the central organ of the Bolshevik Party, *Iskra*, was sent to Baku from Berlin via Tabriz. The operation was organised by Lenin himself and Kropkaya".<sup>249</sup> While this was an exaggeration to say the least, especially considering there is no evidence to suggest that Lenin was even interested in spreading communism to Iran, this statement indicates how

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<sup>243</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 364–365.

<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*, 364–365.

<sup>245</sup> Service, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, 63.

<sup>246</sup> Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East: From World War II to Gorbachev*, 8.

<sup>247</sup> At the founding congress, Mirza Baqer-Oghli Hosseynzadeh, an Edalat party member, was present. Atabaki, "The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran", 299.

<sup>248</sup> Quoted from Hallas, *The Comintern: A History of the Third International*, 10.

<sup>249</sup> M Omidvar, "Brief History of the Tudeh Party of Iran," The Tudeh Party of Iran, March 1993, <https://www.tudehpartyiran.org/en/documents/2148->

the Tudeh established their connection to early Bolshevism, thus creating direct links with the Soviet Union.

Another key moment of the social democratic movement in Iran was the establishment of the Soviet Socialist Republic of Gilan in June 1920.<sup>250</sup> The Jangali movement, supported by the Soviets in the crucial months of its struggle, was the first (and only) time a socialist state existed in Iran, described by Matin-Asgari as the “only Asian country outside the former Tsarist empire into which the Bolshevik revolution directly spread”.<sup>251</sup> Notably, Kuchik Khan and his socialist colleagues received a lot of material and ideological support in Gilan.<sup>252</sup> Although the Jangali leader was not Marxist and saw the alliance with the Soviets as a pragmatic one, Dailami denoted their symbolic importance for Iran’s socialist movement.<sup>253</sup> The socialist state did not survive beyond the withdrawal of Soviet support, but the Left movement in Iran nonetheless continued to develop.<sup>254</sup> The Marxist Adalat (Justice) Party, formed in Baku by activists Assadollah Ghafar Zadeh and Bahram Agayev in 1920, changed its name to the Iranian Communist Party with Sultanzadeh as the party secretary. Jafar Pischevari, the later ADP leader, was an editor for the party’s paper, *Horriyat*.<sup>255</sup> It was also active in wider activities, participating in the First Congress of the Peoples of the East.<sup>256</sup> Domestically, they formed cells and became active among the

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<sup>250</sup> See Cosroe Chaqueri, *The Soviet Socialist Republic of Iran, 1920–1921: Birth of the Trauma* (Richmond: Curzon, 2001), which remains the most detailed account of this short-lived state.

<sup>251</sup> Afshin Matin-Asgari, ‘The Impact of Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union on Qajar and Pahlavi Iran: Notes toward a Revisionist Historiography’, in *Iranian–Russian Encounters: Empires and Revolutions since 1800*, Cronin (Ed.), 23.

<sup>252</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 410.

<sup>253</sup> Pezhmann Dailami, ‘The Bolsheviks and the Jangali Revolutionary Movement, 1915–1920’, *Cahiers du Monde russe et soviétique*, Vol.31(1), (Jan–March 1990), 55.

<sup>254</sup> Stalin supported the Gilan republic but was overruled by Lenin who decided to halt Soviet support. Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 133.

<sup>255</sup> Ghods, ‘The Iranian Communist Movement under Reza Shah’, 506–507.

<sup>256</sup> M Omidvar, ‘Brief History of the Tudeh Party of Iran,’ *The Tudeh Party of Iran*, March 1993, <https://www.tudehpartyiran.org/en/documents/2148->

workers through their leadership of the unions, an area in which the Tudeh asserted influence in politicising workers. The ICP were active among the oil workers and had also led a strike of textile workers in Isfahan in May 1931.<sup>257</sup> The rise of the ICP was suddenly halted in 1931 when Reza Shah passed a law prohibiting any group that was unconstitutional or that contained communist ideology. While the ICP itself was fraught by infighting and differences in opinion, this change in the law severely handicapped the party's rise. Indeed, many of its members were imprisoned or fled abroad, either to Germany or to the Soviet Union, where they became victims of Stalin's purges.<sup>258</sup>

The ICP was one of many Left-wing political groups to be targeted by Reza Shah's laws. In the 1930s, a loose group of Marxist intellectuals, who later formed the basis of the Tudeh, emerged. Collectively known as the Group of 53, the basis of this group was formed abroad among the Iranian students who were sent to study in Germany where they were exposed to the German social democratic movement and witnessed, first-hand, the rise of fascism in Germany. In Berlin, two students, Taqi Arani and Morteza Alavi, older brother of Bozorg Alavi, became politically active, organising the Iranian students' union.<sup>259</sup> Khalil Maliki was also in Berlin at the time studying chemistry and soon became involved with the Iranian student movement there.<sup>260</sup> They oversaw the publication of two newspapers: *Peykar* (Battle) and *Setar-e Sorkh* (Red Star).<sup>261</sup> Upon Arani's return to

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<sup>257</sup> Ghods, "The Iranian Communist Movement under Reza Shah", 508.

<sup>258</sup> Chaqueri, "Communism in Persia to 1941", October 2011; see also, Touraj Atabaki, 'Incommodious Hosts, Invidious Guests: The Life and Times of Iranian Revolutionaries in the Soviet Union, 1921-39', in *Reformers and Revolutionaries in Modern Iran: New Perspectives on the Iranian Left*, Stephanie Cronin (Ed.) (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2004).

<sup>259</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 7.

<sup>260</sup> Accusations of him being communist led him to lose his tuition fees. Katouzian, *Khaterat-e siyasi-ye Khalil Maliki*, 22.

<sup>261</sup> Morteza Alavi caught the attention of the Iranian government. He fled to the Soviet Union, where he became a victim of Stalin's purges, dying in a gulag in Uzbekistan. Hasan Mirabedini, 'Bozorg Alavi', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, August 2014.

Iran in 1930, his circle attracted Iraj Eskanderi, Suleiman Mirza Eskanderi 's nephew, and Bozorg Alavi. They founded the scientific journal *Donya* (The World), which featured Marxist writings and materials.<sup>262</sup>

When narrating their own history, the Tudeh regarded the Arani group as a communist party.<sup>263</sup> In reality, it is difficult to ascertain Arani's real intentions, and notably, Soviet support for this group has been contested as there is no evidence of any links with the Soviet Union nor with the ICP at the time. According to Ghods, Arani travelled to Moscow in 1935 where he contacted the Comintern and formed a central committee with Arani as secretary-general.<sup>264</sup> Atabaki confirms that Arani met with the Comintern in the mid-1930s but asserts that he refused to cooperate with the ICP.<sup>265</sup> Chaqueri on the other hand has denied any Soviet involvement, declaring that *Donya* was independent of Moscow.<sup>266</sup> He has also claimed that Stalin and the Comintern were displeased by Arani's activities and were responsible for exposing them to the authorities.<sup>267</sup> L P Elwell-Sutton, the British press attaché from 1945 onwards saw, in his own assessment, no evidence of Soviet support for Arani's group.<sup>268</sup> While Arani's position with regards to the Soviets remains contentious, it is safe to say that, at least in the eyes of a British official, the group were largely independent from the Soviet Union.

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<sup>262</sup> Ghods, "The Iranian Communist Movement under Reza Shah", 508.

<sup>263</sup> M Omidvar, "Brief History of the Tudeh Party of Iran," The Tudeh Party of Iran, March 1993, <https://www.tudehpartyiran.org/en/documents/2148->

<sup>264</sup> Ghods, "The Iranian Communist Movement under Reza Shah", 509.

<sup>265</sup> Atabaki, 'The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran', 319.

<sup>266</sup> Cosroe Chaqueri, "Iradj Eskandary and the Tudeh Party of Iran", *Central Asian Survey*, Vol.7(4) (2007), 103.

<sup>267</sup> Chaqueri named Abdossamad Kambakhsh as a KGB operative for exposing the group to the authorities. He would later become a member of the Tudeh leadership. Ibid., 103.

<sup>268</sup> Elwell-Sutton, "Political Parties in Iran, 1941-1948", 47.

In 1937, Arani and his close associates were arrested, accused of organising strikes and translating Karl Marx's *Das Kapital* and the 'Communist Manifesto'.<sup>269</sup> According to Abrahamian, it was their activities that exposed them after a student strike at the Tehran Technical College.<sup>270</sup> It seems more likely, based on more recent research by Katouzian, that they were exposed by chance when Mohammad Shureshyian told the police that he was a member of a communist party that published *Donya* and wanted to establish a socialist republic in Iran. Their exposure to the authorities led to their imprisonment, which ironically further exposed them to Marxism. As the Group of 53, these political activists became even more committed Marxists during their time behind bars.<sup>271</sup> During his incarceration, and after receiving a 10-year sentence, Arani died.<sup>272</sup> The other members came into conflict with other imprisoned communists, especially the ICP members, clashing over ideology and strategy.<sup>273</sup> Although the Tudeh was keen to draw a linear trajectory of social democracy in Iran where the party would appear at the end of it, in truth, this was not the case. By the end of the 1930s, social democracy in Iran went through many phases with different groups vying for status and power. Under Reza Shah, the Marxist movement in Iran had been suppressed, members of the ICP and Arani's group were serving long sentences and the social democratic movements of the Constitutional Revolution had largely disappeared. At the start of the occupation, the Tudeh came to represent a movement that was broken and thus incapable of turning Iran communist, which was reflected in the British acquiescence to the party's foundation.

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<sup>269</sup> Mainly hailed from Tehran, coming from a variety of professional backgrounds. Their occupations included that of teacher, factory worker, doctor, peasant, tailor, cobbler, lawyer and businessman. Abrahamian, *Iran*, 155; For a breakdown of the group's backgrounds, see *Ibid.*, 158–161.

<sup>270</sup> They were also accused of conspiracy and communicating with communists abroad. Ervand Abrahamian, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudah and the Firqah-i Dimokrat", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.1 (1970), 298.

<sup>271</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 172–173

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, 156–157.

<sup>273</sup> While the ICP were more Azeri focused, the 53 were interested in spreading Marxism to the whole country. Ghods, "The Iranian Communist Movement under Reza Shah", 510.

However, as will be shown, the evolution of the party's ideology and its ability to carry the weight of its social democratic legacy affected how the British regarded and treated it.

### 3.2 Foundation of the Tudeh Party

The party's formation 13 days after the abdication of Reza Shah symbolised a new era in Iranian politics.<sup>274</sup> Significantly, under the occupation, Iran experienced a period of political freedom, which saw the emergence of a wide range of ideologies and approaches – with the Tudeh being one such example. Following the British–Soviet invasion and occupation, political prisoners were released<sup>275</sup> as a way to assure the Iranian public that the repressive reign of Reza Shah was over and to help soothe the sting of occupation.<sup>276</sup> Although the military occupation oversaw many deprivations of Iranian sovereignty, many institutions remained intact, such as the monarchy, government and Majles. Azimi observed that the sudden absence of Reza Shah resulted in more political expression, but also factionalism and instability.<sup>277</sup> While his observation was true at the level of the Majles, the variety of political expression outside of parliament injected new energies into the Iranian political landscape.

Of those initially released were some members of the Group of 53. 27 of the group's younger members became the Tudeh's founders and earliest adherents.<sup>278</sup> The rest of the

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<sup>274</sup> John Foran, *Fragile Resistance: Social Transformation in Iran from 1500 to the Revolution* (Oxford: Westview, 1993), 268.

<sup>275</sup> Ministry of Information (Radcliffe) to Lockhart, 14 February 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1036.

<sup>276</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 176.

<sup>277</sup> The thirteenth Majles, officially opened on 4 December 1941, proved to be lively. In the absence of Reza Shah, the deputies could now voice their frustrations and criticisms openly and freely. Azimi, *Iran*, 46–47; Abrahamian identifies four groups in the Majles: The National Union Caucus, the Patriotic Caucus, the Azerbaijani Caucus and the Justice Caucus. They disagreed over domestic issues as well as over approaches to the occupation. Abrahamian, *Iran*, 178 – 179.

<sup>278</sup> Foran, *Fragile Resistance*, 268.

group, including Bozorg Alavi, were released later in the year. The released quickly assembled on 29 September 1941, when the founding conference was held in Tehran<sup>279</sup> during which they elected a provisional committee.<sup>280</sup> As their chairman, Suleiman Mirza Eskanderi was chosen for his links with the Social Democratic Party.<sup>281</sup> The Tudeh later described that its foundation sought “to continue the work of the banned Communist Party of Iran [ICP] under the conditions of open activity.” At the beginning, this was not the case as their early goals were not specifically Marxist in nature. As suggested by Shirazi, the name was chosen to have a communist meaning but was still compatible with the anti-fascist movement.<sup>282</sup> The Tudeh pledged to firstly release members of the Group of 53 who were still imprisoned, secondly to gain official recognition, thirdly to publish a daily newspaper; and fourthly, to establish a universal programme that would attract a whole range of political backgrounds.<sup>283</sup> Superseding these goals were their main principles of achieving democracy, supporting the constitutional monarchy, safeguarding national sovereignty and promoting reforms.<sup>284</sup> These demands were not particularly radical and did not catch the attention of the British diplomats in Iran.

It is important here to examine the origins of the Tudeh–Soviet relationship, beginning with the Soviet Union’s involvement in the foundation of the party. Scholars differ on the matter. Chaqueri suggested that the formation of the Tudeh had the unspoken approval of the Allies.<sup>285</sup> Indeed, there is no evidence to suggest that the British were against its

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<sup>279</sup> Mather, “Iran’s Tudeh Party: A History of Compromises and Betrayals”, 613.

<sup>280</sup> Katouzian, *Khaterat-e siyasi-ye Khalil Maliki*, 28.

<sup>281</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 281.

<sup>282</sup> Shirazi, *Moderniteh, shobbeh va demokrasi*, 323.

<sup>283</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 281–282.

<sup>284</sup> M Omidvar, “Brief History of the Tudeh Party of Iran,” The Tudeh Party of Iran, March 1993, <https://www.tudehpartyiran.org/en/documents/2148->

<sup>285</sup> Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 48.

formation, which implies that the formation of the Tudeh had the unspoken approval of both Allies. Prior to the war, the Comintern actively encouraged communism in Iran by backing the ICP and Yusuf Eftekhari's activities in the south but abandoned their support for most of the 1930s.<sup>286</sup> The occupation saw a revival of interest and presence. Chaqueri connivingly argued that the Comintern and Soviet officials were not only present at the foundation but provided vital support for the party's start.<sup>287</sup> After all, the Comintern was no longer restricted by the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact and thus was able to resume its anti-fascist activities.<sup>290</sup> Katouzian concurred with this by stating that the founders were always more inclined towards the Soviets.<sup>291</sup> During the party's founding conference, Soviet intelligence agent Colonel Seliukov was purported to have met Suleiman Mirza Eskanderi.<sup>292</sup> The latter event is often presented as proof of Soviet involvement in the Tudeh's establishment. Abrahamian in his narrative merely states that the younger members of the Group of 53 met in Tehran to form the party without mentioning the Soviet role.<sup>293</sup> Shirazi argued that the Comintern were not keen to establish a communist party in Iran at this point.<sup>294</sup> However, it is more likely that the Soviet organisation was involved in the foundation of the party, as attested by the Comintern themselves. Despite this, it should be noted that the Soviets did not use the party to spread communism in Iran at this point and deliberately stayed away from such policies.<sup>295</sup>

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<sup>286</sup> Atabaki, 'The Comintern, the Soviet Union and Labour Militancy in Interwar Iran', 316 – 317.

<sup>287</sup> Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 13; see also Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 31.

<sup>290</sup> Hallas, *The Comintern*, 162.

<sup>291</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 234; see also Katouzian, *Khaterat-e siyasi-ye Khalil Maliki*, 28.

<sup>292</sup> Chaqueri, "Did the Soviets Play a Role in the Founding of the Tudeh Party in Iran?", 499.

<sup>293</sup> See "Cable from Dimitrov to Stalin, Molotov, Beria, and Malenkov", 9 December 1941, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGASPI, f.558. op.11, d.66, ll. 43–44. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119104>; Abrahamian, *Iran*, 281.

<sup>294</sup> Shirazi, *Moderniteh, shobbeh va demokrasi*, 323.

<sup>295</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 40.

While the involvement of the Soviets in the party's formation is evident, as the next chapter will show, the British did not treat the party as a Soviet entity and instead was approached and utilised as a part of the anti-fascist movement. The occupation's backdrop and the war's direction impacted upon how the party portrayed itself. The occupation of neutral Iran by Britain and the Soviet Union paradoxically created the space for the Tudeh to emerge and thrive. In the early years, the party's early leadership strove to remain neutral, abstaining from favouring either the British or the Soviets. But as the circumstances of the occupation shifted, the party would draw upon Iran's social democratic heritage by altering its programme and language to emerge as a party of the Left.

#### 4. Conclusion

This chapter has provided the necessary frameworks and tools to understand the position of the Tudeh in British policy during the occupation of Iran. The case study of the Tudeh can first be placed in the wider histories of the Second World War and the early Cold War, which will help link British policy attitudes with what was happening globally. As this thesis has begun to show, the attitudes and policies towards the party can be filtered through the aspects relation to the war, relations with the Soviet Union, policy towards the Left, oil, and British interest in expanding political influence. This chapter has also introduced the structure of British policymaking in Iran, which contributes to our understanding as to how policy was derived and how attitudes travelled within the vastness of the British empire. In addition, this chapter introduced the Tudeh and placed it within the narrative of Iran's social democratic legacy, which forms the basis of an understanding of the party's evolution during the occupation era, shifting from an anti-

fascist force to a communist party. As the next chapter will show, the party was forced to develop within the confines of the occupation, but this meant that because of the war, the British saw the party as a useful component of the anti-fascist campaign and were not disturbed by the party's Marxist make-up.

## Chapter 2: The Tudeh in British policy during the early years of the occupation, 1941–1943

The British–Soviet occupation triggered a new phase of British policy in Iran, one that was more involved and politically active. Under the auspices of the military occupation, the British diplomatic services became significantly involved in the day-to-day running of Iran. For the first few months, policy was prioritised towards the war effort and to stabilising the country in the aftermath of Reza Shah's abdication. During these early months of the occupation, the Tudeh was treated as part of the war effort. It pursued a wide support base and adopted a political programme that called for subtle social reforms. In line with many Left-wing parties at the time, it stood against fascism which, in this case, specifically meant Nazi Germany's influence in Iran and beyond. The party was thus viewed as a useful wartime asset by the British in Iran and was utilised accordingly.

This chapter will look at these early links and show how the Tudeh fitted in within key British policies at the time. It will begin by looking at British policy interests at the start of the occupation, which formed the overarching attitudes towards the Tudeh. This will be followed by an examination of the party's early circumstances, looking at its organisation, support base and programme. Lastly, this chapter will present how the Tudeh was perceived within the British policy interest frameworks established in the previous chapter, within the relationship with the Soviet Union, the fight against Nazi German influence in Iran, Britain's oil interests and British policy to promote political reform. By doing so, this chapter continues the thesis' aim of placing the experience of British policy in occupied Iran within the global history of the Second World War. During

the first months the occupying force was on a wartime footing, the policies enacted in Iran were directed to supporting the war effort. For Britain, this guided their strategic needs and affected the party's position within them. Flexible and practical, diplomats placed the Tudeh's Soviet and Marxist leanings aside to prioritise cooperation with the Soviets.

### 1. British wartime policies at the start of the occupation

British policies in the early years of the occupation were, in general, geared towards the immediate needs of maintaining the alliance, establishing authority and ensuring continuity (which included the restoration of the monarchy and control over Iranian resources and the economy).<sup>297</sup> These aspects all related to how the occupation was needed to support wartime needs and had the knock-on effect of making Britain more active and present in Iran, which was embodied by Bullard and his consuls. Throughout Iran, diplomats used their new position as an occupying force to influence the capital and elsewhere to ensure that Britain's needs were met.<sup>298</sup> This section summarises the main British priorities and concerns held at the start of the occupation, which forms the backdrop of how the Tudeh featured within British policy in relation to the global conflict. With the war at the forefront of the occupying forces' minds, the chaos caused by the occupation was side-lined but as will be seen in the next chapter, British presence in Iran was negatively affected.

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<sup>297</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 233.

<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, 233

One of the most immediate concerns facing the British was the integrity of its alliance with the Soviet Union and the United States. Following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour in December 1941, the US government became the newest member of the alliance.<sup>299</sup> Already relying on Lend-Lease aid, Churchill had been pushing for military involvement, which President Franklin D Roosevelt had previously been reluctant to give. US entry thus came as a huge relief for Britain. The US Secretary of State, Cordell Hull regarded aid to Iran as essential for the war effort.<sup>300</sup> In Iran, the US joined the occupying forces and deployed technical missions as well as military forces that provided extra security for transportation and communication lines.<sup>301</sup> The US War Department appointed Major-General John Greely, who was later replaced by Major-General Clarence Ridley, to serve as an adviser to finance and supply the Iranian Army. In addition, the former head of the New Jersey State Police, Colonel H. Norman Schwarzkopf, was sent to head the Iranian Gendarmerie.<sup>302</sup> These efforts further positioned Iran as an important component in the Allied defence strategy.

Besides marking the start of US involvement that would last until the 1979 revolution, US assistance and presence in the occupation of Iran added to the make-up of the new alliance between Britain and the Soviet Union. Overall, the grand alliance of Britain, the Soviet Union and the US was self-regarded as a force capable of fighting the Axis powers. As David Reynolds pointed out, this was an alliance that crossed ideologies, and put aside

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<sup>299</sup> Roham Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger, and the Shah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 7–9.

<sup>300</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

<sup>301</sup> Richard Cottam, *Iran and the United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1988), 62.

<sup>302</sup> The US War Department and the State Department disagreed on what kind of aid the US should provide in Iran. The former did not see the necessity of providing a large military mission whereas the latter saw political and diplomatic importance in such a mission. In the end, a token military mission was sent and would later become symbolic of American presence in the country. Mark Hamilton Lytle, *The Origins of the Iranian–American Alliance* (Homes & Meier Publishers, 1987), 27–28.

historical conflicts to pursue the bigger goal of defeating fascism. He was careful to add that while this combination won the war, it was unable to secure the peace and unresolved tensions led to the Cold War.<sup>303</sup> Early in its formation, Britain positioned the need to reassure its new allies as a top priority, in addition to reinforcing the alliance and displaying a strong strategic partnership.<sup>304</sup> The occupation of Iran thereby became a showcase for this new trilateral cooperation as well as an incubator for tensions between the three. In many ways, the global nature of the conflict was on display in Iran, with all three allies based there and the occupation as necessary to support other theatres of war.

Another pressing policy concern for the British in Iran was the re-establishment of political continuity and stability by restoring the monarchy. As an immediate reaction to fill the void left by Reza Shah's abdication, Foreign Secretary Anthony Eden initially suggested re-installing the Qajar Dynasty, traditionally considered to be closer to the British.<sup>305</sup> Within the Pahlavi family, Reza Shah's third son was also considered instead of his brother because of his Qajar lineage.<sup>306</sup> Keen to establish a political arrangement that was friendly to both Britain and the Soviet Union, the Crown Prince Muhammad Reza was instead approved for succession.<sup>307</sup> This indicated the necessity of establishing a monarchy in Tehran that was welcomed by the occupying forces. Symbolic of this new cooperation, in January 1942 the Tripartite Alliance was signed by Muhammad Reza Shah, Britain and the Soviet Union. According to this treaty, Iran was allowed to maintain its territorial integrity while the Allies pledged to withdraw their military presence upon

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<sup>303</sup> David Reynolds, 'The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance', in *The Cambridge History of the Second World War*, Richard Bosworth and Joseph Maiolo (Eds.) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 301.

<sup>304</sup> Conversation with Persian Minister by Sir H Seymour, 13 September 1941, PRO, FO371/27214, E5584.

<sup>305</sup> Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 40.

<sup>306</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 11 September 1941, PRO, E5554, FO371/27214.

<sup>307</sup> Stalin himself preferred the Crown Prince to the Qajar candidate. Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 40.

the finalisation of the war with the Axis countries.<sup>308</sup> This enshrined the occupation, formalised access to Iran's resources and officially granted Britain (and the Soviet Union) the necessary authority to prioritise their wartime ambitions.

The young shah was treated by the British as a necessary tool for the occupation, especially as a symbol of Iranian support for British and Soviet military presence. Control over him was also a way in which Britain could assert political influence. In early pro-Allied propaganda, he was visually represented in pamphlets distributed to the population.<sup>309</sup> Bullard persuaded the shah to declare his confidence in the Allies and to ally with them against "intrigue and subversive activities"<sup>310</sup> which, in this context meant German activities in Iran. Moreover, Bullard was given substantial backing by the Foreign Office in dealing with the shah.<sup>311</sup> In this capacity, he gave advice to Muhammad Reza Shah and directed him in matters of governance. For example, he was able to dissuade the young shah from dismissing Ahmad Qavam in the winter of 1942.<sup>312</sup> The British diplomatic staff were thus in a position of considerable influence over Iran's domestic affairs.

Influence over the monarchy extended to sway over the Iranian government. While Jackson established that Britain possessed substantial control over material and military matters in Iran, symbolised by the presence of the Tenth Army in Kermanshah, he did not highlight how this also was concurrent with considerable political influence.<sup>313</sup> Although

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<sup>308</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 233.

<sup>309</sup> "Peace, Plenty, Progress", 16 July 1942, Ministry of Information, PRO, INF2/33.

<sup>310</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 16 December 1942, PRO, FO 371/31387, E7338.

<sup>311</sup> Foreign Office to British legation Tehran, 2 December 1942, PRO, FO371/31387, E7217/14/31.

<sup>312</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 10 December 1942, PRO, FO371/31387, E7215.

<sup>313</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 235.

the Iranian government was, in theory, meant to be undisturbed by the occupying forces, they remained affected by the occupation and had to ensure that British and Soviet wartime needs were supported.<sup>314</sup> Reza Shah's abdication broke down Tehran's control over the tribes, leading to the restoration of tribal control in their respective areas. In addition, there was a decrease in the population's food supply due to a poor harvest, worsened by the occupiers' own demands.<sup>315</sup> Muhammad Ali Foroughi's Cabinet in the first months of the occupation were preoccupied with restoring order and balancing the country's needs with those of the occupying forces, caught by the foreign control imposed over the country's resources, railway and road systems spanning from the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea.<sup>316</sup> Bound by treaty, Foroughi and subsequent prime ministers were forced to give the occupying forces substantial access to the Iranian economy and its resources, at the expense of domestic needs.

With this control over Tehran, the British military, supported by the diplomatic service, secured the country's infrastructures and resources, further solidifying British presence, especially in the south of the country. The occupying powers divided the Trans-Iranian railway between them: Britain took the route south of Tehran and the Soviet forces gained charge of the rest.<sup>317</sup> The Tenth Army was tasked with enacting infrastructure developments to improve and secure the "Persian corridor", a supply route, which included enlarging ports, developing river communications, building roads and

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<sup>314</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 506.

<sup>315</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 41–44; for an in-depth discussion about the food shortages in Iran and the importance of the country in this endeavour, see Lotfi and Dehqan-Nezhad, "Kambud-e mavad-e qazaya va shuresh-haye mardom-e Iran dar sal-ha-ye jang-e jahani-ye dovom, 1940–1945/1320–1324," 2–6.

<sup>316</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 173.

<sup>317</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British embassy Moscow (Cripps), 12 September 1941, PRO, FO371/27214, E5613.

reconstructing railways. Over the course of the occupation, five million tons of supplies were transported on this route, indicating the importance of Iran in the war effort.<sup>318</sup>

In addition to route development, security was a key issue for the British at the start of the occupation. The British military force voiced concerns over the deterioration of the security of supply routes in Iran<sup>319</sup>, with the AIOC sharing similar concerns particularly in regard to the security of its facilities and staff in the south.<sup>320</sup> The invasion and occupation of the country had resulted in the disintegration of the Iranian Army, leaving many parts of the country vulnerable.<sup>321</sup> Threats came from a possible Axis attack,<sup>322</sup> and from bandits and tribesmen who coveted supplies and control over land routes. Indeed, they frequently targeted lorries of the United Kingdom Commercial Cooperation<sup>323</sup> and trucks with weapons.<sup>324</sup> In Bushire, a group of Qashqa'i and other tribesmen attacked Ganawah<sup>325</sup>, the location of an AIOC installation.<sup>326</sup> In light of these concerns, security was increased as were displays of military prowess. When Bullard suggested further military deployment and more construction work to protect these routes and convoys, the Foreign Office readily agreed,<sup>327</sup> showing how much London relied on and trusted the legation's recommendations. When the British consul at Bushire recommended military

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<sup>318</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 481.

<sup>319</sup> PAIC (Goff) to Middle East Headquarters Cairo (Minister of State), 25 July 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/84/43.

<sup>320</sup> Since the start of the occupation, AIOC staff and facilities were vulnerable to attack by bandits and local tribesmen. ArcRef 67919, Barcode 63418, General: Security in Khuzistan, 31 July 1942; the AIOC was also concerned over possible German attacks on the oil fields. ArcRef 59017, Barcode 55108, Elkington (AIOC) to Gass, 25 April 1941.

<sup>321</sup> Cronin, *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East*, 159.

<sup>322</sup> British consulate Shiraz (consul) to Tehran, 12 June 1942, PRO, FO249/1409, 39/94/42.

<sup>323</sup> British consulate Bushire to British consulate Shiraz, 22 November 1941, PRO, FO248/1404, 167/3/41.

<sup>324</sup> British consulate Bushire to British consulate Shiraz, 22 November 1941, PRO, FO248/1404, 167/3/41.

<sup>325</sup> British consulate Bushire (consul) to British legation Tehran, 19 December 1941, PRO, FO248/1404, 197/7/41.

<sup>326</sup> British consulate Bushire (consul) to British consulate Shiraz, 20 December 1941, PRO, FO248/1404, 167/8/41.

<sup>327</sup> Foreign Office to British legation Tehran, 4 December 1942, PRO, FO371/31387, E7087/6515/G.

aircraft to fly over the area as a show of force<sup>328</sup>, a further despatch of troops was arranged.<sup>329</sup> As argued by Elling, these shows of force not only increased military presence but created an environment that was tense and susceptible to outbreaks of violence.<sup>330</sup> While this certainly saw tensions develop particularly among the oil industry, the reinstatement of British physical presence was prioritised.

As a way to ensure that enough supplies, be it food or oil, reached Soviet troops, the British were prepared to strain the already-stretched Iranian economy. As an occupying force, Britain was in a position of considerable power over Iranian affairs and could prioritise the war. By doing so, however, this caused considerable economic disorder. The Allies devalued the local currency by over 100% to fix cheaper prices and gain substantial purchasing power. The war with Germany affected Iran's exports, which led to a reduction in the country's balance of payments, further discontentment and contributed to economic difficulties.<sup>331</sup> Consequently, chaos broke out in the provinces.<sup>332</sup> The eruption of disorder was conveniently blamed on the inability of the Iranian government to balance the needs of the population and the occupying forces, which led to Foroughi's resignation and replacement by Ali Suhaili in March 1942. He, in turn, stepped down six months later having failed to sort out the food shortages and contain public order. He was replaced by Ahmad Qavam, who used Iranian troops to restore order and re-establish

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<sup>328</sup> British consulate Bushire (consul) to British consulate Shiraz, 20 December 1941, PRO, FO248/1404, 167/8/41.

<sup>329</sup> British consulate Bushire (consul) to British consulate Shiraz, 22 November 1941, PRO, FO248/1404, 167/3/41.

<sup>330</sup> Foroughi was called upon the Iranian Army on a number of occasions and the issue of tribal resistance continued to arise for subsequent Cabinets. Azimi, *Iran*, 42–43.

<sup>331</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 504.

<sup>332</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 43; Tehran faced severe riots due to shortages in bread. British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 9 December 1942, PRO, FO371/31387, E7167.

government authority.<sup>333</sup> As will be seen in the next section, these economic hardships and political chaos contributed to the appeal of the Tudeh.

Widespread discontent caused considerable opposition towards British presence in Iran.<sup>334</sup> The British consulate in Kermanshah predicted such antagonism, expressing frustration that the legation in Tehran was not listening to their warnings and was risking public opinion by increasing bread prices.<sup>335</sup> At the heart of Britain's zone, Kermanshah was home to the bulk of the Tenth Army and was thus an important location for the British occupation. This gap between the consulate and the centre over the conduct of the occupation, especially with regards to local hardships, indicated Tehran's prioritisation of the war above Iran's economic and political stability. However, Tehran was clearly aware of this but reluctant to make any changes, and instead opted to increase pro-British and pro-occupation propaganda. In the first months of the occupation, propaganda was a useful tool to support the war effort. The Ministry of Information worked together with the Foreign Office to fulfil their main objectives, which included the breakdown of pro-German feeling among Iranians in an effort to sway Iranians towards the notion that the Allies were going to win the war and that Iranians were essential in the war effort.<sup>336</sup> Under the supervision of Ann Lambton and her colleagues, an efficient propaganda strategy was launched in Tehran. In early 1942, her office was expanded to form the PRB. From its headquarters in the legation in Tehran, branches were opened in individual consulates throughout the country.<sup>337</sup> Its task was to manage the local population and

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<sup>333</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 69–71.

<sup>334</sup> This was also demonstrated via the concern of both the Iranian government as well as the British in providing for the basic needs of the population (such as food to the provinces). Azimi, *Iran*, 41.

<sup>335</sup> British consulate Kermanshah to India Corps (Mayne), 1 August 1942, PRO, FO248/1414, 314/78/42.

<sup>336</sup> Ministry of Information to Foreign Office (Lockhart), 9 January 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1036.

<sup>337</sup> Minister of State Cairo to Ministry of Information (Bracken), 23 December 1942, PRO, FO930/167, 41/43.

convert them to “achieve British aims”, as laid out by Elizabeth Monroe, the head of the Middle East Division within the Ministry of Information.<sup>338</sup> She would go on to become the Middle East correspondent for the *Economist* magazine and a fellow of St Antony’s College. During the war, she was involved in the production of propaganda, the appointment of personnel in Iran, and ensuring of coordination between London and Tehran. As Iran was considered to be “the ideal place for the dissemination of rumours”, Lambton was charged with spreading spoken propaganda.<sup>339</sup> The Foreign Office in London and the British legation in Tehran broadcasted from local radio stations and used provincial newspapers to spread Allied propaganda.<sup>340</sup> These tactics targeted the literate population, especially those in the more urbanised areas of Iran.

The occupation of Iran was framed as essential for Iran’s freedom. Broadcasts were disseminated in an effort to show how Britain protected the Iranian constitution and the individual from “arbitrary arrest and imprisonment”.<sup>341</sup> This was designed to explicitly conjure memories of Reza Shah’s reign and to promote the idea that the British had liberated Iran. This sense of political freedom encouraged the growth of the Tudeh, while the presence of such a party fitted with Britain’s self-image as liberator. The BBC publicised pro-Allied literature, using appropriate quotes from the *Journal de Téhéran*, such as: “there has been and there is no opposition at all with regard to the Allies” and “all deputies sincerely desire loyal collaboration and consolidation of friendly

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<sup>338</sup> Ministry of Information (Monroe) to Ministry of Information (Rushbrook Williams), 5 December 1941, PRO, FO930/166, FP1/130.

<sup>339</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Ministry of Information, 13 December 1941, PRO, FO930/166, FP1/130.

<sup>340</sup> Overseas Planning Committee: Plan of Propaganda for Persia, 27 January 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1565.

<sup>341</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 8 September 1941, PRO, FO 371/27212, E5457.

relations”.<sup>342</sup> It was clearly important that a positive image of the occupation was displayed here while the hardships caused were justified. Propaganda thus played a key supporting role in re-instating Britain’s control and presence in Iran.

As seen, Britain’s immediate concerns in Iran at this point were driven by wartime needs. Even the restoration of the Pahlavi dynasty was regarded as necessary to maintain continuity and to establish local support for the occupying forces. Control over the country’s resources and infrastructure may have resulted in chaos and a breakdown in order, but Allied needs were prioritised over Iranian requirements. This period saw the increased role of the British legation in directing the demands of the occupation. Notably, opposition from the consulates were largely ignored. British policy at this point in Iran can thus be contextualised within the wider picture of the Second World War, with efforts mainly directed to the war and the integrity of the occupation. It is within this context that the attitudes towards and treatment of the Tudeh became formalised.

## 2. The Tudeh Party, 1941–1943

As the previous chapter showed, the Tudeh emerged after many decades of struggle for social democracy in Iran. The war allowed the Tudeh to develop under favourable and secure circumstances: Reza Shah had abdicated, and, under the auspices of the occupation, Iran experienced a new era of freedom of expression. Indeed, other new political parties also emerged. British prioritisation of the war created hardships for the Iranian people, making the party’s liberal and social programme attractive.

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<sup>342</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 22 November 1942, PRO, FO 371/31386, E6863.

Unsurprisingly, this contributed to its early popularity. During its early years, the party was associated with anti-fascism. In the Iranian context, this meant the dedication to fighting Nazi Germany's influence. While the party was associated with Marxism, it was not openly communist and, within the first two years of the occupation, it established a substantial support base across Iranian society. The party's early developments will be presented here to better appreciate its position within British policy during this first phase of the occupation.

The early emergence of the Tudeh was representative of the immediate post-Reza Shah era, which saw an increase of freedom in Iranian political expression. Scholarship over this period is in general agreement that this was an era of change and political liberation. Amanat described it as an era of political revival<sup>343</sup> which witnessed relative political freedom.<sup>344</sup> After the Tudeh, the Iran Party (*Hezb-e Iran*) was formed, from the Engineer's Association, in late 1941. Future Iranian Prime Minister Mehdi Bazargan was one of its founding members. The party later came to be seen as country's main secular organisation, inspired by the free and independent parties of Europe<sup>345</sup> and would later become Musaddiq's close ally.<sup>346</sup> In addition, the Justice Party (*Hezb-e Adalat*) was established by Majles deputy Ali Dashti in the early months of the occupation.<sup>347</sup> The political climate at the outset of the occupation was varied and vocal, punctuated with moments of outbursts and protest. For example, in December 1942, a protest over food shortages was held outside the Majles. The Majles was occupied, and the prime minister's

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<sup>343</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 502; Abrahamian saw this period as the start of "a nationalist interregnum", which lasted until the 1953 coup. Ervand Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, Second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 100

<sup>344</sup> Behruz, *Tarikh-e Shureshiyan-e Armankhah dar Iran*, 104.

<sup>345</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 188.

<sup>346</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 536.

<sup>347</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 60.

residence was set on fire, resulting in the intervention of the Iranian Army to restore order.<sup>348</sup> In light of other political developments, the Tudeh was one of a number of parties that emerged at the start of the occupation. However, as will be seen, its Marxist credentials would keep it unique while its organisational skills would separate it from other parties in Iran and would gain the sustained interest of the British.<sup>349</sup>

Indeed, the Tudeh's structure was formalised and organised, setting it apart from other political organisations. At the time of its first provisional conference, a provisional central committee was formed made up of 15 elected members – 6 of whom were from the original Group of 53, former members of the ICP<sup>350</sup>, and continued to be headed by Suleiman Mirza Eskanderi.<sup>351</sup> The committee acted as the official leadership of the party until the summer of 1944. The other branches of the Tudeh leadership included committees for investigation, organisation, propaganda and finance. The party leaders focused on a more wholesome national outlook rather than focusing on the linguistic and regional issues that were more important to the older communists.<sup>352</sup> Internally, the party was generally cohesive, and its early approach did not cause any overt friction. However, this can be contextualised within a wider understanding of what was happening elsewhere. Such a trend of Left-wing groups blending into a more nationalist front could be observed throughout Europe at this point.<sup>353</sup> For instance, the French resistance was strengthened when the French Communist Party joined Charles de

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<sup>348</sup> The Tudeh used this incident 7 months later to express concern that the government had used force to curb political expression. Azimi, *Iran*, 72–73.

<sup>349</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 31.

<sup>350</sup> Abrahamian, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudah and the Firqah-i Dimokrat", 300.

<sup>351</sup> *Ibid.*, 300.

<sup>352</sup> *Ibid.*, 301.

<sup>353</sup> After the outbreak of the war, European socialist and anti-fascist groups were able to organise themselves. Although there were different interpretations of anti-fascism, they were focused on supporting the struggle. Jens Späth, "The Unifying Element? European Socialism and Anti-Fascism, 1939–1945", *Contemporary European History*, Vol.25(4) (2016), 695–696.

Gaulle's nationalist government in exile, collectively depicting themselves as anti-fascist. Similarly, the Czech resistance was made up of communists in alliance with the former President Edvard Beneš.<sup>354</sup> The concept of an anti-fascist front that united different elements in Iran to combat fascism existed, but it was present in an informal manner. There was no specific anti-Fascist body, but rather a loose coalition formed by the British and the Soviets, and supported by the Iranian central government, political factions and parties (which included the Tudeh).

Their position within this anti-fascist coalition in Iran was properly formalised when the Tudeh was officially recognised in February 1942 after it was granted a permit to hold a public gathering in commemoration of the death of its spiritual leader Taqi Arani.<sup>355</sup> That same month, the Tudeh published its provisional programme. In it, the party promised to overcome the trauma of Reza Shah's dictatorship, to protect the constitution, civil liberties and human rights, to safeguard the rights of the masses, and to participate in the global fight against fascism, which also included the domestic fight against German influence.<sup>356</sup> Most of these objectives encompassed the new era of political freedom but were not extreme in the demands raised. These objectives were couched within the terms of the occupation. There is a clear indication that the party was prepared to stay in-line with the occupiers. The party started an Anti-Fascist Society and a Freedom Front for the press, which included different newspapers.<sup>357</sup> Writing much later in 1949, Elwell-Sutton claimed the party used these platforms to establish control over other political parties. He was appointed press attaché in 1945 after serving in the legation during the

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<sup>354</sup> Priestland, *The Red Flag*, 208–210.

<sup>355</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 282.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

<sup>357</sup> Elwell-Sutton, 'Political Parties in Iran, 1941–1948', 47.

occupation and in the labour department in the AIOC in Khuzestan.<sup>358</sup> Although this observation had some truth in it, namely as the Tudeh did indeed gain traction during this early period, in 1942 it was not geared to gain a platform for itself *per se* but rather complemented the Allies' wartime policies. Indeed, the party enjoyed widespread local support and backing, notably from Mostafa Fateh, the highest-ranking Iranian in the AIOC who also harboured socialist sympathies.<sup>359</sup>

The appearance of the Tudeh helped support the narrative that the occupying forces, namely Britain, had provided Iran's political freedom. Indeed, members of the local intelligentsia embraced their new-found freedom by instigating and participating in political debates with greater frequency.<sup>360</sup> The Justice Party became one of the main voices of opposition to Prime Minister Ali Suhaili's government.<sup>361</sup> This new political freedom was also seen in the increase of political publications produced after Foroughi lifted the ban on censorship. Throughout the period of the occupation, the number of newspapers increased from 12 in 1941 to over 500 in 1947.<sup>362</sup> In Tehran alone, Bullard counted 47 newspapers, in addition to the publications of each political party or group. As noted by Ansari, the proliferation of newspapers coupled with the mushrooming of parties indicated the increased political awareness and literacy of Iran.<sup>363</sup> In its earliest stages, the Tudeh participated in political discussion and debate through the publication of newspapers and articles.<sup>364</sup> In February 1943, the party launched two newspapers: *Siyasat* (Politics) and *Mardom-e Zedd-e Fashist*, known as *Mardom* (the People Against

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<sup>358</sup> Elwell-Sutton, 'Political Parties in Iran, 1941–1948', 47–48.

<sup>359</sup> Mostafa Fateh obtained the licence for *Mardom*. Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 15.

<sup>360</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 169.

<sup>361</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 60.

<sup>362</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 65.

<sup>363</sup> Ansari, *Modern Iran since 1797*, 180–181.

<sup>364</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 282.

Fascism, or the People). The party also launched *Razm*, a weekly publication which covered the party's youth activities. In addition to these main titles, there were other sympathetic publications.<sup>365</sup> These journals thus represented the freedom of press that characterised the years of the early occupation. However, even during these early months, Tudeh publications were seized by the local authorities or suppressed when the party spoke against the Iranian government.<sup>366</sup>

Overall, the messages of the party in their newspapers were relatively uncontroversial, standing for unity and support for constitutional government.<sup>367</sup> Under the occupation, this worked well as it showed that Iranian political expression was in-line with the occupying forces. While calls for political changes were made, these did not extend to demands to end of the occupation. Even when the party's provisional programme was refined and expanded during the first party conference, held in October 1944, the new programme continued in the same line and made efforts to remain uncontroversial. Party chairman Suleiman Mirza Eskanderi tempered any anti-religious sentiments within the party so as not to antagonise the religious class<sup>368</sup> and promised better terms for each section of society. Within the programme, calls were made for "national independence from all forms of colonialism and imperialism".<sup>369</sup> This could be read as a mild criticism of the British occupation in Iran as it conjured up Britain's traditional imperial interests in Iran. On this matter, there is no evidence to show that the British were concerned. It appears that the Tudeh was not openly opposed to the British and was cautious in its

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<sup>365</sup> Ibrahim V Pourhadi, *Persian and Afghan Newspapers in the Library of Congress, 1871–1978* (Washington: Library of Congress, 1979), 64; Other sympathetic titles included *Azhir* and *Ahan*.

<sup>366</sup> Ibid.; in May 1943, *Rahbar* was seized. Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone telegraph, 1322/2/23 (14 May 1943), No.16243/3363, 1B, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>367</sup> Katouzian, *Khaterat-e siyasi-ye Khalil Maliki*, 28.

<sup>368</sup> Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 111.

<sup>369</sup> Quoted from Abrahamian, *Iran*, 284–285.

opposition to the occupation. This was, after all, in line with the Soviets' desire to support the occupation and promote trust with the British by refraining from encouraging communist parties in Iran. Even the Iranian Ministry of Interior did not appear too disturbed when a Tudeh delegation from Tehran spoke to a crowd in Mazandaran about democracy.<sup>370</sup> At this point of the occupation, the party pursued a reformist programme with discreet Marxist overtones, which was not seen as controversial by either the British or the local authorities.

While the party was an uncontroversial entity for the British in Iran, its position during the occupation ought to be addressed, especially as it was precisely because of the circumstances of the occupation that it was able to thrive. In its programme, the party promised to address the two main issues facing Iran: maintaining national sovereignty and addressing economic hardships. Amanat has suggested that these hardships led to the increased popularity of the Tudeh, whose calls for reform and alleviation of economic difficulties resonated with those who suffered because of the occupation.<sup>371</sup> Atabaki has also pointed out how such economic suffering contributed to the Tudeh's appeal among the urban working and middle classes.<sup>372</sup> By 1942, the membership of the party among the population appeared to be steadily growing. According to their own sources, and as presented by Abrahamian, the party had 6000 members, made up of members of the intelligentsia, workers, artisans and craftsmen.<sup>373</sup> This number of members is disputed by Chaqueri, who puts it at around 2000.<sup>374</sup> For a new party, both numbers are still quite

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<sup>370</sup> Ministry of Interior report 1322/5/21 (13 August 1943), No.11097, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>371</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 504.

<sup>372</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 67.

<sup>373</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 284.

<sup>374</sup> Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 18.

substantial. The Tudeh initially wanted to attract a wide range of citizens and over the months, the party concentrated on specific members of society: workers, peasants, intellectuals, traders, craftsmen, engineers, university students and even military officers.<sup>375</sup> As observed by Iranian officials in Pahlavi (modern-day Bandar-e Anzali), Gilan, the party wanted to appeal to both the worker and the enlightened liberal.<sup>376</sup> Khalil Maliki, a Tudeh member and later founder of the third wave movement, described this new generation of intellectuals as “young men filled with passion [who] did not know whether they were [F]ascists and [C]ommunists. All they knew with absolute certainty was that everything must be changed and a new world in accordance with everyone’s hopes and desires must come into being”.<sup>377</sup> His cynical view was due to his own fallout with the Tudeh, but it did account for the party’s early widespread popularity which was able to appeal to different political backgrounds.

As such, the party set up various organisations dedicated to each part of society and started building an extensive trade union network, laying the foundations for their later success in this field.<sup>378</sup> In Rasht, it opened a branch and revived local unions for teachers, rice cleaners and tobacco workers. In Isfahan, there was already an existing group of intellectuals and trade unionists, which was absorbed by the Tudeh into their own activities.<sup>379</sup> Here, Chaqueri has criticised the party for monopolising the trade unions, pointing out that other unions were being formed elsewhere, including the oil workers’ union founded by Yusuf Eftekhari, the activist involved in the 1929 Khuzestan strikes.<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>375</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 329; see also Amanat, *Iran*, 511.

<sup>376</sup> Ministry of Interior telegraph, 1324/5/21 (12 August 1945), No.4679/375, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>377</sup> Quoted from Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 63.

<sup>378</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 285.

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>380</sup> Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 17.

In October 1942, Mostafa Fateh founded the group *Hezb-e Hamraham* (Comrades' Party), which advocated for the nationalisation of industry, national health care and free education<sup>381</sup> – a similar ideology propagated by the Tudeh. The Tudeh formed cells and informal trade union organisations throughout the country and became established in Azerbaijan, Isfahan, Gilan, Mazandaran and Khurasan.<sup>382</sup> Although these were mostly territories under Soviet jurisdiction, Elwell-Sutton observed that their expansion there was not attributed to Soviet influence. His position in the AIOC's labour department would have given him some insight into industrial politics. In this regard, he did note that the Tudeh found a calling in places where industrialisation was more advanced and the population was easier to organise.<sup>383</sup> Interestingly, in the eyes of this British observer, the Tudeh's early success was not entirely attributed to Soviet encouragement but rather to its own effort and appeal and helped by the circumstances of the occupation.

A part of its early success during the occupation (and its acceptance by the British) lay in its lack of overt communist label. Consisting of Left-wing activists and intellectuals, Marxists as well as non-Marxists, the Tudeh's diverse membership still restrained from calling themselves communist.<sup>384</sup> In February 1943, in an article in *Mardom*, a party member stated that Iran was not ready for a revolution because of the occupation and instead saw the importance of working through the parliament.<sup>385</sup> In advocating socio-economic reforms without affecting the constitutional framework of the country<sup>386</sup>, the Tudeh extolled democratic values and were in line with the political reforms that the

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<sup>381</sup> Elwell-Sutton, 'Political Parties in Iran, 1941–1948', 4.

<sup>382</sup> Mather, 'Iran's Tudeh Party: A History of Compromises and Betrayals', 614.

<sup>383</sup> Elwell-Sutton, 'Political Parties in Iran, 1941–1948', 48.

<sup>384</sup> Abrahamian, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudah and the Firqah-i Dimokrat", 301.

<sup>385</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 285.

<sup>386</sup> *Ibid.*, 282.

British wanted to instil.<sup>387</sup> As can be seen, the Tudeh was still at its developmental stage in the early phase of the occupation but was becoming a serious political voice in the country. Perhaps recognising its own potential, by 1942 the party was already thinking about participating in the next Majles elections.<sup>388</sup> In the early months of the occupation, it worked to define its agenda and expand its membership. Much of the infighting that would categorise the party later on was largely absent at this point, as was its overt support for the Soviet Union. Instead, the Tudeh focused on harnessing the political freedom of the post-Reza Shah era, mindful of the limits of being under a joint military occupation. While the party did address the imperialistic elements of the occupation and the difficulties it caused, it did not call for the removal or overt support of either the occupying powers. Expanding its base along Marxist lines and focusing its programme on the working class, it mainly pursued an anti-fascist agenda as well. As detailed below, this fitted with Britain's key policy interests at the time.

### 3. The Tudeh in British policy

The early years of the occupation witnessed the British becoming more involved in Iranian affairs. Despite the party's impressive start, the British were not too concerned or worried about the Tudeh. Nonetheless, some relations and connections did exist between the two. At times, in the absence of direct links, the party represented what the British wanted to pursue in Iran. This section will examine how the Tudeh was dealt with by the British and how it can be situated within the four main frameworks that were presented in Chapter 1. Firstly, the Tudeh's position within British attitudes towards

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<sup>387</sup> Zabih, *The Left in Contemporary Iran*, 3.

<sup>388</sup> *Ibid.*, 285.

Soviet activities will be examined. Although the British did not regard the Tudeh as an extension or as part of Soviet policy at this time, they maintained suspicions over Soviet intentions, laying the foundations for British attitudes towards the Soviet-Tudeh bloc that emerged later in the occupation. Secondly, the Tudeh's positioning will be examined within Britain's anti-fascist policy, which showed the Tudeh playing a significant role within this campaign. Thirdly, the Tudeh with regards to the oil factor will be examined. Oil was a prime wartime resource, and it will be revealed that while the Tudeh's influence over the oil labourers was minimal, the occupation nonetheless placed a substantial strain on the industry. Fourthly, an examination will be made of how the Tudeh featured within Britain's policy to promote political reform and offers reasons as to why the party was not chosen to be supported by the British. By contextualising these policies within the war, certain policy trends are highlighted such as the decision to support the Tudeh in line with general policies toward the Left, the choice to not regard it as a Soviet tool, to treat it as a useful component of the anti-fascist front, to use it as a justification for the occupation and to place it as an appropriate representation of a politically liberal occupation.

### 3.1 The Tudeh within British policy towards the Soviet Union

During the early years of the occupation, the British did not draw any links between the Tudeh and the Soviets, despite Soviet political activities in the country being an area of interest for the British. Underneath the surface, British diplomatic appraisal of their Soviet colleagues was, at times, shrouded in prejudice while Soviet activities were often portrayed as comprising intrigue. However, in the early stage of the occupation, these suspicions were measured and any Soviet-Tudeh linkages were played down, due to three main factors: firstly, because the Soviets themselves were keen not to arouse

suspicions; secondly, any accusations of Soviet impropriety by the British diplomatic staff in Iran were dismissed by London in favour of seeking closer relations with the Soviet Union; and thirdly, because the Tudeh refrained from assuming any openly communist or pro-Soviet stances. These factors will be analysed to evidence how, as wartime objectives were prioritised, misgivings over the Soviets and any collusion with the Tudeh were downplayed.

In the beginning, British attitude towards the Soviets in Iran was cautious and their sudden alliance was not a naturally close one and instead was filled with tension. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, suspicions existed on both sides. The occupation of Iran has been depicted as a way in which the Soviets could restore their presence and, by doing so, revive its traditional rivalry with Britain. Fawcett has convincingly argued that the Soviets wanted to use the occupation and their military presence “to exercise influence on the government in Tehran”.<sup>389</sup> Writing in his memoirs, Churchill looked back on the alliance as “welcome but not immediately helpful”.<sup>390</sup> Such misgivings were not one-sided. Indeed, Rudolf Hess’ mission to Scotland in 1941 raised concerns from the Soviet government that Britain and Germany would unite against the USSR.<sup>391</sup> Granted Churchill himself was known for his deep hatred of communism, the irony of the situation was not lost on the press in 1942. The Left-leaning British weekly *The New Statesmen and Nation*, reported on the “immense advance”<sup>392</sup> of a British government that had been anti-Bolshevik 20 years ago but that was now allied to the Soviet Union.<sup>393</sup>

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<sup>389</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 85.

<sup>390</sup> Churchill, *The Second World War*, 461.

<sup>391</sup> Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 113.

<sup>392</sup> “The World War”, *The New Statesmen and Nation*, 19 July 1941 in *The New Statesmen and Nation: The Weekend Review*, 22<sup>nd</sup> Volume, 5 July to 27 December 1941, 51.

<sup>393</sup> “The Anglo–Soviet Treaty”, *The New Statesmen and Nation*, 20 June 1942 in *The New Statesmen and Nation: The Weekend Review*, 23<sup>rd</sup> Volume, 3 January to 27 June 1942, 399.

In Iran, the occupying forces did not always get along and bilateral tensions already were apparent in the early months.<sup>394</sup> Churchill offered Stalin to replace Soviet troops in Iran with British soldiers in order to divert Soviet troops to the eastern front. However, Soviet policy, which had been cautious of British actions prior to the invasion, saw Stalin's suspicions convincing him that such a move would lead to a weakening of their standing within the alliance.<sup>395</sup> Furthermore, London had to constantly remind Bullard to support his Soviet counterpart, indicating a fraught relationship.<sup>396</sup> Bullard had spent some time in the Soviet Union, from 1930 to 1934, where he held the position of consul-general, first in Moscow, and then in Leningrad. He witnessed the brutality of Stalinism first-hand and saw gaps between Soviet projections and reality, which added to his distrust of his Soviet colleagues.<sup>397</sup> However, London's reminders indicated that Bullard's misgivings had to be managed. Eden expressed a need to remove any suspicions that Stalin had with regards to British loyalty and facilitate closer relations between Soviet and British troops in Iran.<sup>398</sup> Despite underlying reservations, the alliance was necessary, and, in the face of a common enemy, they needed to present a united front in Iran and also on the Norwegian island of Spitzbergen where they were also cooperating as occupying forces.<sup>399</sup>

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<sup>394</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British embassy Moscow (Cripps), 12 September 1941, PRO, FO371/27214, E5614.

<sup>395</sup> Quoted from a letter from Churchill to Stalin, to which Stalin did not respond. Reynolds and Pechatnov, *The Kremlin Letters: Stalin's Wartime Correspondence with Churchill and Roosevelt*, 58. Around this time, the Soviet embassy in London were suspicious about the US advisors in the British Ministry of War. Karim Soleyman Dehkordi and Jamileh Azizkhah, "Mokhalefat-ha alaih-ye Millspaugh dar Iran (1321-1323)", *Pazhuhesh-ha-ye tarikh-e*, 5:3 (2013), 101.

<sup>396</sup> Foreign Office to British legation Tehran, 12 September 1941, PRO, FO371/27214, E5580.

<sup>397</sup> E C Hodgkin, 'Sir Reader William Bullard', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, n.d.

<sup>398</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British embassy Moscow (Cripps), 12 September 1941, PRO, FO371/27214, E5614.

<sup>399</sup> Gilbert, *The Second World War*, 226.

Even the Soviets prioritised the integrity of the alliance over their political ambitions. Fawcett has described this era as the first stage of Soviet policy towards Iran, when the Soviets were still preoccupied with the war, and they limited their political activities.<sup>400</sup> At the start of the occupation, the Soviet Union faced major military setbacks in Eastern Europe and was therefore not in a position to compromise the alliance in Iran, where 70% of their military needs were met.<sup>401</sup> Recognising the importance of maintaining a united front, the Soviets pursued actions to assure their ally in Iran. In an effort to show that the Soviets were not pursuing a hidden agenda in Iran or elsewhere, they dismantled their international arm, the Comintern in 1943.<sup>402</sup> In northern Iran, Soviet soldiers lent their support to the Iranian police when demonstrations and lootings occurred.<sup>403</sup> In addition, Stalin was careful not to upset the alliance by assuring Britain that the Soviets would not support an openly communist party in Iran.<sup>404</sup> Soviet neutrality was thus backed by the Tudeh's approach at this point and its deliberate refrain from calling itself communist. A memorandum from Soviet ambassador to Britain, Ivan Maisky, demonstrates how much the Soviets wanted to dispel any suspicions from Britain:

Assumption expressed by the British Minister, Sir R.W. Bullard, that Soviet policy in those parts of Iran where Soviet troops are stationed, was being carried out by organisations on which the Soviet Ambassador had very little influence, is without foundation.<sup>405</sup>

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<sup>400</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 85.

<sup>401</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 504.

<sup>402</sup> Pons, 'The Soviet Union and the International Left', 76.

<sup>403</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1321/4/18 (9 July 1942), [Classmark unclear], 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>404</sup> Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 49.

<sup>405</sup> Soviet embassy London (Maisky) to Foreign Office (Eden), 1 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/54/42.

Despite such assurances, there was a perceived disconnect between the Soviet ambassadors in London and Tehran, Soviet provincial representatives and Soviet political officers. Fawcett has suggested that there was better communication between the Soviets in Tabriz and the Soviet Union than between Moscow and the Soviet legation in Tehran.<sup>406</sup> This assessment was confirmed by the British ambassador in Ankara, Hughe Knatchbull-Hugessen, who believed that Soviet assurances could not be trusted and that these entities worked independently of each other.<sup>407</sup> Alongside Bullard's own misgivings, it appeared that mistrust of the Soviets was institutional and prevalent among the British foreign service.<sup>408</sup> In the eyes of the British, the Soviet structure was geared to intrigue and expanding its ambitions, as supported by Moscow.<sup>409</sup> Their misgivings were not unfounded – the Mitrokhin papers revealed that the Soviet intelligence had expanded their operations in Iran during this period, with over 100 officers positioned in Tehran alone.<sup>410</sup> Indeed, during this early period of the war, the NKVD had successfully infiltrated the British government through well-placed British spies (such as Donald Maclean, Kim Philby, Guy Burgess, John Cairncross, and Anthony Blunt who all served at one point or another, in the Foreign Office, Military Intelligence branches, and the British embassy in Washington DC). Such a wide intelligence gathering contributed to the Soviets aggrandising their position, especially in Iran.<sup>411</sup>

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<sup>406</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 90.

<sup>407</sup> Oftentimes, the Soviet authorities in Azerbaijan would prevent Iranian military and police forces from being stationed there. British embassy Ankara (ambassador) to Foreign Office, 16 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/15/42.

<sup>408</sup> This atmosphere of suspicion towards Soviet intentions also permeated the intelligence services. These seeds of distrust had been in existence since the Bolshevik revolution. Jonathan Haslam, *Near and Distant Neighbours: A New History of Soviet Intelligence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 33.

<sup>409</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 18 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/23/42.

<sup>410</sup> Christopher Andrew and Vasili Mitrokhin, *The Mitrokhin Archive II: the KGB and the World* (London: Penguin, 2006), 169.

<sup>411</sup> For example, Cairncross supplied information on supplies to Russia, though exaggerating the importance Britain held over its relations with the Soviets. Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: the Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1990), 226.

Furthermore, Soviet activities in the northern province of Azerbaijan aggravated Bullard's concerns, despite assurances from his Soviet counterpart.<sup>412</sup> Considered "favourable soil" for Soviet political activity and propaganda<sup>413</sup>, the British consul in Tabriz, Frank A G Cook<sup>414</sup>, claimed that political activities in the northern province were being carried out by Soviet officers from the NKVD.<sup>415</sup> Within the Tabriz area, evidence suggested that Soviet political officers were "meddling and tampering" with the rural population.<sup>416</sup> On the one hand, the Soviet ambassadors in London and Tehran were keen to dispel any rumour of Soviet intrigue yet, on the other hand, as far as British diplomats in Iran were concerned, Soviet authorities in their zone were pursuing other priorities, including encouraging local groups towards communist thought. Even as early as 1942, Bullard was submitting information to the Foreign Office portraying the resident Soviet political officers as actively instigating and orienting local groups towards Bolshevism.<sup>417</sup>

The question here arises whether the Tudeh constituted one of these local groups. Evidence from an intelligence report on the Tudeh, written in July 1949 by the CIA, seems to suggest so – where the Tudeh was described as a vehicle of the Soviets under its direct command from the very beginning.<sup>418</sup> However, this was written in hindsight, after the

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<sup>412</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 10 November 1941, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/250/42.

<sup>413</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 28 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/49/42.

<sup>414</sup> A career diplomat, Cook later went on to serve as a counsellor in the embassy in Burma and later as the consul-general in Antwerp. He died in 1973.

<sup>415</sup> British embassy Ankara (Ambassador) to Foreign Office, 14 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/14/42.

<sup>416</sup> The Soviet military authorities were considered to have behaved correctly. British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 3 February 1942, PRO, FO371/31389, E742.

<sup>417</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 18 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/13/42.

<sup>418</sup> CIA, 'The Tudeh Party: Vehicle of Communism in Iran,' 18 July 1949, NIC 0000258385, [www.cia.gov/library](http://www.cia.gov/library)

party became illegal, was openly supporting the Soviets and was regarded through Cold War lenses. In a report to Stalin written in December 1941, the head of the Comintern, Georgi Dimitrov, described the Tudeh as having “a democratic programme” with its leader as a “democratic figure”. This suggests that the Soviets regarded the Tudeh as separate from a separate group of Iranian communists who wanted to revive the ICP and who had directly sought Soviet help and assistance. The Soviets explicitly stated that the creation of a communist party in Iran at the time would not make any difference and would instead cause more complications. At the beginning of the occupation, the Soviet representative in Tehran claimed that he was not interested in pursuing or encouraging any communist factions in the country. Indeed, Soviet officials even informed the Marxist elements in the Tudeh that they would not support a communist party in Iran.<sup>419</sup> The Soviets believed that the creation of such an entity would jeopardise its cooperation with Britain and would play into the hands of German agents who could use the fear of the Sovietisation of Iran to gain support from Iranians.<sup>420</sup> This reflected the Soviet approach to political matters in Iran and ensured that the Tudeh abided to overall Allied policy.<sup>421</sup> The Iranian Ministry of Interior noted the activities of the Tudeh provisional central committee member Ali Amirkhizi’s activities in Soviet-controlled Azerbaijan, but concluded that his presence and activities were not depicted as related to the Soviets.<sup>422</sup> This further points to deliberate attempts to depict the party as independent. The Soviet

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<sup>419</sup> Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 49.

<sup>420</sup> They approached the Executive Committee of the Communist International. The NKVD found them to be “completely honest revolutionaries and pro-Soviet people”. “Cable from Dimitrov to Stalin, Molotov, Beria, and Malenkov”, 9 December 1941, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGASPI, f.558. op.11, d.66, ll. 43–44. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119104>

<sup>421</sup> Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 48–49.

<sup>422</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1322/4/24 (16 July 1943), 1C, [Classmark unclear], International Institute of Social History.

promise to refrain from promoting communist parties in Iran was key to this and was, at this point in the occupation, accepted by British diplomats based in Iran.

Despite misgivings about Soviet activities in Iran, British perception and presentation of the Tudeh at this point did not reveal any concerns or suspicions. In Tabriz, Cook noticed that the Tudeh Azerbaijan, an arm of the Tudeh founded in early 1942, was becoming active through the publication of a newspaper, *Azerbaijan*, and was soliciting the lower working classes. Nonetheless, he was cautious in his assessment and did not regard them as communist-minded and described how the Soviets utilised this platform to make anti-fascist speeches.<sup>423</sup> Here, the consul established an early link between the Azerbaijan branch of the Tudeh with Soviet activities but presented it within the campaign to counter German influence in Iran.

However, suspicions lingered still over Soviet intentions in Iran. As far as Bullard was concerned, even the Soviets' political activities in their zone of interest (Azerbaijan) affected British interests.<sup>424</sup> Bullard presented these activities to Eden as concerning by presenting Soviet's attention to local political parties<sup>425</sup> and the dissemination of ideology among workers as aspects of Soviet intrigue.<sup>426</sup> Cook noted the growth of "proletarian clubs" with concern and presented them as evidence of Soviet interest and influence in Tabriz.<sup>427</sup> According to Cook, the Soviets assisted and encouraged other local parties such

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<sup>423</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 29 December 1941, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/1/42.

<sup>424</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 15 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/11/42.

<sup>425</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 16 March 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/69/42.

<sup>426</sup> It was believed that the Soviet Union had penned the "Programme and Desires of the Azerbaijan Workers' Committee". British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 16 March 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/69/42.

<sup>427</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 20 February 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/58/42.

as the Democratic Club.<sup>428</sup> In Tabriz, the Azerbaijan club was founded with the help of the Soviet agent there and was managed by locals, who the British in Tabriz regarded as “Soviet Fifth columnists”.<sup>429</sup> Cook also investigated further into Soviet influence over local labour committees, particularly the Azerbaijan Workers Committee. He discovered that it was in touch with the Soviet authorities in Tabriz and had access to a Soviet–Azerbaijan journal.<sup>430</sup> Indeed, reporting on their own activities in the north, the Soviets revealed a desire to create circumstances in which pro-Soviet organisations could emerge.<sup>431</sup> In this regard, British perception of Soviet activities to promote groups in line with the Soviet Union, was not without basis.

As predicted by Bullard, it was the same in the British zone. Cook was transferred to the consulate in Kermanshah in August 1942, and with this, brought his views about his Soviet colleagues with him. He complained that British physical presence was significantly smaller than the Soviet consulate there. He equated this to an inadequate display of British political power, which he predicted would result in an increase in anti-British activities. The legation believed he was exaggerating, revealing differences of opinion between the consulate and the legation.<sup>432</sup> The British staff in the south were tense about the presence of Soviet personnel who were there to coordinate with Soviet ships in the Persian Gulf. The Tenth Army stationed there were uncomfortable and

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<sup>428</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 29 December 1941, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/1/42.

<sup>429</sup> Memorandum, 6 May 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/124/42.

<sup>430</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 26 February 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/63/42.

<sup>431</sup> Central State Archives of the Azerbaijan Republic, f.28, op.4, d.19, Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069>.

<sup>432</sup> British consulate Kermanshah (consul) to British legation Tehran, 9 August 1942, PRO, FO248/1414, 314/44/42.

concerned about unwanted Soviet interference.<sup>433</sup> They were particularly suspicious because the Soviet officers did not speak English.<sup>434</sup> This was not the case everywhere in Iran, however. At the start of the occupation, the British consul in Mashhad, Skrine, had a good relationship with his Soviet counterpart, M A Maksimov and his staff, whom he respected for their knowledge and understanding of Persian language and culture. Skrine's memoirs reveal genuine warmth for his Soviet colleagues, recounting parties at the Soviet consulate general.<sup>435</sup> Skrine's experience was rather the exception though, as the majority of his colleagues were distrustful of their Soviet counterparts.

Parallel to their depictions of Soviet activities in Iran's political development, the British saw the Soviets as inferior and were prejudiced towards their effectiveness. Cook pointed out that the organisations formed by the Soviets in Azerbaijan were politically immature and that their programme was "half-baked".<sup>436</sup> Doubts were further expressed with regards to Soviet intrigue among the peasantry and, as such, the adoption of communist ideas among the local population was regarded as unlikely at this stage. Cook considered the Soviet political officers as ignorant and that their propaganda was not effective enough.<sup>437</sup> Cook's replacement, Robert W Urquhart<sup>438</sup>, gave this scathing opinion about his Soviet colleagues to Bullard: "I find it necessary to remember at all times that our Russian friends are not normal. They are not normal in that after 25 years in the

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<sup>433</sup> British legation Tehran (Hankey) to General Headquarters Tenth Army (Baghdad), 9 July 1942, PRO, WO201/1314, 521/29/42.

<sup>434</sup> General Headquarters Tenth Army (Baghdad) to British legation Tehran, 23 June 1942, PRO, WO201/1314, 521/29/42.

<sup>435</sup> Skrine, *World War in Iran*, 112–113.

<sup>436</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 26 February 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/63/42.

<sup>437</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 12 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/41/42.

<sup>438</sup> Attached to the PRB, he spoke Persian. He was transferred in 1943 to the US where he served as consul-general in New Orleans.

wilderness, they lack the background common to other civilised men; their brains work at the mercy of a jumbled deposit of propaganda, uncorrected by any fund of experience and observation".<sup>439</sup> The British consular staff clearly harboured prejudice and looked down on their Soviet colleagues whom they regarded as incapable and inexperienced. Counterintuitively, their condescension also meant that the British here found Soviet attempts at expanding influence as largely ineffective.

Nonetheless, the British government had to respond to these political activities in Azerbaijan, whereupon Eden threatened to interrupt the supply route.<sup>440</sup> A few months later, the Soviet consul-general in Azerbaijan withdrew assistance from the political clubs.<sup>441</sup> Similarly, in the Kurdish area of Rezaieh (present-day Urmia), Soviet political activities were reduced and democratic clubs appeared weakened.<sup>442</sup> By the spring of 1942, Cook acknowledged that the Soviets had withdrawn their political support for clubs and organisations in Azerbaijan but believed that the Soviets would "try again – but very discreetly" to work among the Kurds, thereby focusing on the work of Soviet political officers in the region.<sup>443</sup> The Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs previously expressed concern directly to Bullard regarding Soviet influence over the Kurdish nationalist movement,<sup>444</sup> but the Foreign Office was quick to put this aside and was assured by

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<sup>439</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Urquhart) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 October 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/248/42.

<sup>440</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran, 18 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/23/42.

<sup>441</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 23 April 1942, PRO, FO 248/1410, 144/99/42.

<sup>442</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (chancery), 14 April 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/97/42.

<sup>443</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 8 April 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/96/42.

<sup>444</sup> The matter was eventually resolved, and the Soviets successfully assured both the British and Turkish governments that they had no designs on the autonomous movement in Kurdistan at that point. Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran, 24 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/34/42.

Maisky that they were only interested in cultural matters.<sup>445</sup> The Tudeh's Azerbaijan branch continued to operate but, according to Elwell-Sutton's own appraisal, this was not due to Soviet influence directly. Despite their misgivings towards their Soviet counterparts, there was no indication that the British saw the branch as an extension of Soviet power.

The British thus remained aware of low-level Soviet activity, although London was careful to avoid attaching malicious intentions to them. At this point in the war, Eden was careful not to let suspicions of "Soviet intentions"<sup>446</sup> overtake the alliance. He put activities in Azerbaijan down to the overenthusiasm of the local Soviet authorities, rather than any grand design by Moscow.<sup>447</sup> In the wider picture, Roosevelt and Churchill were also keen to ensure that Stalin did not feel marginalised. To an extreme, Roosevelt was willing to even minimise outrage to offset Stalin's embarrassment after the revelation of the Katyn massacre.<sup>448</sup> Such measures trickled down and Bullard also placed his own suspicions on hold, mainly due to pressure from London. He echoed Eden's sentiment by declaring that the "Russians are our allies and at this critical stage of the War we should give them our fullest assistance against our main enemy..."<sup>449</sup> In Tehran, Bullard attempted to temper his opinion in correspondence with the Foreign Office. He toned down the notion of the Soviets' long-term designs and reassured London that his

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<sup>445</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 19 February 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/57/42; Foreign Office (Baxter) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 30 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/54/42.

<sup>446</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 26 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/[Unclear]/42.

<sup>447</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 26 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/[Unclear]/42.

<sup>448</sup> Reynolds, 'The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance', 310.

<sup>449</sup> Quoted from Tenth Army Baghdad Note to Sixth Division, 10 May 1942, PRO, WO201/1314, DO/PSC/25.

counterparts were committed to cooperation and the war.<sup>450</sup> In October 1942, Bullard appeared pleased with the state of relations with the Soviets in Iran.<sup>451</sup> As such, despite some suspicions, Tehran followed London's cue to prioritise the war and thus downplayed any overt suspicions towards the Soviets while the war was ongoing and at a critical stage.

As has been demonstrated, the British in Iran were suspicious of Soviet activities during these early months of the occupation. Eden was keen to establish good bilateral relations, but Bullard and his consuls, Urquhart and Cook, were vocal in their suspicions. These internalised suspicions and prejudice led to evidence being sought to show that the Soviets wanted to spread communist thought and Soviet influence among local political groups. The understanding of a Soviet–Tudeh alliance at this point was only concentrated on the Tudeh Azerbaijan branch but, even then, its activities were not depicted as directly linked to the Soviets nor directly understood to be part of an agenda to spread communism. After all, the Soviets were reliant on British cooperation in the war and did not want to be mistrusted by the British. As such, at this stage, links between the Soviets and the Tudeh were not obvious and the British did not regard the party as a vehicle for Soviet intrigue, but suspicions remained.

### 3.2 The Tudeh within the anti-fascist campaign in Iran

In this early phase, the Tudeh emerged as a strong component of Britain's policy of fighting fascism in Iran. In this context, fascism specifically targeted German intrigue,

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<sup>450</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 26 October 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/244/42.

<sup>451</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 19 October 1942, PRO, FO181/966/20, 124/21/42.

influence and presence in Iran, directly contributing to the global fight against the Axis powers. It was within this dimension that the British and Tudeh members directly interacted and where Britain identified the party as an asset. Both shared similar intentions of fighting German appeal in Iran and elsewhere. To analyse this link, the concept and make-up of this anti-German front in Iran will first be presented alongside similar operations in Europe and Asia. After which, how the Tudeh was utilised by the British to combat German presence in Iran will be examined. Here, it will be shown that the British attitude towards the Tudeh can be contextualised within the war and that the lack of opposition to the party indicated that it was a key component of the war effort.

Fighting German presence included countering the influence and appeal it had for the Iranian population. German influence and fascism were used interchangeably and combatting fascism in Iran was taken to mean eliminating German physical presence, Iranian sympathy for the Germans and German influence over the population.<sup>452</sup> The anti-fascist rhetoric had roots in the Popular Front movement of the 1930s, as already established in Chapter 1. After the Soviet Union joined the war on the side of the Allies, this movement was resuscitated and Left-wing parties everywhere were invited to support the war against the Axis powers.<sup>453</sup> Moscow encouraged the French communists to now openly support the joint war effort, with the French newspaper *L'Humanité* declaring that sabotage was necessary to help the USSR and Britain fight Hitler.<sup>454</sup> This echoed how the Tudeh portrayed itself as an anti-fascist entity in Iran via its democratic

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<sup>452</sup> The German Ministry of Propaganda had been active in Iran since 1933 while both the Reich government and officials of the Iranian government were in close contact. For a fuller discussion on the German influence in Iran at this time, see Rezun, *The Soviet Union and Iran*, 318–335; see also Ministry of Information (Radcliffe) to Foreign Office (Lockhart), 14 February 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1036.

<sup>453</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 516–517.

<sup>454</sup> Cobb, *The Resistance: The French Fight Against the Nazis*, 74.

programme (as demonstrated in their publications). In China, the Soviets encouraged the Chinese communists to cooperate with the nationalist forces, the *Kuomintang*, against the Japanese.<sup>455</sup> Furthermore, the Soviets established similar arrangements for other communist parties – including those in Syria, Palestine, Egypt, Iraq, and India.<sup>456</sup> Such a position supported the Soviet policy of promoting the creation of united national fronts that buoyed the war against the Axis forces.

In the first two years of the occupation, when Germany's military power in Europe was at its peak, Britain prioritised combatting Nazi influence and considered it as a key wartime policy. The legation and consuls exercised considerable power over the Iranian government and in the provinces in implementing anti-fascist policies, which further established British authority. Furthermore, the Government of India recommended British consular officers be despatched to Iranian provinces where German influence was felt to be the strongest in order to monitor the situation and to carry out anti-Nazi campaigns.<sup>457</sup> Where possible, the British relied on the Iranian government to implement those policies. From March to July 1942, the government of Suhaili, for instance, cooperated by closing the legations of Axis countries and sanctioned the arrest of Axis agents in the country by British and Soviet forces.<sup>458</sup> In early 1943, the British legation in Tehran pressured the Iranian government to deploy Iranian troops to Fars where German sympathy was regarded as its strongest.<sup>459</sup>

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<sup>455</sup> Kermit E McKenzie, *Comintern and World Revolution, 1928–1943* (London: Columbia University Press, 1963), 177.

<sup>456</sup> Mather, "Iran's Tudeh Party", 614.

<sup>457</sup> Government of India external affairs to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 13 September 1941, PRO, FO371/27214, E5605.

<sup>458</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 52–53.

<sup>459</sup> Stephanie Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921–1941* (Oxon: Routledge, 2007), 193.

In addition, the British legation in Tehran arranged to physically remove Germans and their allies from the country. Coordinating together with the Soviets and the Iranian authorities, the British military (and diplomats) detained official and non-official Axis personnel.<sup>460</sup> British involvement in these arrests worried their US counterparts who expressed concern that Iranian sovereignty was being dishonoured.<sup>461</sup> However, this was largely unheeded. Dr Ahmad Matin-Daftari, a prime minister under Reza Shah, was detained due to his suspected German connections.<sup>462</sup> A prominent *mojtahed*, Ayatollah Abolqasem Kashani, was also arrested for his alleged membership of a pro-German organisation in Iran.<sup>463</sup> According to the British consul in Shiraz, Terence V Brenan<sup>464</sup>, the German agents in Iran provided a considerable sum of money to support such groups.<sup>465</sup> Another important figure to be arrested was General Fazollah Zahedi, the military governor of Isfahan accused of being involved in pro-German activities. His arrest, although seen as integral to curbing fascism in Iran, was the cause of some consternation.<sup>466</sup> Nonetheless, Bullard's recommendation to arrest him and the use of British troops was indicative of the power at the legation's disposal.<sup>467</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> Parliamentary question (Sir John Mellor) to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Antony Eden, 13 September 1941, PRO, FO371/27214, E5588.

<sup>461</sup> There were several exchanges regarding his arrest between the Foreign Office in London and the British legation in Tehran. The US was concerned that the arrest of Zahedi was undertaken independently of Iranian input. This was not the case as they facilitated his arrest. Foreign Office to British legation Tehran, 4 January 1943, PRO, FO371/31387, E7561.

<sup>462</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 241.

<sup>463</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 85.

<sup>464</sup> He would later become the consul in Fars, before leaving Iran to take up a post in Tunis in 1944.

<sup>465</sup> British consulate Shiraz (consul) to British legation Tehran (chancery), 30 September 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 39/145/42.

<sup>466</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 27 November 1942, PRO, FO371/31386, E6973.

<sup>467</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 8 December 1942, PRO, FO371/31387, E7161.

The British legation extended campaign to further support local elements to breakdown pro-German sympathies in Iran. One of the most important targets in this regard were the tribes in the British-controlled zone. German infiltration was substantial among the Bakhtiari and Qashqa'i tribes.<sup>468</sup> British suspicions were compounded by the discovery of German agents in Fars province and their backing for Sheikh Abdul Majid Shirazi<sup>469</sup> to create a Qashqa'i bloc in support of an Axis invasion.<sup>470</sup> When dealing with him, Brenan shrewdly stated that Majid "might just as well as be a villain on our side instead of on the other".<sup>471</sup> Brenan invited Khosrow Qashqa'i to discuss such matters and, in exchange for information on German activities among the Qashqa'i, the consul believed that Britain could "extend a helping hand." In reality, this translated as respect, recognition and money.<sup>472</sup> When Brenan gave more assurances and promises of British protection to Khosrow Qashqa'i in exchange for handing over German agents in his area<sup>473</sup>, Bullard voiced concerns that Brenan was promising too much and had to reign in the consul's enthusiasm.<sup>474</sup> This showed there were differences of approach between the centre and periphery of the diplomatic structure in Iran, with the legation stepping in (and succeeding) to temper the consulate's activities. Nonetheless, these efforts paid off and the British grew closer to a number of Qashqa'i chiefs, such as Naser and Khosrow and, later on, their brothers Mohamed Huseyin Solat and Malek Mansour Solat through

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<sup>468</sup> Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, 193.

<sup>469</sup> A lawyer who had been imprisoned by Reza Shah, Shirazi was stripped of his properties in Mazandaran. In the consul diaries of Shiraz, he was often associated with the Qashqa'i tribe, even accompanying Khadijeh Bibi, the mother of Mohammed Nasir Qashqa'i, to a meeting with the British consul. British consulate Shiraz (consul) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 November 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 39/195/42.

<sup>470</sup> British consulate Shiraz (consul) to British legation Tehran (chancery), 30 September 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 39/145/42.

<sup>471</sup> British consulate Shiraz to British legation Tehran (Trott), 1 December 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 39/232/42.

<sup>472</sup> British consulate Shiraz (consul) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 24 November 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 29/196/42.

<sup>473</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate Shiraz (consul), 22 November 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 39/177/42.

<sup>474</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate Shiraz (consul), 20 November 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 39/177/42.

promises of a cooperative partnership in their territories.<sup>475</sup> This closeness that had emerged from countering German influence would later re-emerge as a useful force to combat Tudeh influence at the end of the occupation.<sup>476</sup> At this point however, the British regarded the tribes as an important component in breaking down German interference in the country.

The Tudeh's all-encompassing description which avoided the specific label of either communist, socialist or Marxist, made it a useful component within Britain's anti-German campaign. Although Abrahamian has put this deliberation as due to residual fear of Reza Shah's suppression of the communist movement in the 1930s<sup>477</sup>, it is more likely that the early Tudeh was cautious about describing themselves as communist as a way to fit into the anti-fascist front ensemble in Iran and avoid conflict with the British. Its provisional statute was described as a "mass organisation based on a union of workers, peasants, artisans, and intellectual democrats".<sup>478</sup> This meant it was able to attract a broad support base and form networks or alliances with other politicians. The party also mimicked British and Soviet general anti-fascist policies, as recounted in the previous section. Their anti-fascism declarations and activities lend weight to Matin-Asgari's recent depiction of the party's initial anti-fascist, constitutionalist and socialist front<sup>479</sup>, which builds on Katouzian's earlier work of connections between the party's ideology and form.<sup>480</sup> Amanat alleged that their communist identity was initially camouflaged.<sup>481</sup> Indeed, as the

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<sup>475</sup> The two brothers had been trained by the Abwehr at the start of the war. The British facilitated their return to Iran in 1944. O' Sullivan, *Espionage and Counterintelligence in Occupied Persia (Iran)*, 68–73.

<sup>476</sup> Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran*, 194.

<sup>477</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 282–283.

<sup>478</sup> Sepehr Zabih, *The Communist Movement in Iran* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1966), 73.

<sup>479</sup> Afshin Matin-Asgari, *Both Eastern and Western: An Intellectual History of Iranian Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 146.

<sup>480</sup> Katouzian, *The Political Economy of Modern Iran*.

<sup>481</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 509.

occupation went on, the overt ideology of the Tudeh changed but, at this point, the party self-identified as anti-fascist.

In addition to these local elements of the anti-fascist campaign, the British set up a propaganda machine in Iran to specifically combat German influence. It is within this context that the Tudeh featured within British policy of countering fascism in Iran. The Ministry of Information, together with the Foreign Office, laid out the objectives for this. In doing so, they invoked the specific aims of ensuring that Iran would be pro-British, and that Iranians would not support the Japanese or the Germans.<sup>482</sup> As already established earlier in this chapter, the PRB coordinated the dissemination of propaganda throughout the country.<sup>483</sup> In addition to censorship and the jamming of radio broadcasts from Berlin, they also produced Iran-specific material to diminish German prestige in the eyes of Iranians. A famous example of these were the art panels depicting scenes from the Persian epic *Shahnameh* which included paintings of Churchill, Stalin and Roosevelt as triumphant over a trussed-up Hitler.<sup>484</sup> In addition to hiring British personnel with knowledge of Persian, such as the former head of the BBC broadcasting services to the Near East, A S Calvert, and the vice-consul of Zahidan, Bowen, Bullard stressed to London the importance of hiring local staff to produce articles and to contribute to a Persian-language newsletter.<sup>485</sup> The Foreign Office in London placed the responsibility of finding “local talent” on Lambton.<sup>486</sup> Bullard regarded her as having “admirable contacts with the educated classes”.<sup>487</sup> Consequently, she hired many locals, including Yusufzada to help

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<sup>482</sup> Ministry of Information (Grubb) to Foreign Office (Baxter), 18 March 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1843.

<sup>483</sup> Sreberny and Torfeh, *Persian Service*, 41–42.

<sup>484</sup> “Postcards”, Ministry of Information, March 1943, PRO, INF2/33.

<sup>485</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 22 November 1941, PRO, FO930/166, E7767/42/34.

<sup>486</sup> Foreign Office to British legation Tehran, 28 November 1941, PRO, FO930/166, E7767/42/34.

<sup>487</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Ministry of Information, 13 December 1941, PRO, FO930/166, FP1/130.

produce materials, alongside Ahmad Rahmani and Ali and Hasan Zarkash as office hands.<sup>488</sup>

Within this capacity, the Tudeh was directly roped in as a part of the anti-fascist campaign in Iran. The party newspaper *Mardom* was utilised by the British to spread anti-fascist propaganda in Iran. First published in February 1942, the editorial board of *Mardom* included two leading Tudeh members Iraj Eskanderi and Bozorg Alavi.<sup>489</sup> It was Mostafa Fateh who introduced Bozorg Alavi to Lambton who then recruited him. Released from prison, the latter became a member of the central committee of the Tudeh. While holding this position, he started working as one of Lambton's assistants in Victory House, the anti-German propaganda information centre.<sup>490</sup> Relieved of her position as press attaché in late 1942 in favour of someone more senior, Lambton was tasked with handling the Persian press, officials, translations, and producing local publications.<sup>491</sup> As a member of the PRB, Bozorg Alavi was employed as a junior staff member for his services as translator and writer for Lambton's Persian bulletin. He was paid the considerable amount of £450 per year, in comparison to the office accountant at £500 per year.<sup>492</sup> His appointment not long after the foundation of the party showed the early collaboration between the Tudeh and the British on the anti-fascist front. In October 1942, he moved from being Lambton's assistant and translator to work under her superior, Calvert, to focus on broadcasts for radio.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>488</sup> British legation Tehran (Lambton) to Ministry of Information, 11 October 1941, PRO, FO930/166, FPI/130; British legation Tehran (Lambton) to Ministry of Information, 17 November 1941, PRO, FO930/166, FPI/130.

<sup>489</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 66.

<sup>490</sup> See Khamseh'i, *Forsat-e bozorg-e az dast rafteh* (Tehran: Haftah, 1983), 32 in M Geranmayeh, *Iranian resistance to Soviet pressure: Irano-Soviet relations, 1941-1947*, PhD Diss., University of London (1992).

<sup>491</sup> British legation Tehran circular to all consuls, 19 December 1941, PRO, FO930/167, 152/38/41.

<sup>492</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Ministry of Information, 18 December 1941, PRO, FO930/166, FP1/130.

<sup>493</sup> Persia budget, Ministry of Information, 6 October 1942, PRO, FO930/167, 1533.

His appointment coincided with an urgent need to improve Persian broadcasts in Iran. The director of the PRB, S Lawford Childs, regarded radio broadcasts as the most important propaganda tool for the British in occupied Iran. Radio programmes were extended to include news bulletins as well as talk shows. In his position, Bozorg Alavi would have had to also monitor BBC questions and broadcasts in Persian from Axis powers.<sup>494</sup> Less than a year later, he was promoted to senior translator.<sup>495</sup> The existence of an active working relationship between the Tudeh and the British showed how both were interested in disseminating anti-fascist propaganda. This also points out to a practicality to utilise whoever useful.<sup>496</sup> With Safar Now'i as the editor, Iraj Eskandari, Bozorg Alavi and other former members of the Group of 53 wrote the newspaper's main articles. The PRB instructed *Mardom* to publish a letter in retaliation to an article boosting the Qashqa'i, as a way to cajole them away from German influence.<sup>497</sup> As aforementioned, the Tudeh was committed to combatting pro-German elements in Iran, with their newspaper thereby being positioned as a vehicle for anti-German thought on behalf of the British.

Due to the presence of some Marxist tendencies within the leadership of the Tudeh and despite its support of communists as an anti-fascist movement, it should be noted that Britain's apprehension towards communism did not completely disappear.<sup>498</sup> Within the coalition government, Britain's deputy prime minister and Labour Party leader, Atlee,

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<sup>494</sup> British legation Tehran (Childs) to Ministry of Information Cairo (Tweedy), 20 October 1942, PRO, FO930/167, 34/139/42.

<sup>495</sup> Persian staff budget, Ministry of Information, 22 April 1943, PRO, FO930/168, 1791.

<sup>496</sup> Khomeh'i, *Forsat-e bozorg-e az dast rafteh*, 35–36.

<sup>497</sup> British consulate Shiraz (consul) to British legation Tehran (Trott), 4 November 1942, PRO, FO248/1409, 39/230/42.

<sup>498</sup> Rothwell, *War Aims in the Second World War*, 66.

pushed for the removal of Francisco Franco's regime in Spain as a wartime aim. Interestingly, the Tudeh later came to the support of Spanish activists against Franco's government after the war ended, holding a public demonstration in Qazvin to rally support against fascist Spain.<sup>499</sup> This stand would later symbolise the divergence of ideals between the party and British policy at the end of the occupation. During the war however, Churchill disapproved of extending the conflict against Spain due to his contention that countries liberated by the Allies would then become susceptible to communism.<sup>500</sup> Although the conflict with Germany was initially prioritised<sup>501</sup>, the fear of communism was to become more pronounced as the war and occupation of Iran progressed, much to the detriment of British attitudes towards the Tudeh, which will be explored in the upcoming chapters.

The tolerance towards the Tudeh during the early years of the occupation could also be further read within the wider context of British support for other Left-wing entities within the global anti-fascist fight. In India, there was a noticeable move towards seeing the communists as valuable allies. The ban on communists was reversed, many were released, and their publications were allowed again.<sup>502</sup> Britain housed national governments in exile in London, in addition to providing aid, intelligence and training to resistance groups of all ideological groups, from nationalists to communists. As the German forces overran Europe and North Africa, and after the fall of Malaya and Singapore to Japanese forces in February 1942, British policy to support communist

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<sup>499</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1324/12/20 (11 March 1946), No.1/13251/15949, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>500</sup> Rothwell, *War Aims in the Second World War*, 80.

<sup>501</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>502</sup> Yasmin Khan, *The Raj at War: A People's History of India's Second World War* (London: Vintage, 2015), 178.

movements became more widespread and common. For example, Joseph Broz, known better as Tito, made a name for himself within and outside of the communist movement. Seeing their ability to cause trouble for the occupying German forces British agents were sent to aid and coordinate with Tito.<sup>503</sup> The communists in Yugoslavia and Greece showed how capable they were at organising a strong and efficient resistance against the fascists. From their headquarters in Cairo, British policy was adapted to accommodate the communists, to encourage them to play a useful military role in the overall efforts of the Middle Eastern theatre of operations.<sup>504</sup> In Britain itself, the Communist Party of Great Britain also joined the war effort, supporting the coalition government wholeheartedly.<sup>505</sup> Britain benefited from this, presenting an image of national unity, which placed it at the forefront of the resistance movement in Europe.

In Southeast Asia, Britain directly allied with the Malayan Communist Party (MCP) to fight the occupying Japanese Army.<sup>506</sup> Together, they emerged as the strongest resistance force in Malaya, forming the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (MPAJA).<sup>507</sup> The "Oriental Mission" of the SOE collaborated closely with the MCP to strategise and raise guerrilla resistance groups throughout the peninsula. The SOE provided essential training for the MCP in sabotage and guerrilla warfare.<sup>508</sup> Although the MCP were the foot

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<sup>503</sup> McConville, "Knight's move in Bosnia and the British rescue of Tito: 1944", 61.

<sup>504</sup> Gerolymatos, *An international Civil War*, 50–51.

<sup>505</sup> James Eaden and David Renton, *The Communist Party of Great Britain since 1920* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), 86–87.

<sup>506</sup> The MCP had close relations with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Indeed, most of its members were of Chinese origin. Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 13–14.

<sup>507</sup> Before the invasion, the MCP was active but flexible in its political rhetoric, calling for the establishment of a Malayan democratic republic. The MCP had previously offered cooperation with the British in the event of a Japanese invasion soon after the Soviet Union was invaded. The British rejected the MCP's offer to suspend its "anti-British imperialism" policy and defend Malaya, in exchange for "democratic rights" being given to the people. This policy showed that the British only collaborated with the MCP and supported communism out of necessity and only after the Japanese invasion. Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 57–59.

<sup>508</sup> Rebecca Kenneison, *The Special Operations Executive in Malaya: World War II and the Path to Independence* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 15–30.

soldiers of the movement, it was ultimately the British who provided the leadership, as Malaya was still part of the British Empire. Importantly, political matters were excluded from the discussions and both sides agreed not to discuss post-war policy.<sup>509</sup> This indicated that the collaboration with the communists was limited only to their functioning as a wartime asset. As can be seen in Europe and Southeast Asia, Britain was active in providing assistance to the anti-fascist (here taken to include the Japanese occupation of Malaya) forces. At the highest level, Britain provided shelter to the national unity governments of Europe in London, which included communist and socialist elements. On the ground, Britain provided training and support to the anti-fascist forces.

The establishment of the Tudeh thus served an important and symbolic purpose as part of the Iranian anti-German front. That the British showed support for communist parties as part of the anti-fascist struggle elsewhere provides insight as to how the British tolerated and used the Tudeh despite the party and its members' Marxist elements and origins. It worked side-by-side with British policies that were more aggressive and interventionist, such as the closing down of Axis legations and arrest of prominent Iranians. The early phase of the occupation was characterised by the instilling of anti-fascism in Iran, which was a trend seen throughout Europe and Asia with the establishment of national unity coalitions between communist, socialist and liberal elements. In Iran, in the absence of a centralised and structured national unity government, the Tudeh was regarded as a part of the loose popular front that was made up of the Soviet Union, the Iranian government and the tribal elements. The British utilised the party's newspapers and its members to help spread anti-fascist ideals which,

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<sup>509</sup> Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 75–77.

in turn, worked with Britain's own wartime propaganda to counter German influence in Iran.

### 3.3 The Tudeh within British oil interests

As a major resource for the war, oil was a prime objective for the invasion and occupation of Iran. At the start, the AIOC complex was geared towards the war and the oil fields were considered vital. As put accurately by Anand Toprani, nations fought for "the capability to accomplish tasks that require oil"<sup>510</sup>, which was very much the case in Iran. In order to support the demands of the war, a dramatic increase in production and an imposition of wartime working conditions occurred and resulted in an increase in hardship for workers. In the early months of the war, the Tudeh's activities in the south were virtually non-existent, while the AIOC was reluctant to become involved in any political activities. The AIOC and the military command were granted considerable power over the oil industry in Iran. Their main priorities at the start of the occupation comprised of unhindered control over workers, efficient production that could meet wartime demands, and the protection of the oil. Nonetheless, the difficulties imposed by the demands of the war laid the foundations for the Tudeh's appeal among oil labourers later on. These tough wartime conditions created the conditions in which the Tudeh became popular and appealing. This chapter further shows how, at this point, the British only saw threats from an Axis attack and were unconcerned by Tudeh (or Soviet) activities with regards to the oil.

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<sup>510</sup> Toprani, *Oil and the Great Powers*, 1.

The AIOC, aided by the British military, held considerable control in the south. This relationship was close, and many resources were shared between them to strengthen the oil complex. Considerable financial aid was given to the AIOC for the expansion of security facilities to secure the oil region.<sup>511</sup> The local police also came under the supervision of the British consulate in Khorramshahr.<sup>512</sup> Elling has given considerable analysis to the significant militarisation of the oil complex and how this tightened British control and grip over the south.<sup>513</sup> As the war was a top priority for the British occupiers, all these measures were necessary to support the increase in demand, production and activities. Demand for oil came from the British and Soviet troops in Iran as well as from the Allied armies. In 1942, the loss of Burma and the Dutch East Indies also resulted in the loss of the oil reserves there, increasing the demand for Iranian oil.<sup>514</sup> In addition, aviation spirit was a particularly important resource from Abadan. Taking all these needs into consideration, the British Cabinet regarded Abadan as an irreplaceable asset for the war.<sup>515</sup>

This increase in demands resulted in a rapid growth in company employees. According to Atabaki, by 1942, about 250,000 Iranians were employed in the war effort, including in the oil industry.<sup>516</sup> Despite the substantial number, the Allied forces, already stretched financially, did not increase the daily wage. Instead, the AIOC maintained the daily wage of 5–6 rials, in place since 1929. In other words, inflation and extra demands caused by the occupation were not taken into consideration. Furthermore, new employees were

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<sup>511</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 240–242.

<sup>512</sup> Official Note on Anti-Sabotage Measures in Company Areas in Iran, 17 August 1943, ArcRef 59017, Barcode 55108.

<sup>513</sup> Elling and Abdul Razak, "Oil, Labour and Empire: Abadan in WWII Occupied Iran".

<sup>514</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 240.

<sup>515</sup> Quoted from Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 257.

<sup>516</sup> Atabaki, 'Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', 95.

subject to prolonged probationary periods with no access to healthcare or welfare advantages.<sup>517</sup> As Shafiee pointed out, the infrastructure for those in the oil industry favoured those in managerial and technical positions, while ordinary workers and their families who lived in Abadan were subject to poor conditions.<sup>518</sup> This increase of employees was not met by the provision of proper housing facilities as admitted by the general manager in Iran, John Pattinson. In addition to the scanty housing situation, there were shortages of food and clothing for company employees and their families. Despite the restrictions of the occupation, the company tried to provide food, clothing, and medication, but was unable to fully meet the needs of the workers. The poverty and poor hygiene in the surrounding areas of the oil complex led to the spread of disease.<sup>519</sup>

The 1942 programme of the Tudeh addressed some of the issues faced by the oil labourers. It promised labour legislation, a set number of hours of work per day, paid holidays, pay for Fridays, overtime, disability insurance, government-subsidised housing, pensions and a ban on child labour.<sup>520</sup> While this was not directed to the oil workers specifically, it indicated an interest in improving the poor working conditions in Iran and in prioritising workers' rights. The war and occupation increased the number of labourers in the south, which led to overcrowding, made worse by poor working and living conditions. These conditions contributed to the Tudeh's appeal and substantiated their calls for reforms.

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<sup>517</sup> Atabaki, 'Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', 95–96.

<sup>518</sup> Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil*, 126.

<sup>519</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 246–248.

<sup>520</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 284.

At this point in the occupation, the party held subtle links to the oil industry. Its main connection was through its relationship with Mostafa Fateh, with whom they formed an anti-fascist front.<sup>521</sup> With the war at its height and the Allies still very much on the defence, Abadan was under strict security measures and subject to military authorities. Throughout the occupation, an Order-in-Council was in place to ensure that oil workers were prohibited from quitting or from moving freely.<sup>522</sup> It was forbidden to form parties, unions and workers' clubs while newspapers and private letters were subject to censorship.<sup>523</sup> Under such circumstances, many political activities and organisation were conducted underground. According to Iraj Eskanderi, the Tudeh were already active among workers during the first phase of the occupation, including among oil workers.<sup>524</sup> In nearby Fars, the Tudeh launched a newspaper, *Surush* (the Herald) in the summer of 1943 to promote party activities in the region.<sup>525</sup> As aforementioned, trade union activism in the south was also being revived by Yusuf Eftekhari, who had substantial experience in the field.

At the height of the war, Britain was not concerned about any local opposition to its dominance over the oil. After the losses faced in Southeast Asia, the AIOC and the British government were even more preoccupied with the safety and defence of the oil from an Axis attack. In July 1942, the Chiefs of Staff, which included Churchill and heads of the military, prepared for the possibility that Germany would either invade Iran or destroy

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<sup>521</sup> LP Elwell-Sutton, *Persian Oil: A Study in Power Politics* (London: Lawrence and Wishart Ltd, 1955), 107.

<sup>522</sup> Elkington (Abadan), 20 November 1942, PRO, FO 371/31439.

<sup>523</sup> Nimrod Zagagi, 'An Oasis of Radicalism: The Labor Movement in Abadan in the 1940s', *Iranian Studies Online* (March 2020), 854; see also 'Discontent among oil company's employees', 6 January 1944, PRO, FO371/40158.

<sup>524</sup> Chaqueri, *The Left in Iran*, 17-18.

<sup>525</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 299; see also, Pourhadi, *Persian and Afghan Newspapers in the Library of Congress, 1871-1978*, 76.

the oilfields in the south of the country. Such a loss would constitute the bulk of the Allies' oil supply. The oil control board went on to recommend that military protection of the Iranian oilfields needed to be maximised to prevent the loss of the oil supply.<sup>526</sup> This was a real threat in the minds of the British<sup>527</sup> and was a notion that permeated throughout the diplomatic service in Iran.<sup>528</sup>

The British were thus only concerned with an Axis invasion of the oil. Soviet activities were not very prominent in the south. According to a British diplomatic report on the situation in the AIOC areas, the Soviets were intriguing with the Armenians in the south by promising them an independent state. The British did not take this very seriously and did not regard it as a threat to the oil supply, with no mention of Soviet interference or Tudeh intriguing with regards to the oil complex.<sup>529</sup> Furthermore, the AIOC did not see the need to increase British propaganda either. It was reluctant to follow the directive from the Ministry of Information for an information centre to be set up in Abadan. They did not want to be associated with propaganda, lest it jeopardise their position after the war. While they wanted to remain above Iranian politics<sup>530</sup>, their apparent reticence indicated that the AIOC did not see any threat to its position at this point.

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<sup>526</sup> Report by the Oil Control Board to the Chiefs of Staff Committee, 21 July 1942, CAB120/665, PRO, COS(42)352.

<sup>527</sup> The Chiefs of Staff Committee made detailed plans in the event of a collapse of the Soviet defence and a German invasion through the north of Iran. Review of Situation – Middle East by Chiefs of Staff Committee, 29 July 1942, PRO, CAB120/665, COS(42)357; the British government through the Defence Committee, which included Churchill, Attlee and Eden, also continued the earlier policy of destroying the oil fields within 48 hours in the event of a German invasion. Air Ministry to Commander in Chief (Middle East), 18 April 1942, PRO, CAB120/665.

<sup>528</sup> The British consul-general in Ahwaz Major Arthur E H Macann described it as the most important asset in the empire. British consulate Ahwaz (Macann) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1418, 105/26/43.

<sup>529</sup> Reconnaissance of the area occupied by the AIOC Ltd in South Iran (HW Lane), 14 June 1942, PRO, WO201/1434, B.48566

<sup>530</sup> Minister of State Cairo to Ministry of Information (Bracken), 23 December 1942, PRO, FO930/167, 41/43.

As shown here, political activities in the south were limited and the oil industry was mainly preoccupied by the war. The Tudeh introduced a party programme that addressed issues that faced the oil workers and were quietly active in the south, but this did not translate into a direct threat in the early months of the occupation. Indeed, the AIOC and British government prepared for its protection and security from a German invasion but nothing else. The entire oil complex was geared for the needs of the occupying forces or the war. However, the poor working and living conditions that emerged from the occupation laid the foundations of worker dissatisfaction, which the Tudeh would later exploit to increase their influence and presence.

### 3.4 The Tudeh within British policy of promoting political change

With the British occupiers prioritising the war, policymakers briefly attempted to present the occupation as an opportunity to promote political reform in Iran. Soon after the occupation, the BBC announced that following Reza Shah's abdication, political change would be gradually possible.<sup>531</sup> The occupation thus presented a window in which the British could imprint on the political development of the country, a policy interest that already existed before the invasion. Within this political interest, the Tudeh featured as an important example of political change as a result of the occupation. This was quickly abandoned, and the party was never completely utilised to Britain's advantage. Policymaking here displayed Britain's flexible approach in response to changing needs in the occupation, which first supported and later moved away from promoting political change.

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<sup>531</sup> F Safiri and H Shahidi, 'Great Britain Xiii. The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)', *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, February 2012.

At its foundation the Tudeh represented a positive effect of the occupation and of Britain's policy of promoting political change in the country. Realising that Iran was at a political crossroads, the British wanted to encourage "public spirited, able and disinterested Persians to come forward and play their part in creating a modern Persia: and once they have emerged, [to] support them".<sup>532</sup> Initially, Britain saw this as an opportunity to restore itself as a key player within Iranian politics and to make circumstances more favourable and susceptible to British influence. Writing in early 1942, it is tempting to imagine that this sentiment from the Ministry of Information in London could well have been directed towards the Tudeh. However, a more sober reading shows that the party fitted in these designs but was not exploited as the British gradually lost the desire to promote political change and began to fear that change could work against its interests.

Iran's political landscape at the start of the occupation was an area of interest to the British in Iran. This period saw the re-emergence of notables who had been side-lined under Reza Shah, with prime ministers coming from the traditional political elite, made up of landed and titled families. They dominated in the Iranian Cabinet, Majles and at the local level.<sup>533</sup> They had little loyalty to Britain and were seemingly un-dynamic in the eyes of the British. Within the legation in Tehran, concerns arose from the continued appointment of these Iranian politicians. For instance, soon after Ahmad Qavam was appointed prime minister in August 1942<sup>534</sup>, Bullard voiced concerns over whether he would choose "good colleagues".<sup>535</sup> Consul-general in Mashhad, Skrine, elaborated even

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<sup>532</sup> Ministry of Information (Radcliffe) to Foreign Office (Lockhart), 14 February 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1036.

<sup>533</sup> Abrahamian, *A History of Modern Iran*, 102–103.

<sup>534</sup> Qavam came from a political and land-owning family. His brother Vosuq al-Dawleh was a prime minister under the Qajars. Qavam was briefly prime minister twice after the 1921 coup, before being sent for a few years to exile in Europe by Reza Shah. Azimi, *Iran*, 65–66.

<sup>535</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 2 August 1942, PRO, FO371/31385, E4564.

further on this, calling the ruling elite “the Gang”. He described them as an “oligarchy of wealthy landlords, merchants, entrepreneurs and dishonest officials”.<sup>536</sup> Opinion at both the legation and consul levels were poor towards those in control of political and economic power. This supports Azimi’s assertion that there was clearly a lack of trust that the Iranian government would be staffed by politicians deemed suitable to the British.<sup>537</sup>

In a memorandum on Iran, writing in March 1942, Eden sought to promote “honest young men” instead of “the return to power of corrupt politicians of the old regime”.<sup>538</sup> Although the foreign secretary did not specify who comprised these new figures, it is clear that, at this stage, Britain was open to the idea of promoting new democratic forces in the country and fostering new political trends, which the Tudeh did represent. This policy tapped into the open public space that had emerged in the post-Reza Shah period, which saw new ideologies, old elites and new politicians emerge to embrace reform and a return to constitutional government. Within this wave was the Tudeh as well as Fateh’s new party, among others.<sup>539</sup> British policymakers believed that such changes were part of a new political environment that could benefit from British encouragement and direction.

Overseeing this era of change, London wanted to promote political reform in Iran and sought to support local Iranians who wanted to “create a modern Persia”.<sup>540</sup> The idea of a modern Iran was left vague by the Ministry of Information, but the underlying idea was

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<sup>536</sup> Skrine, *World War in Iran*, xv.

<sup>537</sup> Bullard was largely disappointed by Suhaili who was only in office for a few months in 1942. Azimi, *Iran*, 51–62.

<sup>538</sup> Memorandum: on Persia in Middle East Headquarters Cairo (Lyttleton) to Foreign Office (Eden), 5 March 1942, PRO, FO371/31385, E1438.

<sup>539</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 503.

<sup>540</sup> Ministry of Information to Foreign Office (Lockhart), 9 January 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1036.

that British political institutions needed to be promoted.<sup>541</sup> In the early years of the occupation, the Ministry of Information in London together with the PRB in Tehran promoted British democracy. In a pamphlet produced for Iran in June 1942, Britain's democratic strength was advertised as a type of freedom and system of government to aspire to.<sup>542</sup> One of the reasons why it felt capable of doing so was because in the Persian Gulf, the British had, for many years, as part of its informal empire, been providing political guidance to local rulers. Through political advisers in the employment of the Gulf leaders, Britain dictated not only on foreign policy but also on domestic issues, thus giving the British confidence and conviction as to its own abilities.

Such promotions of democratic values expanded to what could be described as an attempt to align with Tudeh values. In promoting British democracy in Iran, the PRB included material on British labour: "The right to lawful combination by work-people, or any others with a common interest, is one of Britain's freedoms... This is the basis in Law of Trade Union rights. Now, in the greatest crusade for liberty the world has ever witnessed, Britain's great Trade Unions, representing millions of British workers, stand in the van of the fight, determined to do all, dare all, suffer all, in defence of the freedom their fathers have so arduously won".<sup>543</sup> Interestingly, the conflict against the Axis powers was presented as a workers' struggle here, but what seems more surprising is the focus on Britain's trade union record. Written in English and then translated into Persian, such material was destined for the Left-leaning literate of Iran. The language and content shared some noticeable similarities to the Tudeh programme and the activities undertaken within trade unions at the time – its October 1942 programme focused on

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<sup>541</sup> Ministry of Information to Foreign Office (Lockhart), 9 January 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1036.

<sup>542</sup> "Britain's Democratic Strength", 25 June 1942, PRO, INF2/33.

<sup>543</sup> "Britain's Democratic Strength", 25 June 1942, PRO, INF2/33.

workers' rights and pledged to establish guilds to become more visible among Iran's trade unions.<sup>544</sup> The parallels are striking and highlight inclination by the British to be seen as a role model for workers' rights, an arena in which the Tudeh also saw itself.

In addition to the PRB and the Ministry of Information in London, the British Council in Iran was active at this time in promoting changes along British lines. It ran classes on English language and literature, as well as on arts and sciences. The Foreign Office provided a substantial budget to spread British culture amongst Iranians. The idea behind this was to influence the political landscape and mentality in Iran and to educate Iranians within a British curriculum.<sup>545</sup> British schools were opened in Iran in the late nineteenth century, mainly by missionary organisations. While many were closed during Reza Shah's reign, a few remained in operation during the occupation.<sup>546</sup> Even the American State Department echoed this trend as observed in their attempts to push for the education of young Iranian politicians in American schools.<sup>547</sup> It was also acknowledged that new blood was needed and that this could be "found from the progressive elements" within Iran.<sup>548</sup> The Tudeh founders themselves had not received a British education. Most of the 1942 central committee members were educated at the *Dar al-Funun* and went to either France or Germany for their higher education. Thus, while there was no direct link between British education and the Tudeh, efforts of the British Council and legation nonetheless promoted a sense that Western education was a prerequisite for change.

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<sup>544</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 284–285.

<sup>545</sup> Sreberny and Torfeh, *Persian Service*, 45.

<sup>546</sup> Gulnar E Francis-Dehqani, 'Great Britain Xv. British Schools in Persia', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2012.

<sup>547</sup> British Middle East Headquarters Cairo (Lytleton) to Foreign Office (Eden), 5 March 1942, PRO, FO371/31385, E1438.

<sup>548</sup> Memorandum: on Persia in British Middle East Headquarters Cairo (Lytleton) to Foreign Office (Eden), 5 March 1942, PRO, FO371/31385, E1438.

Within this desire to promote British-style reforms, Lambton supervised and controlled the distribution of books, pamphlets and the teaching of English. Lambton employed the Tudeh member Bozorg Alavi alongside other Iranians to produce the translations and content of such materials.<sup>549</sup> At the time, he was busy writing, publishing stories and translating works of fiction by both English and Russian writers, including J B Priestley and Anton Chekov. He was becoming well-known and was improving his literary skills, in part due to the public encouragement of the British government to promote English books in Iran.<sup>550</sup> Together with local literary figures, the British legation therefore showed a serious interest in promoting English and British-style changes to the educated population.

The question then arises why the Tudeh was not backed by the British from the start as a vehicle for the change it wanted to oversee. While this will be explored further in the next chapter, one of the reasons that appeared immediately was the concern that change in Iran would result in communism. This was embodied by the Ministry of Information's opinion that any kind of potential elite stemming from the Iranian educated class may lean towards communism.<sup>551</sup> Although the Tudeh was not openly communist, it had distinct Marxist elements, which was not entirely masked nor outwardly denied. As early as 1942, Bullard had begun to voice concern over the possible election of communist deputies in the Soviet-controlled northern provinces.<sup>552</sup> Disparaging of the long-serving politicians ruling in Tehran, Bullard was quick to admit that "Communist deputies could

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<sup>549</sup> Public Relations Bureau (Childs) to Ministry of Information (Monroe), 26 April 1942, PRO, FO930/167, P34/51/42.

<sup>550</sup> Mirabedini, 'Bozorg Alavi.'

<sup>551</sup> Ministry of Information (Radcliffe) to Lockhart, 14 February 1942, PRO, FO371/31400, E1036.

<sup>552</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 April 1942, PRO, FO371/31385, E2493.

scarcely be more mischievous than the present gang”.<sup>553</sup> Bullard here expressed a unique sentiment, showing a preference for communist deputies in the Majles, regarding them as of better calibre than the existing Iranian political class.

Still, the British legation in Tehran remained vigilant of the possible rise of Left-leaning deputies in the north, encouraged by the presence of the Soviets. Bullard expressed concern to London that this would, unavoidably, undermine Britain’s position in the country.<sup>554</sup> According to Cook while he was still the British consul in Tabriz, the local population seemed to welcome Soviet influence, with this indicating suitable conditions for the promotion of “bolshevist and communist activity”.<sup>555</sup> Coming from Cook, it seems unsurprising that he would highlight this since he perceived Soviet interference in many areas of Azerbaijan. At this point of the occupation, he and the British legation were aware of a Tudeh branch in Azerbaijan while the foundations of suspicion towards Soviet activism were already in place.

Despite their ostensible desire for change, the British were ultimately willing to back traditional conservative politicians that fulfilled British interests. Despite misgivings, Bullard showed support for Qavam who passed bills that were favourable to the occupation. It can thus be seen that while Britain lamented the fact that old politicians were still in power, they supported politicians such as Qavam and this willingness to rule in favour of the Allies.<sup>556</sup> Furthermore, too much political openness was seen as

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<sup>553</sup> Bullard was equally quick to state that despite this, the Iranian constitution demanded enough deputies from Tehran to prevent nominees from the north from ever gaining a majority. British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 April 1942, PRO, FO371/31385, E2493.

<sup>554</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 6 August 1942, PRO, FO371/31385, E4636.

<sup>555</sup> British consulate Tabriz (Cook) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 28 January 1942, PRO, FO248/1410, 144/49/42.

<sup>556</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 508.

disruptive. The deputies of the thirteenth Majles that opened in December 1941 took advantage of their new freedom to voice criticism of Reza Shah's reign and to engage in political debates.<sup>557</sup> Bullard regarded this development as obstructive and a serious danger to the running of the occupation.<sup>558</sup> This coincided with an increase of concern by the Iranian Ministry of Interior who observed the Tudeh becoming more vocal, instigating more political activity and using public platforms to further their message.<sup>559</sup>

The Foreign Office in London echoed Bullard's sentiment that the Majles and therefore parliamentary elections were disadvantageous and stated a preference for elections to be postponed indefinitely so that the occupation could run smoothly. The dissolution of the Majles was also seen as necessary to safeguard the flow of supplies and the removal of any parliamentarians sympathetic to Germany.<sup>560</sup> Bullard suggested to close the Majles, regarding the deputies "like school children" and disruptive for the Iranian government's attempts to restore order.<sup>561</sup> Patronising in his outlook, his suggestion was tantamount to suspending democratic practices in Iran. The Foreign Office eventually refrained from suspending elections and the Majles, deciding that such a move would encourage anti-Allied propaganda and lead disgruntled deputies to "intrigue against us".<sup>562</sup> The thirteenth Majles was seen through though until new elections were called in the summer of 1943.<sup>563</sup>

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<sup>557</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 46–47.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>559</sup> Ministry of Interior telegraph, 1322/5/20 (12 August 1943), N0.17679/987, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>560</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 7 October 1942, PRO, FO 371/31386, E5930.

<sup>561</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 16 December 1942, PRO, FO371/31387, E7215/14/34.

<sup>562</sup> Foreign Office minutes, 10 October 1942, PRO, FO371/31386, E5930; see also Fakhreddin Azimi, 'Great Britain vi. British Influence in Persia, 1941–79', in *Encyclopaedia Iranica*, 2012.

<sup>563</sup> During the reign of Reza Shah, Britain and Iran maintained an economic partnership and Britain provided technical services to Iran. As mentioned in the previous chapter, although the British government

Another reason why the British lost interest in promoting political reform was also because the very notion that the British knew best for Iran was unpopular. In Mashhad, Skrine arranged for a display of British and Soviet generosity to the Iranian people by donating food from their own supplies. To his surprise, this was not greeted by gratitude. He had to remind himself that “Persia was modern now, whether the West liked it or not, and they were not going to say thank you for charity from the British or anyone else”.<sup>564</sup> While Skrine was dismissive of Iranian pride, he was aware of the underlying resentment towards the imposition of British charity and ideals on Iran within the context of the military occupation.<sup>565</sup> The implication was that, at least in the province in Khurasan, the country was not open to British imposition of changes.

In sum, the British wanted to promote political change in Iran that suited its interests and needs. Testament to the flexibility and nuanced character of policy, these changes could be accommodated and adapted relatively easily. Through its campaign to encourage political changes, the Foreign Office and the British legation was a part of the open environment that allowed for political parties, including the Tudeh, to express themselves. However, when the British legation saw that change might promote communism, the perceived potential to exploit a party like the Tudeh disappeared. Despite the desire to promote younger reformist-minded politicians, the British later backed Sayyid Zia, an older statesman who did not have a reformist programme. Writing

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was the biggest shareholder in AIOC, Reza Shah was still able to negotiate a more advantageous oil agreement for Iran. Elizabeth Monroe, *Britain's Moment in the Middle East, 1914–1956* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1963), 90, 108.

<sup>564</sup> Skrine, *World War in Iran*, 115–116.

<sup>565</sup> *Ibid.*, 116–117.

at the end of the war, Elwell-Sutton lamented this decision.<sup>566</sup> The Tudeh was a party that represented the change that the British envisioned in theory to promote but did not in practice. This trend continued throughout the occupation, whereby the party was admired for being organised and forward-looking but did not lay in long-term British interest to encourage.

#### 4. Conclusion

The early phase of the occupation saw Britain play a significant role not only in the running of the occupation but in many areas of Iranian politics as well. It established a policymaking style that was flexible and adaptable, as demonstrated by its ability to establish control, fight German presence, manage its alliance with the Soviets and accommodate (and later hinder) new political entities such as the Tudeh, to their advantage and within a relatively short period of time. The British diplomatic service and its propaganda campaigns in Iran proved instrumental in running the affairs of Britain and the occupation. This illustrates how British policy interests were implemented and how the role of the Tudeh within key policy frameworks was envisioned. With the Tudeh, the British had a party in Iran that was openly against German influence in the country. Contextualising this experience within the wider war, patterns in British policymaking show why the Tudeh was not seen as a threat and instead was utilised as part of the global anti-fascist movement. At this point in the occupation, the British, whether in London, Tehran or the provinces, did not see a Tudeh-Soviet link. They did, however, voice suspicions towards their Soviet colleagues and were clear in their criticisms when

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<sup>566</sup> Elwell-Sutton, 'Political Parties in Iran, 1941-1948', 47.

corresponding with London, who wanted to prioritise good working relations with the Soviets. Such conflicts resulted in policy appearing contradictory at times as the struggle between individual prejudice and the greater alliance appeared frequently.

At this point in the occupation, the path of the war was still very much ongoing, and the integrity of the alliance prevailed. Freed from suspicions and driven by a certainty that the occupation was right, British policymakers were encouraged in their belief that they could instil democratic values. At the heart of these changes was the Tudeh, symbolic of the post-Reza Shah era of political freedom and thus emblematic of the change Britain wanted to encourage. By promoting political change and British-style reforms, Britain sought to nurture a new strand of Iranian politicians but, when faced by the risks of change, abandoned such an approach together with any efforts or potential attempts to exploit the Tudeh.

### Chapter 3: The Tudeh within shifting British interests, 1943–1945

In January 1943, the direction of the war was still uncertain but by the summer, the balance had shifted in favour of the Allies. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad and the Allied success in the North African campaign both resulted in a positive turn in the war for the Allies, which corresponded to a change in stance for British policy in Iran: one that inched away from being strictly wartime focussed to being more concerned with its long-term position. Again, it appeared that British responses in Iran were a reaction to what was happening in the wider war. This affected British presence, confidence, relations with the Soviets and views on and attitudes towards the Tudeh. The diplomatic service in Iran subtly changed the narrative, influencing London's opinions and depicting an increasingly worrying situation in which Britain's key interests in Iran faced a different kind of threat: either from the Soviets, the Tudeh or from a Soviet–Tudeh alliance.

This chapter covers what can best be described as a transitional period for the British, from the Battle of Stalingrad to the Soviet Union's bid for an oil concession in the north of Iran. This middle phase of the occupation was still dictated by the war and Iran remained an important part of the Allies' strategic plans, as embodied by the tripartite conference held in the winter of 1943. The chapter begins by looking at how changes in the war broadly affected Britain's overall political position in Iran. Next, the Tudeh's political and ideological development will be presented to show that its significance was ascending as a party. Policy and attitudes will be analysed within key British interests at the time, namely in relation to combatting fascism, protecting its position in the country, the managing of relations with the Soviets, and the ensuring of its oil interests. It will be established that while the British acknowledged the Tudeh's political standing and exceptional organisation, the party was no longer regarded within the framework of anti-

fascism but came to be seen as a vehicle of Soviet ambitions. This shift in attitude will be contextualised within the wider war and within British policy adaptability.

### 1. Shifting British interests and policies

To state that there was a sudden shift in British interests from one year to another of the occupation would be overly simplistic. Despite the changes in Allied fortunes at Stalingrad and in North Africa, some continuity existed within Britain's overall policy in Iran. In 1943, British officials in Iran continued to be motivated by factors that are familiar from the previous chapter: the status of the ongoing war with the Axis powers and their position within Iran *vis-à-vis* its partnership with the Soviet Union. Nonetheless, shifts in the war caused Britain to look beyond the occupation to consider the reality of its position and the anxiety the occupation had caused. Here, the war will be discussed in tandem with overall British policy considerations at the time. As will be seen in this chapter, these changes had a ripple effect in British approach towards the Tudeh.

1943 saw an improvement in Allied military fortunes. Germany's campaigns in the Soviet Union overstretched their resources and troops, making their other fronts vulnerable. The Red Army was at its fullest capacity, bulked by the higher production of planes, tanks and guns, in part due to the steady access to Iranian resources. After months of fighting, the Soviets defeated the German troops near Stalingrad in February 1943, greatly increasing Allied confidence.<sup>567</sup> Meanwhile, in the Mediterranean, the Allied offensives witnessed success against General Erwin Rommel's troops in North Africa, ending with

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<sup>567</sup> Service, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, 266.

German and Italian troops surrendering in May 1943.<sup>568</sup> Another turning point in the war was the successful landing of British and US troops on the island of Sicily on 10 July 1943. By the end of the month, Italian leader Benito Mussolini was ousted. His successor Marshall Pietro Badoglio signed an armistice with the Allies in September, removing Italy from the Axis alliance.<sup>569</sup> The Allies knew that victory would not come soon or easily, but the general tide of the war had shifted favourably.

The improvement of the Allies' war fortunes impacted the occupation and British policymaking in a number of ways. US presence took on a new dimension of significance, which not only influenced Britain's post-war vision but also upset the balance in the alliance. The larger roles played by the US and the Soviets in the war saw Britain acting more and more as a go-between. Churchill highlighted this in a conversation with the Soviet ambassador to London, Maisky, by describing Britain as only a bridge between Washington and Moscow.<sup>570</sup> Underpinning the notion that Britain was becoming less prominent in the alliance was Britain's reliance on American support in the war and awareness of Soviet sacrifices in the fighting on continental Europe.<sup>571</sup> Furthermore, since March 1941, Britain's economic survival relied on the Lend-Lease agreement through which the US supplied its allies with oil and materials.<sup>572</sup>

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<sup>568</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 446.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, 597–598.

<sup>570</sup> 9 February 1943, *The Maisky Diaries*, 482.

<sup>571</sup> Soviet contribution to the war was by far still the greatest. US commitment to the war after D-Day increased significantly. In Western Europe, only 20% of Allied soldiers were British. Reynolds, *From World War to Cold War*, 111.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, 109–110.

This may explain why in Iran, Bullard cultivated closer relations with the US at the expense of its relationship with the Soviet Union.<sup>573</sup> It has been well established by scholars such as Roham Alvandi, Kristen Blake and Fawcett, that the foundation of the Cold War was laid in occupied Iran.<sup>574</sup> Even before the Azerbaijan crisis, the cooperation between the three powers were not always smooth and tensions existed.<sup>575</sup> After Stalingrad, the Red Army became more protective of its zone of interest, to the point that they refused to build accommodation for American lorry drivers along the southern road to Tabriz.<sup>576</sup> In March 1943, the US food adviser, Joseph P Sheridan, and the US Consul in Tabriz were both requested to return to Tehran after Moscow complained of their anti-Soviet attitude.<sup>577</sup> Dreyfus, the US minister in Tehran, had until then taken a conciliatory approach to the Soviets. Upon learning this, however, Roosevelt decided to strengthen US presence, secure its interests in Iran and cooperate more with the British.<sup>578</sup> While Roosevelt regarded British imperialism and its empire as anachronistic, the US prioritised strengthening its relationship with Britain.<sup>579</sup> As observed by Yasmin Khan, the debate on decolonisation remained rhetorical as Roosevelt prioritised close relations with Britain as a key ingredient to victory.<sup>580</sup>

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<sup>573</sup> Despite this, the US remained protective of the independence of Iran and observed that Britain did not violate the terms of its authority. Memorandum: condition of Persia: alleged responsibility of His Majesty's government, British legation Tehran, 9 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/36/43; Kuniholm, *The Origins of the Cold War in the Near East*, 155.

<sup>574</sup> Alvandi, *Nixon, Kissinger and the Shah*, 7; Kristen Blake, *The US-Soviet Confrontation in Iran, 1945-1962* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2009), 1-2; Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 1.

<sup>575</sup> The Soviets were irritated by the US forces' arrival in Iran. Rouhollah K Ramazani, *Iran's Foreign Policy, 1941-1973* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1975), 93.

<sup>576</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 24 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/18/43.

<sup>577</sup> Vivian, Sheridan's representative in Azerbaijan, was convinced that his dismissal came at the behest of the Azerbaijani governor-general, accused of hoarding wheat and who had a difficult relationship with Vivian. The governor-general was further believed to be under the protection of the Soviets. British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 24 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/18/43.

<sup>578</sup> Blake, *The US-Soviet Confrontation in Iran*, 18.

<sup>579</sup> Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 38, 41.

<sup>580</sup> Khan, *The Raj at War*, 152.

The Soviet Union's victory at Stalingrad caused a noticeable increase of tension between the occupying forces in Iran, brought on by an inflation in confidence and international reputation. Although scholars such as Reynolds have shown how the Soviet Union, especially Stalin, was able to charm his British and the American counterparts, positive relations seemed to have been concentrated only at the leadership level.<sup>581</sup> In Iran, tensions were always just below the surface. On the eve of Stalingrad, Maisky suspected that the British ruling elite were becoming concerned with the potential rise in popularity of Bolshevism within Europe, drawing attention to Britain's insecurity towards its geopolitical position during the war that would continue into the post-war period.<sup>582</sup> Initially, the British government was publicly supportive of its ally and even celebrated the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Red Army at the Royal Albert Hall, London. The irony of this was not lost on Maisky, who exclaimed: "How times change! History has turned full circle within a quarter of a century".<sup>583</sup> Such a remark from the Soviet ambassador acknowledged the awkwardness of their cooperation in light of the Soviets' historically tense relationship with Britain. Maisky further remarked that Britain was in "universal amazement... from the top to the bottom of the social pyramid", adding that, in England, there were more cheers for Stalin than for Churchill.<sup>584</sup>

His enthusiasm and pride held some truth even in Iran. The British legation in Tehran observed that a month later, in March 1943, the Soviets were becoming more popular in the country.<sup>585</sup> In April 1943, Foreign Secretary Eden revealed his concern to Bullard,<sup>586</sup>

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<sup>581</sup> Reynolds, 'The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance', 312–313.

<sup>582</sup> 5 February 1943, *The Maisky Diaries*, 475.

<sup>583</sup> 21 February 1943, *The Maisky Diaries*, 487.

<sup>584</sup> He expanded these feelings of great admiration "for the Soviet people, the Red Army and comrade Stalin personally". 5 February 1943. *The Maisky Diaries*, 474–475.

<sup>585</sup> British legation Tehran minutes, 1 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

<sup>586</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran, 17 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/15/43.

creating a circle of suspicion over Soviet intentions that spread between London and the diplomatic service in Iran. It probably did not help that the Soviets were aware of their growing popularity. The Soviet ambassador half-jokingly asked the Iranian minister of war why Iran had not employed Soviet personnel as the “Soviet Union was the best administered country in the world”.<sup>587</sup> With growing Soviet confidence, Britain became even more suspicious of its ally’s objectives and formed the impression that Moscow was keen to maintain chaos in Iran in order to increase Soviet prestige and status.<sup>588</sup> Bullard regarded this juncture of the occupation as an opportune time to re-examine British policy towards their ally and to “look ahead to the post-war period... as the Russians are obviously doing”.<sup>589</sup> Bullard believed that the Soviet Union was keen to pursue “actions and propaganda, both to boost herself and discount us [Britain]”. With an Allied victory a real possibility, Britain became more concerned about its position and future in Iran.

Questioning Soviet intentions, the British believed that they were bearing the brunt of the occupation. Since the start, Britain had prioritised wartime requirements, including the responsibility to supply the Soviet Union, even when it came at the expense of Iran’s own needs.<sup>590</sup> Now, in the spring of 1943, Bullard noted the imbalance between Britain’s unpopular position in the country with London’s responsibilities towards its ally. As he noted:

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<sup>587</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/33/43.

<sup>588</sup> Minister of State to Foreign Office, 22 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/44/43.

<sup>589</sup> One of the ways in which Bullard thought London could do so was by prioritising Iran’s economy over aid to Russia. British legation Tehran minutes, 29 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

<sup>590</sup> Political situation (Bullard), 7 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43; for Bullard, Britain had jeopardised its position in Iran and had incurred the distrust of the Iranian people of all classes. British legation Tehran minutes 29 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

I am fully conscious that the flow of supplies to Russia must be maintained, but failure to furnish the civilian population with its minimum needs not only arouses criticism against us [Britain], but... In remembering Russia, we must not forget ourselves entirely.<sup>591</sup>

Such a statement reveals an acknowledgement that the occupation had inflicted hardships upon the Iranian population. The regret did not reveal any desire to atone, rather Bullard revealed his preoccupation that the Soviets were pursuing their own agenda and that it was no longer the time for altruism in the alliance. In a report to the Foreign Office, Ronald Campbell, a minister in the embassy in Washington DC, further cautioned London over Soviet ambitions in Iran.<sup>592</sup> Campbell had experience in the Middle East, particularly in Egypt and his expertise on the region later led to his appointment to head the Eastern Department in the Foreign Office. He was a seasoned diplomat and his position in the US further fed into institutional suspicions towards the Soviets. The sudden openness of British opinions after Stalingrad showed how present these suspicions were among diplomats. While these concerns were dormant when the Soviets joined the alliance, they were quick to re-emerge the moment the tide of the war shifted.

Although he had initially highlighted the implications of Soviet popularity in Iran, Eden still had to maintain the integrity of the alliance. In the summer of 1943, he pressed Churchill to consolidate British–Soviet–US collaboration and coordination in the war,<sup>593</sup> resulting in the decision to call for a trilateral meeting. For the diplomatic service in Iran,

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<sup>591</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 1 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/11/43.

<sup>592</sup> British embassy Washington DC (Campbell) to Foreign Office (Cadogan), 13 October 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, E374/2551/65.

<sup>593</sup> Thorpe, *Eden*, 287.

the conference was an opportunity to showcase their central position in the running of the occupation, with Bullard and his staff organising most of the logistics. The conference was a great honour for the legation but also a source of internal tensions and disagreements.<sup>594</sup> There were practical decisions to hold the meeting in Tehran. Stalin wanted a location that he could travel to by land and still keep a secure communication line with Moscow. Despite initial objections, Roosevelt agreed.<sup>595</sup> Besides this, the choice to hold the meeting in Tehran was symbolic for two other reasons: to showcase a working alliance and also as a way to emphasise the key position of Iran within the war, which Stalin highlighted in a letter to Churchill in October 1943.<sup>596</sup>

The conference held between 28 November and 28 December 1943, was the first face-to-face meeting of the “Big Three” – Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill. It has been described as a milestone in their relations and the first time the Soviet Union was treated as a real equal in the alliance.<sup>598</sup> The conference focused on the opening of a second front in continental Europe to lessen the Soviet burden and on the political reconstruction of Europe. Indeed, the leaders found surprisingly common grounds, even working together to persuade Churchill to invade France over the English Channel in 1944.<sup>599</sup> During the Tehran conference, Roosevelt was warned by the US Ambassador to the USSR, Averell

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<sup>594</sup> Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony's College, 247.

<sup>595</sup> Reynolds and Pechatnov, *The Kremlin Letters*, 313; see also Geoffrey Roberts, “Stalin at the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences”, in *Journal of Cold War Studies*, Vol.9(4) (Fall 2007), 11.

<sup>596</sup> Stalin emphasised the importance of the “Northern route” for supplies, which was essential for Soviet troops. Stalin to Churchill, 13 October 1943. Reynolds and Pechatnov, *The Kremlin Letters*, 322.

<sup>598</sup> Reynolds and Pechatnov, *The Kremlin Letters*, 313 – 314.

<sup>599</sup> During their first meeting, they discussed a number of post-war issues, including trade between the USSR and the US. Both leaders agreed that trade between them would be mutually beneficial. Both also shared a similar view over the British and French empires and agreed to establish an international commission on the future of colonies. *Ibid.*, 11–12.

Harriman, of the Soviet Union's desire to establish a communist government in Poland.<sup>600</sup> Churchill attempted to bring the matter up with Stalin, but was provided with very little in response.<sup>601</sup> These early disagreements would become more apparent as the occupation went on and tensions would beset the alliance. However, with the war ongoing, the Tehran conference served to demonstrate that the Allied powers were still united against fascism and maintained a number of common goals.<sup>602</sup> Despite different ideologies, the complex alliance remained united by the overriding goal of defeating the Axis powers.<sup>603</sup>

In Iran, the change in the course of the war affected the British narrative behind the occupation. The justification for taking Iranian supplies and causing economic hardships was quickly diminishing. This, coupled with increased Soviet confidence and the concern that Britain was becoming less important within the alliance, revealed the anticipatory anxiety Britain felt over their position, driving the British to focus on their image and future. Ultimately, the ongoing occupation felt uncomfortable next to the war. W A K Fraser, the military attaché, pointed to the connection between escalations in British policy and poor local opinion of the British.<sup>606</sup> The Foreign Office was also warned by Cairo that the rampant inflation witnessed not only increased the cost of living but also encouraged workers' strikes.<sup>607</sup> In the spring of 1943, the legation feared that popular discontent would lead to "some revolutionary movement" from these unhappy sections

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<sup>600</sup> Norman A Graebner, "Review of 'Foreign Relations of the United States: Diplomatic Papers, the Conferences at Cairo and Tehran, 1943' [Department of State Publication] (Washington DC: Government Printing office, 1961)", *The American Historical Review*, Vol.67(4) (July 1962), 1072.

<sup>601</sup> Roberts, "Stalin at the Tehran, Yalta, and Potsdam Conferences", 14.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>603</sup> Thorpe, *Eden*, 290.

<sup>606</sup> Military attaché to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 25 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/34/43.

<sup>607</sup> Minister of State to Foreign Office, 22 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/44/43.

of the population.<sup>608</sup> Even when food distribution improved in the summer of 1943, the Allies' need for easy access to local currency had increased the standard of living in Iran. Jackson described the British, particularly Bullard, as "stony-faced" in light of their responsibility for the shortages and hardships. Indeed, Bullard's lack of culpability led to the preference to blame the shortages on hoarding and mismanagement by the Iranian population rather than the needs of the occupiers.<sup>609</sup> By 1943, this was a prevalent issue. Eden revealed London's discomfort and uncertainty:

The situation in Persia undoubtedly represents our most formidable political problem in this area. Our position in Persia has deteriorated very considerably over the past year. It is now an anxious and menacing situation.<sup>610</sup>

According to Fraser, this fear stemmed from a potential violent anti-British backlash arising among the Iranian population and the inability of the weak Iranian armed forces to protect British personnel in the country.<sup>611</sup> Fraser was known for his intimate knowledge of Iranians from a long experience in Iran, previously commanding the South Persia Rifles from 1919 to 1921. He worked closely with Bullard on matters of security in Iran and was known to give realistic reports on Soviet activities in northern Iran.<sup>612</sup> His appraisal on a possible anti-British backlash would not have been an exaggeration and displayed an awareness of how the occupation had created a tense situation in which the British felt especially vulnerable. As will be seen in this chapter, Britain sought to improve

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<sup>608</sup> The British described Iranians as "not revolutionary in nature and appear[ing] almost infinitely long-suffering". Situation in Persia, 17 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/40/43.

<sup>609</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 243.

<sup>610</sup> Minister of State to Foreign Office, 22 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/44/43.

<sup>611</sup> Military attaché to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 25 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/34/43.

<sup>612</sup> Foreign Office to Tehran, 21 February 1944, PRO, WO208/3085, BM1613.

its image in Iran in order to ameliorate their standing in the eyes of Iranians and to counter the growing popularity of the Soviets.<sup>613</sup>

In sum, British policies and interests in Iran was still on a wartime footing and can be placed within the context of the war. Notably, Moscow, London and Washington DC knew that cooperation was still a prerequisite for victory over the Axis powers. Nonetheless, because the alliance was made up of different ideologies and world views, trilateral relations were complicated. In Iran, this translated into the burgeoning rivalry between the US and the Soviets, and a subtle convergence between Britain and the US. Stalingrad and the ensuing Soviet confidence resulted in insecurity and anxiety over Britain's position in Iran. This sense of uncertainty arrived punctually as the war moved in favour of the Allies with a corresponding loss of resolve to justify the suffering caused by the occupation. These emerging factors formed the backdrop of how the Tudeh featured in British policy during this middle era of the occupation.

## 2. The Tudeh Party, 1943–1945

From the summer of 1943, the Tudeh started to be viewed differently by the British, due to many developments within and around the party. Behruz saw these years as a time of transition for the party, moving away from one that was inclusive to one that was evolving and developing its programme, vision and structure along Soviet-aligned communist lines.<sup>614</sup> Indeed, the British began to view the Tudeh as more associated with

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<sup>613</sup> For a full analysis of the propaganda tactics employed by the British to address their insecurity and undermine Soviet confidence, see Rowena Abdul-Razak, "“But what would they think of us?” Propaganda and the Manipulation of the Anglo–Soviet Occupation of Iran, 1941–1946" in *Iranian Studies*, Vol.49(5), 817–835.

<sup>614</sup> Behruz, *Tarikh-e shureshiyan-e armankhah dar Iran*, 104.

the Soviets and were regarded as becoming more openly communist in outlook. The Tudeh's evolution reflected the changes in the war and within the occupation, where its anti-fascist and anti-German façade was becoming less applicable. In addition, the re-emergence of Sayyid Zia and the fourteenth Majles elections also impacted on the party and its position within Iran's political landscape. Here the changes in the party's development and expansion will be presented, alongside relevant British perceptions of the party.

Structurally, there were a number of changes within the Tudeh. In the summer of 1944, the provisional central committee was replaced by a more permanent central committee, (consisting of 9 core members) and an inspection commission. The post of general secretary was made up by a triumvirate of Iraj Eskanderi, Bahrami and Nuraldin Alamuti.<sup>615</sup> Iraj Eskanderi was now even more prominent, in addition to taking on the role editor-in-chief of *Rahbar*, the new party newspaper.<sup>616</sup> The party also gained other members from the Group of 53, including Khalil Maliki who joined in early 1944.<sup>617</sup> The leadership structure was clearer, with certain figures appearing more prominently and thus it began to resemble a classic Leninist party with a vanguard leadership that emphasised loyalty in following the central committee's decisions.<sup>618</sup> The formalisation of its leadership reflected their growing prominence and numbers. By the spring of 1943, it had branches in most major cities and was building on the foundations cultivated in the previous months. Such expansion did not go unnoticed by British diplomats. Their observations were not done in passing and revealed a genuine interest in the party's

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<sup>615</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 295.

<sup>616</sup> Chaqueri, 'Iradj Eskandary and the Tudeh Party of Iran', 105.

<sup>617</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 36.

<sup>618</sup> *Ibid.*, 286.

expansion. In his report to the Foreign Office in London, Bullard observed that the Tudeh was busy developing its activities – undertakings that spanned from the formation of new cells to the increased distribution of socialist propaganda.<sup>619</sup> In addition, the party's tone evolved considerably as they called for ministers to be held accountable and for the rule of law to be properly implemented, as observed by the Iranian Ministry of Interior.<sup>620</sup> Bullard also reported to London how widely and actively the Tudeh had spread its influence, namely in Isfahan<sup>621</sup> and in Abadan, through workers' organisations.<sup>622</sup> This revealed the party's focus on cities with a considerable worker populations. In Fars province, the British consul, Brenan, reported that the Tudeh had begun a new recruiting campaign in Shiraz and established a branch in the Marvdasht sugar factory.<sup>623</sup> In Tehran, their activities among cargo workers in Tehran also caught the attention of the Iranian authorities.<sup>624</sup> These developments illustrate how that the Tudeh was focused on enhancing their standing among industrial workers, which caught the interest and attention of British diplomats, indicating the party had ambitions beyond the anti-fascist campaign.

An increase in Tudeh activism and popularity among industrial workers coincided with increased strikes.<sup>625</sup> From the start of 1943 onwards, Iran witnessed more public

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<sup>619</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/33/43.

<sup>620</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1324/4/14 (5 July 1945), No.194, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>621</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 11 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/13/43.

<sup>622</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/44/44.

<sup>623</sup> British consulate Shiraz to British embassy Tehran, 18 November 1944, PRO, FO248/1439, G69/116/44.

<sup>624</sup> Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telegram report, 1324/2/15 (5 May 1945), No.1510, 1B, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>625</sup> Report by Captain Garrod, 6 January 1944, PRO, FO371/40163, E117/35/34; in December 1943, telephone operators went on strike for higher wages. It is difficult to say if the Tudeh instigated this, but the party was certainly active in Isfahan. British consulate general Isfahan to Foreign Office, 27 December 1943, PRO, FO371/40163, E35.

demonstrations over a variety of issues facing different pockets of society.<sup>626</sup> While not all of these protests were instigated by the Tudeh, the party's increased activities certainly caught the attention of the Iranian Gendarmerie, who broke up a few meetings and demonstrations held in Tehran.<sup>627</sup> The increased activism of the party can be seen as a reflection of the escalation witnessed in regards to awareness of and public participation in social and labour issues. The party became more active here through its increased activities among the country's trade union organisations. The trade union movement was relatively young in 1943. The printers of Tehran had been the first to establish a union and, by 1927, there were six in the capital and even one catering for the oil workers in Khuzestan, responsible for the strikes in the 1920s.<sup>628</sup> However, Reza Shah regarded the trade unions as opponents to his rule and suppressed them. Following the British–Soviet occupation and the ensuing political amnesty, several communist trade union organisers, including Yusuf Eftekhari, were released from prison and those who decided to remain independent from the Tudeh organised their own trade unions.<sup>629</sup> The Tudeh wanted to establish a unified trade union organisation and, together with other labour organisations, formed the Central Council of Trade Unions of Iran (CCTU) in 1942. They then went on to form the Central Council of Federated Trade Unions of Iranian Workers and Toilers (CCFTU) on 1 May 1944. Their goal was to organise all urban wage earners but did not want to include those who were directly involved in the war effort,

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<sup>626</sup> As a result of the differences between the engineers and the Ministry of Information over salaries and working conditions, a number of engineers went on strike in early April. Agricultural engineers, together with some professors and teachers joined in. Although various promises were made (and never delivered), the engineers' demands were sent to the US financial adviser Arthur Millspaugh, who in turn refused to increase their pay without also increasing the pay of other government employees. The strike died down and Millspaugh blamed the strikes on political agitators. Political situation British legation Tehran (Bullard), 29 June 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/76/43.

<sup>627</sup> Iranian Gendarmerie to Ministry of the Interior, 1324/8/25 (16 November 1945), report dated 1324/4/6 (18 July 1945), No.519, 1A, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>628</sup> Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil*, 122–123.

<sup>629</sup> Sepehr Zabih, *The Dynamics of the Communist Movement in Iran, 1920–1962* (Berkeley: University of California, 1963), 213.

which technically included oil workers.<sup>630</sup> Nonetheless, the oil industry experienced plenty of political activity during the mid-era of the occupation.

The Tudeh's recruitment and growing presence among industrial workers brought it into conflict with Isfahani mill-owners and local figureheads.<sup>631</sup> Tribal leader Jahanshah Bakhtiari, son of Morteza Quli Khan, expressed concern over the rise of the Tudeh, which he predicted would result in the Soviets becoming more active as well. This led Charles Gault, the British consul in Isfahan, to formulate that a link existed between Tudeh activism and Soviet presence.<sup>632</sup> His suspicions were fuelled by merchants, landowners and mill-owners who regarded the party's expansion as tantamount to communism.<sup>633</sup> The support given by the Tudeh to workers backfired when the mill-owners successfully argued to the more conservative elements of the Iranian Parliament that close association with the Tudeh could be used as a legitimate excuse to deny workers their rights and therefore prevent Soviet interference.<sup>634</sup> From then on, many members of the workers' union of Isfahan distanced themselves from the Tudeh.<sup>635</sup> Mostafa Fateh also disassociated from the party and worked to transform the union into a strictly non-political body.<sup>636</sup> These reactions were observed by the consulate in Isfahan, who then reported back to London. By depicting the party as radical, pro-Soviet and non-

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<sup>630</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 292.

<sup>631</sup> In addition, the Vatan Party was negatively affected. This manifested in a newspaper attack against Bahrami for his supposed support of the Tudeh – an accusation he protested against. British embassy Tehran minutes, 25 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/25/44.

<sup>632</sup> British consulate general Isfahan minutes, 30 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/32/44.

<sup>633</sup> British consulate general Isfahan (consul) to British embassy Tehran (Bullard), 25 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/24/44.

<sup>634</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 102.

<sup>635</sup> British consulate general Isfahan to British embassy Tehran (Bullard), 23 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/44/44.

<sup>636</sup> Fateh also wanted to wean Taqi Fidakar off the main party apparatus. However, by this point, he was considered to be pro-Soviet and was not prepared to withdraw from the Tudeh. British consulate general Isfahan minutes, 29 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/31/44.

mainstream, the consulate started to establish a nagging concern surrounding Tudeh's activism and presented evidence of possible collusion with the Soviets.

Opposition to the Tudeh emerged during this middle period, especially in the months of the fourteenth Majles elections. Most significantly, Sayyid Zia's Fatherland Party was formed in September 1943, which was renamed the National Will Party (*Hezb-e Eradeh Melli*) in early 1944. In addition to addressing old grievances against Reza Shah, he rallied businessmen, ulema and tribes against the Tudeh, highlighting the party's "aesthetic communism."<sup>637</sup> In addition, the National Will's reformist pledge and stand against inequality made the Tudeh less unique and provided voters with an alternative.<sup>638</sup> Around the same time, the National Union Party formed the People's Party (*Hezb-e Mardom*) to challenge the Tudeh and gain more popularity by espousing stronger socialist aims. During the elections, they backed candidates who were against the Tudeh.<sup>639</sup> Although opposition against it grew, the party's wide network and focus on workers' rights meant that it was able to not only survive but make significant political gains.

Indeed, during the campaigning for the elections, the Tudeh was active and became more visible in the public sphere. At the start of campaign, the Tudeh garnered praise from British officials in Tehran who saw it as the only party with a determined policy, a well-designed structure and nationwide organisation.<sup>640</sup> The Tudeh in the Majles were made up of 8 party members. It used the parliament as a platform to further its political

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<sup>637</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 193 – 194.

<sup>638</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 119.

<sup>639</sup> In Isfahan, they supported Sayyid Hashem al-Din Dawlatabadi, who had the support of guild leaders and bazaar merchants. Abrahamian, *Iran*, 192–195.

<sup>640</sup> *Ibid.*, 291.

standing and concentrated on issues such as media freedom and social legislation.<sup>641</sup> The elections also saw new figures emerge on the political scene with the election of a number of candidates of the Iran Party. In addition to Musaddiq, members of the Western-educated intelligentsia were elected to the new Majles. Together they established a new political bloc that reaffirmed constitutionalism, national independence and feudalism.<sup>642</sup> The Tudeh was thus not the only voice of change in the Majles, but the party would use the platform of the Majles to expose and accuse British imperialism and hold over the oil.

A significant development for the party was its formation of a network within the military. In early 1944, Abdul Samad Kambaksh, a member of the central committee, established contacts in the military through his teaching position at the military academy.<sup>643</sup> He gathered officers who were either sympathetic to the party or wanted to overthrow the government. A year later, he would gain the attention of the Iranian authorities for his political and recruitment activities in Qazvin.<sup>644</sup> It was not hard to find discontented army officers who were largely unhappy either with their positions, poor pay or lack of promotion. This frustration found refuge in a variety of causes, including that of the Tudeh.<sup>645</sup> In the 1940s, the shah had not yet achieved the power he would later have over the army. Furthermore, British attempts to nurture pro-British sentiments among the army proved unpopular and many within the Iranian Army's officer corps were deeply resistant to British military advisors.<sup>646</sup> Despite this, the British still wanted

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<sup>641</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 201–202.

<sup>642</sup> *Ibid.*, 190–191.

<sup>643</sup> Kambaksh had been involved in the communist movement since the early 1920s. Shirazi, *Moderniteh, shobbeh va demokrasi*, 323.

<sup>644</sup> Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Post, telegraph from Qazvin, 1324/10/1 (22 December 1945), No.13505/11459, 1C, International Institute of Social History; see also Ministry of Interior report, 1324/4/14 (5 July 1945), No.194, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>645</sup> Cronin, *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East*, 162.

<sup>646</sup> *Ibid.*, 165–166.

to be involved in combatting the party's influence over the army. General Mohammad Hossein Mirza Firuz, who oversaw military matters in Shiraz, received information that one or two officers were working for the Tudeh and that the Soviets wanted to establish a network within the army ranks. In response, British consul, Brenan, offered to provide a list of names so that Firuz could get rid of any "doubtful officers".<sup>647</sup> Such a move showed that the British were concerned by Tudeh influence in the military even though the party's network was still in its infancy. This complicity between Brenan and the local authorities reveals the level of involvement Britain experienced during the occupation.

Despite these developments, the Tudeh still refrained from labels. Party member H Mutasavi elaborated the party's position at the end of 1943 in the party's newspaper *Mardom*. He declared that fascism was still a threat and that the party was not interested in launching any kind of revolution. Instead, he professed the party's desire to work within the parliamentary system.<sup>648</sup> In the spring of 1943, Bullard regarded the Tudeh as pursuing policies that were not necessarily communist or pro-Soviet in nature. Of their published programmes for Tabriz and Qazvin, the demands raised were considered to be largely constitutional and mild in comparison with the actual conditions faced by the poorer classes.<sup>649</sup> However, during and after the elections, the British in Iran noted the party evolving in outlook and depicted the Tudeh as becoming more communist in focus and rhetoric. During the course of the elections, the Tudeh gained experience in organising industrial workers and in developing its propaganda skills.<sup>650</sup> Receiving a

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<sup>647</sup> British consulate Shiraz to British embassy Tehran (Chancery), 21 October 1944, PRO, FO248/1439, G69/101/44.

<sup>648</sup> Quoted from H Mutasavi, "How to change the system: through revolution or parliament?", *Mardom*, 21 December 1943 in Abrahamian, *Iran*, 285.

<sup>649</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 11 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/13/43.

<sup>650</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 101.

mandate through the election of its members, the Tudeh became more focused on the labour class and more vocal about its support for the Soviets. In the spring of 1944, Bullard reported to London that the Tudeh was actively spreading communist propaganda among factory workers.<sup>651</sup> By the end of the year, London was receiving regular reports from Bullard showing how the Tudeh could cause widespread unsettlement in the city should their demands not be met.<sup>652</sup> Despite how they were seen, by the end of the middle phase of the occupation, the Tudeh still refused the communist label. Written in May 1944, an article in its daily *Rahbar*, declared that communism was unsuitable for Iran and that accusations of being a communist party were unfounded.<sup>653</sup>

These protestations, however, did not seem more than residual attempts to resist the label. In all but name, the Tudeh had become communist in form and outlook. A key factor was its alignment with the Soviet Union. As seen in Chapters 1 and 2 of this thesis, links between social democracy, the party and the Soviet Union were present, but while the war was at its peak, these links were kept below the surface. However, by 1944, Bullard regularly reported to London about these connections. In a report to the Foreign Office, he openly noted that in the north, Tudeh activism among the workers had the backing of the Soviets.<sup>654</sup> He further noted to Eden that some members of the Soviet embassy in

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<sup>651</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 23 April 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E2612; see also British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 22 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/207/44.

<sup>652</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 22 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1439, G69/148/44.

<sup>653</sup> Quoted from "The Tudeh Party and Partisanship in Foreign Policy", *Rahbar*, 17 May 1944 in Abrahamian, *Iran*, 285.

<sup>654</sup> In Shahi, Mazandaran, the workmen of the silk factory attacked the local gendarmerie. In the ensuing clash, two workmen were killed, and others wounded. The Soviets subsequently arrested the gendarmerie officers involved. Bullard advised Sa'id to treat the affair like an ordinary industrial dispute. At the suggestion of sending an intermediary (Dr Shaikh) to settle the issue, Bullard was sceptical as to whether the Soviets and the Tudeh would allow him to succeed. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 21 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/205/44; see also the case of a sacked engineer who was persuaded by the Tudeh to stage a strike at the Tehran power station. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 22 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/206/44.

Tehran attended the funeral of Suleiman Mirza Eskanderi, the party figurehead, regarding this as evidence of their close relationship.<sup>655</sup> Bullard's suspicions seemed to be confirmed when the Tudeh called for the establishment of provincial councils and demanded the exile of Sayyid Zia, whom the Soviets disliked.<sup>656</sup> There was a feeling within the party that the leaders were becoming more openly supportive of the Soviets, which led to a minor split. Katouzian has also pointed out how the Tudeh leadership was "bound by the Soviet embassy in Tehran". According to Khalil Maliki, even Tudeh members themselves accused their leaders as "lackeys" of the Soviet embassy.<sup>657</sup> Some members of the party felt, including Abdolhussein Nushin, a theatre director, actor and close friend of the writer Sadeq Hedayat, felt alienated by the prevailing pro-Soviet behaviour.<sup>658</sup> Their focus on workers' issues, the establishment of a vanguard leadership and its growing closeness to the Soviet Union suggests a deliberate ideological move towards communism-Leninism by the summer of 1944.

These suspicions of closeness to the Soviets were confirmed with the party's support for a Soviet bid for an oil concession in the north of the country. When negotiations were not going in favour of the Soviets, the Tudeh press condemned the Sa'id government and took to the streets.<sup>659</sup> Most historians, including Fawcett and Katouzian, agree that the move irreversibly aligned the party with the Soviet Union and showed its willingness to support Soviet ambitions in Iran. Katouzian has pointed out, however, that Tudeh-led demonstrations were not welcomed by all in the party. Khalil Maliki and Iraj Eskanderi,

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<sup>655</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/44/44.

<sup>656</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 8 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/182/44.

<sup>657</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 36.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, 34.

<sup>659</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 94.

for instance, opposed Tudeh support for the Soviet bid.<sup>660</sup> Despite these protestations, the Tudeh firmly placed itself in the Soviet camp. The editor of the Tudeh newspaper *Mardom*, Ehsan Tabari, justified this policy by arguing that it was impossible to not grant a concession in light of Iran's financial problems and chaotic politics.<sup>661</sup> The party further justified its support by presenting it as part of a positive equilibrium policy, whereby a Soviet oil concession in the north would balance out the British presence in the south.<sup>662</sup> However, its overt endorsement of the Soviets resulted in a loss of stature and support for the party.<sup>663</sup> After the Soviet delegation left empty-handed, General Ali Razmara ordered the military governor of Tehran to close the Tudeh's headquarters.<sup>664</sup> Their decision to oppose Musaddiq's bill on the grounds that the Soviets deserved an oil concession saw the party lose further credibility.<sup>665</sup>

In sum, the Tudeh's identity evolved considerably, moving more in the direction of Soviet-aligned politics. The party moved away from anti-fascist campaigning and increased their participation in trade union activities and focused on workers' rights. These shifts caught the attention of not only local authorities but also the British. From the consulate level, diplomats in Iran began to form an opinion of the party as communist in nature and more aligned with the Soviets. In light of such developments, coupled with changing circumstances in the war, alliance and occupation, the party came to represent a challenge to Britain's interests in Iran.

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<sup>660</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 40.

<sup>661</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 109–110.

<sup>662</sup> Musaddiq criticised Iran's pattern of relying on either the British or the Russians. For further explanation, see Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 21, 56–57.

<sup>663</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 78–79.

<sup>664</sup> Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 329.

<sup>665</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 40.

### 3. The Tudeh in British policy

Over time, the Tudeh's position within British thinking became more complex, as a result of both the party's evolving ideology and changes in the war. These changes in attitude and policy reveal how flexible and malleable British policymaking was, how it was able to hold different views of the Tudeh and be in a position to both accommodate and undermine the party. At the start of the occupation, the Tudeh's anti-fascist stance and democratic programme helped to stabilise and justify the Allies' presence in Iran. During the mid-era of the occupation, the party's increased political participation and growing alignment with the Soviet Union signalled a shift in intent and ambitions, which came to the attention of British diplomats in Iran. Projected onto the underlying concerns held by British decision-makers, the Tudeh began to mean something different for them, evolving to represent a threat to Britain and as able to affect key British interests.

#### 3.1 The Tudeh within British anti-fascist policy

After Stalingrad and the victories in North Africa and Italy, the Allied armies were more confident. They no longer had to heavily rely on covert operations undertaken through local resistance groups, although these remained important components of British wartime strategy. Anti-fascist campaigns still continued but with less intensity as the threat of German expansion declined and German troops were pushed back in Europe and the Middle East. In Iran, the concerns over a German invasion subsided and, with this, the British need for local anti-fascist groups (like the Tudeh) lessened. Concurrently, suspicions towards the Soviets increased. The ability of British policy to transition from one stance to another saw the anti-German campaign develop anti-communist tones. Tellingly, how Britain acted towards the Tudeh fitted in with patterns in British policies

in Greece and Malaya. By looking at these two cases, a pattern emerges regarding how the Left were utilised against fascism during the war.

Throughout 1943, the cross-ideological resistance front continued to develop and remained an important arm of the resistance, uniting different groups, even after the Comintern was dismantled.<sup>666</sup> For the Soviet Union and their allies, wartime communist alliances were expanded to include religious groups and non-Marxists. In occupied Western Europe, the resistance there included communists, who were well-organised and used to underground activities. Similar to the Czech resistance, the National Council of Resistance was formed comprising of the major French resistance movements, including the communists and De Gaulle's Free French Forces.<sup>667</sup> Collaboration between communists and non-communists can be observed in the British sphere as well. In Malaya, from 1943 onwards, the MPAJA became better equipped and organised after receiving aid from Southeast Asia Command, based in Colombo.<sup>668</sup> In January 1944, the British-led resistance group in Malaya, known as Force 136, allied with Malayan communist leaders to coordinate against the Japanese.<sup>669</sup> These continued collaborations symbolised the common and committed goal of communists and non-communists against fascism in Europe and Asia well after Stalingrad.

Nonetheless Stalingrad forced British policymakers to consolidate their post-war policy towards the communists. In Greece, their policy seemed quite well fleshed out and served

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<sup>666</sup> Stanley G Payne, "Soviet Anti-Fascism: Theory and Practice, 1921-45", *Politics, Religion & Ideology*, Vol.4(2) (2003), 54-55.

<sup>667</sup> Priestland, *The Red Flag*, 209-211.

<sup>668</sup> Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 62.

<sup>669</sup> Kenneison, *The Special Operations Executive in Malaya: World War II and the Path to Independence*, 31-50; see also Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 75.

as an example of policy projection for after the war. There, Britain had facilitated collaboration with the Left, knowing fully that they would be abandoned once the war was over. Since September 1941, the Greek Communist Party (KKE) was in league with other Greek nationalist parties and had formed the National Liberation Front (ELAS). The SOE had been active within the ELAS, helping with coordination and arms since then too.<sup>670</sup> After Stalingrad, Churchill started to think about what British–Greek relations would look like beyond Germany’s defeat. Despite the reliance on the KKE-led resistance to bring relief to the Balkans and the Mediterranean<sup>671</sup>, Churchill was determined to reinstate the Greek King George II after the war’s end.<sup>672</sup> This naturally led to tensions between Churchill and the KKE, who wanted to leave it to the people to decide the king’s return.<sup>673</sup> Discussions began in Cairo in 1943 but with the war ongoing, military necessities continued to be prioritised and Britain still needed to back the resistance force. It was decided that SOE would continue its coordination with the KKE and ELAS but, in private, the British government vowed to return to the pre-war status quo in Greece once the war was over.<sup>674</sup> Britain’s Greek policy was indicative of how short-term the alliance with the Left was envisioned, but also how major political change was not on the cards as far as the British government was concerned. The Greek case serves as an important example and counterpart to how events unfolded in Iran. As will be seen in the next chapter, such a policy was adopted by the Labour government as well.

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<sup>670</sup> Dominique Eudes, John Howe (Translator), *The Kapetanos: Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943–1949* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009), 14.

<sup>671</sup> Gerolymatos, *An International Civil War: Greece, 1943–1949*, 51.

<sup>672</sup> Thanasis D Sfikas, *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War, 1939–1945* (Bodin: Keele University Press, 1994), 24–25.

<sup>673</sup> Gerolymatos, *An International Civil War: Greece, 1943–1949*, 85.

<sup>674</sup> *Ibid.*, 86.

In Iran, the anti-fascist movement was slowly disintegrating. Among the tribes in southwestern Iran, the German threat was scattered among some sections of the Qashqa'i<sup>675</sup>, but tribal support had declined due to Germany's fading war fortunes and British efforts to court the tribes. Germany's tribal channel, which was established by the German *Abwehr* Air-Force Intelligence officer Berthold Schulze-Holthus to support the Qashqa'i, had been significantly weakened after his arrest in April 1944. Due to information gathered from him, British intelligence was even more well equipped to sway the Qashqa'i to the Allied side.<sup>676</sup> With German defeats and Berlin's growing disinterest in Iran, the operations to physically remove German presence felt more like a clean-up. The German threat was diminishing but residual concerns remained that Iranians were still pro-German and wanted a German victory.<sup>677</sup> The German agent Franz Mayr who had tried to set up a fifth column organisation, was arrested in August 1943.<sup>678</sup> Remaining Iranians linked to the German fifth columnist movement were arrested by British police but, after local protests, were handed over to the Iranian police.<sup>679</sup> From London, Eden fully backed the decision to keep arresting pro-German Iranians.<sup>680</sup>

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<sup>675</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 15 September 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/129/43; see also Benham, Persian legation (Baghdad) to Mushfik Kadhimi (Cairo), 16 September 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, IRAQ/SP/2171/43 for a detailed discussion of the Qashqa'i attack on the garrison in Fars, as was organised by Franz Mayer. Suhaili had already been following their movements for some months and placed blame for several public disorders on them.

<sup>676</sup> The British facilitated the relationship by allowing the two Qashqa'i brothers Mohammed Hussayn and Malek Mansour to return from their 12-year absence which had taken them to Oxford, Berlin, Istanbul and Cairo. O' Sullivan, *Espionage and Counterintelligence in Occupied Persia (Iran)*, 64–73.

<sup>677</sup> Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 292.

<sup>678</sup> As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Schulze-Holthus, an agent in the south was taken captive by the Qashqa'i tribes, who were now in alliance with the British. *Ibid.*, 291.

<sup>679</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 15 September 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/129/43; British legation Baghdad (Benham) to Mushfik Kadhimi (Cairo), 16 September 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, IRAQ/SP/2171/43.

<sup>680</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to Tehran, 26 July 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/86/43. One of the biggest operations included the arrest of several high-ranking military officers, led by General Koglu. British legation Baghdad (Benham) to Mushfik Kadhimi (Cairo), 16 September 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, IRAQ/SP/2171/43.

Although arrests continued, the anti-fascist campaign was winding down, which resulted in changes in priorities and approaches for British decision-makers. The successful Allied landing in Normandy in June 1944 and the Soviet offensive in the east saw the German Armies retreating further into mainland Europe.<sup>681</sup> Bullard acknowledged that the war was “gradually receding” from Iran, which saw the occupation evolve. With that however, new threats and concerns began to emerge. Already, in 1943, he started laying the foundations of a “Red Threat”, singling out “dictators... of the proletariat to be discouraged.”<sup>682</sup> From then on, the anti-German campaign evolved to be utilised against the development of communism and to improve Britain’s image in Iran. Indeed, as observed in Greece, there was no appetite to encourage communism beyond the war. By recycling anti-fascist propaganda, this machinery was used to promote British image. At the start of 1944, the activities of the British military authorities and the Anglo–Iranian Relief Committee, which included providing food, clothing and medical supplies to the poor, were given significant publicity.<sup>683</sup> Here Fraser in his capacity as military attaché regarded these activities as a direct contribution to the British war effort<sup>684</sup>, which placed the British in a more positive light despite the continuing occupation.<sup>685</sup>

Linked to this were covert operations carried out by the SOE in Iran to weed out any opposition to Britain. These activities no longer targeted fascist influence but also pertained to launching oral propaganda, secret attacks, the production of leaflets and forged documents against persons that the legation indicated could foster anti-British

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<sup>681</sup> Reynolds, ‘The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance’, 315.

<sup>682</sup> British legation Tehran minutes (Bullard), 12 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1546, G783/2/43.

<sup>683</sup> Political situation British legation Tehran (Bullard), 29 June 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/76/43.

<sup>684</sup> Military attaché to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 25 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/34/43.

<sup>685</sup> British Middle East Headquarters (minister of state) to Foreign Office, 22 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/44/43.

feeling among the population.<sup>686</sup> Such a move showed that the propaganda campaign was becoming more varied and that the nature of the anti-fascist campaign had evolved. This deliberate change of tactic saw the PRB now tasked with overt operations that could influence public opinion more generally, while its anti-fascist campaign was toned down.<sup>687</sup> Similarly, the US intelligence service (OSS) was also starting to take notice of the Tudeh from 1943 onwards.<sup>688</sup> As can be seen here, there were varied shifts within the intelligence services to move away from a mainly anti-fascism campaign and different sectors of Iran's political landscape were instead focused on.

The Tudeh's anti-fascist campaign also evolved during this period, which directly affected its position within British anti-fascist policy. The anti-fascist front that it had established fell apart after its co-founder Mostafa Fateh distanced himself from the party following the spring of 1944.<sup>689</sup> There was also a change in focus away from anti-fascism within its ideology. After its first party congress, held in August 1944, the new programme dropped fighting fascism as an aim, instead choosing to prioritise the workers.<sup>690</sup> Its newspaper, *Mardom*, shifted focus from opposing fascism to promoting the party's socialist programme and was no longer used as a platform for British propaganda.<sup>691</sup> In 1944, Bozorg Alavi, who had been writing with support from the PRB since 1941, was appointed editor of *Payam-e now* (The New Message), the main publication of the Perso-Soviet Society of Cultural Relations. Simultaneously, he continued his work as a translator

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<sup>686</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British Middle East Headquarters Cairo (Moynes), 11 August 1943, PRO, FO248/1546, G783/4/43.

<sup>687</sup> Memorandum on the proposed extension of SOE propaganda activities in Persia, 2 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1546, G783/1/43.

<sup>688</sup> O' Sullivan, *Espionage and Counterintelligence in Occupied Persia (Iran)*, 217–218.

<sup>689</sup> British consulate general Isfahan minutes, 29 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/31/44.

<sup>690</sup> Quoted from Tudeh Party, "Party Programme," *Rahbar*, 5–7 September 1944 and A Qassemi, *Hezb-e Tudeh-e Iran cheh migoyad va cheh mikhonad?* Tehran, 1944, 2–5, in Abrahamian, *Iran*, 295.

<sup>691</sup> Pourhadi, *Persian and Afghan Newspapers in the Library of Congress, 1871–1978*, 40.

for the PRB.<sup>692</sup> His retention by the PRB suggests flexibility within the Ministry of Information, despite his position. However, his employment with a Soviet paper was indicative of closer relations with the Soviets, as was later observed by both British diplomats and Iranian authorities.<sup>693</sup> The move away from anti-fascism as a policy pillar for the Tudeh reflected the changes in the occupation where fascism was no longer a priority for either the party or, for that matter, the British.

Here, British policy underwent a shift in its anti-German campaign in Iran, arising from Germany's defeats in Europe and North Africa. These developments in the war affected policy in Iran, which was able to make shifts within its existing policy to target new concerns. This was not unique to Iran and, as seen in Greece, new views and priorities were coming into play. The Tudeh no longer focused on defeating fascism and, instead, their policies became more socialist in nature. The PRB may have kept Bozorg Alavi on in its retinue but in light of the bureau's own reduction of anti-fascist campaigning, the Tudeh was no longer regarded as an anti-fascist ally. Indeed, previous collaborations effectively disappeared, with *Mardom* subsequently no longer being used as a mouthpiece for British anti-fascist propaganda. British focus had shifted in a short period of time, which points to the flexible nature of its policymaking and efficiency in responding to the shifting needs of the war and occupation.

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<sup>692</sup> Mirabedini, 'Bozorg Alavi'.

<sup>693</sup> Ministry of Interior, 1323/7/11 (3 October 1944), No.11292, 1C, Institute of Social History. Here, Iranian authorities noted the Tudeh's frequent meetings with the Soviet consulate in the north with regards to the oil concession debate.

### 3.2 The Tudeh within British interest in Iran's political development

Due to such changes in the war, British policy to pursue changes in Iran's political landscape took on a different tone, moving away from seeking reform to finding ways in which their political interests could be maintained. In April 1943, this policy was articulated as a long-term aim: "to assist in laying the foundations of lasting political and economic reform in Persia with a view to the post-war relations between that country and Great Britain".<sup>694</sup> Since the start of the occupation, the British had an eye on the future of its position in the country and saw political influence as means of remaining relevant. Fawcett also observed this kind of thinking in British policymaking where the best way to maintain its presence was to ensure that political reform in Iran lay within Britain's purview.<sup>695</sup> Indeed, as has been seen in the last chapter, Britain's openness towards political reform allowed parties like the Tudeh to initially (and briefly) be envisioned as a vehicle for change in Iran. This possibility never materialised, partly because British policymakers opted to back other politicians who could better protect their interests. They were also clouded by suspicion that the Tudeh was too much in line with the Soviets to be won over. Although, the Foreign Office doubted that the party would jeopardise London's long-term or short-term interests<sup>696</sup>, the party was deliberately removed from the earlier policy of wanting to promote political change. In this regard, the policy shifted to maintaining the status quo in an effort to block the Tudeh's rise, which saw the legation falling back on supporting traditional politicians and entities to protect its position from the party.

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<sup>694</sup> Memorandum on the proposed extension of SOE propaganda activities in Persia, 2 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1546, G783/1/43.

<sup>695</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 147.

<sup>696</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British legation Tehran, 16 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/14/43.

In 1943, British policymakers in London, Tehran and even Cairo regarded the inclusion of Left-wing elements within the Iranian government as a basic ingredient for reform in Iran. The position of the Tudeh within British policy was coloured by the Foreign Office's attitude towards the traditional elites of Iran, figures whom they considered to be both "corrupt and selfish".<sup>697</sup> In wanting to promote political change and to avoid supporting an unpopular elite, London initially saw no harm in backing the Tudeh even after Stalingrad, with the Foreign Office stating its position to Bullard as such:

We doubt if our short- or long-term interests would be prejudiced if some of them [deputies] were from the Tudeh Party. Indeed, from a long-term point of view does not the danger of a violent swing over increase the longer the present gang of corrupt and selfish landowners remain in control? To this extent the anxiety of wealthy classes about the activities of the Tudeh Party seems to us encouraging as evidence that they are beginning to realise their growing unpopularity.<sup>698</sup>

Such sentiments demonstrate how little esteem Britain had for the traditional elites of Iran, which made the presence of the Tudeh appear refreshing. The formation of more liberal governance in the Middle East fitted in with overall British policy.<sup>699</sup> The British personnel in Middle East Headquarters in Cairo theorised that an Iranian government made up of "young intellectuals... from more [L]eft [W]ing elements" would better

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<sup>697</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 82.

<sup>698</sup> Quoted from *Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>699</sup> Part of Britain's wartime goals was the fight for liberal democracy, especially as part of the backdrop of the Allied struggle against fascism. The war placed difficult challenges in the way of normal political practices and even political parties in Britain were not exempt from this. Andrew Thorpe, *Parties at War: Political Organization in Second World War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), (Accessed 12 November 2019) <http://ezproxy.ouls.ox.ac.uk:2274/view/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199272730.001.0001/acprof-9780199272730-chapter-1>

administer and control the country.<sup>700</sup> This kind of concern for better governance which was synonymous with social and labour consciousness could be observed in Britain as well, embodied by the Labour Party's growing prominence. As part of the national coalition government, Bevin, a strong figure in local trade union politics, was appointed minister of labour and national service. Under him, labour issues were addressed and acknowledged, while workers' rights were prioritised because of their importance in the war effort.<sup>701</sup> At the end of 1942, the Liberal politician and economist Sir William Beveridge introduced a settlement plan for societal and economic conditions, laying the foundation of the British welfare state. Within two years, the government had adopted a policy to achieve full employment and provide universal secondary education.<sup>702</sup>

Trends for more social governance trickled down and even the legation in Iran favoured establishing and supporting a "more progressive government" that could introduce improvements in public health and other spheres which interest the mass of the people.<sup>703</sup> Bullard's enthusiasm for a more socially-conscious government even backed for some Tudeh elements to be included within government to "turn itself to the task of social reforms".<sup>704</sup> At this time, the presence of the Tudeh seemed to be an example of "fresh blood" in Iranian politics.<sup>705</sup> In the summer of 1943, Bullard described the Tudeh as the only political party with "some coherence".<sup>706</sup> He acknowledged the party's successes, that it had "achieved a definite policy" and was seen to have "conducted a

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<sup>700</sup> Situation in Persia, 17 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/40/43.

<sup>701</sup> Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 107.

<sup>702</sup> Mick Carpenter, 'Welfare State', in *A Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics and International Relations*, Garret W Brown, Iain McLean, Alistair McMillan (Eds.), Fourth edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

<sup>703</sup> British legation Tehran minutes, 1 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

<sup>704</sup> British legation Tehran minutes, 1 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

<sup>705</sup> Conversation with Dr Taheri, 23 April 1943, PRO, FO 248/1427, G544/49/43.

<sup>706</sup> Bullard, *Letters from Tehran*, 193.

definite campaign in the provinces”.<sup>707</sup> In this regard, the party was thus seen positively and as adhering to the kind of political change the British wanted to promote. Despite concerns for its closeness with the Soviets, these nuances within British policy revealed flexibility and an ability to utilise the party according to British interests.

In a conversation with the British counsellor in the legation Adrian Holman, the shah encouraged Tudeh representation in the Majles, a presence that he saw as being able to act as a “safety valve... in the best interests of Persia [Iran]”.<sup>708</sup> Although these young intellectuals may have lacked political experience<sup>709</sup>, the shah was certainly being encouraged to appoint younger ministers from this group.<sup>710</sup> At this point in his reign, Muhammad Reza wanted to depict himself as a reformer oriented towards the Left, a directional shift that was emerging as a popular trend in Iran at the time. A far cry from a few years later when, in 1949, he declared the Tudeh illegal. On the eve of the fourteenth Majles elections, he announced to Holman his lack of fear of the parties of the Left.<sup>711</sup> In the early months of 1943, the idea that the Tudeh could form a suitable government was tangible even in the eyes of the monarchy and was not seen as being against British interests.

The question then re-emerges why this never became a reality and why investing in the party’s potential was abandoned by British policymakers. One of the main reasons why this policy did not take shape was because the need to maintain and protect its position

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<sup>707</sup> Political situation British legation Tehran (Bullard), 29 June 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/76/43.

<sup>708</sup> Provided that they were not the recipients of any foreign financial aid. British legation Tehran (Holman) to Foreign Office, 27 May 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/60/43.

<sup>709</sup> British legation Tehran (Holman) to Foreign Office, 27 May 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/60/43.

<sup>710</sup> British legation Tehran (Holman) to Foreign Office, 27 May 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/60/43.

<sup>711</sup> British legation Tehran (Holman) to Foreign Office, 27 May 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/60/43.

and image overrode any push for change. In contradicting Britain's supposed desire for reform in Iran<sup>712</sup>, British officials in Cairo for instance were prepared to suppress press freedom if newspapers criticised the British presence in Iran. Based in the Egyptian capital, the Minister of State of the Middle East, Oliver Lyttleton, as well as his successors, Richard G Cassey and Walter Guinness, were tasked with implementing British policy throughout the region.<sup>713</sup> Conservative in outlook, they were also tasked with propaganda and economic warfare.<sup>714</sup> In April 1943, Cassey became quite concerned with developments that damaged Britain's reputation in Iran. Since Reza Shah's departure, some degree of press freedom had been allowed, through which Iranian newspapers had become more open in voicing hostility towards the British and attributed the problems facing Iran to Britain.<sup>715</sup>

As the party became more politically confident, so did their potential to speak out against the occupation and, more worryingly, against the British. This proved to be another compelling reason as to why a policy to accommodate the Tudeh was not realised. Although Britain would occasionally admit to causing such hardships, it reiterated its justification of the occupation by pointing out the advantages of an Allied victory to Iran.<sup>716</sup> Bullard sought to avoid a "new Majles containing [a] considerable Tudeh element

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<sup>712</sup> Cottam, *Iran and the United States*, 63.

<sup>713</sup> From the beginning of the occupation, Lyttleton was suspicious of the Soviets and their activities. Jackson, *Persian Gulf Command*, 203.

<sup>714</sup> Martin Kolinsky, *Britain's War in the Middle East: Strategy and Diplomacy, 1936–42* (New York: Palgrave, 1999), 14.

<sup>715</sup> British Middle East Headquarters Cairo (minister of state) to Foreign Office, 22 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/44/43.

<sup>716</sup> Each British consulate throughout Iran reasserted the necessity of the occupation. Memorandum: Condition of Persia: Alleged Responsibility of His Majesty's Government, British legation Tehran, 9 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/36/43.

sworn to uphold the freedom of the press”.<sup>717</sup> Bound by the 1942 treaty, the Iranian government, together with the Majles, were unwilling to alienate Britain and even agreed to shut down newspapers that were publishing anti-British articles.<sup>718</sup> Correspondingly, the Iranian government actively censored and seized Tudeh publications such as *Rahbar* and *Razm* whenever they published anything too radical or in opposition to the British or Iranian governments.<sup>719</sup> The suppression of unfriendly newspapers was an effective way through which Britain could control how its image was portrayed. The Tudeh’s support for free speech which encouraged the publication of anti-British articles and material brought it into direct confrontation with the legation.

Faced by a party that could potentially destabilise Britain’s image, the legation sought policies that could block the Tudeh. For instance, when Suhaili agreed to tighten governmental grip imposed over the press, Bullard recommended to the Foreign Office that support should be given to prolonging the thirteenth Majles with Suhaili as prime minister.<sup>720</sup> The concern for British image was not unique to Iran. In India as well, pro-British propaganda was distributed while anti-British protestors were arrested, including key members of the Indian National Congress.<sup>721</sup> Despite the Allied victories, there was certainly a sense of anxiety for British policymakers. The growing opposition to their presence in Iran was a realistic reminder that they held an uncomfortable position as an occupying force.

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<sup>717</sup> At the time, Britain was struggling with bad press and pressured for the suppression of certain newspapers and editors. Memorandum: Condition of Persia: Alleged Responsibility of His Majesty’s Government, British legation Tehran, 9 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/36/43.

<sup>718</sup> Conversation with Dr Taheri, 23 April 1943, PRO, FO 248/1427, G544/49/43.

<sup>719</sup> Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone telegraph, 1322/2/23 (14 May 1943), No.16243/3363, 1B, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>720</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 24 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/19/43.

<sup>721</sup> Khan, *The Raj at War*, 175–200.

Such a realisation forced the British in Iran to manage the opposition which saw a change of policy with regards to Iran's political development. Despite Bullard's recommendations, the thirteenth Majles remained in session until 22 November 1943. Under the already politically-trying circumstances, the elections for the fourteenth Majles saw the Tudeh take its first opportunity to join the political arena. Instead of promoting change, British policy shifted to stop the Tudeh from gaining parliamentary seats. It was a unique time to hold elections, which saw Iran campaigning and voting under military occupation. Despite the circumstances, Katouzian has described this democratic process to be the first free election since Reza Shah.<sup>722</sup> Although this was true, the elections invariably fell under British and Soviet purview and were subject to their machinations. Even before the start of campaigning, the Soviets regarded Bullard's visit to Azerbaijan prior to the elections as an indicator of the role Britain wanted to play in the electoral process.<sup>723</sup>

While Abrahamian has pointed out that the occupying forces were only able to manipulate the electoral process but did not control the results,<sup>724</sup> British actions certainly had a significant bearing on the outcome. By taking an active role in the elections, the legation was able to successfully counter the Tudeh. By doing so, any chance of collaborating with the Tudeh was abandoned, which saw the legation actively follow policies that undermined the party's political participation. During the long electoral process, the legation followed three main approaches to block the Tudeh and to

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<sup>722</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 237.

<sup>723</sup> "Report on the Political and Economic Situation in Tabriz in 1943", 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archives, f.28, op.4, d.19. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069>

<sup>724</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 186.

simultaneously protect their interests: by supporting the candidates that were British-friendly<sup>725</sup>, by remaining neutral when an unsuitable candidate was standing,<sup>726</sup> and by directly interfering if a candidate was against British interests.<sup>727</sup> The Soviets asserted that the British made every effort from the start to prevent Tudeh members and those in support of the Soviets from being elected.<sup>728</sup> As will be shown here, the Soviets were correct in their assertion.

From the beginning of the elections, British personnel in Iran closely monitored the party and its activities over the electoral process, predicting that the possibility of the Tudeh getting into the next Majles was quite high. Bullard recognised that the Tudeh would gain prominence in the elections as the “only seriously organised party”.<sup>729</sup> Although they conceded that some Tudeh deputies were necessary to affect at least some social reforms in Iran, by May 1944, the legation rejected the idea of a strong Tudeh faction in the Majles as it was believed this would jeopardise Britain’s position.<sup>730</sup> In response to the potential entry of a Tudeh bloc into the Iranian Parliament, the legation was concerned that the

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<sup>725</sup> They encouraged voters to support a “suitable progressive and usually local candidate”. British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British embassy Moscow, 26 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1428, G69/21/44; see also British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate general Kirman, 17 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/37/44.

<sup>726</sup> British consulate general Kirman to British legation Tehran, 16 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/36/44.

<sup>727</sup> It was deemed that the Faramarzi brothers – Ahmad and Abd al-Rahman – were unsuitable to stand as they were anti-British and had been evicted from Bahrain. The British consul in Bushire did not want their nomination to pass. British consulate general Bushire to British consulate general Shiraz, 13 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1535, 22/23/44.

<sup>728</sup> “Report on the Political and Economic Situation in Tabriz in 1943”, 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archives, f.28, op.4, d.19. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069>

<sup>729</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British embassy Moscow, 26 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1428, G69/21/44.

<sup>730</sup> From the party the Soviets supported Amirkhizi, Pischevari and Musavi, from the workers’ union, they supported Rahim Hamdad, and from the Anti-Fascist Party, they pushed for the candidacy of Aqazadeh and Ahmad Ispahani. Additionally, they also backed Ipekchian, Mashinchi and Panahi. British embassy Tehran minutes, 17 May 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/149/44.

party would advocate an unfriendly attitude towards the US and become even more influenced by the Soviet Union.<sup>731</sup>

The impression made by the Tudeh during the elections further distanced the British from their initially positive attitude regarding the party's rise. Reports began to emerge that the Tudeh had used all sorts of "illegitimate devices" to dissuade members of the Armenian community from voting for the pro-British candidate, Alex Aqayan, in Faridan. Party members were allegedly seen sporting Soviet emblems while declaring that the Red Army was winning the war.<sup>732</sup> While this further fuelled British concerns of a Tudeh-Soviet alliance, it revealed a deeper concern that Tudeh support for the Soviets was regarded as a declaration of anti-British sentiment.

Yet still, in the provinces, there were lingering attempts to back the Tudeh. During the elections, the consulates and the legation clashed over support for the party. In Isfahan, the British consul, Gault, wanted to support Tudeh hopeful, Taqi Fidakar<sup>733</sup>, the city's labour leader. Gault had been personally involved in General Fazollah Zahedi's arrest a year before and later went on to become the political agent to Bahrain, advising the ruling family over matters of foreign and regional affairs. Gault was sure that Taqi Fidakar was not a communist and was independent enough of the Tudeh to not simply toe the party line. Indeed, his somewhat diverse politics, which included a close association with a local mill owner, later brought him into conflict with his communist comrades.<sup>734</sup> Bullard

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<sup>731</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 24 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/19/43.

<sup>732</sup> British legation Tehran minutes, 12 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/30/44.

<sup>733</sup> British consulate general (Isfahan) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 27 November 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/368/43.

<sup>734</sup> British consulate general (Isfahan) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 27 November 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/368/43.

nonetheless pushed for alternatives in an effort to stall Taqi Fidakar's candidature and that of party members in general, indicating that even the slightest association was enough to make a candidate unfavourable. Gault's support for the Tudeh labour leader showed that the British in Iran were not a monolith of one policy, yet his voice was unique in its support for a Tudeh candidate. Further south in Bam, Kirman, the consul successfully pushed for the candidacy of two pro-British figures who would not "deliberately do anything contrary to [Britain's] interests".<sup>735</sup> In Shiraz, consul Brenan proposed to postpone the elections in a bid to stop the Tudeh from gaining the seats, which was cautiously backed by Bullard.<sup>736</sup>

The presence of local politicians who were open to British patronage during the elections placed the Tudeh further in a negative light. It was from this group that the British found resonance through which to counter the rise of the party and other Left-leaning candidates. Such an environment arguably pushed the British agenda that it could still remain influential in the country's political development. The most striking example of this was Sayyed Zia and his National Will Party, whom the British backed strongly since his return to the political scene in September 1943. His party ran a centre-right programme that attracted bazaar retailers, shopkeepers' guilds and conservative religious authorities who, according to Fraser's predecessor, Underwood, feared the Tudeh.<sup>737</sup> Politically aligned with the British embassy<sup>738</sup>, Sayyid Zia used his party to provide support for other pro-British candidates.<sup>739</sup> Further afield in Tabriz, Bullard

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<sup>735</sup> British consulate general Kerman to British legation Tehran, 4 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/95/44.

<sup>736</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 11 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/13/43.

<sup>737</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 194.

<sup>738</sup> Azimi, 'Great Britain vi. British Influence in Persia, 1941-79'.

<sup>739</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 194.

directed the consul there, Thomas Rapp, to persuade local authorities in Saqqez to secure the election of the editor of the paper *Emruz va Farda* (Today and Tomorrow), Dr Shahidzadeh<sup>740</sup>, after receiving assurances that he would be “a wonderful nucleus of opposition to the communists”.<sup>741</sup> The newspaper was founded by Mostafa Fateh, as a further declaration of his break with the Tudeh. As one of the leading members of the Hamrahan Party, he focused the party’s activities in the British zones, supporting candidates who were civil servants and had a Western education. In these instances, the British were able to rely on the support of local politicians to counter the Tudeh.

As another way to deflect Tudeh success, Bullard placed pressure on Tehran. He warned the minister of foreign affairs that they would regard the election of the Tudeh candidate Ismail Amirkhizi<sup>742</sup> with “great disfavour” due to an anti-British speech he had made.<sup>743</sup> Amirkhizi had also come to the attention of the Iranian authorities for his activities in Azerbaijan a year before.<sup>744</sup> The shah had further lost some enthusiasm for the party after Morteza Yazd publicly made a number of anti-monarchy remarks.<sup>745</sup> While Bullard found it reasonable for Tehran to use moral influence against “dangerous candidates”, he wanted to avoid direct interference as Britain’s image could be further damaged by being seen to be involved in the electoral process.<sup>746</sup> This suggests an underlying concern about

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<sup>740</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp), 6 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/77/44.

<sup>741</sup> British embassy Tehran minutes, 11 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/27/44.

<sup>742</sup> British embassy Tehran minutes, 7 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/92/44.

<sup>743</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp), 6 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/77/44.

<sup>744</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1322/4/24 (16 July 1943), No.888, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>745</sup> British embassy Tehran notes, 5 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/19/44.

<sup>746</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate general Shiraz, 6 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/76/44.

Britain's image and the kind of legacy it sought to leave as an occupying force. Ultimately, this led to contradictions within its policy of interfering in elections.

At the end of the elections, British manoeuvring appeared to have paid off. A new parliament came into session that had a hint of the Tudeh but with the majority of the previous Majles intact. The election thus maintained Iran's political status quo, with the exception of a few new candidates, including members of the Tudeh, Sayyid Zia, and Musaddiq.<sup>747</sup> Several communist and Tudeh candidates were successful, including Iraj Eskanderi for Sari, Reza Radmanesh for Lahijan and Fereydun Keshavarz for Pahlavi. In Isfahan, the Tudeh candidate Taqi Fidakar had won together with two others.<sup>748</sup> In these instances, the British were tolerant of a Tudeh candidate, partly due to Gault's persuasion. Besides these new deputies, the Tudeh bloc that the British were worried about did not materialise, mainly due to Bullard's efforts to block them and his support for the party's opposition. According to Bullard, the Tudeh wanted to postpone the opening of parliament because they had not won as many seats as they had hoped for.<sup>749</sup> In opening the fourteenth Majles at the start of 1944<sup>750</sup>, the shah called upon Mohammad Sa'id, minister of foreign affairs under Suhaili, to form a government. His predictable choice of ministers was opposed by many of the deputies, including the Tudeh.<sup>751</sup>

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<sup>747</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 3 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/124/44.

<sup>748</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 3 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/124/44.

<sup>749</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 20 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/8/44.

<sup>750</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/44/44. Although the parliament was already in session, the elections in some constituencies in Azerbaijan and Fars were still ongoing. British consulate general Tabriz to British embassy Tehran (Bullard), 18 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/66/44.

<sup>751</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 100–101.

With a hint of triumph, the candidates were described by the legation “as good as any” and, with relief, doubted that the newly elected members could assert any real influence in the Majles.<sup>752</sup> Bullard summarised this sentiment:

The Majles has so far done nothing but discuss the certificates of election of its members and offer confused and unhelpful advice to M. Sa’id on the composition of his government. Since there are so many new deputies anxious to attract attention it may be expected that the 14<sup>th</sup> Majles will be notable for its oratory.<sup>753</sup>

The “new deputies anxious to attract attention” were probably a reference to the Tudeh. Bullard’s assessment of the new Majles was not particularly positive, while his assessment to London was marked by snide remarks about the Tudeh’s inexperience. He also hinted that the party would be the most vocal group in parliament which, in his calculations, would be balanced out by the conservative elements. In response to the growing prominence of the Tudeh, the main conservative Majles deputies rallied together against this perceived new threat. The Tudeh focused a lot of its energy on discrediting Sayyed Zia, labelling him a tool of the British.<sup>754</sup> The Tudeh and other Leftist organisations began a vigorous campaign against him<sup>755</sup>, including organising a gathering of workers to demand that the governor of Isfahan should put him on trial.<sup>756</sup> Now the new deputy for Yazd, he became one of the main opponents of the Tudeh, rallying workers and many

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<sup>752</sup> Consul-general (Isfahan) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 27 November 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/368/43.

<sup>753</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 3 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/124/44.

<sup>754</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 24 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/49/44.

<sup>755</sup> Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 51.

<sup>756</sup> Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone report, 1324/11/26 (15 February 1946), No.659/18, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

wealthy manufacturers against “the violence of the Tudeh”.<sup>757</sup> As such, through his placement in the parliament, the British were guaranteed of support while establishing a useful political pawn.

In line with this and seeing that the British legation and its consuls were content with suppressing the Tudeh, it was no surprise that the Iranian military approached the British to become more involved in dealing with the Tudeh following the elections. Since the start of the occupation, the Iranian Army was tense with frustration and dissatisfaction. As Cronin established, the early 1940s saw the military struggling, caught between the shah and the occupying forces vying for control over its affairs.<sup>758</sup> Against this backdrop, in 1944, a few days after Norouz, Isfahan’s governor-general, Farajollah Bahrami, proposed to the British consulate there to establish a military governorship in Isfahan, a regime that would have a free hand in dealing with the Tudeh ringleaders.<sup>759</sup> It included the establishment of temporary military courts, the suspension of newspapers that printed anything against the Iranian and British governments, and the imposition of the death penalty on those who acted against the Iranian government or who disrupted public order and security. Importantly, public gatherings and meetings were also to be banned in an effort to weaken Tudeh activity in the region as well as to curb their calls for freedom of press.<sup>760</sup> The possibility of this military governorship in Isfahan offered a real opportunity for the military to assert its control over Iran’s political affairs. For the

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<sup>757</sup> Quote from Reader Bullard in Azimi, *Iran*, 103. Sayyid Zia and the Tudeh Party differed on the continued employment of Millspaugh in Iran as a financial adviser. At their first general conference in the summer of 1944, the Tudeh spoke against the retention of any foreign adviser. In contrast, Sayyid Zia supported the American financial adviser. Azimi, *Iran*, 106. The Soviets objected to his presence. Dehkhordi and Azizkhah, “Mokhalefat-ha alaih-e Millspaugh dar Iran”, 101.

<sup>758</sup> Cronin, *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East*, 158–169.

<sup>759</sup> British consulate general Isfahan minutes, 29 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/31/44.

<sup>760</sup> Summary of Military Governorship Law of 1329 (lunar) in British consulate general Isfahan to British embassy Tehran, 3 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/33/44.

British, it was an opportunity to seriously stunt the growth of the Tudeh and thus was subjected to significant debate among the British officials in Iran – especially between Gault and Bullard.

It would be an exaggeration to describe this episode as a British alliance with the Iranian military in order to counter the Tudeh, yet it does reveal some collusion and bilateral talks over dealing with the party in a serious way. Turning away from his earlier support for the party, Gault had built a negative image of the Tudeh in Isfahan, calling their control over workers a dictatorship. Described as the ‘Manchester of Iran’, Isfahan was home to 9 large textile mills and 11,000 workers.<sup>761</sup> After local trade union leaders locked out Tudeh-affiliated workers from the factories, the Tudeh organised strikes and storage rooms were forcibly opened.<sup>762</sup> Mill-owners were concerned that the salaries they paid their workers were funding the Tudeh, a suspicion that led these owners to threaten a lockout. This led to much tension and, for Bahrami, demonstrated the necessity of keeping the growing influence of the Tudeh in check. His fear that Iran could become Bolshevised should nothing be done further increased Bullard’s anxiety.<sup>763</sup> Local Iranian authorities also watched Tudeh activities with concern, especially when *Rahbar* talked openly about defending the rights of workers.<sup>764</sup> This Red spectre further influenced British decision-makers in Iran to seriously consider the military governorship proposal.

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<sup>761</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran, The Crisis of Democracy*, 147; see also British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Eden, 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/44/44.

<sup>762</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 101–102.

<sup>763</sup> British embassy Tehran minutes, 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/33/44.

<sup>764</sup> Ministry of Interior, 1324/5/24 (15 August 1945), No.4655/264, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

Bullard voiced his acquiescence over the proposal to Gault, stating that troops should be employed to aid the police to repress any Tudeh-organised violence.<sup>765</sup> Things moved quickly and considering British consideration as approval, Bahrami went personally to Tehran to secure additional powers for dealing with the Tudeh.<sup>766</sup> The military commander in Isfahan, General Qadar, had also gone to the capital to obtain instructions to suppress the Tudeh without the necessity of referring to the local governor-general beforehand. Qadar's involvement concerned Gault. His discomfort revealed some concern that any undermining of the Tudeh needed to be done carefully and without raising too much scrutiny. The general was known for his use of backhanded methods in dealing with the Tudeh, having carried out terror attacks in Isfahan that were then blamed on the party.<sup>767</sup> The increase of military confidence occurred at a time when the shah and the army were planning to expand and increase in clout.<sup>768</sup>

However, despite deep consideration over the use of the military to quash the Tudeh, both Gault and Bullard did not have the appetite to see the plan through. In general, the British were not interested in becoming too involved with the Iranian Army since previous efforts had been rejected.<sup>769</sup> Seeing the general lack of interest to become too involved with the military, Gault backed down from his earlier assessment of the Tudeh, declaring that a military governorship was not the best way to combat the party's rise.<sup>770</sup>

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<sup>765</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate general Isfahan, 31 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/32/44.

<sup>766</sup> British consulate general Isfahan to Foreign Office, 30 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/30/44.

<sup>767</sup> British consulate general Isfahan (Consul) to British embassy Tehran (Bullard), 25 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/24/44.

<sup>768</sup> Steven R Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), 175.

<sup>769</sup> Cronin, *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East*, 164. Furthermore, US developed a growing interest in the Iranian military. Ward, *Immortal: A Military History of Iran and Its Armed Forces*, 171–175.

<sup>770</sup> British consulate general Isfahan (Gault) to British embassy Tehran (Bullard), 23 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/444/44.

Gault advised the embassy (the legation was upgraded to an embassy at the end of 1943)<sup>771</sup> in Tehran to “quash” any talk in favour of military control in Isfahan.<sup>772</sup> While the party still needed to be controlled, Gault believed that firm civilian control was adequate to control the Tudeh.<sup>773</sup> Bullard readily concurred, and backed Tehran’s reluctance to use a military option in dealing with the Tudeh in Isfahan.<sup>774</sup> To further avoid the imposition of a military governorship, he suggested to Sa’id that Bahrami should be replaced.<sup>775</sup> Bahrami was removed as governor-general and replaced by Reza Afshar on 30 April 1944. Gault proposed that Tehran needed to authorise and adequately support the governor-general in being firm with the Tudeh without resorting to a military governorship.<sup>776</sup> This had the intended effect: the Tudeh saw Afshar’s arrival as an effort by Tehran to control the party.<sup>777</sup>

The military governorship was thus never established due to Bullard and Gault’s preference for a less controversial solution. Despite the abandonment of the military governorship solution, London and the British in Iran considered utilising the tribes to counter the rise of the Tudeh.<sup>778</sup> Such links with the tribes were not out of the ordinary. Since the late nineteenth century, when southern Iran became strategically and economically important to the British Empire, Britain identified tribes as a useful entity

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<sup>771</sup> Following the Tehran Declaration, the US and British governments raised the status of their legations to embassies. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/44/44.

<sup>772</sup> British consulate general Isfahan (Gault) to British embassy Tehran, 4 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/16/44.

<sup>773</sup> British consulate general Isfahan to British embassy Tehran, 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/35/44.

<sup>774</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate general Isfahan (Gault), 15 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/404/44.

<sup>775</sup> British embassy Tehran minutes, 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/33/44.

<sup>776</sup> British consulate general Isfahan (Gault) to British embassy Tehran, 29 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1434, 10/29/44.

<sup>777</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 103.

<sup>778</sup> Stephanie Cronin, “Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century”, in *Iranian Studies*, Vol.42(3) (June 2009), 376.

to protect its interests in the south.<sup>779</sup> After Reza Shah's abdication, the tribes regained their political importance and prominence. As Cronin alluded to, British policymakers saw the necessity of cultivating the southern tribes to counter Soviet and Tudeh influence.<sup>780</sup> Indeed, Bullard oversaw a tribal pact with local Iranian leaders to cooperate in the south, counter the Tudeh and not oppose British interests. Naser Qashqa'i<sup>781</sup> signed a pact of friendship with Ebrahim Qavam (Qavam al-Mulk) of the Khamseh tribe, Morteza Quli Khan of the Bakhtiaris, together with the governor-general of Fars and the governor-general of Isfahan. Supported by southern property owners, the tribes and local government banded against Tudeh subversion and any kind of potential revolutionary movement.<sup>782</sup> An anti-Tudeh newspaper coalition was also formed, comprising of the Independence Front (*Jebheh-e Esteqlal*) and several other newspapers and journals with many articles and writers focused on discrediting the Tudeh and encouraging fear of the party's influence.<sup>783</sup> These efforts pointed to the kind of campaigns that British policymakers wanted to launch in Iran.

As can be seen, British policy over political reform was reversed and a policy of supporting the Iranian traditional elite was prioritised instead. No more serious consideration was given to finding new political faces or replacing old politicians. The British now regarded the Tudeh as a threat to their position, highlighting the changing nature of the Tudeh from a fairly neutral party to one that was seen as opposed to British

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<sup>779</sup> The British made the Bakhtiyari tribe as their closest ally. Cronin, *Tribal Politics in Iran: Rural Conflict and the New State, 1921-1941*, 44.

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>781</sup> Son of Sawlat al-Dawlah, Naser Qashqa'i was of the khans and sought to re-establish his tribal leadership following the collapse of Reza Shah's regime. He quickly established himself as leader of the Qashqa'i tribes, initially took on an anti-British stance and offered support to the Germans. Cronin, "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century", 374-376.

<sup>782</sup> Cronin, "Re-Interpreting Modern Iran: Tribe and State in the Twentieth Century", 377.

<sup>783</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 207.

interests. Although they made their own efforts to deal with the Tudeh, they also differed to Tehran and the traditional elite. Bullard and his staff readily showed a preference for this, but still undermined the party's political participation and presence. The narrative of Britain promoting political change shifted to one that looked out for its own interests, with the Tudeh as a threat to Britain's position in Iran.

### 3.3 The Tudeh within British–Soviet tensions

While the British had initially refrained from letting their suspicious attitude get in the way of cooperation, by the end of 1944, the Soviets were regarded as pursuing self-serving agendas to expand their influence in Iran. Fawcett describes the post-Stalingrad era as the second stage of Soviet policy towards Iran during the occupation, which became more aggressive and open.<sup>784</sup> In a conversation with the daughter of Rapp the consul general of Tabriz, the head of the NKVD allegedly said, "We are your friends now, but won't be in three or four years' time."<sup>785</sup> Casual dinner conversations aside, British officials started to interpret Soviet actions and attitudes as being geared towards undermining Britain's position. At the heart of this was the Tudeh, which was more and more being seen as a vehicle to facilitate the Soviet Union's designs. Barely two weeks after Stalingrad, the legation warned that the Soviet zone was ripening for communist ideology and that the Tudeh was on its way to becoming a "potential instrument" for the Soviets.<sup>786</sup> Within this heightened sense of alert, links between the Soviets and the Tudeh frequently permeated diplomatic reports and opinions. Bullard and his colleagues' framing of the Tudeh as part of a Soviet agenda was a marked change from how the party

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<sup>784</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 85.

<sup>785</sup> Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony's College, 256.

<sup>786</sup> British legation Tehran to Foreign Office, 19 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/5/43.

was viewed at the start of the occupation.<sup>787</sup> This section examines the party's transition and highlights the flexible nature of British policy in responding to this context.

In the eyes of the British, Stalingrad caused the Soviets to actively pursue independent goals to maintain a long-term position in Iran. Historians such as Fawcett regarded the victory as a decisive moment that put the Soviets on a more confident and aggressive path to pursue their goals in Iran, and that their policy became opportunistic and more responsive to developments.<sup>788</sup> British diplomats, on the whole, were convinced that the Soviets pursued deliberate policies to expand their influence, utilising ideology, either through communism or by supporting nationalist movements in the north. In 1943, the British legation saw that the Soviet Union deliberately "encourage[d] communistic ideas among the poorer classes of Persia".<sup>789</sup> Such thinking was encouraged by rumours that circulated soon after Stalingrad. The legation was told by their Iranian informer that ordinary Iranians were "being roped into Bolshevik organisations, and given badges of the hammer and sickle to put inside their coat lapels".<sup>790</sup> To the Foreign Office, Soviet activity was presented as encouraging Left-wing politicians and organisations in Iran to oppose the shah and to target the richer inhabitants of Tehran.<sup>791</sup> Bullard further suggested to Eden that the Soviets were doing little to decrease British and US' suspicions.<sup>792</sup>

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<sup>787</sup> British legation Tehran minutes, 1 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

<sup>788</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 85.

<sup>789</sup> British legation Tehran minutes, 29 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

<sup>790</sup> Conversation with Dr Taheri, 27 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427 [Classmark unavailable].

<sup>791</sup> Conversation with Dr Taheri, 27 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427 [Classmark unavailable].

<sup>792</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/33/43.

Thus, from early March 1943, the legation was on heightened alert towards such Soviet activities. Against this background, it is no coincidence that the legation seriously made a causal link between the Tudeh's rise and Soviet ambitions. Bullard suggested to the Foreign Office that the Soviets might take advantage of the party "in the interests of their long-term policy in Persia".<sup>793</sup> From then on, the Tudeh's expansion and convergence with the Soviets was further felt and noticed by British diplomats stationed in the Soviet zone. Bullard reported the Soviet embassy's refusal to station a British liaison officer within the Soviet forces in Tabriz<sup>794</sup>, which increased his mistrust of Soviet activity in the north. Soviet-Tudeh collusion in the north of the country also caught the attention of the Iranian Ministry of Interior. In the Azerbaijani city of Takab, local authorities reacted to Tudeh presence by protesting and threatening to punish the Red Army. Soviet reach was also felt in other areas, for example, when they purchased a leather factory and transferred some industries from Soviet Russia.<sup>795</sup> In Tabriz, the Soviets opened public hospitals and schools that taught in Russian and Azeri Turkic, encouraging the idea of an independent Azerbaijan.<sup>796</sup> The legation in Tehran noted this trend and saw that the Soviets derived support from the lower classes to gain "a plebiscite in the Northern Provinces or, alternatively, that they [the Soviets] hope that the whole country will become communist and become virtually one of the Soviet Republics".<sup>797</sup> In a report to London, Bullard stated that the Tudeh branch in Azerbaijan distributed supporting

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<sup>793</sup> Although many accusations about Soviet activity turned out to be false, Bullard was convinced they still existed. British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 11 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/13/43.

<sup>794</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/33/43.

<sup>795</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1324/4/25 (16 July 1945), [Classmark unclear], 1B, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>796</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 23 April 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E2612; see also British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 22 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/207/44.

<sup>797</sup> Britain still saw the shah as the main obstacle to such a design, although it was also acknowledged that the shah "could be removed". British legation Tehran minutes, 1 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/12/43.

propaganda.<sup>798</sup> Writing in March 1943, he was already predicting the possibility of the Soviets supporting an autonomous northern state, as they had done in Gilan in 1920. This further fed into the notion that the Soviets were taking significant steps to maintain a position in Iran once the occupation was over and that the Tudeh would play a prominent role in furthering this ambition.

From as early as the end of February 1943, the legation was encouraged to be concerned about Soviet intentions regarding the Tudeh by local politicians such as Bahrami, the then minister of internal affairs. Bahrami's determination to paint the Tudeh in a bad light may have had an impact on Britain's hesitant attitude towards the party. Bullard knew that the Iranian political elite were wary of the Tudeh and were convinced that Soviet agents were dictating its activities.<sup>799</sup> Bahrami used his ministerial power to stop a Tudeh demonstration that had been staged to celebrate the anniversary of Taqi Arani's death on 22 February 1943.<sup>800</sup> Britain's perception of links between Qavam, the Soviets and the Tudeh was further encouraged by Bahrami, who accused Qavam of trying to please the Soviets when he objected to Bahrami's halting of a Tudeh demonstration.<sup>801</sup> In close contact with the legation, Bahrami helped further British perceptions that the Soviets could be placated through the good treatment of the Tudeh, further strengthening the notion that there was a link between the two.

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<sup>798</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 23 April 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E2612; see also British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 22 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/207/44.

<sup>799</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 11 March 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/13/43.

<sup>800</sup> Such a warning may well have been put forward in order to gain favour with the British as Bullard was initially sceptical of Bahrami. Talk with Farajullah Bahramy, 22 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/9/43.

<sup>801</sup> Talk with Farajullah Bahramy, 22 February 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/9/43.

As 1943 went on, British perceptions of the existence of Soviet–Tudeh links became more concrete, partly due to Soviet actions as well as British interpretations of those actions. At the start of the fourteenth Majles elections, Bullard acknowledged the lack of any real evidence of Soviet interference or of any interest in the Tudeh.<sup>802</sup> Soviet ambassador in Tehran, Maximov, also denied any interference in the elections.<sup>803</sup> By the summer however, with the war moving more in favour of the Allies, belief of Soviet interference became more prevalent. Bullard reported of the Soviets rigging the northern elections.<sup>804</sup> How far these accusations were accurate is questionable and even Rapp, the consul-general in Tabriz, was uncertain.<sup>805</sup> While there was a difference of opinion between Tehran and Tabriz about rigging, Soviet interference was not in doubt. Rapp saw the Tudeh as the Soviets’ “chief instrument of subversion” as shown through their support for the party’s election campaign in Azerbaijan.<sup>806</sup> Much like his predecessors, Urquhart and Cook, Rapp also had an ingrained suspicion of the Soviets.<sup>807</sup> He had served in the Soviet Union in the 1930s, firstly as consul in Sofia in Bulgaria and then in the consular office in Moscow, an experience he found quite depressing. While there, he witnessed the “tentacles of the feared OGPU (precursor to the NKVD and KGB) and Communist Party

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<sup>802</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 15 September 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/129/43.

<sup>803</sup> Azerbaijan elections (Bullard), 13 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/386/43.

<sup>804</sup> Political situation (Bullard), 29 June 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/76/43.

<sup>805</sup> British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 18 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/406/43.

<sup>806</sup> The consul-general in Tabriz had received information from Sigat ul Islami [Segat al-Islam] regarding Soviet interference, in particular the consul Kuznetsov’s insistence on getting his candidates elected. The Soviets were not prepared to use force to persuade the electorate, nor was the government ready to rig the elections to please the Soviets, especially because there was so much hope for true democratic elections. British consulate general (Tabriz) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 December 1943, PRO, FO371/40171, E491; see British consulate general (Tabriz) to British legation Tehran, 18 December 1943, PRO, FO371/40171, E491; see *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp*, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony’s College, 255.

<sup>807</sup> He had spent some months as a prisoner of war upon capture in Dubrovnik. He regarded his appointment as consul-general in Tabriz as an “internment” due to its isolated location and its occupation under the Soviets. *Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp*, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony’s College, 244.

stretched everywhere.”<sup>808</sup> In addition, he saw the effects of Soviet propaganda, witnessed a devastating famine and experienced the rumblings of social unrest in the country.<sup>809</sup> Personal feelings appeared to permeate his opinion of his Soviet counterpart, whom he saw as superficial and uninformative.<sup>810</sup>

Rapp’s office in Tabriz kept in touch with an informant known as Azodi, the elections inspector tasked with overseeing the Azerbaijani elections, who dutifully reported back to the legation in Tehran about Soviet and Tudeh activities.<sup>811</sup> Based on these reports, Rapp fed Bullard information about Soviet activities, including that Kuznetsov was backing Tudeh candidates.<sup>812</sup> The consul was certain that the Soviets were planning for a “long stay” in Azerbaijan and couched their activities in the north as part of long-term Soviet imperial designs and interest in oil.<sup>813</sup> Rapp was careful to point out that there was little local support for the party, and thus had to rely on Soviet support.<sup>814</sup> Although this was not strictly true as the Tudeh already had a local branch in the northern province, Bullard took Rapp’s report as evidence of a Tudeh–Soviet nexus in the north.<sup>815</sup> Bullard was particularly concerned that Iraj Eskanderi, as a member of the party’s central

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<sup>808</sup> Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony’s College, 113.

<sup>809</sup> Service, *Russia: From Tsarism to the Twenty-First Century*, 184–189; for some examples see, Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony’s College, 114–115.

<sup>810</sup> British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 18 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/406/43; he described their meetings as cold and perfunctory. Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony’s College, 257.

<sup>811</sup> According to Azodi, Soviet-backed candidates were not widely supported by the main electorate and would thus only be able to gain a small minority vote. British consulate general Tabriz to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 18 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/66/44.

<sup>812</sup> British consul-general (Tabriz) to British legation Tehran, 16 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/394/43.

<sup>813</sup> Memoirs of Sir Thomas Rapp, GB165-0234, Middle East Centre St Antony’s College, 252–254.

<sup>814</sup> British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/408/43.

<sup>815</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1439, G69/1/44.

committee, would become a prominent mouthpiece for the Soviets.<sup>816</sup> Indeed, the latter admitted that, as a candidate, he received Soviet support for his election campaign in Mazandaran.<sup>817</sup> Rapp further claimed that his Soviet counterpart was persistently imposing candidates on the population<sup>818</sup> who were subservient to the Soviets.<sup>819</sup> These assertions confirmed that the Soviets wanted to push for candidates, including Tudeh members, to be elected to the Majles, thereby establishing continued influence over the country's political affairs.

Throughout the elections, the Tudeh was regarded as a vehicle for Soviet influence. However, this perception remained a concern mainly among the British in Iran, as the Foreign Office was not overly worried by Soviet interference in the elections, let alone about the make-up of the new Majles. Bullard complained to the Foreign Office that the Soviet chargé d'affaires wanted to secure the candidature of an editor of a Tudeh newspaper.<sup>820</sup> He was clearly building a particular image in London's mind regarding the Soviets while trying to portray Tudeh inclusion negatively. He also claimed that the Soviets were dissatisfied with Iranian Minister of War, General Amir Ahmadi, due to his open opposition to Tudeh influence.<sup>821</sup> It seemed that the Foreign Office did not take the bait, dryly admitting that Soviet support for the Tudeh would not be "more or less

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<sup>816</sup> Suhaili Cabinet, 20 October 1943, PRO, FO248/1527, G544/14243. However, Bullard believed that as long as Suhaili supported the Allies in Iran, he could support one or two Soviet-picked deputies. Suhaili Cabinet, 20 October 1943, PRO, FO248/1527, G544/14243.

<sup>817</sup> *Khaterat-e Iraj Eskandari* (Interview by Amir Khosravi Babak and Fereydun Azarnur) (Tehran: Moasseseh-ye motaleat va pazhuhesh-ha-ye siyasat-e, 1993), 47 and 482.

<sup>818</sup> British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/408/43.

<sup>819</sup> British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp) to British legation Tehran (Bullard), 22 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/408/43.

<sup>820</sup> This candidate was unnamed, though it may have been Ardashez Hovhannasian, an editorial staff member of *Mardom*, *Rahbar* and *Razm*. In supporting this candidature, the Iranian prime minister declared that he was acting under the orders of the shah, as he saw it as a way in which he could return the Soviets' favour for being more conciliatory. From British Legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 25 October 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/144/43.

<sup>821</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1439, G69/1/44.

desirable than the others... and from the point of view of the Persian electorate they may well be less corruptible".<sup>822</sup> In the eyes of the British legation, then, the linkage between the Soviets and the Tudeh was apparent and, although Bullard wanted to highlight Soviet interference, London seemed undisturbed. With London still in a wartime mindset, the Soviets were still needed and were regarded as an ally.

While London remained firm in its position, British diplomats in Iran were allowed a free hand to interfere in Iran's elections and shape its outcome. One of the ways in which the British tried to stop the Soviets from gaining political ground during the campaigning was by stalling or suspending the elections when possible. Bullard encouraged Tehran to suspend the elections in the north where Kuznetzov backed the candidacy of a further two Tehran-based Tudeh members after 5 Tudeh candidates had already been elected.<sup>823</sup> Although the elections were indeed temporarily suspended, Bullard reported to London that the Soviet consul in Tabriz continued to do whatever necessary to ensure the election of Soviet-backed candidates.<sup>824</sup> In Ardebil, Suhaili suspended the elections after the Soviet authorities asked 2 local candidates to retire to make room for their choice, a pro-Tudeh local mullah.<sup>825</sup> The Soviets regarded these suspensions as Britain's strategy of ensuring that such candidates would not be elected.<sup>826</sup>

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<sup>822</sup> Foreign Office minutes, 5 January 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E94.

<sup>823</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 20 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/396/43.

<sup>824</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 January 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E94.

<sup>825</sup> Soviet favourite Hussein Lankarani was against British favourite Sayyed Zia as well. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 30 May 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/153/44.

<sup>826</sup> "Report on the Political and Economic Situation in Tabriz in 1943", 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archives, f. 28, op 4, d. 19. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069>

As a way to further counter Soviet interference and thereby stall the Tudeh's rise in the elections, Britain sought to get Tehran to object to Soviet ambassador Maximov's interference in the elections so that Moscow would reprimand him.<sup>827</sup> In coordination with London, Eden sought the British representative in Moscow to discuss interference with Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov.<sup>828</sup> Bullard also engaged with Tehran regarding this matter, especially when the Iranian government appeared cooperative. The prime minister proposed to transfer Dr Esmail Marzban from Reza'i'yeh to the governorship of Tabriz as he was perceived as being more capable of preventing the elections from being hijacked by the Soviets.<sup>829</sup>

Another way in which the British countered the Soviet-backed Tudeh was by supporting candidates who were either anti-Tudeh or capable of defeating them. As a way to counterbalance the perceived "godless influence... from the north", referring probably to the Soviets, the mullahs at Qom demanded more political power from the shah, greater freedom for preachers and, importantly, the election of 5 prominent *mojtaheds* to the Majles<sup>830</sup> – a tactical nod by the British towards religious representation as a way to counter the Tudeh. Rapp suggested for the candidature of the Iranian diplomat, Abul Seghatal-Islami, who was regarded as independent from the Soviets and an appropriate representative of the mullahs, landowners and educated locals.<sup>831</sup> Rapp had previously recommended Tehran to include landowners and merchants in the elections as a way to

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<sup>827</sup> British embassy Tehran to Foreign Office (Baxter), 4 January 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E491.

<sup>828</sup> Foreign Office (Eden) to British embassy Moscow, 19 February 1944, PRO, FO248/1439, G69/12/44.

<sup>829</sup> British legation Tehran (Bullard) to British consulate general Tabriz, 31 December 1943, PRO, FO248/1428, 636/415/43.

<sup>830</sup> Political situation (Bullard), 29 June 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/76/43.

<sup>831</sup> British consulate general Tabriz (Rapp) to British embassy Tehran (Trott), 20 May 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/152/44.

counter the Tudeh candidates.<sup>832</sup> These methods were all ways in which the Tudeh (and therefore Soviet influence) could be weakened.

As the Soviet-backed candidates eventually proved to be unpopular, the Soviets lessened their propaganda and enthusiasm for them. While Fawcett has spoken about the *ad hoc* nature of Soviet policy, it is perhaps more useful to present this back-paddling of enthusiasm as part of general Soviet policy at the time. Stalin was not keen for Left-wing parties to strike for power and as was the case in Italy and France, he instead preached for restraint.<sup>833</sup> In a report back to Moscow, the Soviets accused the British of working to undermine growing Soviet popularity through the curbing of the Tudeh's political rise.<sup>834</sup> Rather dramatically, the Soviets accused the British of conducting "a decisive struggle to consolidate their position and destroy the democratic organisations" in the Soviet sphere of interest.<sup>835</sup> By doing so, Soviets openly admitted the existence of a link with the party and blamed their failure to gain parliamentary seats on the British. In reality they were probably shrewd enough to know that a Left takeover in the Iranian Parliament would not have been in line with Stalin's vision. Disappointed with the results, and rather naively, Tudeh candidates alleged that ballot boxes were not sent to the Kurdish districts. Rapp turned this accusation around and in a direct report to the Foreign Office in London, framed it as proof that the Soviets were showing more respect towards the local authorities.<sup>836</sup>

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<sup>832</sup> British consulate general Tabriz to British embassy Tehran, 18 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1435, 22/42/44.

<sup>833</sup> Reynolds, 'The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance', 317.

<sup>834</sup> "Report on the Political and Economic Situation in Tabriz in 1943", 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archives, f.28, op.4, d.19. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069>

<sup>835</sup> "Report on the Political and Economic Situation in Tabriz in 1943", 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archives, f.28, op.4, d.19. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069>

<sup>836</sup> British consulate general (Tabriz) to Foreign Office, 6 February 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E1313.

While the elections had not brought the results the Soviets wanted, their interference did reveal that the Soviets had designs in the north. By the end of 1944, Bullard depicted the ease in which the Soviets could encourage the autonomous movement in Azerbaijan.<sup>837</sup> Jonathan Haslam revealed that, by March 1944, the Kremlin, spearheaded by Molotov and NKVD chief Lavrentiy Beria, wanted to expand their political influence in the north through the encouragement of nationalist separatist movements.<sup>838</sup> The elections seemed to confirm British suspicions of Soviet political activity in the north, but ultimately the impact of the Soviet Union and Tudeh on the elections proved to be quite small.<sup>839</sup> Possibly in response to Britain's consistent protesting against Soviet interference in the elections, the latter reduced their candidates in Tabriz to two, which placated Rapp. Upon the elections wrapping up, and the Tudeh candidacy successfully contained, Bullard felt it was safe from raising further accusations against the Soviets in the elections.<sup>840</sup> Britain's earlier cautious enthusiasm irreversibly changed to distrusting the party's intentions and as being closely associated with the Soviets, further sealing the fate of the Tudeh to be subject to the precarious nature of Soviet-British relations.

These increased suspicions were grounded in what was happening more generally within the British-Soviet relationship. In the autumn of 1944, Churchill grew increasingly concerned over Stalin's post-war designs over Poland. Furthermore, the Soviets had not

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<sup>837</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 15 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/194/44.

<sup>838</sup> Haslam, *Russia's Cold War*, 48.

<sup>839</sup> In addition to Eskandari's election in Mazandaran, Darajez, Durri was elected and in Pahlavi Dr Feridun Kishavarz. British legation Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 3 November 1943, PRO, FO248/1427, G544/153/43; British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Eden), 6 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/44/44.

<sup>840</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to British embassy Moscow, 11 March 1944, PRO, FO248/1428, G69/26/44.

allowed for Allied planes to use Soviet airfields, leading to increased tensions within the alliance.<sup>841</sup> These tensions became apparent as 1944 went on and as Tudeh activism increased, relations between Britain and the Soviet Union in Iran became more difficult. The heightened tensions caused a number of issues within the administration of the occupation to arise. For some months, the Soviet military attaché failed to keep his British counterpart informed of Soviet troop movements.<sup>842</sup> Bullard appealed to the Iranian prime minister to assert more control over the press, a plea made in response to the Soviets gaining more flattering treatment in the Iranian media. Bullard's main fear was that if this continued it would sway the public towards the Soviets and would position the British and Americans to look like the main aggressors.<sup>843</sup> The US tried to avoid this by getting the Soviet Union more engaged in Iranian affairs.<sup>844</sup> Washington instructed its chargé d'affaires in Tehran to approach the Soviets for their economic cooperation in what was a predominantly British–American project.<sup>845</sup> Such gestures made towards the Soviet Union hinted at a tentative approach to persuade the Soviets to be more committed to joint ameliorations in Iran, thereby deflecting any ambitions the Soviets had towards independent expansion into Iran.

The concern that the Tudeh was now a Soviet political tool had become a reality in the eyes of the British diplomacy in Iran. While the Foreign Office was careful not to accuse their ally too much in light of the ongoing war, in Iran tensions nonetheless existed. Since the Soviet involvement in Iranian social democracy and at the party's foundation were well-established, it was not difficult for the British in Iran to extend this link to

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<sup>841</sup> Reynolds, 'The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance', 316.

<sup>842</sup> Foreign Office (Baxter) to War Office (Howell), 20 May 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E2939.

<sup>843</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 24 April 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/49/44.

<sup>844</sup> Foreign Office minutes, 2 May 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E2660.

<sup>845</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 5 May 1944, PRO, FO371/40171, E2782.

contemporary issues, such as the fourteenth Majles elections. Tempering Soviet ambitions and its closeness to the Tudeh from then on thus became a key British policy interest. This new attitude towards the party showed the nuances of British policy, as well as the ability of individual diplomats to shape policy and opinion.

### 3.4 The Tudeh within British oil interests

The mid era of the occupation saw some significant developments among and around the oil industry. The stresses and conditions of the war had taken their toll on workers, who became more vocal in their dissatisfaction. Communist activities were also noted among the oil employees. The Tudeh began to establish itself in the south, but not exclusively among the oil workers. These developments heightened a sense of threat to the AIOC and the British government. Early concerns about the oil stemmed from wider wartime concerns regarding supplies and supply routes. However, once the threat from the Germans had passed, the British authorities and the oil company in the south faced pressure from their own workers. The conditions brought about by the war saw dissatisfaction increase, which also saw an increase in political organisations and union activity. At the same time, the British faced another threat to their monopoly over Iranian oil, from their ally, the Soviet Union. It was the Tudeh's support of the Soviet bid for an oil concession in the north that established the party as a dangerous threat.<sup>846</sup> The shifts in the war egged on by growing Soviet confidence made the bid for an oil concession especially tense, which further disrupted the British–Soviet cooperation in Iran. In this section, the Tudeh's activities and developments in the south will be presented, followed

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<sup>846</sup> It pegged the party as not only pro-Soviet but also as being prepared to back a Soviet agenda at the cost of its own independence and reputation. Azimi, *Iran*, 109.

by an examination of the party's support of the Soviet bid and how it established itself as a threat to Britain's oil interests.

From 1943 onwards, compounded by poor working conditions and strict wartime rules<sup>847</sup>, the oil industry experienced more political activity, which was born out of worker dissatisfaction. In January 1944 British employees protested against working hours and conditions. The British government first sent Irene Ward, a Conservative MP who had international experience dealing with labour matters, to investigate.<sup>848</sup> Both she and a professional investigator who was sent after her, concluded that the employees were overworked but recommended that the striking employees should continue to be subject to wartime rules.<sup>849</sup> Ward also concluded that the company was inadequate at responding to legitimate grievances and predicted that the British government would be "in for serious trouble".<sup>850</sup> The strike revealed the pressing conditions endured by the workers as a cause of the occupation as well as the lack of proper response, which later re-surfaced during the 1946 strikes.

The British authorities also noted the presence of communist activities among the oil workers but, in the 1943–1944 period, did not initially attribute this development to the Tudeh. The Foreign Office believed that some British employees were communist and

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<sup>847</sup> A report emerged in mid-1944 of the employees' poor health standards. Furthermore, since December 1941, the British government introduced an Order-in-Council that had placed the AIOC and its employees under wartime rules, which also meant that British employees in the AIOC were not allowed to leave without the written permission of Bullard. Bamberg *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 249; see also Rasmus Elling, "Abadan oil city dreams and the nostalgia for past futures in Iran (part three)", in Abadan: Retold, <http://www.abadan.wiki/en/the-early-beginnings-of-modern-abadan-part-3/>

<sup>848</sup> She had also been sent to China by Brendan Bracken, the minister of information, to investigate the war effort there. Ministry of Information (Bracken) to Ward, 29 January 1943, FP53/8, MSeng 7005; see also British embassy Tehran to British consulate Khorramshahr, 1 January 1944, PRO, FO371/40158, E25.

<sup>849</sup> Discontent of the AIOC employees at Abadan, report by Picton, PRO, FO371/40159.

<sup>850</sup> Ward to Ministry of Labour (Bevin), 15 January 1944, PRO, FO371/40158, E891.

would influence other workers.<sup>851</sup> International communist groups had also taken root in the south among the oil workers. *Solel Boneh*, a Zionist labour organisation founded in 1921 in British-Mandate Palestine, had set up operations in 1942 to expand the refinery.<sup>852</sup> Bullard expressed concern over their activities and potential plans to sabotage the AIOC.<sup>853</sup> Furthermore, Indian communists<sup>854</sup> were also becoming more influential among the Indian oil workers.<sup>855</sup> The Indian Artisans Union and an Indian communist newspaper were both active in the south.<sup>856</sup> However, these developments were more of a nuisance than an actual threat as neither Bullard nor the consulate in the south made any serious attempts to stamp out these communist activities. With the war still reliant on the participation and cooperation of the Left, anti-communist policies and attitudes were still held back.

Against this background of increased activity, the Tudeh expanded their presence in the south and increased their association with oil workers. In 1943, as the Tudeh expanded among Iran's workers generally, the party tested the waters in the oil refinery but these attempts amounted to little and the party's presence was quickly dismantled. Part of this was due to its residual commitment to the war and to avoid activities that could

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<sup>851</sup> Quoted from Abrahamian, *Iran*, 360.

<sup>852</sup> Yehouda Shenhav, "The Jews of Iraq, Zionist Ideology, and the Property of the Palestinian Refugees of 1948: An Anomaly of National Accounting", *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol.3 (1999), 608; *Solel Boneh* members were already employed in Iran even before the outbreak of the war, often vocalising their dissatisfaction over working conditions. Nimrod Zagagi, "An Oasis of Radicalism: The Labor Movement in Abadan in the 1940s", *Iranian Studies*, Online (March 2020), 6.

<sup>853</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to British embassy Jerusalem, 9 March 1944, PRO, FO371/40158, E1609.

<sup>854</sup> The Indian Communist Party were loyal to the Soviet Union and since the Stalinist era had been careful to follow the USSR. Robert Service, *Comrades: Communism: A World History* (London: Macmillan, 2008), 199.

<sup>855</sup> For a thorough discussion of the tribulations faced by Indian workers in Abadan, their specific grievances and their role in worker organisation before the outbreak of the war, see Atabaki, "Far from Home, But at Home: Indian Migrant Workers in the Iranian Oil Industry", 105–113.

<sup>856</sup> Military Intelligence officer Karachi (Thomas) to General Headquarters New Delhi, 31 August 1946, India Office Records, IOR/R/15/2/912.

potentially disrupt the war effort. Nonetheless, the Tudeh remained active in the south and formed unions for other types of workers, such as taxi drivers, road sweepers, irrigation cleaners, cotton spinners and bakers.<sup>857</sup> Notably, the Tudeh was not the only entity conducting political activities in the south. Yusuf Eftekhari revived his union activities and established an independent union network. An affiliate of his, Farhad Falahati, a former AIOC worker, tried to establish a workers' union in April 1944 but was closed down by the Abadan military governor. In neighbouring Ahwaz, another affiliate, Ali Omid, managed to establish a union for workers in Khuzestan. Despite these attempts, it was the Tudeh-led CCFTU that dominated the oil workers and monopolised union activities in the south. After absorbing Omid's union, they established the Khuzestan United Council of the Trade Union of Workers and Toilers (KUC). However, their activities were still foundational at this point and were limited by the war and the authorities.<sup>858</sup> As will be seen in the next chapter, the party's union work and presence during the war years contributed to its popularity and allowed it to take a leadership role in the strikes.

After the fourteenth Majles elections, the British in Iran grew concerned that the Tudeh would use its position as a platform to criticise the AIOC. In a report, Bullard displayed a rare moment of self-reflection to the Foreign Office: "Nothing has annoyed the Persian population more than being deprived of their own oil and the use of their own railway for transporting it".<sup>859</sup> Knowing that there was underlying discontent over the oil, by April 1944 Bullard was keeping London in the loop about Tudeh activities and its associations. From their new position, the party started to speak out against British dominance over

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<sup>857</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 358.

<sup>858</sup> Zagagi, "An Oasis of Radicalism", 854–856.

<sup>859</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 15 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/194/44.

the oil.<sup>860</sup> The embassy was particularly interested in the party's relations with Mohammad Taqi As'ad, also known as Amir Jang, the new speaker of the Majles who had spent some time in prison under Reza Shah alongside the Group of 53 members. Basing his concern on a speech by a Tudeh deputy praising As'ad, Bullard suspected that the Tudeh might manipulate the new president into causing trouble for the AIOC.<sup>861</sup> The British embassy was clearly concerned that the Tudeh might secure its own support base among the Iranian political elite, thereby gaining political ammunition against the AIOC.

What the British probably did not expect at the time was that the main threat from the Tudeh would come from their support for the Soviet demand for a northern oil concession. The Soviets and the party had been coordinating efforts since the start of 1944.<sup>862</sup> While the oil concession is often seen controversially, the demand was not unique nor were the Soviets the only interested party. The change in the fate of the Allies in the war marked a period of renewed international interest in Iranian oil. In late 1943, the Royal Dutch-Shell and the Standard Oil Company of New York (Socony) enquired into gaining a concession in Iran. Representatives from the Royal Dutch-Shell and the Standard-Vacuum Oil Company travelled to Tehran to meet with Suhaili, who only registered interest but did not commit to anything. He was replaced by Sa'id, who was purported to have promised a concession in the south to British and US companies as

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<sup>860</sup> Reza Radmanesh talked about Iran's slavery to foreign governments over oil. Speech quoted in Katouzian, *Khaterat-e siyasi-ye Khalil Maliki*, 32.

<sup>861</sup> His son, Seyfollah, or Jangi, was Millspaugh's secretary and it is possible that the Tudeh wanted to get closer to the family in order to gain influence. However, Amir Jang however professed loyalty to Sayyed Zia. British embassy minutes, 24 January 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/19/44.

<sup>862</sup> At this point the Soviets were directly communicating with the Tudeh, through Radmanesh but it was in an "absolutely official nature as occurs with other democratic parties and leaders". Thus, the Soviets did not regard their growing closeness to the Tudeh as anything out of the ordinary. "Letter, Dimitrov to Molotov, 'The Situation in the People's Party of Iran'", March 18, 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGASPI, f.82, op.2, d.1221, ll. 1-4. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119105>

well as a concession in the north to Standard-Vacuum.<sup>863</sup> In response to this, the Soviets decided to also place a bid for oil. In mid-September 1944, the Soviet assistant commissar for foreign affairs, Sergei Kavtaradze, arrived in Tehran to begin negotiations for a Soviet oil concession in the northern provinces. He was backed by Beria, who wanted to secure the north of Iran as a source of oil for the Soviet Union.<sup>864</sup>

It was almost a given that the Soviet bid would not be supported. At the heart of this decision was the desire to keep Iranian oil a solely British endeavour, but this was overshadowed by concerns over the post-war plans of the Soviets. From Tehran, Bullard positioned the Soviet oil concession bid not as a commercial move but rather as a political one, theorising that if the Soviets were granted a northern oil concession without competition, they would use it as the first step in converting that part of the country into an autonomous Soviet republic.<sup>865</sup> This was supported by the Foreign Office who regarded the Soviet bid as a stand against British interests.<sup>866</sup> Concerns over Soviet ambitions were further encouraged by the US. George Kennan, the American chargé d'affaires in Moscow regarded the Soviet insistence on an oil concession as a route through which Moscow could increase its prestige and ensure its continued presence in Iran after the war.<sup>867</sup> Kennan harboured strong suspicion of the Soviets and would later warn of Soviet intentions after the war in the impactful 'Long Telegram'. In London, the Cabinet regarded the Soviet demand as worrying and objected to the pressure placed

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<sup>863</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 251–252.

<sup>864</sup> Haslam, *Russia's Cold War*, 48.

<sup>865</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 2 October 1944, PRO, FO248/1428, G69/81/44. It was no coincidence that the concessionary area would include territories that the supposedly defunct Anglo–Russian Agreement of 1907 recognised as under Tsarist influence. Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 56.

<sup>866</sup> Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 79.

<sup>867</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 210.

upon Iran. This was a marked change from London whose attitude, until then, had mostly been concessionary to their Soviet ally.<sup>868</sup>

On 8 October 1944, Sa'id's government announced that it would not grant any oil concession until the war was over. Behind the scenes, this was a culmination of efforts by the British embassy in Tehran who, in agreement with London, worked to block Soviet advances towards the oil concession. Sa'id had initially proposed the creation of an Iranian company that could drill for oil on behalf of the Soviets, but Bullard was quick to point out that the AIOC had already trained the local experts. As such, he claimed there was no need for such an enterprise.<sup>869</sup> This hinted at the possessive attitude held by Britain towards its position in the south. Bullard stipulated that the Iranian government should not sign its rights to oil away too quickly. If the Soviets wanted to compete for oil in the north of Iran, Bullard stated, "[i]t would be for the Persian government to say whether they wanted a foreign government exploiting oil deposits in its territory".<sup>870</sup> Concurrently, Bullard sought a policy whereby applications for concessions were to be scrutinised carefully by the Majles before any decision was made. Bullard successfully persuaded the Iranian government that it was necessary to protect the nation's oil from Soviet interests.<sup>871</sup> Essentially, he manoeuvred Tehran and the Majles to delay a decision regarding the granting of an oil concession – not only to the Soviets but to any foreign entity. He was so confident that he went so far as to declare to the Foreign Office that

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<sup>868</sup> Confidential Annex, War Cabinet, 21 November 1944, PRO, CAB/65/48/7.

<sup>869</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 20 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/202/44.

<sup>870</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 2 October 1944, PRO, FO248/1428, G69/81/44.

<sup>871</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 2 October 1944, PRO, FO248/1428, G69/81/44.

although this would jeopardise any future British oil concession negotiations, it was worth it.<sup>872</sup>

The Tudeh immediately came to the side of the Soviets and launched a publicity campaign against the Iranian government, targeting Sa'id. The party staged several rallies and gave public speeches throughout the north. In Qazvin, the party organised demonstrations made up of local workers in support of the bid, alongside demands for democracy.<sup>873</sup> The Tudeh's support for Moscow placed the party firmly in the Soviet camp. There was no ambiguity in the eyes of the British diplomat who described such Tudeh behaviour and campaigning as part and parcel of the Soviet bid.<sup>874</sup> Both the Iranian Ministries of Interior and War observed the same and noted the Tudeh's influence at the heart of the demonstrations supporting the oil concession.<sup>875</sup> For such demonstrations, the Soviets provided transport for demonstrators and allowed Tudeh members to ride the train for free. The governor-general in Isfahan gave his permission and confined Iranian troops to barracks to allow the demonstrators to walk freely. Bullard highlighted this incident to London to show how much the Tudeh enjoyed Soviet and local support.<sup>876</sup> When the newspaper *Vatan* published a cartoon depicting the Tudeh demonstrating with Soviet tanks in the background, the Soviet consul in Isfahan, Marchenko, demanded the paper's suppression and the expulsion of its editor, Ali Besharat. The British consul in Isfahan,

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<sup>872</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 2 October 1944, PRO, FO248/1428, G69/81/44.

<sup>873</sup> Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, telegraph from Qazvin, 1324/10/1 (22 December 1945), No.13505/11459, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>874</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 109–110 and Abrahamian, *Iran*, 210–211 for a further description; *Rahbar* also carried stories against the Chief of General Staff, Ali Razmara, especially following action taken against the Tudeh by his ally the military governor Hejazi; see also Persian government and internal situation (Tehran), 16 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/198/44.

<sup>875</sup> In Tabriz, the Tudeh gathered factory workers and others to publicly support the Soviet bid. Ministry of Interior report, 1323/8/16 (7 November 1944), No.152, 1C, International Institute of Social History; see also Ministry of War report, 1223/11/29 (7 November 1944), No.42809/97455, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>876</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 10 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442.

Gault, wrote directly to the Foreign Office over this incident, seeing this as proof of Soviet support for the Tudeh.<sup>877</sup> As such, in the eyes of the British, the Tudeh's support for the oil bid also revealed Britain's concerns over the Soviet-Tudeh block and its potency against British hegemony in the Iranian oil industry.

In response to the demonstrations, the shah informed the US ambassador to Tehran and Dreyfus' successor, Leland B Morris, that he was ready to sacrifice Sa'id in order to salvage some Soviet pride.<sup>878</sup> Such a decision failed to take into account the support Sa'id actually had. In Simnan, the Tudeh tried to muster up support for the Soviet bid by holding public speeches but crowds in Damghan were unturned in support of the prime minister.<sup>879</sup> Despite this, Sa'id was removed from office and replaced by Morteza Qoli Bayat in November 1944, who merely confirmed that any oil concessions with a foreign government or company would have to wait until after the war, in line with Britain's policy on the matter.<sup>880</sup> At the same time, the nationalist deputy Musaddiq launched a campaign against the Soviet demand, which the Majles, with the exception of the Tudeh, fully supported. He also rejected the Tudeh's justification for supporting the Soviet bid as a way of balancing out the British monopoly over the oil. Instead, he promoted the concept of 'passive balance' which sought independence from both British and Soviet interference in Iran.<sup>881</sup> His stance gave him wide support and he enjoyed public praise alongside the government decision to refrain from making any oil deals.<sup>882</sup> The Majles

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<sup>877</sup> British consulate general (Isfahan) to British embassy Tehran (Bullard), 24 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1439, 895/5/2/25.

<sup>878</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 1 November 1944, PRO, FO248/1439.

<sup>879</sup> Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone report, 1323/8/14 (9 November 1944), No.386, 1A, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>880</sup> "Iran: Checkmate", *Time Magazine*, 18 December 1944, accessed 18 November 2013, <http://content.time.com/time/subscriber/article/0,33009,778272,00.html>

<sup>881</sup> Katouzian, *Musaddiq*, 56.

<sup>882</sup> Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone report, 1323/8/14 (9 November 1944), No.386, 1A, International Institute of Social History.

decision to forbid all future Iranian governments from granting concessions to foreign powers was in line with Bullard's recommendations from October 1944.<sup>883</sup> The Tudeh spoke out against Musaddiq's bill and accused him of double-dealing with the British.<sup>884</sup> The bill had the intended effect and temporarily halted the Soviet Union's ambitions for oil.<sup>885</sup> Kavtaradze left Tehran empty-handed in December 1944. The Tudeh newspaper, *Rahbar*, asserted partly correctly that Kavtaradze failed due to the machinations of the ruling class.<sup>886</sup> In an attempt to backpaddle its failure, the Soviets blamed Kavtaradze in *Dust-e Iran* (The Friend of Iran), the Soviet embassy's publication in the country, for the "mistake" of tabling the parliamentary bill. Here, this was ironically noted as being "inconsistent with the existence of foreign concessions in Iran", referring of course to the British in the south.<sup>887</sup>

Defeating the Soviet bid left a bitter aftertaste for the British in Iran. The oil concession crisis considerably strained relations between the British and the Soviets. Bullard betrayed his personal indignation, writing to the Foreign Office:

He [Kavtaradze] had no legal power to break off diplomatic relations. We knew that the Soviet government had the power to bully us but we did not expect that a government professing the principles of Lenin would support its Embassy in humiliating us especially after the sacrifices we made on its behalf.<sup>888</sup>

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<sup>883</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 253.

<sup>884</sup> Dr Mohammad Musaddiq, *Musaddiq's Memoirs*, edited by Homa Katouzian (London: JEBHE, National Movement of Iran, 1988), 20.

<sup>885</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 253.

<sup>886</sup> Quoted from British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 11 December 1944, PRO, FO28/1442, G150/89/44.

<sup>887</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 21 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/203/44.

<sup>888</sup> Relations were not exactly broken but the relationship between the Soviets and the British had been damaged. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 21 December 1944, PRO, FO248/1442, G150/203/44.

Thus, as far as the embassy was concerned, this episode was a clear indication that wartime cooperation was quickly becoming a thing of the past and that Soviet policy was ready to target a prime British interest, oil.<sup>889</sup> More worryingly, the Tudeh had exposed its potential to threaten Britain's control over oil.

The Tudeh's actions further confirmed British suspicions that the party had become a vehicle to further Soviet ambitions in Iran. However, the party's presence among the oil workers were still rather limited. The war had certainly attracted Left-leaning groups to the oil industry in the south, but the Tudeh's influence over the AIOC workers was still limited. Furthermore, the British were not overly concerned by communist activities at this point and therefore only saw the Tudeh threat to the oil as mainly confined to the Soviet demand in the north of the country. Nonetheless, the party's presence in the oil dispute added to the build-up of the Tudeh character within the paradigm of being pro-Soviet and anti-British. This took on an even more menacing significance when the Tudeh expanded its network among the oil workers, which will be further explored in the next chapter.

#### 4. Conclusion

The mid era of the occupation can be regarded as a transitional period in British policy and in the attitudes held towards the Tudeh. During these months, the British shifted their wartime focus to the future, bringing a new sense of urgency to the occupation.

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<sup>889</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 1 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/54/56.

Changes in the war effectively changed the way the Tudeh featured within British policy. The party's nature was also changing during this period, shifting from anti-German to communist, from pro-Allied to anti-British, from independent to pro-Soviet. These changes were noted by British diplomats and affected how they reacted to the party. Policy flexibility allowed for these changes and shifts within attitudes. The nuances in opinions at times resulted in contradictions but were more indicative of reactions to the course of the war and the occupation dynamics. Tensions over the increasing importance of the Soviets surfaced more strongly at this juncture, a political shift that further affected how the British regarded the Tudeh. As the party grew in strength and relevance, it expanded its programme and started focusing on the Iranian labour force, which worried local businessmen and gained the attention of the Iranian authorities. However, it was the Tudeh's growing closeness with the Soviet Union that made the British policymakers rethink their attitude towards the party. As relations with the Soviets deteriorated, British suspicions of their colleagues emerged, creating an atmosphere that invoked the finding of any link between the party and the Soviets which endangered Britain's position in Iran's political landscape and in the oil industry. As will be seen in the next chapter, such trends continued and became even more pronounced in the immediate post-occupation era.

#### Chapter 4: The Tudeh within British policy at the end of the occupation, 1945–1946

With the German surrender in May 1945, an overall Allied victory became imminent in the other theatres of war. However, the approaching end did not translate into the immediate cessation of British presence in Iran. The final months of the occupation witnessed a dramatic escalation of events, which forced policymakers (in both London and Iran) to re-assess their future in the country. The Azerbaijan and Khuzestan crises coincided with a number of important changes that contributed to new approaches in policy in Iran: major shifts in the alliance, the beginnings of the Cold War, the election of a Labour government, a steep decline in Britain's economic fortunes, and a change in the relationship with the Left. These factors all influenced how the Tudeh was treated and regarded in the immediate post-war era. The various happenings at the end of the occupation also resulted in a chaotic attitude by the British, which saw different approaches and priorities emerging in a relatively short period.

This final chapter concludes the study of British policy towards the Tudeh during the occupation. It looks at how British policymakers in Iran and London adapted to the changing situation back home in Britain and internationally. The flexibility of overall British policy in Iran and its ability to adapt to changing circumstances is further evidenced here, but when faced by the challenges of the end of the war and withdrawal, resulted in contradicting attitudes and wavering decisions. It did not take long for Britain to readjust to its new role as former occupier and different considerations were then given before the decision was made at the end of the Khuzestan strikes to support the Iranian government to protect British interests in the country. The Tudeh took on a new significance in this last phase of the occupation, mainly due to changes specifically within the relationship with the Soviet Union and with former communist allies, suggesting a

close interlinked relationship between what was happening in Iran and in the unfolding international Cold War. As tensions developed in this arena, the Tudeh represented a menace to British interests and presence in Iran, but in light of the challenges faced, Britain referred to the status quo and sought covert measures to address the Tudeh threat.

### 1. British policies and interests at the end of the war

The post-war era marked great changes for Britain's global position. The war came at a great financial cost to the British government, which resulted in a fall in economic power and in the ascendancy of US supremacy. In addition to this, the election of the Labour Party to government in Britain brought new outlooks and approaches. However, many British priorities remained the same, resulting in contradictions and challenges. These will be examined here to provide a broad picture of the immediate post-war era.

Since D-Day, the British government was not only preparing for the war's end, but also for how the post-war landscape would look. By January 1945, Germany had entered the stage of its 'final defeat'.<sup>890</sup> The alliance of the "Big Three" had shown significant resilience and, despite some underlying tensions, lasted until the German surrender. However, with the liberation of Europe came the division of the continent into different spheres of influence and power. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the question over Poland revived Churchill's suspicions towards Soviet ambitions. In the seaside town of Yalta, Ukraine, these questions were again addressed. Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill met

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<sup>890</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 776.

together for the last time in February 1945, where they discussed the end of the war and broadly sketched the post-war world, touching upon the fates of Germany and Poland.<sup>891</sup> A few months before, Churchill had negotiated with Stalin over the division of Europe between them, demarcating “spheres of influence” based on rough percentages: the Soviets were allotted 90% of Romania, with a similar percentage in Greece for Britain, while Yugoslavia was split equally.<sup>892</sup> These divisions were ideological in nature too. The British and the US envisioned the re-establishment of democracy in post-Nazi Germany, while the Soviets envisaged rebuilding it under a communist direction.<sup>893</sup> This schism impacted the alliance, and the wider question of Europe’s ideological direction became a key foreign policy consideration for Britain.

These divisions seeped into post-war Iran as well, made more tense with the retention of Soviet troops in Azerbaijan. The Soviet Union openly lent support and direction to a local movement’s bid for autonomy from Tehran, plunging the country and the occupation into an international crisis.<sup>894</sup> Plans were put into action in July 1945 after Moscow sent out a directive to establish the ADP as a separatist organization.<sup>895</sup> Pischevari, the former ICP member who did not have a close relationship with the Tudeh, played a monumental role in the ADP, both as an ideologue for Azeri nationalism and as the party’s leader.<sup>896</sup> On 14

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<sup>891</sup> Diana Preston, *Eight Days at Yalta: How Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin shaped the Post-war World* (London: Picador, 2019).

<sup>892</sup> Reynolds, ‘The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance’, 317.

<sup>893</sup> Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 784–798.

<sup>894</sup> Pischevari announced the formation of the ADP on 3 September 1945. In its first declaration, it described Azerbaijan as a distinct nation within Iran. For more, see Abrahamian, *Iran*, 398–399.

<sup>895</sup> This included a press agency called the ‘Voice of Azerbaijan’. “Secret Soviet Instructions, ‘Measures to Carry out Special Assignments throughout Southern Azerbaijan and the Northern Provinces of Iran’”, July 14, 1945, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, GAPPOD AzR, f.1, op.89, d.90, ll. 9-15. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli. Translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/112018>; see also Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War*, 74–90 for a clear narrative on the Soviet involvement in the founding of the ADP based on Russian-language sources.

<sup>896</sup> Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War*, 92–96, 111, 122–123; see also Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*.

December 1945, backed by Soviet troops, Pischevari declared the takeover of institutions by the Azeri national government, effectively declaring the region autonomous from the rest of Iran.<sup>897</sup> The unity of the country was further compromised by the proclamation of the first Kurdish Republic on 24 January 1946 in Mahabad by the Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) under the leadership of Qazi Mohammad,<sup>898</sup> who also received aid from the Soviets.<sup>899</sup> The Azerbaijan crisis has been regarded by many, such as Fawcett, Axworthy, and Hasanli among others, as one of the earliest Cold War confrontations.<sup>900</sup> Azerbaijan was the first real test for how Britain would engage in an international crisis in the post-war era and would further impact upon its trust of the Soviet Union and the Tudeh.

The end of the Second World War coincided with some changes in the Alliance's make-up. These new players ushered in a new era for the post-war world, which heralded changes for policy direction in Iran as well. Roosevelt died in office mere weeks before the war's end and was swiftly replaced by his deputy, Harry S Truman. The most dramatic change came with the British general election of 5 July 1945. In October 1944, Churchill declared that parliament (and therefore his coalition government) would not continue past the end of the war with Germany.<sup>901</sup> True to his word, Churchill resigned as leader on 23 May, with the election set to be held in July. Nonetheless, Churchill and Attlee

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<sup>897</sup> Hasanli, *At the Dawn of the Cold War*, 122–123.

<sup>898</sup> Qazi Muhammad had actually declared independence on 15 December 1945, but the government was only formed in January 1946. The Kurdish Republic was smaller than Azerbaijan, incorporating the towns of Mahabad, Bukan, Naqada and Ushnaviya. David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: IB Tauris, 1996), 242.

<sup>899</sup> In April 1946, the governments of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan signed a treaty of friendship. Since they were bordering each other, they were also in dispute as to where they needed to be divided. A R Ghassemlou, 'Kurdistan in Iran', in *A People Without a Country: The Kurds and Kurdistan*, Gerard Chaliand (Ed.), Michael Pallis (Translator) (London: Zed Books, 1980), 106–108.

<sup>900</sup> Michael Axworthy, *Iran, Empire of the Mind: A History from Zoroaster to the Present Day* (London: Penguin, 2008), 237; Atabaki suggests that the Azerbaijan crisis was coloured by the Cold War and makes an important study of the crisis within the "development of Azerbaijani ethnic identity". Atabaki, *Azerbaijan*, 6.

<sup>901</sup> Henry Pelling, "The 1945 General Election Reconsidered", *The Historical Journal*, Vol.23(2) (1980), 401.

continued to work together over international matters, as seen by their joint attendance of the Potsdam conference in the summer of 1945. Domestic politics aside, both shared similar views on foreign policy, especially in opposition to the Soviet Union's designs on Poland.<sup>902</sup> At the end of the July election, the Labour Party emerged victorious, winning a considerable majority.<sup>903</sup> Attlee was invited to form a government and returned to Potsdam as prime minister.<sup>904</sup> He was accompanied by his new foreign secretary and Eden's replacement, Bevin, fresh from his post as minister of labour.<sup>905</sup> Both Attlee and Bevin played key roles in designing Britain's post-war policies. Under them, a number of foreign policy objectives were established: namely, to maintain the Commonwealth structure, to ensure that the Middle East and Asia were stable, prosperous and friendly, to maintain a special relationship with the US, to consolidate stability in western Europe and to curb Soviet expansion and the reach of communism.<sup>906</sup>

Leading the British government into this new era, the Labour Cabinet found itself in a new landscape with issues that impacted upon its foreign policy vision. First and foremost was the country's growing economic crisis. Britain had spent a quarter of its total wealth on the war, bringing the country (and the new Labour government) to the verge of a severe economic breakdown.<sup>907</sup> This complicated the prevalent view that Britain was a leading power.<sup>908</sup> Furthermore, both Britain and the Soviet Union lost out

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<sup>902</sup> Pelling, "The 1945 General Election Reconsidered", 404.

<sup>903</sup> *Ibid.*, 408.

<sup>904</sup> John Bew, *Citizen Clem* (London: Riverrun, 2016), 352–353.

<sup>905</sup> Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 119–120.

<sup>906</sup> Rhiannon Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World, Volume 1: The Evolution of Labour's Foreign Policy, 1900–1951* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 163.

<sup>907</sup> Britain was able to secure a separate agreement with the US government, with additional loans. Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 122.

<sup>908</sup> Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World, Volume 1*, 164–165.

when Truman abruptly cancelled the Lend-Lease agreement in August 1945, which halted a much-needed injection of aid to the British economy.<sup>909</sup>

Another key policy concern was Britain's quickly disintegrating cooperation with the Soviet Union after the war. In mid-January 1945, Churchill sent a secret telegram to Roosevelt warning him of possible Soviet intentions in Iran in a bid to secure American support.<sup>910</sup> Shortly before the elections, Churchill expressed deep concerns over Soviet ambitions in Europe and beyond, famously enshrined in his 'iron curtain' speech.<sup>911</sup> Tensions continued to develop after the elections. The Labour Party was regarded suspiciously by the Soviet communist party, as observed by US diplomats. They predicted that the new Labour government would take a hostile stance towards the Soviets.<sup>912</sup> Maisky, who was in attendance at Potsdam, did not enjoy particularly close relations with Labour leaders Attlee and Bevin.<sup>913</sup> In December 1945, Bevin voiced his concern over Soviet behaviour at a meeting in Moscow, saying that the Soviets were purposely undermining Britain's position in the Middle East.<sup>914</sup> The Labour government also did not differ much from the coalition when it came to harbouring strong relations with the US, which Bevin wanted to pursue.<sup>915</sup> Frictions with the Soviet Union and the perception that Britain was under threat drove London closer to the US.

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<sup>909</sup> The Soviet Union felt particularly indignant at receiving less aid in light of their heavy military commitments. Weinberg, *A World at Arms*, 832–833.

<sup>910</sup> The British deputy prime minister here feared that the US would withdraw and would not share the burden of resisting the Soviet Union in Europe or in the Mediterranean. Darwin, *Britain and Decolonisation*, 69.

<sup>911</sup> Reynolds, 'The Diplomacy of the Grand Alliance', 321.

<sup>912</sup> Bew, *Citizen Clem*, 352.

<sup>913</sup> *The Maisky Diaries, 1932–1943*, 547.

<sup>914</sup> Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World, Volume 1*, 166.

<sup>915</sup> *Ibid.*, 160.

London's deteriorating relations with the Soviet Union complicated another British priority, the ending of the occupation of Iran. During the Yalta conference in early 1945, the British delegation proposed to draw up plans for the withdrawal of Allied troops from Iran. Eden had issued a draft statement which was rejected by his counterpart Molotov, who preferred to refrain from making any public statements about withdrawal.<sup>916</sup> In Iran, the end of the war was welcomed with local press calling for the evacuation of Allied troops.<sup>917</sup> The tripartite treaty after all, stipulated that evacuation should occur a few months after the end of the war. However, with no formal or concrete plans of withdrawal between the Soviets and the British, the occupation remained in place. This created prolonged anxiety over the Soviet Union and Left-wing parties such as the Tudeh. Indeed, in Azerbaijan, the Soviets seemed to be doing precisely what Bevin feared: undermining Britain's position and delaying the promise to withdraw from Iran.

Another important policy interest for the Labour government was Britain's post-occupation legacy in Iran. Fundamental questions regarding what kind of influence and presence Britain would embody were considered. Here, Bullard outlined British policy as wanting to keep Iran stable and to re-establish the country's sovereignty, but without abandoning British presence or appearing as weak.<sup>918</sup> To achieve these aims, Attlee and Bevin pursued a strategic approach that promoted economic development and social advancement, mainly as a way to establish Britain as an important influencer of

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<sup>916</sup> Preston, *Eight Days at Yalta*, 227–228.

<sup>917</sup> British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Ministry of Information, 11 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3062.

<sup>918</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3170.

change.<sup>919</sup> This mixed approach of promoting reform and upholding presence initially drove policy in the immediate months after the occupation.

Significantly, such an approach meant that the British government could wind down its commitments but not its relevance. Key to this was the need to have a strong Iranian government that could protect British interest in Iranian oil, Britain's political reputation and shield it from Tudeh attacks. As seen in the previous chapter, there was already a tendency to rely on particular political figures to uphold interests. It seemed logical to extend this support to the government. After all, only the prime minister of Iran could end the crisis in Azerbaijan, formalise the end of the occupation, manage Soviet-British tensions and placate Soviet ambitions. These issues and tasks invariably fell to Qavam who formed his Cabinet in January 1946.<sup>920</sup>

As will be shown, British policy would later support Qavam, but at the start of his second premiership he remained an enigma. He was known for his ability to balance the two occupying forces and, soon after his appointment, he promised to not have anti-British politicians within his Cabinet.<sup>921</sup> At the same time however, the British were suspicious of Qavam's relations with the Soviet Union due to his perceived positive attitude towards the Tudeh. Bullard expressed alarm over Qavam's decision to allow a Tudeh demonstration and saw this as perceived subservience to the Soviets.<sup>922</sup> Qavam relied on

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<sup>919</sup> In addition to the situation in Iran, the British government was also concerned with other issues facing the region, including Egypt, Palestine, and the continuation of supplies to the area. Foreign Office memorandum (Bevin), 28 August 1945, PRO, CAB129/1.

<sup>920</sup> Even when Qavam was no longer prime minister, he remained politically active, enlisting the support of the Tudeh as they were gaining in popularity. Azimi, *Iran*, 147.

<sup>921</sup> British embassy Tehran minutes, 12 January 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/6/46.

<sup>922</sup> Bullard raised a number of concerns to Qavam's political ally, Muzaffar Firuz who he had made political under-secretary of state. Also, the director general of propaganda announced on behalf of Qavam that he was lifting the military governor's orders on limiting the rights of political parties. Bullard saw this as

the Tudeh for support in the Majles and pledged that the party could continue their activities and any violent action against them would be discouraged.<sup>923</sup>

Nonetheless, at the end of the war, the British were committed to winding down their presence, as was seen through their attitude during the fifteenth Majles elections. Bullard acknowledged that the British embassy was “not impartial” in the last elections and did not hesitate to voice their preferences.<sup>924</sup> However in the summer of 1945, he soberly declared to the Foreign Office that “the circumstances attending the forthcoming elections will be radically different”. He regarded this new attitude as a necessary step to restore Iran’s sovereignty in the post-occupation period. He recommended to London to set an example of remaining neutral and refraining from discussing the elections or candidates.<sup>925</sup> While he quickly provided the caveat that Britain could resort to a more active policy in light of Soviet activities and intervention, the Foreign Office did not seek a quick departure from neutrality nor rush to place pro-British politicians against pro-Soviet ones.<sup>926</sup>

Another important change for British policymaking in Iran was Bullard’s retirement and his replacement by Le Rougetel, who arrived to take his position on 28 April 1946.<sup>927</sup> His arrival marked a new direction for British policy in the country, one that would maintain

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beneficial for the Tudeh “who organise[d] demonstrations for the purpose of intimidation”. British Embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 12 February 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/22/46.

<sup>923</sup> Persian government and internal situation British embassy Tehran (Holt), 9 January 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/5/46.

<sup>924</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3169/31/34.

<sup>925</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3169/31/34.

<sup>926</sup> Foreign Office (Baxter) to British embassy Tehran (Bullard), 13 June 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3169/31/34.

<sup>927</sup> During his first audience with the shah, Le Rougetel remarked upon the uneasiness between the monarch and his prime minister. British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 28 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/51/46.

presence and influence more discreetly without appearing to be intervening in internal affairs. On the day of his arrival, minutes from the British embassy suggested the necessity of determining the difference between “direct interference in the internal affairs of another country and a policy of trying to obstruct and nullify the intervention of another power in that country” in Britain’s policy in Iran.<sup>928</sup> This reflected the Labour government’s commitment to counter the Soviets but also the wider debate over Britain’s post-occupation position.

As seen here, British policy interests had shifted to address the post-war landscape. While the war removed the Nazi threat, it established new concerns in the form of Soviet ambitions and designs. These tensions between the Allied powers laid the foundations for the Cold War and impacted on policy in Iran. Facing an economic crisis, the Labour government’s approach meant that there was a desire to reduce presence. Thus, as a response to these changes, London and the embassy in Tehran moved to back Qavam to protect its interests and appear to respect Iranian sovereignty.

## 2. The Tudeh Party, 1945–1946

The Tudeh in the aftermath of the Soviet oil concession bid suffered a minor setback in terms of its popularity and rise. The military attaché Underwood noted that when the Soviets evacuated from Tehran (but not the rest of the country) in September 1945, together with British troops, the Tudeh became nervous and lost some confidence.<sup>929</sup> But

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<sup>928</sup> British embassy Tehran minutes, 28 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/56/46.

<sup>929</sup> Military attaché’s intelligence summary, 24 September 1945 in Paul Preston and Michael Partridge (Eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Vol. Eastern Affairs: April 1945–December 1945, Near and Middle East, B (University Publications of America, 1997), 459.

as Katouzian has pointed out, in 1945, the party was still strong and considered the only popular and well-organised political group in Iran.<sup>930</sup> Indeed, it continued to expand and gain ground, as observed by the Iranian Ministry of Interior. In Damghan the Tudeh continued to cooperate with employees from the local iron industry to speak against the ruling class.<sup>931</sup> In addition to increased activities in Simnan province, the Tudeh continued to expand its organisation and activities, including in Shiraz and Yazd, as well as in Khuzestan province. In Tehran, the party also saw some significant growth with new district clubs and an increase in *Rahbar* readers, despite attempts by the government to curb Tudeh publications.<sup>932</sup> The party's appeal attracted existing groups. For example, in the north, the Tudeh absorbed the smaller *Hezb-e Mehan* and joined with the more radical elements of the Iran Party in the summer of 1946.<sup>933</sup> Among wider society, it developed its youth and women's organisations and was able to undo some of the damage caused by its alignment with the Soviet Union during the oil concession crisis.<sup>934</sup>

With the end of the occupation coming, there was also a lot of uncertainty faced. Iranian politicians and parties were preoccupied with the crisis in Azerbaijan, the continued retention of Allied troops and the strikes in the south. Faced with multiple crises, Qavam asserted his position and power, leaving a lasting imprint on Iranian labour, the country's foreign relations and political make-up.<sup>935</sup> He formed the Democrat Party (*Hezb-e Demokrat Iran*) in June 1946, which sought a broad support base, from socialist to

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<sup>930</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 42.

<sup>931</sup> Ministry of Interior to Prime Minister, 1324/10/22 (12 January 1946), [Classmark unclear], 1A, International Institute of Social History. However, some demonstrations did not have much effect despite Tudeh protest against the government. Mayor of Damghan to Minister of Interior, 1324/8/17 (8 November 1945), No.7868, 1A, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>932</sup> Zanzan to Tehran, Ministry of Post, Telegraph and Telephone, 1323/2/21 (11 May 1944), No.1880/421, 1B, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>933</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 188.

<sup>934</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 511.

<sup>935</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 225–227; See also, Azimi, *Iran*, 147–148.

conservative politicians, supporters of the shah and the army.<sup>936</sup> Many of the parties that emerged during the occupation also went through significant changes. Like the Tudeh, the Iran Party also emerged more into mainstream politics by gaining a presence in Qavam's Cabinet.<sup>937</sup> Other parties, however, were not as fortunate. The Comrades' party split over opposing attitudes towards the party, which saw the formation of the pro-Tudeh Socialist Party (*Hezb-e Sossiyalist-e Iran*).<sup>938</sup> In addition, the National Will Party suffered setbacks when Sayyid Zia was implicated in financial scandal and its activities were restricted.<sup>939</sup> These setbacks helped the Tudeh appear more united and influential, even if below the surface there were cracks within the party.

By the end of the occupation the Tudeh had expanded its trade union activities to include cab drivers, electricians, textile employees and sugar mill workers.<sup>940</sup> The party had also emerged as the lead party in the trade union movement, bringing it into conflict with Tehran. As head of the United Workers Central Council, Reza Rusta implemented strong measures to keep workers in line, including running detention centres, enacting raids and even taking hostages.<sup>941</sup> The CCFTU established ties with the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), which accepted it as an affiliate member.<sup>942</sup> As the CCFTU was recognised as the only trade union body in Iran, the Tudeh monopolised most labour issues. By 1946, the CCFTU had a membership of 355,000. Unions came into existence throughout the country wherever there was a salaried middle-class and an industrial working community (in cities such as Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd, Khuzestan,

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<sup>936</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 516.

<sup>937</sup> Party leader Allahyar Salih was appointed minister of justice. Azimi, *Iran*, 155.

<sup>938</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 207–208.

<sup>939</sup> *Ibid.*, 213.

<sup>940</sup> *Ibid.*, 300–302.

<sup>941</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 42–43.

<sup>942</sup> Zabih, *The Dynamics of the Communist Movement in Iran*, 214.

Mazandaran, Gilan and Mashhad).<sup>943</sup> The party's control over industrial workers invited the Ministry of Labour in London to scrutinise Tudeh activities. The perception of the party's strength was worrying enough for the ministry to approve the spreading of malicious information and to accuse the Tudeh leaders – namely Reza Radmanesh, Taqi Fidakar, and Dr Jodat, – of being involved in illicit activities.<sup>944</sup> As will be seen later in this chapter, such tactics would be utilised during the Khuzestan strikes.

The Tudeh's influence over the military continued to grow. Significantly, in August 1945, Khurasan-based officers launched a minor armed uprising, aided by Turkoman tribes and local army detachments who were sympathetic to the officers. Tehran sent the army to defeat the officers, and, after a few days, the troops were defeated.<sup>945</sup> The uprising occurred without the knowledge of the Tudeh leaders and only with Kambaksh's knowledge. Most of the Tudeh leadership tried to distance themselves from the event and even wanted to dismantle its military network.<sup>946</sup> Despite this, the incident made the party more of a significant threat and symbolic of the party's reach and control over the army. To further curb Tudeh influence within the military,<sup>947</sup> Qavam issued a proclamation banning all officers, non-commissioned officers and civilian employees of the Iranian Army, Gendarmerie and police from joining any political party.<sup>948</sup>

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<sup>943</sup> Abrahamian, "Communism and Communalism in Iran: The Tudah and the Firqah-i Dimokrat", 301.

<sup>944</sup> This allegedly included organising illegal meetings, provoking strikes, arming the workers, assisting traitors, killing innocent people, destroying machinery in the factories, extorting money and establishing private prisons. Memorandum from Minister of Labour and Propaganda to WFTU Delegation in British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 1 May 1947, PRO, FO248/1474, G78/50/47.

<sup>945</sup> Miyata, "The Tudeh Military Network during the Oil Nationalisation Period", 322.

<sup>946</sup> Cronin, *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East*, 171.

<sup>947</sup> Miyata, "The Tudeh Military Network during the Oil Nationalisation Period", 313–28.

<sup>948</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 12 August 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, G65/144/46.

Over the events in Azerbaijan, the Tudeh faced disagreements that eventually led to its first internal split. The local branch of the party had become unpopular with accusations of abuse, corruption and terror against the Iranian population. The party central committee sent Khalil Maliki to ameliorate the situation. While there, he purged the party and worked hard to re-establish it as an intellectual and social entity. Maliki also sought to lessen the visible Soviet influence, which annoyed Maximov, the Soviet ambassador in Tehran.<sup>949</sup> Perhaps more damaging was the split between Tudeh central and its Azerbaijani branch over identity and politics.<sup>950</sup> At the first party congress in August 1944 the Tudeh reaffirmed that it had no intention to support any separatist or regional movements.<sup>951</sup> However, when the National Government of Azerbaijan was established on 12 December 1945,<sup>952</sup> the Azerbaijani branch of the Tudeh moved to develop a regional platform.<sup>953</sup> The rift between the mainstream Tudeh and its Azerbaijani branch became final after being absorbed into the ADP.<sup>954</sup>

Tudeh strength was further compromised when former Tudeh members – such as Padegan, Qiyami and Biriya – aligned the Azerbaijan Workers' Council with the new government in Tabriz.<sup>955</sup> Consequently, with the main body of the Tudeh weakened and its national agenda jeopardised, the party was ready to publicly denounce the ADP. The Soviet ambassador in Tehran successfully persuaded the Tudeh to instead cautiously

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<sup>949</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 43–44.

<sup>950</sup> Taqi Arani, an Azerbaijani by birth, insisted on Azerbaijanis learning Persian and went so far as to support the abolition of minority languages (including Azeri). However, with the growing awareness of ethnic identity, largely due to Soviet encouragement, the Azerbaijani Tudeh members began voicing their regional grievances to the Tudeh forum. Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 38.

<sup>951</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 39.

<sup>952</sup> See Azimi, *Iran*, 137–139 for a detailed discussion on Pishevari's autonomous government in Azerbaijan.

<sup>953</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 39.

<sup>954</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 45.

<sup>955</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

sanction some ADP demands.<sup>956</sup> Despite protestation and conflict, the Tudeh submitted to Soviet policy, and recent evidence presented by Fawcett, confirms this.<sup>957</sup> In doing so, the party contradicted its stance of national unity by upholding Azerbaijan's desire for autonomy.<sup>958</sup> For Bevin, such a contradiction was seen as a weakness that could damage the party's reputation, which he felt could be capitalised upon should the need arise. Although this was never explicitly used against the party for London, Azerbaijan symbolised a weak spot for the party.<sup>959</sup> As demonstrated here, the crisis in the north weakened the party and added to its reputation as a vehicle for Soviet ambitions.

Despite the ongoing Azerbaijan crisis, the Tudeh tried to make other political gains. One of the most striking developments was its emergence in the south, among the oil workers. From the spring of 1944 onwards, the party worked hard to bring together the labour movement in the south under the control and purview of the provincial arm of the CCFTU,<sup>960</sup> which was seen as more openly communist-oriented.<sup>961</sup> In Zanjan, they gathered support from custom officers who had been made redundant.<sup>962</sup> As a debut of their presence in the south, in 1946 the Tudeh led a May Day parade in Abadan.<sup>963</sup> Although the military governor was unable to provide any additional reserves to control the crowds, the British consul at Khorramshahr advised the governor to allow the

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<sup>956</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 42.

<sup>957</sup> Louise Fawcett, "Revisiting the Iranian Crisis of 1946: How Much More Do We Know?", *Iranian Studies*, Vol.47(3) (2014), 391.

<sup>958</sup> Furthermore, the Tudeh adhered to non-violent methods while, conversely, the ADP wanted to establish its own army. Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 42.

<sup>959</sup> Foreign Office memorandum (Bevin), 11 July 1946, PRO, CAB 129/11/19.

<sup>960</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 360. For more about the unification process of the trade unions and their leadership, see Habib Ladjevardi, *Labour Unions and Autocracy in Iran* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1985), 46–49.

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>962</sup> Ministry of Commerce report, 1324/4/24 (15 July 1945), No.15428, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>963</sup> Ladjevardi, *Labour Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 61–64.

Tudeh's May Day procession to proceed nonetheless.<sup>964</sup> Le Rougetel described to London that the party's leadership of the parade was symbolic of its control over the workers.<sup>965</sup> While the British embassy and its consuls seemed willing to allow the Tudeh certain liberties and freedoms, the Tudeh-led strikes of oil workers were another matter, as will be discussed later in relation to the party's position within Britain's oil interests.

A surprising development at the end of the occupation was the improvement of Tudeh relations with the Iranian government and with politicians such as Qavam.<sup>966</sup> In April 1945, soon after Bayat's resignation, the Tudeh wanted to form a coalition government. Daniel Lascelles, the chargé d'affaires in Tehran, informed the Foreign Office that most of the Majles deputies regarded Tudeh presence in the Cabinet as a "serious danger".<sup>967</sup> His alarm was not, however, shared by the ambassador, who wanted to develop a clear policy position on the Tudeh's political ambitions. While Bullard did not support the Tudeh due to their relationship with the Soviets, he did support the party's social programme and regarded it as the most genuine voice in the Majles for social reform. Furthermore, he considered the party to be compatible with Britain's own legacy of social legislation and advancement. He went on to recommend that the party should not be completely opposed.<sup>968</sup> Bevin adopted this attitude, realising that the Tudeh had an "essential vote" and could not therefore be dismissed completely.<sup>969</sup>

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<sup>964</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 3 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/6/46.

<sup>965</sup> Workers were ushered out of the distillation and bitumen plants by Tudeh officials. British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 7 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/5/46.

<sup>966</sup> This closeness with Qavam was part of Moscow's policy in Iran at the time. "Letter, Dimitrov to Molotov, 'The Situation in the People's Party of Iran'," 18 March 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, RGASPI, f. 82, op. 2, d. 1221, ll. 1-4. Obtained by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <https://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/119105>.

<sup>967</sup> British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Foreign Office, 29 April 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E2729.

<sup>968</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3170.

<sup>969</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 1 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/54/56.

The British embassy were keen to show that they were not interested in suppressing the party.<sup>970</sup> Notably, the party did not publish a new programme after the war's end, which meant that the British government relied on the 1944 party programme to understand its stance and goals. Within the Labour government, particularly Bevin, there was an interest to know the party and identify parallels with Labour values.<sup>971</sup> He went on to share the party's programme with the Cabinet, stating that "it should continue to be our policy to encourage their realisation wherever possible... in accord with His Majesty's Government's general policy in social and economic matters in the Middle East".<sup>972</sup> Such a statement was significant and even translated into action. During the 1945 May Day demonstration staged by the Tudeh, Bullard advised the Iranian chief of staff not to repress the protestors.<sup>973</sup> There were two main reasons behind this thinking: firstly, repression might lend credibility (and public sympathy) to the party and secondly, Bullard and Bevin wanted to paint the British as supportive of democracy.<sup>974</sup>

Beneath the surface however, questions arose as to how to approach the Tudeh. Unlike Bevin, the rest of the Foreign Office was reluctant to encourage a sympathetic view, arguing that it would be "misleading" to point out similarities between the Tudeh's party programme and Labour policies.<sup>975</sup> In April 1946, consular officers were encouraged to familiarise themselves with commercial, industrial and cultural activities within Iran as a way of countering Tudeh infiltration.<sup>976</sup> Such a directive from the British embassy

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<sup>970</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3170.

<sup>971</sup> Foreign Office minutes, 2 July 1946, PRO, FO371/52705, E6087/149/34.

<sup>972</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to Cabinet, 17 July 1946, PRO, FO371/52705, E6936.

<sup>973</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 3 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E2858.

<sup>974</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 4 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3170/31/34.

<sup>975</sup> Foreign Office minutes, 2 July 1946, PRO, FO371/52705, E6087/149/34.

<sup>976</sup> British embassy minutes, 26 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/58/46.

showed preparation towards curbing the party. In addition to seeking ways to counter the Tudeh, the British embassy contemplated “making the best of the Tudeh” by converting some of its members to a “less jaundiced view of British policy”.<sup>977</sup> In the short-term, the idea of posing as “friends and admirers of the Tudeh brand of democracy” was seen as potentially beneficial, but the reputation of the British in Iran was so poor that it was considered too late to suddenly adopt a pro-Tudeh stance.<sup>978</sup>

When the Tudeh was invited to join Qavam’s Cabinet in August 1946, the British were unopposed. Three Cabinet positions were given to Keshavarz, Yazdi and Iraj Eskanderi.<sup>979</sup> A few months earlier, the Tudeh had become involved in regional government.<sup>980</sup> Within the Tehran municipality, those who were dismissed were replaced with Tudeh sympathisers.<sup>981</sup> The Tudeh also supported Qavam during his visit to Moscow, particularly against those deputies who were against him.<sup>982</sup> As will be discussed in more detail in this chapter, British acquiescence to the party’s closeness with Qavam was actually a way of keeping the party in check. While the British embassy prepared for the eventuality of a Tudeh-infused government, staff remained ready to lend either material or moral support to whichever government was willing to contain the Tudeh and thus protect British interests.<sup>983</sup> In conversation with the British embassy, the director of the third political department of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, M Nabil, stated his

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<sup>977</sup> Persian government and internal affairs, 19 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/71/46.

<sup>978</sup> Persian government and internal affairs, 19 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/71/46.

<sup>979</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 303.

<sup>980</sup> The embassy made a note of these appointments and marked the governorships out on a map. British embassy Tehran memorandum, 29 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/59/46.

<sup>981</sup> For a list of Tudeh appointees, see British embassy minutes in British embassy memorandum, 29 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/59/46.

<sup>982</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 153.

<sup>983</sup> There was a sense of regret as to the support given to Sayyed Zia, a figure who proved to be a failure. Persian government and internal affairs, 19 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/71/46.

belief that this should not be any “cause for alarm”.<sup>984</sup> Internally, the Iranian Ministry of Interior together with the military commander of Tehran were keeping an eye on the movements of these Tudeh members.<sup>985</sup> Further convinced, the British embassy was not worried about these appointments, identifying that the three Tudeh posts within the Cabinet would not result in any major change.<sup>986</sup> At times, the British embassy defended Qavam’s choices by stating that while he acknowledged the party’s communist leanings, he chose to tackle (and tame) it by involving the party in governmental affairs.<sup>987</sup>

By the end of the occupation, the Tudeh had reached a new level in its development. Although its support for the Soviet oil concession was a blow to its reputation, it was able to hold onto power and even expand its control in the south. Attlee’s government was supportive of the Tudeh and even saw similar values with the Labour Party but referred to the lead of the Foreign Office and the British Embassy in Tehran who advised caution. This approach was embodied by British support for the inclusion of the party in government as a way of keeping the party under control. However, as the next section elaborates, the path to this approach was fraught with challenges.

### 3. The Tudeh within British policy

The Tudeh’s emergence in the south proved to be a turning point for British policy. Although Britain wanted to become less interventionist, the party-led strikes saw Britain

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<sup>984</sup> British embassy Tehran Memorandum, 29 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/59/46.

<sup>985</sup> As an example of Yazdi’s movements and meetings, see Ministry of Interior report to Tehran commander Isa Soroush, 1324/10/17 (7 January 1946), No.15, 1B, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>986</sup> British embassy Tehran Minutes in British embassy Tehran memorandum, 29 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/59/46.

<sup>987</sup> Conversation with Dr Taheri, 17 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/70/46.

reverting back to being more involved and taking forceful measures. This approach was couched within other British foreign and domestic concerns, as will be examined here. The immediate post-occupation era and the emerging Cold War tensions was a confusing time for British policymakers. The world around them was shifting significantly, while their own views of their place in that new world was also changing. This led to complex and, at times, contradictory approaches to the Tudeh. The party had recovered some of its lost reputation from the Soviet oil bid crisis and had managed to emerge in the post-war period as a significant political party. The tug-of-war among British policymakers in London, Tehran and the various consulates eventually gave out to a more held-back and cautious approach by the Labour government. This ultimately led to a policy that reinforced support for Qavam and his abilities to undermine the Tudeh and in doing so, protect key British interests.

### 3.1 The Tudeh within British–Soviet relations and the beginning of the Cold War

At the end of the war, the Allies' cooperation was in jeopardy as a new conflict emerged between the two world orders, spearheaded by the US and the Soviet Union. With the Axis forces defeated, the Soviet Union moved to establish control not only in Europe, but also in Iran. Their policy with regards to the oil and Azerbaijan were indicative of a more aggressive approach. Britain was fading further into the background, with its empire was shrinking and its economy stretched. Its new place in the emerging Cold War brought to light two immediate concerns, where Soviet ambitions would lead and what Britain's post-war relations with the US would look like. Dressing their concerns as part of a drive to promote Iranian national sovereignty, the British government was realistic about their capabilities and chose to relinquish responsibility of containing Soviet expansion in Iran in the guise of protecting Iran's independence.

With this backdrop, the Tudeh's closeness to the Soviets presented the British with a unique challenge: how would they be able to keep Iran away from Soviet dominance while the British were in the process of withdrawal? The answer to this lay, in how the Tudeh could be dealt with. Each element of British policymaking had ideas and impressions on the Tudeh and its links with the Soviet Union. For most British officials (in both Iran and London), the Tudeh represented Soviet ambitions and facilitated Soviet control in the country at the expense of Britain's interests. Indeed, from Moscow, the Tudeh was hailed as the main hope for Iran.<sup>988</sup> This view was encouraged by the party's open support of continued Soviet presence in the country, even after the war's end.<sup>989</sup> Dealing with the party was, in turn, part of Britain's wider post-war strategy of dealing with the Soviet threat. As demonstrated by Deighton, Britain was preparing to defend against "militant communism and Russian chauvinism."<sup>990</sup> This rather harsh statement does not however capture Soviet post-war mindset at the time, which was concerned with ensuring 'friendly neighbours' in the Asian region, as it had in Eastern Europe.<sup>991</sup> The tensions as caused by Soviet action in the north of Iran reflected the international tensions that would characterise the Cold War, but in light of the limitations it faced, the Labour government opted for a cautious approach.

In Iran, British-Soviet cooperation had broken down and the Soviet threat loomed large in the minds of British policymakers. Soviet support for the ADP marked a major break within the alliance and as already mentioned, is regarded as the start of the Cold War. In

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<sup>988</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 99.

<sup>989</sup> Shirazi, *Moderniteh, shobbeh va demokrasi*, 326.

<sup>990</sup> Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945-1955', 119.

<sup>991</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 107.

seeking a solution, the powers moved further away from each other. For the Labour government, Azerbaijan confirmed suspicions about Soviet ambitions. Since 1943, Attlee had been involved in governmental assessments as to how far the Soviet Union could be considered a threat.<sup>992</sup> With his election, he brought the apprehension of Soviet expansionism with him. As pointed out by Deighton and as already seen throughout this thesis, diplomats in the Foreign Office were at the forefront of this anti-Soviet policy, which mirrored the opinions held by British diplomats in Iran towards their Soviet counterparts. With the war over, Soviet policies were seen as purposely poised to damage Britain.<sup>993</sup> In May 1946, Bevin warned against the dangers of Soviet designs and a Russia Committee was established to guide the Foreign Office on policy.<sup>994</sup> On the other side, Stalin and his foreign minister, Molotov, also reverted back to a hostile view of their former allies, regarding Britain and the US as anti-Soviet by nature.<sup>995</sup> In the space of less than 5 years, Britain and the Soviet Union went from hostility to cooperation and back to hostility.

The US also became increasingly concerned at Red Army troops remaining in Azerbaijan, seeing it as an extension of Soviet ambitions in the region.<sup>996</sup> The US ambassador to Moscow, Harriman, delivered a note to Molotov, demanding that Soviet troops withdrew from Iran by 1 January 1946.<sup>997</sup> When this was ignored, US policymakers were even more convinced of Soviet actions in Iran as part of a general policy of Soviet expansionism, as

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<sup>992</sup> Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945–1955', 115.

<sup>993</sup> Quoted from the diplomat Christopher Warner in Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945–1955', 119.

<sup>994</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

<sup>995</sup> Vladimir O Pechatnov, 'The Soviet Union and the World, 1944–1953', in Leffler and Westad (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol.1 Origins*, 93.

<sup>996</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 333.

<sup>997</sup> Fernande Scheid Raine, 'The Iranian Crisis of 1946 and the origins of the Cold War', in David S Painter and Melvyn P Leffler (Eds.), *Origins of the Cold War: An International History*, Second edition (New York: Routledge, 2005), 104.

seen in Greece and Eastern Europe.<sup>998</sup> Truman was disillusioned by Stalin and sought a tough stance against him. At the start of 1946, the US president formally adopted a policy of containment, establishing the official Western stance towards their former allies in the post-war landscape.<sup>999</sup>

The Soviets regarded their presence in northern Iran as a result of “the growth of the democratic movement and the strength of pro-Soviet moods”, rather than an imposition of Soviet influence over local affairs.<sup>1000</sup> The Tudeh readily backed this narrative. In their newspaper, *Rahbar*, they justified the Soviet decision to delay withdrawal by stating that the Iranian government was anti-Soviet and had fascist tendencies.<sup>1001</sup> The Soviets were convinced that they were supporting a national struggle, seeing evidence of this when a local factory worker declared: “Already more than 70% of the population of Azerbaijan are ready to follow you [the Soviets] for any experiment”.<sup>1002</sup> Furthermore, Stalin did not seek a revolution in Iran but regarded his support of the Azeris as part of a strategy to create border areas that were friendly to the Soviet Union.<sup>1003</sup> Indeed, as highlighted by Fawcett, Soviet designs in Azerbaijan were driven more by interests than ideology.<sup>1004</sup> Thus, the Tudeh’s backing of the Soviet presence made them complicit in the continuation of the occupation and further convinced the Allies of the party’s leanings and allegiance.

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<sup>998</sup> Cottam, *Iran and the United States*, 67.

<sup>999</sup> Melvyn P Leffler, ‘The Emergence of an American Grand Strategy, 1945–1952’, in Leffler and Westad (Eds.), *The Cambridge History of the Cold War, Vol.1 Origins*, 72–73.

<sup>1000</sup> “Report on the Political and Economic Situation in Tabriz in 1943”, 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archives, f.28, op.4, d.19. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069>

<sup>1001</sup> Shirazi, *Moderniteh, shobheh va demokrasi*, 326.

<sup>1002</sup> “Report on the Political and Economic Situation in Tabriz in 1943”, 1944, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, Central State Archives, f.28, op.4, d.19. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120069s>

<sup>1003</sup> Priestland, *The Red Flag*, 233.

<sup>1004</sup> Fawcett, “Revisiting the Iranian Crisis of 1946: How Much More Do We Know?”, 386–387.

The British saw the Soviets' actions as deeply threatening and resolved to move closer to the US approach.<sup>1005</sup> Azerbaijan confirmed the existing suspicions held by the British towards their Soviet allies. Having pledged to respect and restore Iran's sovereignty, Soviet action placed the British in an awkward position.<sup>1006</sup> It alerted the British government that their former allies wanted to maintain the occupation to increase its control and to undermine British position.<sup>1007</sup> Echoing Eden at Yalta, Bevin recognised that the immediate evacuation of British troops from Iran would leave British policies and interests vulnerable. Thus, in light of the delay of the evacuation of Soviet troops, the Foreign Office decided to delay Britain's own withdrawal from Iran to March 1946.<sup>1008</sup> Britain's continued military engagement beyond the war was evidence of its commitment to respond to the Soviet threat with a similar show of force.

The continued presence of British troops was a means through which the Soviet undermining of British presence could be countered. Outwardly, it contradicted Britain's policy of supporting Iranian sovereignty, yet in reality, the British did not take the opportunity to act as an occupying force and deliberately stayed away from direct interference. True to this, continued Soviet presence was left to be dealt with by the newly-created Security Council of the United Nations (UN)<sup>1009</sup> at the behest of

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<sup>1005</sup> The CIA depicted the Tudeh as unfriendly to the US, and worse, actively echoed the Soviet line against the US. CIA, 'The Tudeh Party: Vehicle of Communism in Iran', 18 July 1949, NIC 0000258385, [www.cia.gov/library](http://www.cia.gov/library)

<sup>1006</sup> Foreign Office memorandum (Bevin), 28 August 1945, PRO, CAB129/1.

<sup>1007</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 7 November 1945 in Paul Preston and Michael Partridge (Eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Vol. Eastern Affairs: April 1945–December 1945, Near and Middle East, B (University Publications of America, 1997), 428.

<sup>1008</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 7 November 1945 in Paul Preston and Michael Partridge (Eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Vol. Eastern Affairs: April 1945–December 1945, Near and Middle East, B (University Publications of America, 1997), 431–432.

<sup>1009</sup> Alexander Nicholas Shaw, "Sir Reader Bullard, Frank Roberts and the Azerbaijan Crisis of 1945–46: Bevin's Officials, Perceptions and the Adoption of a Cold War Mentality in British–Soviet Policy", *Cold War History*, Vol.17(3) (January 2017): 279–97.

Washington.<sup>1010</sup> The British Cabinet supported this move and backed the US support for Iran's ambassador to the US, Hossein Ala, to bring the matter to the Security Council.<sup>1011</sup> Qavam was unenthusiastic about seeking a solution through the UN due to his own strategy of misleading the Soviets, but allowed Ala to make a formal complaint about the Soviet Union's violation of the Tripartite Agreement.<sup>1012</sup> The crisis in the north of Iran was thus a situation that the British left to the international community to deal with and chose to support the Iranian government at the UN.

Nonetheless, the Soviet presence in the north was still very real to the British in Iran, which was compounded by the Tudeh's presence and growing relevance. In their minds, the party's alignment with the Soviets also implied that any political control the party gained would benefit the Soviets.<sup>1013</sup> In certain instances, the party continued to act as a mouthpiece for the Soviets. When they objected to Millspaugh's presence and influence in Iran, party members spread rumours about him, exaggerating his control over local businessmen.<sup>1014</sup> In the aftermath of the oil concession crisis at the end of 1944, Bullard believed that the Tudeh's support for the Soviets and the separatist movement in Azerbaijan would discredit the party to the point that it would disappear from the political scene.<sup>1015</sup> Such an observation indicated that the embassy was inclined to let things play out on their own and that it was not always necessary to become too involved.

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<sup>1010</sup> Cottam, *Iran and the United States*, 69–70.

<sup>1011</sup> Cabinet notebook, 27 May 1946, PRO, CAB195/4/40. This challenges Azimi's notion that despite America's insistence that the situation should have been brought to the UN, Bevin was against it, the latter arguing that it did not allow for a solution that could be achieved by all three powers. Azimi, *Iran*, 141–142.

<sup>1012</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 240.

<sup>1013</sup> However, behind the scenes and probably unknown to the British, Soviet support was not always guaranteed. The Soviet consul Emilianov admitted to Yusef Eftekhari that Soviet backing to the Tudeh was not permanent and could be withdrawn in a day. Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e doran-e seperi shodeh*, 92.

<sup>1014</sup> Dekhordi and Azizkhah, "Mokhalefat-ha alaih-e Millspaugh dar Iran", 103.

<sup>1015</sup> Although he did not describe the Tudeh as a communist group, he confirmed that it received support from the Soviets. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 12 October 1945 in Paul

The prolonged crisis over Azerbaijan changed that perception as the Tudeh grew in strength from their support, which increased their prominence and brought some material benefits, including control over the railways in the north.<sup>1016</sup> In the Majles and in the media, the party downplayed Soviet activities in Azerbaijan. For instance, when the deputy Musaddiq protested the continued presence of Soviet troops in Iran, the Tudeh remained silent.<sup>1017</sup> Furthermore, perhaps as a way to distract from the issue, the Tudeh newspaper *Rahbar* declared that there were still British troops in Ahwaz while drunken American officers could be found in a Tehran nightclub.<sup>1018</sup>

Bullard regarded the Tudeh's accusations as potentially destabilising towards the British presence and image in Iran. His suspicions over the Soviet-Tudeh relationship were also fanned by local opinion. The chief of staff of the army, General Hassan Arfa, predicted that the Soviets would not only occupy Iranian territory but would also install the Tudeh in government through a revolution.<sup>1019</sup> When the Soviets requested to postpone a UN Security Council meeting over Iran, Bullard warned the Foreign Office that this was a ruse to gain more time to produce a "puppet" government.<sup>1020</sup> Bullard's fears were further compounded by knowledge of the Soviet embassy's involvement behind Tudeh

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Preston and Michael Partridge (Eds.), *British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print*, Vol. Eastern Affairs: April 1945–December 1945, Near and Middle East, B (University Publications of America, 1997), 424.

<sup>1016</sup> Air Ministry communications to Foreign Office, 12 February 1946, PRO, FO371/52321, E1286.

<sup>1017</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 5 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/37/46.

<sup>1018</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 6 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/38/46. A clash between a nationalist crowd (led by the editor of *Iqdam*) and Leftist sympathisers over the prolongation of the Majles resulted in the death of some protestors. University students also wanted to organise a demonstration, but they did not want to appear sympathetic to the Soviet presence, which suggests that support for the Tudeh was regarded controversially. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 8 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/40/46.

<sup>1019</sup> According to Arfa, the Soviets had already been undertaking preparations since the beginning of 1945. Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 331–332. Qavam accused General Arfa of opposing the Tudeh. British embassy Tehran (Farquhar) to Foreign Office, 9 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/46/46.

<sup>1020</sup> British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Foreign Office, 22 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/44/46.

demonstrations.<sup>1021</sup> He further expected that the Soviets would call upon factory workers to take to the streets and to demonstrate the unpopularity of the UN Security Council's involvement in Azerbaijan.<sup>1022</sup>

In light of this, inclusion of the Tudeh within the government and its control over protests could mean that the Soviets were enabled to increase their control over Tehran. Qavam saw good relations with the Tudeh as a way of gaining the support of the country's labour movement.<sup>1023</sup> At the same time, Qavam also appeared to do the Soviets' bidding. He oversaw the detainment of Sayyed Zia, who the Soviets described as a "well-known reactionary agent of the British".<sup>1024</sup> These actions made the British even more worried about the potential power held by the party in Qavam's government. The British counsellor and Holman's replacement, Harold Lister Farquhar regarded such arrests as indications of Britain's precarious position in Iran.<sup>1025</sup> The chargé d'affaires, Lascelles, warned Qavam against making any more political arrests, which he regarded as "first fruits of Soviet-Persian friendship and mutual understanding"<sup>1026</sup> and a further indication of Qavam's growing alignment with the Soviets. The idea that the Soviets were manipulating Qavam for their political benefit was exaggerated by Bullard's departure, which was widely interpreted in Iran as an admission of Britain's defeat in the country.<sup>1027</sup>

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<sup>1021</sup> These demonstrations were in favour of prolonging the fourteenth Majles and delaying elections. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 5 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/37/46.

<sup>1022</sup> Bullard wanted closer cooperation between Qavam and the shah, but the former had two members of the Qajar family in his Cabinet, a presence that resulted in some tension. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 15 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/42/46. However, the chargé d'affaires saw that Qavam was finding it harder to resist Soviet pressure. British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Foreign Office, 23 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/45/46.

<sup>1023</sup> Ladjevardi, *Labour Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 58.

<sup>1024</sup> British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Foreign Office, 22 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/44/46.

<sup>1025</sup> British embassy Tehran (Farquhar) to Foreign Office, 9 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/46/46.

<sup>1026</sup> British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Foreign Office, 23 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/45/46.

<sup>1027</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 6 March 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/38/46.

At this point of the crisis, the British position felt vulnerable. Farquhar's protests brought to light concerns about Qavam's relations with the Tudeh. Ultimately, dealing with the party would only be symptomatic of a wider issue. His assessment triggered an urgency that the Soviet presence in Iran had to be dealt with directly. The Iranian government and the Soviets seemed to be at an impasse, as observed by Bullard who did not see any sign of Soviet troop withdrawal in February 1946, a month before the designated date.<sup>1028</sup> Indeed, there was evidence that the Soviets were still supplying Azerbaijan with weapons until January 1946.<sup>1029</sup> Although Qavam led a delegation to Moscow to discuss Soviet troop withdrawal<sup>1030</sup>, Bullard did not believe that Qavam would appeal to the Security Council if the Soviets did not promise to withdraw their troops by the spring of 1946, as per the 1942 treaty.<sup>1031</sup> The British embassy confronted Qavam with evidence of Soviet troop presence in Azerbaijan, but Qavam professed a belief that the country was "almost clear of Russian troops".<sup>1032</sup>

The delicate balance of encouraging Iranian independence without losing face or power to the Tudeh and the Soviets was difficult to achieve. British officials in London and Tehran disagreed on how much intervention was necessary to achieve this. Skrine, who moved to the embassy in Tehran from the Mashhad consulate, saw that there was a serious risk of an overwhelming majority of Tudeh candidates running for the fifteenth

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<sup>1028</sup> British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 12 February 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/22/46.

<sup>1029</sup> For a list of weapons sent between October 1945 and January 1946, see "Memo on the Number of Weapons Sent to Iranian Azerbaijan", February 23, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, GAPPOD, f.1, op.89, d.114. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120535>.

<sup>1030</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 149.

<sup>1031</sup> It appeared to Bullard that Qavam was crafty enough to feign a mutual fear of the Soviets. British embassy Tehran (Bullard) to Foreign Office, 12 February 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/22/46.

<sup>1032</sup> British embassy Tehran (Farquhar) to Foreign Office, 9 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/46/46.

Majles elections. If the British decided not to interfere in the elections, he concluded, this would result in the establishment of a Soviet-controlled government that was “highly dangerous to [Britain’s] vital interests in this part of the world”.<sup>1033</sup> In light of this, the British embassy suggested the provision of guidance for the elections of provincial councils. Here, Farquhar and Skrine, as well as Bullard, were prepared to return to a policy of intervention in order to stall increased Soviet presence via the Tudeh.

The Foreign Office and the Government of India disapproved of this suggestion and instead opted for a policy of neutrality.<sup>1034</sup> They argued that any interference would be inconsistent with Britain’s earlier pledge to respect Iranian sovereignty and independence. London further cautioned that it would only intervene if the status quo was affected and a Tudeh majority was unavoidable.<sup>1035</sup> London’s official stance was thus to support and encourage the independence of the Iranian government, whereby:

...the proper course [was] not to balance Russian intervention by British and American intervention but to insist that the Persian government be allowed to conduct their own affairs without interference.<sup>1036</sup>

By choosing to back the Qavam government, London was able to counter Soviet interference without actually interfering and without stretching its already stressed resources. The economy was suffering and its appetite for further conflicts and overseas

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<sup>1033</sup> British embassy minutes (signature unclear), 26 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/58/46.

<sup>1034</sup> British embassy minutes in British embassy memorandum, 29 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/59/46

<sup>1035</sup> There was Iranian support for British intervention during the elections in order to counter the Tudeh. Statement by Lisan-Sipher to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 15 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/68/46.

<sup>1036</sup> This was consistent with Bevin’s general policy of trying to minimise intervention in the Middle East. British embassy minutes (signature unclear) 26 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/58/46.

commitment was low. Coming out of the war, the British government felt it could not afford to partake in any outward intervention in countries like Iran, where its commitments were mainly linked to war needs (with the exception of oil).

Contradicting London's lead, the British embassy in Tehran undertook discussions over their own course of action in post-occupation Iran. It was quickly agreed that any action involving the organisation of political parties and tribal unions against a "Tudeh and Soviet-controlled Iran" could not be sporadic and must be integrated with a "forward policy".<sup>1037</sup> Within the embassy, there were those who were reluctant to support ineffectual Iranian politicians against the Tudeh, but these voices were largely ignored.<sup>1038</sup> The embassy, led by Bullard, before his departure, and supported by other officials such as Skrine and Farquhar, expanded the policy of pressuring the centre, warning Qavam that the inclusion of more Left-wing elements in his government and support for Tudeh publications would be to Soviet advantage and would damage British interests.<sup>1039</sup> By doing so the British in Tehran directly contradicted London's stance of non-intervention and explicitly pursued its own line of action by placing pressure on Qavam.

While the British troops evacuated on time, the Red Army was still in Iran in March 1946.<sup>1040</sup> A parliamentary mission was sent from London, consisting of Labour Party

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<sup>1037</sup> British embassy minutes (signature unclear) 26 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/58/46.

<sup>1038</sup> British embassy minutes (signature unclear) 26 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/58/46.

<sup>1039</sup> In addition to the manipulation of the Iranian government to appoint Soviet stooges and to suppress Right-wing papers. British embassy minutes, 26 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/58/46.

<sup>1040</sup> However, it should be noted that the Soviets did agree to a partial withdrawal and worked together with the British to ensure this. "Message from Bagirov to Stalin and Molotov about Withdrawal of Troops from Northern Iran", March 13, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, GAPPOD, f.1, op.89, d.112. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120473>

member and future leader Michael Foot and Conservative MP Brigadier Anthony Henry Head to assess the situation and observe the ongoing negotiations between the Soviets and Qavam.<sup>1041</sup> This pressure and focus of the British government seemed to have had an impact on Qavam who became more cautious of his actions with regards the Tudeh. The party, in response, publicly condemned Qavam's conciliatory attitude towards the British.<sup>1042</sup> He also sought a serious solution with the Soviets to facilitate their withdrawal.

The main issue holding the Soviets from complete withdrawal was the uncertainty of their position in the country, particularly with regards to the question of oil and Azerbaijan. However, as noted by Fawcett, the incentive to seek a bilateral solution came from US (through the UN) pressure.<sup>1043</sup> In March 1946, Qavam and the Soviets reopened negotiations, resulting in the promise of a joint Soviet–Iranian oil company.<sup>1044</sup> Through their ambassador in Tehran, Ivan Sadchikov, the Soviets also conceded that the Azerbaijan crisis was an internal matter and pledged to resolve the matter peacefully.<sup>1045</sup> After the agreement was signed, this had the effect it intended. In May 1946, Soviet troops finally withdrew from the country.<sup>1046</sup> Although the Soviet press hailed this as a new era of Soviet–Iranian relations, in reality the withdrawal resulted in the serious reduction of

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<sup>1041</sup> Air Ministry communications to Foreign Office, 12 April 1946, PRO, FO371/52321, E3285/441/65.

<sup>1042</sup> Ladjevardi, *Labour Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 59.

<sup>1043</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 102.

<sup>1044</sup> "Message from Ambassador Sadchikov to Prime Minister Qavam About the Joint Oil Company", April 04, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, GAPPOD AzR, f.1, op.89, d.113. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120470>; see also "Memo from a Telegraph Report of Ashurov from Tehran", April 05, 1946, History and Public Policy Program Digital Archive, GAPPOD, f.1, op.89, d.114. Obtained for CWIHP by Jamil Hasanli and translated for CWIHP by Gary Goldberg. <http://digitalarchive.wilsoncenter.org/document/120539>

<sup>1045</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 515–516.

<sup>1046</sup> Ghassemlou, 'Kurdistan in Iran', 109.

Soviet influence within the country.<sup>1047</sup> As can be seen, Britain's dual policy of backing Qavam and supporting the Soviet oil bid worked in favour of British interests. It succeeded in removing Soviet presence and left the Tudeh without their main supporter.

Britain's relationship with its former partner in the occupation of Iran entered a new phase of relations, coloured by ideological differences and strategic deviations. The new rivalry with the Soviet Union made the Tudeh even more threatening to the British presence. It represented Soviet influence in the Majles and was effectively a mouthpiece for Soviet interests. The party's fate was intertwined with that of the Soviets, and it was soon acknowledged that in order to lessen the Tudeh's influence, the Soviet presence had to be reduced. As has been seen here, among the British in Iran and in London, there were two main ways through which it was believed that the Soviet threat could be managed – either explicitly or implicitly. While London preferred a non-interventionist approach, the embassy (as encouraged by Bullard while he was still ambassador) placed direct pressure on Qavam. Such a policy allowed for London to promote itself as a supporter of Iranian sovereignty, without compromising on its interests or promising more than it could commit. Soviet withdrawal brought much-needed relief for the British, especially in light of its stretched economy and ongoing overseas commitments. It also removed many of the concerns over how the Tudeh's presence could increase Soviet influence in Iran.

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<sup>1047</sup> Fawcett, *Iran and the Cold War*, 103.

### 3.2 The Tudeh within anti-communist policy

In addition to representing Soviet interests, the Tudeh's commitment to communism became an increasing concern for the British. Their overt adoption of Marxism in its policies and Leftward orientation had not been much of an issue during the war, partly because of Britain's ongoing collaboration with communist groups. However, the war's end saw this alliance break down and strengthened fear among British diplomats towards the Tudeh's communist characteristics. The growing rift between Britain and the Soviet Union further strained the relationship with the Left and, as the Soviets began to be regarded more aggressively, so did communist and Left-wing parties. While the immediate post-war era did not lead to open hostility, tensions became more palpable with every passing month. Britain under the Labour government was cautious about navigating the liberation of Europe and Asia from Axis forces and was careful to respect the sovereignty and claims of national governments, which eventually came at the expense of their former allies, as was the case in Greece and Malaya. By contextualising British attitudes towards the Tudeh within the cases of its policies towards other communist groups, this section furthers our understanding of how the party was seen in the early Cold War. While differences of opinions between the British in London and Iran resulted in policy variations, London was driven by practicalities and a realisation that its commitment to fighting communism had to be limited.

Britain's relations with Europe's communists had changed by the war's end and the debate on how to contain communism came to the forefront. The defeat of Hitler was a great victory for not only Stalin, but also for communists everywhere. Confident, the establishment of communist power in Europe was in the forefront of his mind, which he sought to achieve without antagonising the US and without burdening the already-

burdened Soviet budget.<sup>1048</sup> Upon recognising that the Soviets were interested in expanding its control in the post-war landscape, the Foreign Office shifted towards an anti-communist stance.<sup>1049</sup> This laid the basis for the British government to form their post-war foreign policy around the communist threat, depicted as a dangerous ideology and as a conduit for Soviet power.<sup>1050</sup>

A key contributing factor to the British government's stance on communism was the US' own policy. At the end of the war, the US government became increasingly concerned by the spread of Soviet influence and communist ideology, in the Middle East. As part of Truman's containment policy, communist influence in Europe and Asia was earmarked as areas of concern. In China, the US were involved in settling the conflict between communists and the nationalists while, in Europe, the US State Department saw that Europe was deteriorating into chaos. The US grew concerned that the post-war landscape had established favourable conditions in Europe and Asia for communism to flourish. The Truman administration, led by anti-communist and anti-Soviet figures such as Dean Acheson and George Kennan, began to view the rise of communistic ideas and groups in almost apocalyptic terms, presenting it as the antithesis to a democratic way of life.<sup>1051</sup> However, in early 1946, the US government still had not developed a proper strategy on how to apply its containment strategy. As such, it relied heavily on British commitment to deal with the spread of communism in the immediate months following the war's end.<sup>1052</sup>

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<sup>1048</sup> Service, *Comrades: Communism*, 230–232.

<sup>1049</sup> Deighton, 'Britain and the Cold War, 1945–1955', 119.

<sup>1050</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.

<sup>1051</sup> Leffler, 'The Emergence of an American Grand Strategy, 1945–1952', 74–75.

<sup>1052</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

This burden was placed on Britain's already stretched economy and political reach. Immediately after the war, the British government committed substantially to the emerging struggle against the communists. In Greece, British forces were not only preoccupied by the re-constructing of the country but also by dealing with the communists.<sup>1053</sup> London's intervention in Greek internal affairs oversaw the backing of Right-wing governments and the launch of an anti-communist campaign.<sup>1054</sup> After the German withdrawal from most of Greece, the British turned their attention to halting the activities of the Greek People's Liberation Army (ELAS), the military arm of the Left-wing National Liberation Front (EAM), which was mainly under the leadership of the KKE. At the end of 1944, ELAS launched a military campaign, known popularly as the December uprising, against the British forces. Churchill opted for armed confrontation as a way to counter ELAS and secure Greece from the communists.<sup>1055</sup> Although the KKE and the British were able to halt the fighting in Athens at the beginning of 1945, the KKE launched a guerrilla warfare against the British-backed Greek national government. British involvement and fight against the EAM received strong criticism from within Britain and the international community<sup>1056</sup> but the Labour government remained committed to fighting the communist insurgents.<sup>1057</sup>

Further afield in Malaya, the British faced a similar situation with the MCP. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, there was a breakdown in law and order which saw

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<sup>1053</sup> As part of the post-war settlement, Stalin approved that Britain would have the most share over Greece. Eudes, *The Kapetanios*, 162–163.

<sup>1054</sup> Alexandra Moschovi, 'Re-Imag(in)ing Arcadia: British Intervention in the Post-War Reconstruction of Greece, c.1945–1946', in *Greece and Britain since 1945*, Second edition, David Wills (Ed.) (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014), 66.

<sup>1055</sup> Eudes, *The Kapetanios: Partisans and Civil War in Greece, 1943–1949*, 178–180.

<sup>1056</sup> Gerolymatos, *An International Civil War: Greece, 1943–1949*, 169.

<sup>1057</sup> *Ibid.*, 252–254.

the MCP occupy towns throughout Malaya.<sup>1058</sup> Upon returning to the peninsula, London formed the British Military Administration (BMA) to re-establish British control. Initially, the Supreme Allied Commander of Southeast Asia, Earl Mountbatten and the BMA recognised the MCP's contribution against the Japanese.<sup>1059</sup> The MCP however began to seek political influence and moved away from cooperation with the BMA, becoming interested instead in establishing self-determination and breaking away from colonialism.<sup>1060</sup> Their demands for elections were dismissed by the British in Malaya, who were not even considering ending their rule there.<sup>1061</sup>

In addition to protecting its imperial position, the Attlee government saw its commitments in Asia as important to Britain's economic and strategic needs.<sup>1062</sup> Regarding its wider imperial commitments, the Labour Party had in the past adopted a strong colonial policy. Under Attlee, the government remained committed to Indian independence, but this did not extend to the rest of the empire.<sup>1063</sup> As argued by John Newsinger, the Labour government involved itself in restoring and protecting its imperial domains from the communist threat, which was certainly the case in Malaya. When the MCP took to the streets, the BMA opted for force. In February 1946, demonstrators were fired upon, killing several.<sup>1064</sup> Such violent actions showed that Britain was prepared to use force against their former allies, the Left, when British interests and position were in

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<sup>1058</sup> Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 135–136.

<sup>1059</sup> MCP leader Chin Peng was awarded the Order of the British Empire (OBE). John Newsinger, "War, Empire and the Attlee Government, 1945–1951", *Race & Class*, Vol.60(1) (2018), 66.

<sup>1060</sup> A similar war was brewing in Indochina where the French republic clashed with the communist-led Democratic Republic of Vietnam, formed by Ho Chi Minh in August 1945. Stein Tonnesson, *Vietnam 1946: How the War Began* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

<sup>1061</sup> Kheng, *Red Star over Malaya*, 241–242.

<sup>1062</sup> Malaya's rubber and tin resources were necessary for Britain's economic recovery. Newsinger, 'War, Empire and the Attlee Government, 1945–1951', 67.

<sup>1063</sup> Vickers, *The Labour Party and the World, Volume 1*, 165–167.

<sup>1064</sup> Newsinger, 'War, Empire and the Attlee Government, 1945–1951', 67.

jeopardy. The Greek and Malayan cases reflected the early commitment of the Labour government to combatting communism in its informal and formal empires, despite London's budgetary concerns. The heavy-handed responses marked a departure from the cooperation during the war and showed the footing it was on *vis à vis* communism. The actions of the communist parties were regarded as hostile and deeply questioned Britain's position in these two spheres of its political reach.

In Iran, British policymakers were confronted with a similar situation. Although London wanted to avoid direct interference in Iran's political landscape, the British embassy in Tehran recognised that the Tudeh could become a vehicle to spread communist ideas. Seeing that communism was a threat for British policymakers in places such as Greece and Malaya, it was no surprise that the Tudeh was painted with a similar brush. As was the case in Greece and Malaya, the Tudeh appeared more hostile towards the British. In May 1945, the Tudeh launched a media campaign against the British empire. In the party's newspapers, Sayyed Zia was described as an agent of British imperialism.<sup>1065</sup> A year later, the Tudeh continued its anti-British rhetoric, worrying the British embassy, especially Le Rougetel.<sup>1066</sup> The Iranian Ministry of Interior also began to notice the party's reach to other Left-leaning parties in Iran, especially in Gilan.<sup>1067</sup> In the embassy and Foreign Office's eyes, the party's reach and anti-imperialist stance added to its communist record, as did its closeness with international communist figures. In July 1946, the party hosted Louis Saillant, the general secretary of the WFTU, who the Foreign Office regarded

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<sup>1065</sup> British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Ministry of Information, 11 May 1945, PRO, F0371/45448, E3062.

<sup>1066</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 19 June 1946, PRO, F0731/52705, E5996.

<sup>1067</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1324/10/29 (19 January 1946), No.710, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

as a communist opposed to the British government.<sup>1068</sup> The party's associations with the international Left were also observed by the Iranian Ministry of Interior who commented on the party's activities in Qazvin where they rallied against Franco's fascist government.<sup>1069</sup> These can be regarded as evidence of the Tudeh's commitment to activism not only in Iran but beyond.

In the context of what Britain was confronted with in Greece and Malaya, Iran posed similar worries. In this regard, British diplomats in Iran and the Persian Gulf were in agreement with London in seeing the Tudeh as part of a wider communist threat. From Tehran, the British embassy was concerned about the spread of communism through the Tudeh's military network. The existence of such a network, as established by Cronin, challenged the conventional assessment of the army being only on the side of the monarchy.<sup>1070</sup> Indeed, it appeared that Tudeh infiltration and influence was an area of concern for higher-ranking officers. General Ali Razmara attempted to break the party's subversion through internal intelligence work, which resulted in the compiling of a list of approximately 100 officers suspected of being sympathetic to communism.<sup>1071</sup> Colonel Touraj-Amin, who was sent to inspect the police departments in Ahwaz, was known to be a strong Tudeh supporter.<sup>1072</sup> Furthermore, the embassy was aware that certain officers had connections with the Tudeh.<sup>1073</sup> In addition to these military connections, the

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<sup>1068</sup> Foreign Office to British embassy Tehran, 21 July 1946, PRO, FO371/52705, E6804/179/37; for an account of the visit, see also Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e doran-e seperi shodeh*, 95–96.

<sup>1069</sup> Ministry of Interior report, 1324/12/20 (11 March 1946), No.1/13251/15949, 1C, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>1070</sup> Cronin, *Armies and State-Building in the Modern Middle East*, 134.

<sup>1071</sup> He gave the list to Arfa. Arfa, *Under Five Shahs*, 332; Arfa was arrested after it emerged that he had been organising a tribal resistance against the Tudeh. However, the embassy was not sure if he had acted with the tacit approval of the government or not. British embassy Tehran minutes, 25 April 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/52/46.

<sup>1072</sup> Touraj-Amin was appointed the chief of police in Mashhad at the request of the Soviets. British consulate Ahwaz (Trott) to British embassy Tehran, 18 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/245/46.

<sup>1073</sup> Annex B in Note on General Arfa, 11 June 1946, PRO, FO246/1462, G65/75/46.

governor of Abadan shared his suspicions with Lascelles that the new chief of police, Laali, was sympathetic towards the party.<sup>1074</sup> By exchanging information over this matter, the consulate helped to build a threatening image of the Tudeh, especially over the party's capabilities to infiltrate the army and police.

British concern over the Tudeh's communist credentials was further heightened by the upcoming independence of India.<sup>1075</sup> The Tudeh had close contacts with both Indian communists and trade unions. It had also joined in the debate surrounding India's upcoming independence, accusing Indian politicians of being "tools in the hands of Imperialists".<sup>1076</sup> In Abadan, the Tudeh was in touch with the Indian Artisans Union, which had links with the Indian communist organ *Naya Zamana*. The British authorities in India also wanted to ensure that Abadan did not become a "forcing-ground for Indian communists", further encouraging the British in Iran to improve working conditions for Indian labourers so that they would be less swayed by Tudeh campaigns.<sup>1077</sup> The Government in India closely monitored the Tudeh "menace" and its influence on Indian labourers and expressed concern over its parliamentary platform.<sup>1078</sup> The extra-territorial reach of the Tudeh was a concern in other places as well. The political agent in Bahrain believed that the many Indian employees in Abadan were influenced by the

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<sup>1074</sup> The governor of Abadan tried to have the new chief of police, Laali, removed but the Tudeh sent a counter telegram demanding his retention. British consulate Khorramshahr (Britain) to British embassy Tehran, 8 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/64/46.

<sup>1075</sup> However, the External Affairs Department in New Delhi did not see the benefit in simply focusing on the Indian labourers in Khuzestan. Instead, it wanted to ensure that more improvements should be made for the Persians as they were worse off. External affairs department New Delhi (Weightman) to British embassy Tehran (Skrine), 4 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/270/46.

<sup>1076</sup> British embassy Tehran (Lascelles) to Ministry of Information, 11 May 1945, PRO, FO371/45448, E3062.

<sup>1077</sup> External affairs department New Delhi (Weightman) to British Embassy Tehran (Skrine), 4 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/270/46.

<sup>1078</sup> External affairs department New Delhi, 10(10) ME, National Archives of India.

Tudeh to the degree that they were becoming more pro-Soviet than pro-British.<sup>1079</sup> Many workers believed that an association with the Tudeh was the only way in which they could get their grievances heard.<sup>1080</sup>

The Tudeh, as a communist threat, loomed large in the minds of British policymakers, especially so with the growing threat of communism in Greece, Malaya, and even India. However, unlike in Greece and Malaya, Britain did not counter the party militarily or with a show of force. While the party posed a threat, it was not threatening or as violent in the way that the KKE and the MCP were. As such, British responses were relatively moderate and subtle. In order to counter the party but without appearing interventionist, the British embassy launched a propaganda campaign against the Tudeh. Here, a new anti-Tudeh newspaper, *Caravan*, was launched under Jalali, who had previously run the newspaper *Kishwar*. He approached the British embassy for material support against the Tudeh but found that they were already planning to wage a publicity war against the pro-Soviet elements in the party.<sup>1081</sup> Here, the British in Iran were keen to oppose the Tudeh by backing local writers and newspapers. The PRB was prepared to spend resources in this endeavour. The embassy wanted to mobilise and support young Iranians who sought an independent Iran:

Let us, to begin with, select a dozen or so of the best young writers... pay them well, make it clear to them that the British lion is at last awake and will not desert them, supply them with plenty of ammunition, and with their help launch a thundering counter-offensive in

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<sup>1079</sup> Political Agency (Bahrain) to Political Resident (Bahrain), 31 July 1946, The India Office Records, IOR/R/15/2/912, C/805.

<sup>1080</sup> For evidence of Indian artisans expressing such views, see British consulate (Khorramshahr) to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 2 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/149/46.

<sup>1081</sup> For instance, the press desk had been closely monitoring the Tudeh newspaper *Rahbar* to keep track of Tudeh strategy. Persian government and internal affairs, 19 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/71/46.

selected newspapers, new ones if necessary or old ones resuscitated under new names.<sup>1082</sup>

Such a strategy was reminiscent of Lambton's strategy of employing Bozorg Alavi to aid with anti-fascist propaganda. The director of PRB, Cecil Arthur Grant Savidge, knew that he would have the backing of the Iranian Right-wing press, who he believed, wanted the British to be more assertive.<sup>1083</sup> The support of more conservative and traditional newspapers was thus regarded as an important element to the embassy's anti-Tudeh campaign.<sup>1084</sup>

Such a policy was in coordination with London's policy of appearing to protect Iranian sovereignty, while acknowledging Britain's inability to commit much more. In Greece, the British government soon realised that it was unable to sustain its campaign or support for the Greek national government. In the summer of 1946, Attlee and Bevin were unable to provide the vast amount asked for by Greece. Furthermore, Labour's pledge to retain troops in Greece met with substantial opposition within the Labour Party.<sup>1085</sup> These reasons led Attlee to reassess British foreign and defence policy, which within the year, saw the US take a more dominant role in Greece and Britain winding down its pledge to counter communism.<sup>1086</sup> This quick reversal of policies showed where Britain was in terms of what it could provide but also its lack of enthusiasm for further overseas fighting.

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<sup>1082</sup> Persian government and internal affairs, 19 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/71/46.

<sup>1083</sup> Press attaché to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 11 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, G65/76/46.

<sup>1084</sup> Such newspapers would have included the Tehran-weekly publications *Bahram* and *Iran-e now*. Pourhadi, *Persian and Afghan Newspapers in the Library of Congress, 1871-1978*.

<sup>1085</sup> Sfikas, *The British Labour Government and the Greek Civil War, 1939-1945*, 125.

<sup>1086</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

By the end of the occupation, the Tudeh was treated as a party that could promote communism in Iran, as identified by the embassy, the Foreign Office and government. On this front, most of the elements of policymaking raised were in agreement with each other. Such behaviour was in line with a wider trend of cooperation with the Left being abandoned now that the war with fascism had concluded. The conflict with communism erupted in Greece and Malaya, and in Iran, whereby the Tudeh's overt communist leanings, connections with the international Left and far-reaching influence concerned British policymakers in both London and Iran. Still, a realistic appraisal was made in light also of what level of commitment and justification the Labour government could afford. As such, although the party was seen in the same negative light, its campaigns against Britain and British imperialism were not as hostile or as threatening as in Greece and Malaya. As such, Britain responded through a subtle propaganda media campaign while severe methods (as seen in Malaya and Greece) were avoided.

### 3.3 The Tudeh within British oil interests

The end of the war greatly affected Britain's oil position. In Iran, the AIOC and by extension, the British government, faced a number of challenges to its position. Fundamentally, Britain's military and economic exhaustion left the AIOC vulnerable to changes within the oil industry as a whole and within Iran in particular. Internationally, the AIOC and Iran's supremacy as an oil producer in the region was under threat. Regionally, the US took its oil interests in the Middle East more seriously and expanded its partnership with Saudi Arabia. Domestically, the AIOC faced growing opposition to its management over labour matters. The Tudeh-led strikes of 1946 questioned Britain's control over the oil and brought the oil workers' discontent to light, forcing the AIOC and the British government to adopt a more interventionist attitudes towards the party and

to engage more with labour issues. Here it will be shown that the British responded to the Tudeh from a position of vulnerability, which led the Labour government and British embassy in Tehran to deviate from its policy of non-intervention. However, due to the post-war landscape, this was quickly abandoned, and different methods of containment were sought. These new tactics in dealing with the Tudeh reflected Britain's ability to adapt and accommodate its new position. In reaching the decision to follow a cautious attitude, this section reveals the variations of opinions and approaches given at different decision-making levels.

By 1946, British oil supremacy in Iran, and by extension the region, was under pressure. The impact of the war on the oil industry was noticeable. In the spring of 1945, the Labour government sent a representative of the Ministry of Labour and National Service to assess the situation in the south. It concluded that in order to increase the standards of the AIOC, British employees with high-level skills needed to be prioritised over unskilled Iranian workers. The report also suggested that the AIOC had not provided proper housing for the labourers in Abadan. Shafiee observed that the visit pointed out the inadequacies of the AIOC and the British government in maintaining concern over social issues with regards to the Iranian worker.<sup>1087</sup> Internationally, the British faced further chaos. As Bamberg pointed out, the global economic environment was in "a state of disarray". Britain had suffered immensely from the war and found itself at the mercy of US economic superiority, compounded by growing US interest in oil produced in the Persian Gulf. In 1944, with US-British cooperation on a more equal footing, a governmental agreement was signed between the two to ensure Britain would continue to have a say in global oil

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<sup>1087</sup> Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil*, 137–138.

demand.<sup>1088</sup> However, at the end of the war, and with the British government relying heavily on US aid, it was no longer in a position to dictate or challenge US interest in Middle Eastern oil.

Despite the decrease of British control over oil matters internationally, under Attlee, governmental say in oil affairs increased in line with Labour's domestic policies of augmenting influence over the economy.<sup>1089</sup> This was partly due to the fact that oil came to occupy a more important role in Britain's home economy. Even after the war and despite struggles with the US over control, oil remained a key resource. With the British economy faring poorly, Iran's oilfields took on a new important significance as a way to positively affect Britain's balance of payments.<sup>1090</sup> Furthermore, Britain's coal industry had dwindled to the point where it was unable to meet local demand. In April 1946, the Labour government launched a campaign to substitute coal with oil within British industry.<sup>1091</sup> Thus, any disruption to the supply of oil had major consequences for Britain.

In Iran, these oil interests came under significant threat from the Tudeh, which had consequences beyond the oil industry. Since the war's end, the party had set up branches in the oil centres and established a union of Khuzestan workers, which effectively became the regional arm of the CCFTU.<sup>1092</sup> From the spring of 1946, the activities of its provincial committee in Khorramshahr caught the attention of the Iranian Ministry of the Interior,

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<sup>1088</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 333–334; see also Toprani, *Oil and the Great Powers*, 262.

<sup>1089</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 308–309.

<sup>1090</sup> *Ibid.*, 311; see also Thorpe, *A History of the British Labour Party*, 124.

<sup>1091</sup> Bamberg, *The History of the British Petroleum Company: Volume 2*, 315–316.

<sup>1092</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 360.

advising for vigilance.<sup>1093</sup> From a May Day procession, the Tudeh launched a number of strikes among the oil workers lasting for most of the summer of 1946. They first started in the locomotion section of the refinery which was soon followed by the distillation plant on 5 May. The strikes started as a protest against a British foreman who had been violent towards workers.<sup>1094</sup> Led by the CCFTU and the Tudeh, the strikes took on a much wider cause. At a Tudeh gathering in Abadan on 20 May 1946 after 200 AIOC workers had gone on strike, a strike leader declared:

The Englishmen should not think of the time of the war, when they oppressed Iranians so much that the pen is helpless to write their tyranny. Oh! Brothers of the same religion, hear the production of oil in our land is like jewels, you must try to get these jewels back, if we do not succeed to get it back, then we are men of worst and rotten stuff. The salaries which they give to Iranians are the wages of their dogs. So we should try to get this oil and get its profit to ourselves.<sup>1095</sup>

For the first time here, the party openly called for nationalisation and linked Iranian oil to the wider question of British imperialism. More importantly, it was the first time the party revealed itself as a serious defender of oil workers. Throughout the month, strikes were called, and entire oilfields stopped working.<sup>1096</sup>

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<sup>1093</sup> Ministry of the Interior Report, 1324/12/23 (14 March 1946), No.48.8, 1A, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>1094</sup> Atabaki, 'Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', 107.

<sup>1095</sup> AIOC to British embassy Tehran (Roberts), 29 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/50/46.

<sup>1096</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 361.

Both Abrahamian and Atabaki have discussed how the Tudeh was at the helm of the strikers, from guiding the strikes to undertaking arbitration with the company.<sup>1097</sup> The party was targeted immediately by the British and the AIOC, who initially condemned the strikes as illegal. They then threatened to cut off supplies for workers completely.<sup>1098</sup> Panicked, the AIOC was not only concerned for the security of their position but also about the influence of the Tudeh over its workers.<sup>1099</sup> Shafiee also pointed out the significant impact the strike had on the technicalities of oil supply and distribution.<sup>1100</sup> Notably, the strikes opened up wider issues when the party also called for the removal of the British from the country and for violent acts to be carried out against British personnel. This prompted the chief of police, Colonel Vaqar, to echo earlier warnings from the Iranian authorities for Europeans in Khuzestan to take care of their safety.<sup>1101</sup> The Tudeh used the strikes to further harass the servants and personnel of the British consulate general in Ahwaz,<sup>1102</sup> while Tudeh pamphlets were distributed that explicitly incited violence against supporters of “Foreign Imperialists”.<sup>1103</sup> The expansion of the strikes to target not only the AIOC but also British officials brought the conflict to the door of London.

Tudeh activity in the south had far-reaching influence, much to the consternation of the British in Iran, India and in the rest of the Gulf. Within Iran, these oil workers became

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<sup>1097</sup> Atabaki, ‘Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946’, 107–109 and Abrahamian, *Iran*, 359–363.

<sup>1098</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

<sup>1099</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 4 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/57/46.

<sup>1100</sup> Shafiee, *Machineries of Oil*, 139.

<sup>1101</sup> British consulate (Khorramshahr) to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 3 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/6/46.

<sup>1102</sup> British consulate general Ahwaz (Trott) to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 20 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/268/46.

<sup>1103</sup> British consulate (Khorramshahr) to British embassy Tehran, 15 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/188/46.

involved in other Tudeh activities. In July, 25 foreign workers arrived in Qom in a bus fitted with party flags before taking to the streets to sing Tudeh anthems.<sup>1104</sup> While this contingent must have been quite a sight for the local authorities, their arrival so far from Abadan had wider implications for the British. Serious consideration had to be given to the party's potential to reach beyond Khuzestan and even to the British protectorates in the Persian Gulf.<sup>1105</sup> Employees of the Kuwait Oil Company were also coming under the sway of Tudeh ideas, particularly through the spread of the party's literature.<sup>1106</sup> The British political agent in Kuwait, who was the British adviser to the Al-Sabah family, expressed concern regarding the Tudeh's potential to spread to the Indian employees of the Kuwait Oil Company.<sup>1107</sup> In Iraq, the oil workers of the Khanaqin Company were in full support of the Abadan strikes, with oil companies in the region subsequently coming under intense scrutiny from their host governments.<sup>1108</sup> By being the voice of the anti-British campaign and causing disruption to the oil refinery<sup>1109</sup>, the Tudeh directly challenged British interests in the region and threatened the central position of oil within the British economy.

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<sup>1104</sup> Described as "non-Iranian", they could have been Indian or Arab. Ministry of Interior, 1325/4/11 (2 July 1946), No.1/26010/4413, 1B, International Institute of Social History.

<sup>1105</sup> This proved to be an ongoing concern when two years after the strikes in Khuzestan, several members of the Tudeh, including Ali Akbar Baqir Zada and Ismail Kadhemi, arrived in Bahrain. This quickly came to the knowledge of the Political Agency there and the entry of the Tudeh members was considered to be a security breach. Political Agency Bahrain to Adviser to the Bahrain Government (Belgrave), 17 March 1948, Political Agency (Bahrain) to Political Resident (Bahrain), 31 July 1946, the India Office Records, IOR/R/15/2/912.

<sup>1106</sup> Political Agency (Bahrain) to Political Resident (Bahrain), 31 July 1946, the India Office Records, IOR/R/15/2/912, C/805.

<sup>1107</sup> Political Resident (Bahrain) to Foreign (New Delhi), 21 November 1946, Political Agency (Bahrain) to Political Resident (Bahrain), 31 July 1946, the India Office Records, IOR/R/15/2/912.

<sup>1108</sup> Political Resident (Bahrain) to Foreign (New Delhi), 21 November 1946, Political Agency (Bahrain) to Political Resident (Bahrain), 31 July 1946, the India Office Records, IOR/R/15/2/912.

<sup>1109</sup> AIOC to British embassy Tehran (Roberts), 29 May 1946. PRO, FO248/1468, G543/50/46; see also Military Intelligence officer (Karachi) to General Headquarters (New Delhi), 25 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/78/46.

On a trip to Abadan in June 1946, Le Rougetel observed that the Tudeh was in complete control of labour at the refinery and was continuing to grow in strength. The strikes which had begun a month before had clearly taken on a more important significance while the party's reach expanded beyond. The party had become an alternate source of authority – for instance, in holding tribunals and fining employers who failed to treat their workers well.<sup>1110</sup> The Tudeh also carried out other activities, including the commandeering of AIOC vehicles without permission.<sup>1111</sup> Here, the party maintained the support of workers through simple slogans and were efficient in campaigning and recruiting.<sup>1112</sup> Le Rougetel warned that the only reason that there was any semblance of order was because the Tudeh was in charge and were effective.<sup>1113</sup> To the British consulate in Shiraz, the party seemed to be moving from strength to strength, while gaining more popularity and influence.<sup>1114</sup> In this regard, the embassy and its consuls were in agreement over the Tudeh's strength in the south.

Such reports from Shiraz also revealed that British officials felt that the Tudeh's rise was occurring unchecked by Iranian authorities. Le Rougetel and the British consul in Khuzestan were not impressed by local efforts in responding to the Tudeh.<sup>1115</sup> The AIOC

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<sup>1110</sup> Other examples included Tudeh members arresting and fining an agent of a motor company for failing to supply a car to one of his employees. British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 10 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/72/46. The Tudeh had also solicited the help of the AIOC workers to produce pro-Tudeh propaganda. The party forced shops to close so that owners could attend meetings. British consulate Ahwaz to British embassy Tehran, 14 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/77/46.

<sup>1111</sup> Party members borrowed some vehicles to transport workers but returned them in good condition. AIOC to British embassy Tehran (Roberts), 29 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/50/46.

<sup>1112</sup> For a thorough discussion on Tudeh influence over the workers, see Roberts' memorandum in British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 5 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/58/46.

<sup>1113</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 4 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/55/46.

<sup>1114</sup> In Fars, the Tudeh were gaining more influence and support by criticising the British consulate and the chief of police. British consulate Shiraz to British embassy Tehran, 23 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1460, 33/85/46.

<sup>1115</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 7 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/5/46.

shared the unease that not enough was being done to curb Tudeh activities.<sup>1116</sup> In Khorramshahr, the governor expressed his doubts over the trustworthiness of the police and gendarmerie in the region, subsequently seeking advice from AIOC officials with regard to security matters.<sup>1117</sup> Underwood, the former military attaché, transferred to Khorramshahr to become the political adviser there. His military expertise was needed in the summer of 1946. The British embassy in Tehran expressed concern to London that the governor-general of Khuzestan did not have a proper mandate from Tehran to maintain order in the province.<sup>1118</sup> Qavam had initially agreed<sup>1119</sup> with Le Rougetel's statement that the Iranian government was responsible for the protection of company staff<sup>1120</sup>, yet the governor-general of Khuzestan failed to receive instructions from Tehran to curb the Tudeh.<sup>1121</sup> Qavam's apparent conciliatory attitude towards the Tudeh highlighted to the British that Qavam was too associated with the party to curb it.<sup>1122</sup> As argued by Atabaki, Tehran was itself realigning its politics to focus more on labour matters. At the beginning of the strikes, the British consul in Ahwaz, together with the AIOC's security officer and governor-general Mesbah-Fatemi drew a list of ringleaders to be arrested, which was refused by Tehran.<sup>1123</sup> Qavam oversaw instead the passing of a new labour bill in mid-May 1946, alongside other policies to alleviate Iranian labourers'

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<sup>1116</sup> British consulate general Ahwaz (Trott) to British embassy Tehran, 24 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/286/46.

<sup>1117</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr (Britain) to British embassy Tehran, 30 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/52/46.

<sup>1118</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 8 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/61/46.

<sup>1119</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 26 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/106/46.

<sup>1120</sup> British embassy Tehran aide mémoire, 26 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/103/46; see also British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 15 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/188/46.

<sup>1121</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 4 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/55/46.

<sup>1122</sup> Ladjevardi, *Labour Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 65.

<sup>1123</sup> Atabaki, 'Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', 109.

difficulties.<sup>1124</sup> Tehran was conscious about how to deal with the party since standing in its way could potentially undermine Qavam's reforms.

This reluctance by the Iranian government to control events in the south prompted the British to deal more directly with the Tudeh. Bevin was greatly concerned by its growing influence. Indeed, it became clear that the non-interference policy was paralysing to an extent. For a brief moment there was unison between London, Tehran and the provinces over dealing with the Tudeh, resulting in a brief reversal of supporting Iranian sovereignty. There were three main reasons behind the change in policy. Firstly, the Labour government held a general interest in labour affairs. Secondly, there were wider implications of Tudeh influence within British imperial interests. Thirdly, considerations needed to be given to Britain's stake in oil. Here, British officials at home and in Iran implemented a multi-pronged approach in attempting to undermine Tudeh influence over the oil workers. The Cabinet in London remotely oversaw the situation and were instrumental in pressuring the AIOC and strengthening the British embassy in Tehran.<sup>1125</sup>

On 14 July 1946, the Tudeh staged the most important strike of this period, bringing production to a complete standstill. During this strike, a Tudeh picket at an oil rig stopped personal servants of the AIOC as well as consul general of Ahwaz, Alan Charles Trott, further showing opposition to British presence.<sup>1126</sup> The British consulate in Khorramshahr initially responded by stating that the only way to curb the Tudeh was to

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<sup>1124</sup> Amanat, *Iran*, 516.

<sup>1125</sup> Cabinet conclusion, 7 August 1946, PRO, CAB128/6/15.

<sup>1126</sup> British consulate general Ahwaz (Trott) to British embassy Tehran, 16 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/221/46.

arrest its leaders, or, to at least, suppress their activities.<sup>1127</sup> The Iranian military was called in to manage the situation<sup>1128</sup> and martial law was declared.<sup>1129</sup> To reinforce British control, the Foreign Office saw it necessary to establish a stand-by military force in Basra. An Indian brigade and divisional headquarters were established to respond to any emergencies in Abadan<sup>1130</sup>, poised for a more severe approach to dealing with the Tudeh.

The despatch of British troops to Basra proved to be instrumental in instigating Tehran to become more committed against the Tudeh. In light of Britain's stretched commitments, direct British involvement was not wanted, prompting different approaches to the party. Bevin was clear that the way to deal with the Tudeh was to improve the labour conditions and their public image.<sup>1131</sup> Bevin persuaded his colleagues in the Cabinet that the best way to overcome the party's influence in the south was through "means of winning the labour movement over to us".<sup>1132</sup> This was adopted by the rest of his government, who believed that the party could be challenged sufficiently if labour conditions were improved.<sup>1133</sup>

By improving worker conditions in the south, the British wanted to achieve two main goals: to undermine Tudeh influence and dominance by achieving whatever the party

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<sup>1127</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr (Underwood) to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 30 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/83/46.

<sup>1128</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 14 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/175/46.

<sup>1129</sup> The AIOC and the Iranian governor-general in Khuzestan were prepared to fire upon the Tudeh demonstrators if necessary. AIOC (Abadan), 17 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/240/46.

<sup>1130</sup> The Foreign Office was careful to ensure that there was no publicity regarding the replacement of new troops with fresh ones to respond to Abadan. Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 18 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/254/46.

<sup>1131</sup> Foreign Office memorandum (Bevin), 1 October 1946, PRO, CAB/129/13.

<sup>1132</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to Cabinet, 17 July 1946, PRO, FO371/52705, E6936.

<sup>1133</sup> Foreign Office memorandum (Bevin), 11 July 1946, PRO, CAB 129/11/19.

stood for and to establish Britain's relevance in labour affairs.<sup>1134</sup> Bevin was keen to make Abadan an international standard for labour conditions.<sup>1135</sup> Leading the charge, Bevin offered British governmental advice and wanted to see improvements made to the labour conditions, housing and amenities available for AIOC employees.<sup>1136</sup> He arranged for a parliamentary delegation to visit the oil province.<sup>1137</sup> The minister of fuel and power, Emanuel Shinwell, placed pressure on Sir William Fraser, the chairman of the AIOC to make social improvements.<sup>1138</sup> A month before the strikes, the AIOC had agreed to the articles of the new labour law, but they had not been implemented in time.<sup>1139</sup> Although the governor-general of Khuzestan believed that the company treated its workers well, he too suggested that improvements could be made to the living and working environment.<sup>1140</sup>

The AIOC general manager, Ivor Jones, and Le Rougetel both agreed that while it was necessary to meet with the Tudeh as labour representatives, the company needed to be seen to be responding to worker demands independently of the Tudeh.<sup>1141</sup> During the

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<sup>1134</sup> In October 1945, the Labour government sent a delegation to the International Labour Conference, signalling an interest in global labour affairs. Memorandum by George Alfred Isaacs, minister of labour and national service, 14 March 1946, PRO, C.P.(46) 109.

<sup>1135</sup> Cabinet notebook, 3 June 1946, PRO, CAB195/4/42.

<sup>1136</sup> Foreign Office to British embassy Tehran, 17 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/242/46

<sup>1137</sup> For the report, see Foreign Office memorandum (Bevin), 1 October 1946, PRO, CAB/129/13; Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 14 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/86/46; see Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 22 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/98/46 for Bevin's summary and see British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) for the chief of police of Abadan's full report. As already mentioned, Laali was suspected of having Tudeh sympathies. The military police confirmed the apparent threat from the Tudeh and mentioned the dangers posed towards European staff. Again, the report stressed the need to pressure the Iranian government to improve security conditions or, failing that, to ensure that London took "urgent measures to ensure [the] safety of British interests in South Persia". This clearly went beyond the protection of British citizens.

<sup>1138</sup> Cabinet conclusion, 7 August 1946, PRO, CAB 128/6/15.

<sup>1139</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 152. The labour bill also covered the settlement of disputes through the establishment of a factory council. Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 16 May 1946, FO248/1468, G543/18/46; the British were willing to accept the provisions of this new bill in advance. Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 18 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/21/46.

<sup>1140</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 4 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/55/46.

<sup>1141</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 4 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/55/46.

early negotiations, the AIOC was forced to concede on the question of better pay and access to better supplies, which was hailed as a victory by the Tudeh.<sup>1142</sup> The media coverage placed the AIOC in a particularly bad light, which led the company, the embassy and the Foreign Office to undermine the party. This was done in four main ways: by setting up alternative platforms for workers to air their grievances, through propaganda, by supporting an Arab union and finally, by supporting the Iranian government.

To reduce the importance and prominence of the Tudeh, a better relationship with the labour force was needed. Bevin recommended for proper consultation between the company management and the labour force to take the form of a strong industrial relations department with effective factory councils.<sup>1143</sup> As another way of countering the Tudeh monopoly over workers, Le Rougetel wanted the Iranian labour department of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to appoint a permanent official representative to Abadan.<sup>1144</sup> The ambassador concentrated on improving the welfare of Indian workers by ensuring that they had regular means of airing their complaints.<sup>1145</sup> The British consul in Khorramshahr was successful in persuading the Indian workers that their grievances would be responded to if they ceased their association with the Tudeh.<sup>1146</sup> This showed that, at the same time as negotiating with the Tudeh, it was necessary to wean the workers off their dependence on the party. Furthermore, the diplomats in Iran were in agreement over this issue, which further strengthened this policy.

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<sup>1142</sup> Atabaki, 'Chronicles of a Calamitous Strike Foretold: Abadan, July 1946', 111.

<sup>1143</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 18 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/264/46.

<sup>1144</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 5 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/58/46.

<sup>1145</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 12 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/166/46.

<sup>1146</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 30 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/148/46. The British Indian employees of the AIOC eventually formed a union themselves. Indian Labour Union (Faruki) to British consulate Khorramshahr, 26 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/148/46.

In terms of propaganda, Le Rougetel recommended to London that the party's control over the workers had to be broken.<sup>1147</sup> London responded positively, and Bevin agreed it was necessary to reveal the "true nature" of the Tudeh, asserting that it was no different from other "stooge" communist-inspired parties. Starting with the British consulate in Khorramshahr, counter-Tudeh policies emerged, which included the distribution of false Tudeh leaflets among workers and the production of counter-propaganda.<sup>1148</sup> In this regard, inter-Tudeh frictions were regarded as important propaganda material.<sup>1149</sup> As the political adviser at the Khorramshahr consulate, Underwood implemented oral propaganda tactics to spread doubts over the usage of party funds and rumours about corruption among members.<sup>1150</sup> Following the resignation of some members in light of an alleged misappropriation of party funds, it was suggested that this should be spread orally so that the European employees of the AIOC could "plant this seed of doubt in their workmen's minds".<sup>1151</sup> Similarly, the Tudeh's plan to increase the monthly subscriptions of its members was also manipulated by Underwood to discredit the party.<sup>1152</sup>

Another way in which the British tried to undermine the Tudeh was through the Arab community in the south. The British consulate in Khorramshahr considered the Arabs

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<sup>1147</sup> The British were eager to launch an "all-out publicity campaign". British embassy Tehran (Skrine) to external affairs department, Government of India, New Delhi (Weightman), 5 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/56/46.

<sup>1148</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 26 May 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/82/46.

<sup>1149</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 2 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/149/46.

<sup>1150</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr (Underwood) to AIOC (general manager), 8 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/93/46.

<sup>1151</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 28 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/147/46.

<sup>1152</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 2 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/149/46.

less susceptible to Tudeh influence. Consequently, he encouraged the AIOC to employ more Arabs.<sup>1153</sup> Indeed, it was the Arab sheikhs who proved to be useful in countering the Tudeh monopoly over the workers.<sup>1154</sup> The sheikhs of Abadan and Khorramshahr wanted to achieve two goals – to form an Arab union against the Tudeh and to negotiate with the Iranian government for a fairer deal for the Arab labourers.<sup>1155</sup> The idea of an Arab union threatened the Tudeh leaders.<sup>1156</sup> To de-legitimise this scheme, the Tudeh invoked fear of British intervention by spreading rumours and pamphlets that the British were behind the Arab union, providing arms and support.<sup>1157</sup> The Soviets spoke out to accuse the British of providing substantial financial aid to the Arab chiefs in support of their fight against “[d]emocratic organisations in Khuzistan”, which undoubtedly meant the Tudeh.<sup>1158</sup> Their reactions indicated to the British consulate in Khorramshahr that the Arab community presented a viable threat to the Tudeh’s monopoly in the south.

The governor-general of Abadan encouraged the establishment of such an entity, finding several Abadan merchants who were prepared to financially support it.<sup>1159</sup> Prior to the July strikes, Sheikh Haji Ali Faisali appealed to the British consulate for financial aid to sponsor an Arab resistance against Tudeh and Soviet infiltration, but at the time, the

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<sup>1153</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 19 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/95/46.

<sup>1154</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 28 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/147/46.

<sup>1155</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr (Underwood) to AIOC (General Manager), 16 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/100/46.

<sup>1156</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 25 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/109/46.

<sup>1157</sup> AIOC staff (Shakeri) to general manager in British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 2 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/149/46.

<sup>1158</sup> Foreign Office to British embassy Tehran, 3 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/140/46.

<sup>1159</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr (Underwood) to AIOC (General Manager), 16 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/100/46.

British were not willing to offer support.<sup>1160</sup> However, the British in Iran became more supportive in light of the Tudeh strikes. The British consulate in Khorramshahr pressured the embassy to start the union without delay.<sup>1161</sup> Although the Khorramshahr consulate did not want to be seen to be openly supporting the Arabs<sup>1162</sup>, they did want them on their “side”.<sup>1163</sup> At the same time, the governor-general of Khorramshahr suggested to the British consulate and AIOC that a Bakhtiari chief should be persuaded to visit the oil fields to wean their tribesmen from the Tudeh.<sup>1164</sup> The British Cabinet also agreed that the tribes in the south were useful as a counter to the Tudeh.<sup>1165</sup> Further north, in Isfahan and Shiraz, the Bakhtiari and Qashqa’i tribes had already started to work together against the Tudeh in the upcoming elections. Le Rougetel was sceptical here and cautioned the consul there to stay away from such plans.<sup>1166</sup> His opposition displayed some variances with regards to approach and that ultimately showed that British policy did not want to support too much intervention.

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<sup>1160</sup> British consulate (Khorramshahr) to British embassy Tehran, 15 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/81/46; when the Arabs approached the British following a violent clash with the Tudeh, the British consul refused to get involved. In this regard, the consulate followed Bullard’s policy of not wanting to respond to the Tudeh with violence. When the governor-general of Khorramshahr advised the Arabs to burn down the local Tudeh headquarters in retaliation, the British consul advised moderation instead. British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 15 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/191/46; see also report by Skrine in British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Howe), 17 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/230/46.

<sup>1161</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr (Britain) to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 28 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/147/46; for the main objectives of the union, see British consulate Khorramshahr (Britain) to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 28 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/147/46.

<sup>1162</sup> Bevin thought that this would provide the Soviets with propagandist material. Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 26 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/300/46.

<sup>1163</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 25 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/296/46.

<sup>1164</sup> British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 24 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G153/108/46.

<sup>1165</sup> Cabinet notebook, 24 June 1946, PRO, CAB195/4/47.

<sup>1166</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 30 August 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, G65/155/46.

Indeed, while Britain could lend its support to the Arabs, distribute anti-Tudeh propaganda and quietly support improvements in the oil industry, supporting Tehran was regarded as the only way in which its interests could be properly (and legitimately) protected. This was corroborated by British military intelligence, which declared that two-thirds of the Indian workers who were influenced by the Tudeh would silence their support if the Iranian government intervened and punished those who openly supported the party.<sup>1167</sup> In this light and despite Bevin's interest in utilising the tribes, the Foreign Office in London opted for a less aggressive approach. Bevin instructed the British embassy in Tehran to place more pressure on Qavam, to the extent that it noted that if the Iranian prime minister did not deal with the party, he risked a repeat of 1907 and further dividing the country into two spheres of influence.<sup>1168</sup> This threat struck a chord with Qavam who did not want to risk British intervention should the Tudeh not be dealt with.<sup>1169</sup> Qavam sent two of his ministers together with two Tudeh leaders from Tehran to the south in order to break the strike.<sup>1170</sup>

Local authorities were also given appropriate mandate to deal with the party. The military governors in Khorramshahr overrode the chief of police and refused permission for the Tudeh to demonstrate.<sup>1171</sup> Becoming more serious about dealing with the Tudeh, the Iranian prime minister and his government ordered that Tudeh members to be arrested and sought for martial law to be declared in Khuzestan.<sup>1172</sup> The governor-

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<sup>1167</sup> Military Intelligence officer Karachi (Thomas) to General Headquarters New Delhi, 31 August 1946, India Office Records, IOR/R/15/2/912.

<sup>1168</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 4 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/57/46.

<sup>1169</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, 10 June 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/71/46.

<sup>1170</sup> Katouzian, *The Persians*, 241.

<sup>1171</sup> This demonstration was against the fascist regime in Spain; but as mentioned, the Tudeh continued to demonstrate against Franco. British consulate Khorramshahr to British embassy Tehran, 18 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/251/46.

<sup>1172</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 15 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/194/46.

general also ordered the arrest of pro-Tudeh AIOC employees and state railway employees who had been spreading Tudeh propaganda. Qavam's adviser and deputy, Mozaffar Firuz was provided with a list of agitators that needed to be removed from Khuzestan.<sup>1173</sup> Following the arrest of some Tudeh leaders, many workers returned to the refinery, but the industrial action continued.<sup>1174</sup> Clearly, the strikes had developed a life of their own. While the British diplomats were scheming behind the scenes to counteract Tudeh power, the AIOC engaged a final time with the Tudeh leaders Iraj Eskanderi and Radmanesh, who had come from Tehran to negotiate an end to the strikes. By August 1946, the strikes were officially called off when the AIOC agreed to increase the minimum wage and to provide pay on Friday.<sup>1175</sup> Although the strikes resulted in victory for the Tudeh and the Iranian labourers, the party's influence and hold over the workers had been significantly undermined by the efforts of the British and the local authorities.

The end of the strikes and the crackdown of the party must have come as a relief to not only the AIOC but to the British government as well. The Tudeh's activities in the south among the oil workers placed British policymakers in a difficult situation. They no longer had much presence or mandate but, nonetheless, military tactics were initially employed as a show of force. These were quickly abandoned for more discreet methods of dealing with the Tudeh, which indicated Labour's vision for British presence in Iran. On the whole, the different levels of decision-making were in agreement about the Tudeh threat

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<sup>1173</sup> British consulate general Ahwaz (Trott) to British embassy Tehran, 20 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/263/46.

<sup>1174</sup> British consulate general Ahwaz (Trott) to British embassy Tehran, 15 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468/G543/199/46; the main instigators of the July strikes – Hafizullah, Durusti and Zubdeh – were also arrested by the military and sent to Tehran. British consulate Ahwaz (Trott) to British embassy Tehran, 24 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/286.

<sup>1175</sup> Abrahamian, *Iran*, 365.

and that it needed to be dealt with. Several avenues were explored, from covert tactics to using the tribes, and Bevin, Le Rougetel and the consuls each having their own preferences (and at times, dislikes). The differences in approach resulted in a somewhat chaotic response to the Tudeh and the strikes, whereby different players undertook different tactics at the same time. In light of Britain's economic position and due to its lack of appetite for increased intervention, the Foreign Office saw it prudent to support Tehran and local authorities as the main way to undermine the party's influence.

### 3.4 The Tudeh within Britain's post-occupation legacy

The unrest in Khuzestan had begun to settle down by the end of August 1946. Britain's responses during the critical weeks of the strikes opened up a debate about the future of its policy direction in Iran. When Britain perceived the Tudeh as a significant threat to the oil, it abandoned its initial post-war policy of cautious non-intervention in favour of a more open role in intervening in Iranian affairs. However, this was not sustainable in the long-term, seeing that the British could neither afford nor justify direct action in Iran. This led to a serious commitment to support an Iranian government that would, in turn, protect British interests. This was embodied in Britain's support to include the Tudeh within the Iranian government. Although the latter point seems counterintuitive, it actually shows the adaptability of British policy in how it supported Qavam's policies and methods towards the Tudeh and as a way to stay committed to political distancing in Iran despite the Tudeh's rising political presence. This section also explores how the policies adopted in Iran were very much a reflection of Britain's position at the end of the war, which played out in the changes in attitudes of policymaking.

In London, domestic eagerness for British intervention abroad had changed significantly since the war's end. Members of the British Parliament questioned Bevin about the country's intervention in regard to the strikes, indicating domestic opposition to involvement in Iran. One parliamentarian openly criticised the curtailment of the right to strike, comparing Iranian conditions to those witnessed in Britain. Bevin carefully reiterated that there had been no interference in Iranian affairs. Another MP further questioned Bevin as to what extent policy was driven because of Soviet involvement. Notably, some parliamentarians desired to extend the labour standards implemented in Britain to places like Iran, thereby promoting British-led reforms in other parts of the world.<sup>1176</sup> The interest in Iran within the British Parliament pointed to the concerns held over labour issues more generally but emphasised that the solution did not lie in an increased degree of British government involvement overseas.

In Iran, local developments eased the concerns of British policy makers and illustrated that minimal political involvement would be possible without compromising their interests. In the aftermath of the Khuzestan strikes<sup>1177</sup>, the British embassy and Le Rougetel were ultimately satisfied by the Iranian government's policies for handling the Tudeh and were pleased with the arrest of the strikes' main instigators.<sup>1178</sup> Bevin was also encouraged by Qavam's political party, the Democrat Party, whose policies were regarded as progressive and similar to the Tudeh's 1944 programme. Le Rougetel was

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<sup>1176</sup> Smithers was anti-Soviet and during the course of the Cold War frequently pressed for anti-communist activities. Foreign Office to British embassy Tehran, 17 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1468, G543/242/46.

<sup>1177</sup> However, it should be noted that the tribal revolt, led by the Qashqa'i in Fars and Isfahan, threatened to place Qavam's plans to tame the Tudeh through inclusion in jeopardy. Breaking out in October 1946, the tribal insurrection demanded to dissolve the Qavam's coalition Cabinet, to ban the Tudeh from ever joining government and to prohibit any Tudeh organisations in the south. Abrahamian, *Iran*, 235.

<sup>1178</sup> Ladjevardi, *Labour Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 68. Local syndicates were also set up to organise the workers and break the party's hold in the south. Yusuf Eftekhari, for instance, negotiated with the military governor in Khuzestan over this issue. Eftekhari, *Khaterat-e doran-e separi shodeh*, 96–7.

initially cynical about the effectiveness of the Democrat Party's aims as he found it did not have the same kind of appeal as the Tudeh.<sup>1179</sup> Nonetheless, the Foreign Office emphasised that the Tudeh risked losing its unique and social stance within the political landscape of Iran through its alignment with the Qavam government. In light of this, Bevin proposed to back Qavam's new party, framing it as part of government policy to support political reform in the Middle East.<sup>1180</sup> Despite his earlier cynicism, Le Rougetel encouraged this and gave Qavam the incentive to seek a more lasting solution with the Tudeh in order to stabilise the country's political situation.<sup>1181</sup> London was further encouraged by the Qashqa'i-led insurrection in the south in October 1946, together with the Bakhtiari and other tribes from Fars, against the Tudeh.<sup>1182</sup> Such developments encouraged Labour to continue pursuing the double approach of limited interference and support for the Iranian traditional political class in the hope that it would lead to the breakdown in Tudeh influence.

London's trust in Qavam was particularly evident when it supported the inclusion of the Tudeh within government. Qavam wanted to increase the party's participation so that it would become more invested in maintaining law, order and stability in the country, especially in relation to labour issues.<sup>1183</sup> As already mentioned in this chapter, Qavam appointed party members as a way of making the party both responsible and accountable,

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<sup>1179</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 17 July 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, 65/116/46; the Qashqa'i tribe initially believed that Qavam's party was the best defence against the Tudeh but subsequently changed their minds when some Tudeh members were included in government. British consulate Shiraz to British embassy Tehran, 19 September 1946, PRO, FO248/1460, 33/138/46.

<sup>1180</sup> Cabinet memorandum (Bevin), 17 July 1946, PRO, FO371/52705, E6935.

<sup>1181</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 30 August 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, G65/155/46.

<sup>1182</sup> They demanded for autonomy in Fars and Isfahan and went on to capture Bushire and Kazerun. Abrahamian, *Iran*, 235.

<sup>1183</sup> There were other anti-Tudeh movements, such as the one led by the tribes in the south. In addition to the Arab union, in Isfahan, the Bakhtiari tribe banded together. Anonymous Letter to British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel), 6 December 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, [No Classmark].

which Le Rougetel did not object to.<sup>1184</sup> However, this support came at a risk. Azimi pointed out that Britain allowed Qavam to include the Tudeh, despite some suspicion that such inclusion could be regarded as evident of Qavam's leanings towards the Soviet Union.<sup>1185</sup> Furthermore, although the Tudeh-run ministries had removed many of the corrupt, redundant or inefficient officials that the British criticised, the British embassy in Tehran was concerned that they would be overrun by Tudeh appointees.<sup>1186</sup> Despite these concerns from Le Rougetel in his dispatch to Bevin, the decision to back Qavam and the Tudeh in government remained.

Ultimately, the British concluded that the appointment of Tudeh ministers showed some effort by the Iranian government to suppress the party and restore order throughout the country. The trust placed by Britain in Qavam and his government coincided and may even have prompted the reassertion of Tehran's power over the country. Since the summer of 1946, following the withdrawal of Soviet troops, both the autonomous governments of Azerbaijan and Kurdistan were now vulnerable to the Iranian Army, revealing the reliance these movements had on Soviet assistance.<sup>1187</sup> In December 1946, Tehran sent troops into the northern provinces. Without much resistance, Mahabad fell on 15 December 1946<sup>1188</sup> despite attempts by Qazi Muhammad to negotiate for autonomy some months before.<sup>1189</sup> After the fall of Azerbaijan, the Tudeh appeared disillusioned and weak, which probably helped to justify the decision by London to

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<sup>1184</sup> After some tensions, Qavam reformed his Cabinet and appointed Tudeh ministers. British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 2 August 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, G65/122/46; the appointments sparked some protest from within the Tudeh, much to the delight of Le Rougetel. British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office, 3 August 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, G65/132/46.

<sup>1185</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 153.

<sup>1186</sup> British embassy Tehran (Le Rougetel) to Foreign Office (Bevin), 12 August 1946, PRO, FO248/1462, G65/144/46.

<sup>1187</sup> Fawcett, "Revisiting the Iranian Crisis of 1946: How Much More Do We Know?", 389-390.

<sup>1188</sup> Qazi Muhammad and his associates were arrested. Ghassemlou, "Kurdistan in Iran", 109.

<sup>1189</sup> McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds*, 244.

remain politically distant in Iran.<sup>1190</sup> In the months following the Khuzestan strikes, Le Rougetel noted that the Tudeh was losing ground while its role as leader of the labour movement was becoming less relevant after the Khuzestan strikers' demands were responded to.<sup>1191</sup> There were also efforts by Zahedi to establish a club in Tehran, which comprised deputies from the south, to give the impression of a united front against the Tudeh.<sup>1192</sup> The inclusion of the Tudeh in the Iranian Cabinet had resulted in apparent tensions between the Tudeh, Qavam and the Democrat Party, which further undermined the party's position.<sup>1193</sup> As predicted by Khalil Maliki, Qavam would deceive the party and indeed in November 1946, the Tudeh Cabinet ministers were dismissed.<sup>1194</sup>

The scheme to support the Iranian government appeared to pay off. The Tudeh's power was weakened and its closeness with the government meant that the party came under observation by the ruling class. By pursuing this path, the British government was able to publicly say that it supported Iranian sovereignty. In a conversation with the head of the Iranian delegation to the Paris peace conference, M Sepahbodi, Bevin confidently asserted that the British government was opposed to interfering in the internal politics of any country.<sup>1195</sup> At the same time, the party's political ambitions were controlled by Tehran, thereby ensuring British interests were protected. Although the British embassy, especially Le Rougetel, voiced doubts over Qavam's ability to control the Tudeh, Bevin

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<sup>1190</sup> For more on those who went into exile after, see Amir Khosravi Babak, *Mohajerat-e sosalist-e va sarnevesht-e Iraniyan: Mohajeran-e Hezb-e Kommunist-e Iran, Ferqah-ye Demokrat-e Azerbaijan, Hezb-e Tudeh-ye Iran, sazman-e fadaiyan-e aksariyat* (Tehran: Nashr-e payam-e emruz, 2003), 85–86.

<sup>1191</sup> Ladjevardi, *Labour Unions and Autocracy in Iran*, 68.

<sup>1192</sup> The necessary funds came from wealthy donors in the south. British consulate Shiraz to British embassy Tehran, 20 November 1946, PRO, FO248/1460, G33/148/46.

<sup>1193</sup> Azimi, *Iran*, 154.

<sup>1194</sup> Katouzian, *Khalil Maleki*, 52.

<sup>1195</sup> Foreign Office (Bevin) to British embassy Tehran, PRO, FO248/1468, G65/158/46.

and the Foreign Office prevailed, while political distancing remained in place until the end of 1946.

#### 4. Conclusion

Immediately after the end of the war and with the start of Cold War tensions, the British were confronted by changes in their economic and political fortunes not only domestically but globally. This had a ripple effect on its position in Iran. The installation of a Labour government also meant a re-evaluation of Britain's position. Their former co-occupiers, the Soviets, asserted their position by remaining in the north of Iran and by supporting the Azerbaijan autonomous movement. In response, Britain delayed its withdrawal from the country. However, in light of its economic situation, the Labour government in tandem with the British embassy in Iran sought to find a way it could reduce its political interference in the country but still maintain control over its interests, which were namely the discouragement of communism, the removal of Soviet troops, the protecting of its prime oil position and the promotion of British-led reform. As established, the Tudeh posed a threat to all of these concerns and, at the end of the war, despite setbacks, maintained its credibility and continued to be a significant player in Iran.

By contextualising the party in Britain's globalised approach and positioning at the end of the war, it appears that the party's activities in Iran had implications in other spheres of British power. It brought instability among the Indian subjects working in Khuzestan, which affected British presence in the Persian Gulf. The party was also embroiled in the international struggle with the Left – and can be categorised alongside former assets such

as the KKE and MCP. However, the British government avoided expanding direct confrontation to Iran. Although the strikes led the British to briefly foray into a more involved path to reassert its position, this was quickly abandoned for subtler but more effective tactics. In addition to improving the British image and to promoting better working and living conditions in the south, the British relied on Tehran to protect its interests as of overcoming the Tudeh threat but also without burdening Britain's stretched resources. In doing so, the flexibility and robustness of British policy in adapting to the evolving nature of the post-war landscape was revealed.

## Conclusion

This thesis has established that British policy maintained a flexible nature which was able to respond to changing circumstances, that the Tudeh was a key factor in policymaking which was affected by changes in British interests and priorities during the period of this study and, finally, that Iran can be placed within the global histories of the Second World War and the Cold War by drawing links between how the British treated the Tudeh. To conclude this study, an in-depth summary of the main policy interests will be discussed to further show how and why attitudes towards the Tudeh shifted. In addition, this study has opened up new avenues for future research, which will also be presented here.

### 1. The flexible nature of British policy

The occupation was an important phase of British policy in Iran, one that was politically active and able to directly uphold Britain's interests in the face of a global war. However, when the nature of the occupation changed as a result of shifts in the war and within the alliance (with the US and Soviet Union), challenges emerged. The flexible nature of British policy allowed for adjustments to be made in the attitudes held in accordance to needs. In this vein, the ability of decision-makers to respond to developments in Iran and to the war meant that such approaches and attitudes could be shifted accordingly and quickly. It is this same elasticity and flexibility that allowed policymakers to view the Tudeh both in admiration (for its programme and organisation) and with concern when it came to preserving British presence and interests.

British policy during the occupation can (and has in this thesis) be divided between the start of the occupation (1941–1943), the middle era (1943–1945), and the end (1945–1946). In turn, these periods correspond to particular sets of British interests and eras of the Second World War and Cold War. Within each of these phases, policymakers adapted to respond to changes in Britain, Iran and abroad, affecting how the Tudeh featured and was treated.

The first phase of British policy saw the military occupation of Iran and the re-establishment of Britain's political influence in the country. Until the invasion of Iran in August 1941, British presence was limited, partially due to Reza Shah's policies but mainly because of Britain's own diminishing interest and energy to remain politically active in the country. This meant that British interests in Iran were exposed to volatility within Reza Shah's desire to gain more say and independence from Britain and London's main entity in the country, the AIOC. With the outbreak of the war, Reza Shah and his closeness to Germany was regarded suspiciously, propelling British diplomats to take a more active interest in Iran. Even before the decision to invade and occupy, they started propaganda campaigns in the country and made preliminary plans to protect the oil. Led by Bullard supported by the legation staff, the PRB and his consuls, British presence was revived. The ability to switch policies reflected the flexible nature of policymaking, which became even more apparent when Britain entered into alliance with the Soviet Union. The invasion and occupation of neutral Iran saw two conflicting ideologies come together over a common enemy. Although Bullard and his staff were suspicious of their Soviet colleagues, these were put aside for the greater need to cooperate in the war. The early phase of British policy was largely driven by the events of the war, which was not going particularly well for Britain at that point. Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour expanded the

alliance to include the US, but the Japanese invasion and occupation of Singapore and Malaya was a major blow to the British empire.

Turning Iran into a war asset proved problematic at the start. In the absence of Reza Shah, political freedom created new entities as well as a volatile political climate, with prime ministers coming and going with high frequency. In addition to the political instability, Allied needs were prioritised over Iranian ones. Under such circumstances, British policymakers in Iran sought to make the occupation tolerable for Iranians. Driven by notions of liberalism and reform, the British in Iran also pursued policies designed to promote changes both as a way to leave an imprint on Iran's politics and as a way to seek new figures who could protect British interests in the country. On one level, the occupation gave way to a new burst of political expression, as seen through the emergence of new political parties. The British tried to use this development to benefit the war effort. A manifestation of this thinking related to how the Tudeh was seen and utilised as a part of Britain's war effort, despite the party's links with the Soviet Union and Marxism. The conflicting duality of Britain's presence (as occupier and reformer) was apparent here and revealed what was essentially a contradictory situation: while Britain fought to liberate the world from fascism, here it was occupying a neutral country. The adaptability of its policymaking meant that it embodied both personas with relative ease, justifying the occupation by prioritising strategic needs and depicting the occupation as politically liberating for Iran. The hypocrisy of the situation was completely ignored, as were feelings of guilt or the need to justify depriving Iran of its sovereignty and resources.

The second phase of British policy saw subtle transitions in mindset and attitude. The Soviet victory at Stalingrad in February 1943 was a turning point for not only the war,

but also for the British in Iran. Victory in the war would not come soon but with Italy's surrender and Germany's retreat from North Africa, there was a renewed confidence among the British. Perversely, there was also an underlying concern that the Soviets were faring better in terms of image and political clout. In Iran, this manifested in increased suspicions over Soviet interference and interest in gaining political platforms in the Majles and in the north of the country. Bullard and his colleagues led this charge, sometimes to the chagrin of the Foreign Office who wanted to maintain the integrity of the alliance. In most cases, the legation and its consulates respected London as the final determiner of policy, but where possible pursued their own approaches, as seen, for example, during the fourteenth Majles elections. Within these shifts however was also the tendency to return to the pre-occupation status quo from where the control of the government in Tehran was tolerated and pushes for radical reform were abandoned. However, the difference in the post-occupation era was the presence of the Tudeh, which was viewed suspiciously. The fluid nature of British policymaking came into play by turning to Tehran to ensure Britain's needs and interests were met, while more suspicious attitudes towards the Soviets and the Tudeh were adopted.

Finally, the last phase saw policymakers respond to the end of the occupation and the beginning of the Cold War. With all the challenges that came from this period, and with the change of government in Britain, one would have expected to see British presence in Iran thrown into flux. Instead, its resilience and ability to adapt surfaced. Indeed, diplomats found new ways of navigating its role and protecting its interests in post-occupation Iran. However, this did not come without compromises. The end of the war signalled not only an end to the occupation but also the start of a new phase of British policymaking. The Labour Party's victory in the elections of 1945 introduced new strands

of thinking, including an emphasis on labour issues, which was adopted as a political tool as a way to imprint British influence on Iran. In many ways, the new Labour government upheld the policies of the previous coalition government when it came to Iran. Beside a brief moment of political interference during the 1946 Khuzestan strikes, the British government, as supported by its diplomats in Iran, upheld the policy of supporting the government in Tehran. Moving from the role of a military occupier, the British in Iran also had to adapt, which it did quickly, as seen through Bullard's noticeable shift in attitude during the fifteenth Majles elections where he deliberately kept intervention to a minimum. In the post-war climate (with Britain economically weak, exhausted, and on the brink of a new conflict with its former ally the Soviet Union), the Labour government simply could not afford to stay politically active in Iran. As such, Tehran was relied upon more and political interference was limited to lobbying the Iranian government to protect British assets (such as oil) from Tudeh encroachment.

In sum, this thesis has shown that the agility of British policy was a necessary component of its robustness which, in turn, ensured that Britain was able to maintain its interests beyond the occupation, despite a significant reduction in its economic strength. British interests changed as well during this period, alongside shifts in the war, which in turn saw changes in priorities. The adaptable and elastic nature of the British diplomats in Iran meant that policy could move organically while different views of the Tudeh could be accommodated, even at the same time. Although such an approach resulted in contradictory attitudes, it allowed for British presence to endure in some shape or form.

## 2. The Tudeh factor in British policy

This thesis has established that the Tudeh played an important role in British policy. By situating its position within the key interests of Britain at the time, we can see how the British in Iran were subject to changes in the war, its international relations and British politics. Conversely, the party's political significance is highlighted by tracking how the British reacted to the party's rise and ideological development. The Tudeh thus has been established as a barometer of British reactions to external changes and to shifts in Iran. Policymaking was also a matter of individuals and governments who brought their own sets of contradictions, prejudices and hunches in determining the nature of the Tudeh and its impact on British interests. These reactions all contributed to the depiction of the party as an important component of its strategy in Iran – either as a policy determinant or at the receiving end of certain policy decisions.

The position of the Tudeh within British policy can also be divided between the three main phases of the occupation. In each, the Tudeh was treated and regarded according to British interests, British attitudes, and on the party's own development during those eras.

The Tudeh emerged at the very start of the occupation, which coincided with the beginning of a new chapter in Iran's political development. Its foundation derived from the political freedom of the post-Reza Shah era in Iran and as a result of the occupation. In the first phase of the occupation, the party pursued a programme that was uncontroversial and largely in line with the interests of both occupying forces, namely combatting German influence in Iran and beyond. Here, the Tudeh's link with the Soviet Union appeared vague, which was most probably a deliberate act to show that the Soviets did not want to pursue their own political agenda. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that the party had Comintern support from the start of the occupation. Furthermore, the party's

Marxist credentials did not translate directly onto paper, which instead focused on societal improvements and fighting German influence in Iran.

Indeed, the Tudeh was regarded positively by the British. Their interests in Iran was largely concentrated on the war effort during this early phase and thus the Tudeh was seen as an asset in two main ways. Firstly, as a vehicle and platform to counter German influence in the country through its programme and activities and by supporting the British propaganda machine in Iran. Secondly, as an example of the political freedom established by the occupation. However, it is in the former positioning that the Tudeh featured the most within British policy. The inclusion of Bozorg Alavi and the utilisation of the party's newspaper, *Mardom*, were concrete examples of British policymakers seeing the Tudeh as an asset. This interaction speaks of British pragmatism at the time. In other theatres of war, Left-wing groups, including communist parties, were all seen as assets in the fight against Germany and Japan in Europe and Southeast Asia. Furthermore, the British government's alliance with the Soviet Union was prioritised above any ingrained prejudices against the Soviets and suspicion towards communism. As such, the Tudeh was not viewed as a vehicle for Soviet political ambitions. Conversely, the Soviet Union and these communist parties placed political agendas and ambitions on hold in solidarity with their new allies. This created a unique environment in which British policy adapted to the needs of the war, embodied by cooperation with the Tudeh.

The second phase of the occupation saw policies and ways of thinking in the first phase of the occupation abandoned in favour of more tried-and-tested methods of safeguarding interests. The Tudeh's position within British policy also changed and was used as a reason to implement certain policies, which came to the fore during the fourteenth Majles

elections when Britain politically interfered to prevent a Tudeh bloc entering the Iranian Parliament. This represented the transformation of how the Tudeh was viewed by British policymakers in Iran, shifting from a war asset to a potential threat. An explanation for this change lies in the re-emergence of suspicions about Soviet intentions and ambitions in the country after Stalingrad. Figures such as Bullard and his consuls in Tabriz, Cook and Urquhart, held negative opinions about their Soviet colleagues and began to present the Tudeh as a Soviet political tool. This concern was not immediately shared by the British government, who appeared unalarmed by the growth of the Tudeh in Iran. London prioritised the ongoing war and the need to maintain the alliance with the Soviet Union, which was captured by the success of the Tehran conference. Furthermore, cooperation with the Left continued to be relied upon in places like Malaya and Greece. In Iran, with the German threat quickly diminishing, the Tudeh was seen as a threat while the party pursued policies that openly confronted British presence. When the party openly supported the Soviets' bid for an oil concession, the Tudeh made a stand against British monopoly over the oil in Iran and confirmed the suspicions of the diplomatic staff in Iran. Within a relatively short period of time, the Tudeh's position had shifted significantly. The concerns of British diplomats in Iran shaped how the party was seen, while policies that could protect British interests from Tudeh and Soviet encroachment were sought after.

In the last phase of the occupation, the Tudeh's position within British policy was reassessed in line with the end of the war. Here, British policymakers in Tehran and London began to re-examine their position in Iran, in light of what was happening internationally. Bullard, realistically, concluded that Britain should step back from political interference, asserting that Britain's political position ought to be reduced with the end of the occupation. London readily concurred but with the caveat that it could step

in should the Soviets overstep the mark and threaten Britain. Indeed, when it came to the Tudeh, the British maintained their opinions and politically interfered where and when needed. In this respect, the Labour government maintained the policies of the previous government. There was also an increased interest in the party from London, which ran alongside Labour's own interest in workers' rights and labour issues. The breakdown of relations with the Soviets and with former anti-fascist allies throughout Europe and Southeast Asia impacted on how the Tudeh was viewed and treated. By the end of the occupation, the party was regarded (and acted) as a communist entity willing to spread communist ideology and defend Soviet actions in Iran.

While the Tudeh's reputation had been damaged during the oil concession crisis, the party remained significant and was even able to increase its influence among the workers in the south. Their support for the oil workers' strike during the summer of 1946 brought the party into direct confrontation with the AIOC, London and the British in Iran, who were forced to rethink their policy of non-interference. This led to the consideration of a military solution, which was quickly dismissed due to lack of resources and enthusiasm for increased commitment. However, as the Tudeh was now a crucial factor in British decision-making, it still needed to be dealt with. In the post-occupation landscape, the British decided to maintain a position of limited interference and thus opted to support the government in Tehran to defend Britain from the Tudeh threat. While this offered some contradictory policy choices, the decision to do so and to seek a workable solution further highlights the position of the Tudeh within British policy.

In sum, it has been shown in this thesis that in each stage of the occupation, the Tudeh was a policy consideration for British decision-makers as well as a reason to pursue

certain policies. The party held different façades throughout the occupation period, which affected how it was viewed by British policymakers. Shifts in the war resulted in varying degrees of suspicion towards the Soviets and the Tudeh was seen as a prime target to impair Soviet ambitions. At the end of the occupation, the party represented a different kind of threat to the British. This time, the party's influence over the oil workers harmed Britain's control over Iranian oil and, more generally, British presence in the region. In all these instances, for the British, the Tudeh occupied a way to halt Soviet designs and a threat to defend against.

### 3. Understanding the shifts in policy towards the Tudeh

In order to understand the shifts in policy towards the Tudeh, the primary questions posed at the start will be summarised here. The post-war landscape was very different from the world of the early 1940s. Allies became rivals for power, while the British empire was no longer the powerhouse it once was. The war had accelerated its shrinking, crippled the British government and forced Britain to seek new ways to protect its political and economic interests. The occupation saw shifts in vision and priorities within the British governmental and diplomatic structure that impacted the way the Tudeh featured in British policy. At both ends of the occupation, policy was influenced by mostly the same diplomats and politicians, with the exception of the final months of the occupation era which saw the appointment of Le Rougetel and the election of the Labour government. However, they too were at the mercy of those changes facing Britain and implemented policies, at times contradictory, in response to them.

The shifts in policy at the start of the war to the end of the occupation were brought on by a number of obvious factors: the end of the war, the change in governments, the start of the Cold War, the importance of the oil industry to the British government, and an exhausted economy back home. The less apparent factors included the flexible and realistic nature of British policy, the anxiety felt by British policymakers towards too much involvement in Iran, the concerns surrounding British image and an apparently genuine belief that Britain should support Iranian sovereignty in the aftermath of the occupation, which were all aspects underscored by the admittance that Britain simply could not afford to maintain the influence and power it had held during the occupation. The last months of the occupation witnessed chaos and confusion which threw British policymakers into the deep end, forcing them to also deal with the conclusion of the war and the beginning of the Cold War. All of these issues underlay the bigger question of what Britain's role in post-occupation Iran would look like and explain the shifts in how the Tudeh featured.

If Britain's position at the end of the occupation was marked by caution, its position at the start was the opposite. The war provided an opportunity to restore some of Britain's political say and influence in Iran, outside of its oil interests. Bullard led the charge and established British presence as a key decisionmaker in Iranian affairs. The set-up of the occupation created ideal circumstances for this. The British military was there, Reza Shah had abdicated and relations with the Soviets were geared towards cooperation, temporarily suspending suspicions of and rivalry with the Soviets. The war drove Britain to pursue policies that supported the war in Europe, which bolstered British presence in Iran. As an occupier, Britain found itself in a position where it could influence the economy and the political developments in Iran. These circumstances created an

atmosphere where altruistic policies (such as promoting reform) could run alongside war-centric policies that brought hardship to Iran. On the rule of the Brooke Family in colonial Sarawak, Ronald Hyam described this as being led by conservative altruism, which included the educating of the population and the discouraging of some traditional practices.<sup>1196</sup> To some extent, this conservative altruism could also be observed in the actions of policymakers in Iran who wanted to encourage a new liberal-minded political class in Iran and to instigate a move away from what they perceived as backward corrupt politics. As laid out in Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis, the Tudeh was representative of this nuance in policy and was regarded both as an example of change and as an asset to the war.

The decision to see the Tudeh as a threat did not come as a given. As has been seen in the preceding chapters, British diplomats maintained a duality in their approach to the Tudeh for the majority of the occupation, which was seen most obviously during the Khuzestan strikes when the party was praised for its organisation and its campaign for better workers' rights. Nonetheless, at the same time, its influence and reach had to be undermined and countered. The realisation that the party posed a serious threat to Britain's position in Iran was seen from early on, which coincided with the victory at Stalingrad when the realistic side of Bullard and his consuls emerged. With this, their ingrained suspicion towards the Soviets came to the fore just as the Allies turned the tide of the war. The Tudeh, which on paper represented the reform Britain wanted to promote, revealed its alignment with the Soviets and spoke out against British imperialism. As such, British focus on promoting reform was switched to protecting

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<sup>1196</sup> Ronald Hyam, *Britain's Declining Empire: The Road to Decolonisation, 1918–1968* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press: 2006), 7.

British image and position. Moreover, the idea that Iran needed to be reformed was reminiscent of nineteenth century imperial undertones, which was becoming more and more outdated. In India, the empire was falling apart and the calls for independence grew louder as the war imposed a huge strain on British society. Under such circumstances, British rivalry with the Soviet Union could not be met by military means. The nature of the international dynamics was rapidly changing, and, with it, the ideal was replaced by the practical. Reforming the Iranian political landscape had proved to be too great a task. As seen in Chapter 3, British policymakers pursued those policies and began to build reliance on Tehran to protect British interests.

From the beginning of the war to its end, the position of communist parties also shifted dramatically, from allies to enemies. At the height of the war against the Axis powers, and with German influence still considered present in Iran, these entities were vital to the war effort. After the breakdown of the German–Soviet pact, Britain and the Left were drawn together against the fascist governments. The war fought in Europe and Asia created an international sense of solidarity. Suspicions and bias towards the Soviets and communism were put aside to prioritise and facilitate a working relationship between Britain and communist groups all over. Even when the tide of the war turned, this relationship remained largely intact. It was only with the end of the war that the relationship broke down, as seen for example in Malaya and Greece. The changes of attitudes bore on how the Tudeh was viewed as well, from the start of the war to its end. The transformation from ally to threat mirrored how the Left was treated in other theatres of war.

Cooperation with the Left was dependent on the relationship with the Soviet Union, which led to other shifts within policymaking. By the end of the occupation, the alliance in Iran had broken and Britain's post-occupation role remained unclear. The Soviet bid for an oil concession gave a taste of Moscow's ambitions while their activities in Azerbaijan were all indications that the Soviets were serious about establishing their political presence in Iran. Instead, the British were doing the opposite. The ideals at the start of the occupation of influencing political reform had largely vanished. The optimism that Britain could promote change in Iran disappeared and was replaced by a realistic belief that it was easier to work with what was present rather than creating a political environment that could not be controlled. After all, Britain was not prepared to commit to Iran beyond the occupation.

Britain's position in global affairs was also rapidly changing during the period of the occupation. No longer in isolation, the US began to play a more important role politically and economically, slowly overshadowing Britain. American emphasis on national sovereignty and Washington's disdain for empires appeared modern next to the British Empire. By the end of the war, the US had established itself as an important international player. Indeed, the US' economic strength placed it in a position of considerable power. Upon winning the 1945 elections, the Labour government realised the position Britain was in globally. The war had drained Britain's coffers, while its imperial grip was becoming unsustainable. In nearby India, independence meant the loss of one of Britain's biggest markets but also constituted a huge loss of its empire. Future relations between London and the Raj were further marred by rumblings of communism in India, which drew inspiration from the Tudeh.

A prevailing question throughout the period covered in this thesis was regarding Britain's key interest in Iran, oil. Its position and relevance within British policy increased considerably during the course of the occupation, thus affecting attitudes towards the Tudeh. At the start of the war, oil was a key component to the war: control of and access to it was necessary to keep the Allied war machine afloat. As Elling and Atabaki have shown, the war placed the oil within a complex militarised context, which introduced stringent laws on Abadan and its workers. The concentration on oil as part of the war effort also meant that the Tudeh stayed away from activities in the south, honouring its alignment with the war effort and its commitment to the fight against Germany. The war and the Tudeh, though initially appearing as separate issues, were interconnected as the war created heightened tensions between oil workers with the British authority on one hand, but closer links with labour activists (including the Tudeh) on the other. After the war's end, oil took on a different significance for British policymakers. While it still retained its symbolism of British presence in Iran, more practically, oil contributed greatly to the British economy.

The party's activities among the oil workers threatened to disrupt the oil supply, which made the Tudeh appear more menacing. The combination of a Tudeh threat and a stretched British economy presented British policymakers with an added dilemma of how to protect British interests (namely protection of the oil industries of the Persian Gulf from the Tudeh's influence) without overburdening itself. The decision to rely on the Iranian government to take on that responsibility was not a sudden one but derived from a long-and-drawn-out debate that began from the middle of the occupation. This was also not the only change in policy made due to external considerations. As seen throughout the occupation, the British made regular changes to their policy in Iran: from focusing on

the war to concentrating on the post-war situation, from seeing the Tudeh as asset to threat and from trying to promote political changes to supporting the Iranian government. Seeing British policy as reactive, it was this flexible approach to policy that supported the decisions to shifts in response to events in Iran and elsewhere.

#### 4. Further study

This study has opened up new areas for further research. Firstly, a similar study from the Soviet perspective could be made. Existing work by Shahram Chubin and Basil Dmtryshyn<sup>1197</sup>, written in the 1980s, broadly touch on Soviet policy in Iran. However, these works can be expanded to include relations with the Tudeh, which were an important part of this study albeit from the perspective of what the British knew. Unfortunately, this research could only rely on limited sources translated from Russian. Research on the Tudeh within Soviet policy during the occupation would complement this thesis and either counter or confirm what British politicians and diplomats were thinking. By undertaking such a study, the relationship between the party and Moscow (and Soviet diplomats) could better understood. This may further be compared with Moscow's relations with other communist parties at the time, especially in Iraq (which was also under Allied occupation). Jacob Landau's article on the Soviet Union on Middle Eastern political parties makes an important case that there were vital links between Moscow and the region's communist movement<sup>1198</sup> and so subsequent studies could expand upon this.

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<sup>1197</sup> Shahram Chubin, *Soviet Policy towards Iran and the Gulf* (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 1980), and Basil Dmytryshyn, *The Soviet Union and the Middle East: A Documentary Record of Afghanistan, Iran and Turkey, 1917-1985* (Princeton: Kingston Press, 1987).

<sup>1198</sup> Jacob M Landau, 'Soviet Works on Middle Eastern Political Parties', *Middle Eastern Studies* 28, no. 3 (July 1992): 588-91.

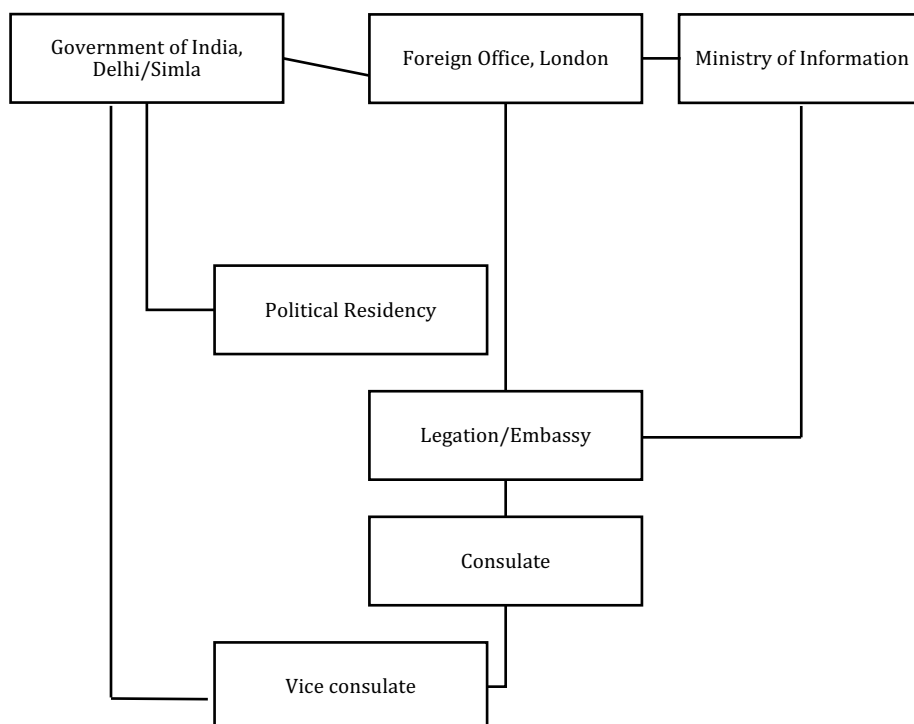
Another area of study could focus on the period spanning from the end of the occupation and thereby include the years until the 1953 coup. A study of British policy from 1946 to 1953 would be a logical follow-up to this thesis. It would be interesting to see how the British government's attitude changed towards the Tudeh as the Cold War progressed with increased US power and as Muhammad Reza Shah became politically more prominent. For instance, what was the British government's reaction to his decision to make the party illegal after the attempt on his life in 1949 and how did the party's involvement during the oil nationalisation period influence Britain's decision to intervene. From what has been briefly examined, the Labour Party maintained an interest in labour affairs in Iran and competed with the Tudeh to champion workers' rights in the country, especially over oil. In addition to Bamberg's study of Britain and Iranian oil, other useful works of oil and the Tudeh include Roger William Louis, Toprani, Galpern and Ikeda Tomoko.<sup>1199</sup> Indeed, it appears that the Labour government maintained a keen interest in Iranian labour issues well into the late 1940s. This could be expanded to an even deeper study of the relationship between Britain, the Tudeh and labour issues and could even include the narrative of the British Communist Party who also developed an interest in Iran after the end of the Second World War.

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<sup>1199</sup> William Roger Louis, 'Musaddiq, Oil, and the Dilemmas of British Imperialism', in *Ends of British Imperialism: The Scramble for Empire, Suez and Decolonisation: Collected Essays* (London: IB Tauris, 2006), 727-87, Galpern, *Money, Oil, and Empire in the Middle East*, Toprani, *Oil and the Great Powers*, and Ikeda Tomoko, 'British Foreign Policy Concerning Oil Interests in Iran, 1946: Traditional Ideas and the Search for New Policy Approaches', *Japan Science and Technology Agency* 2008, no. 152 (2008).

## Appendix

### 1. Structure of British diplomatic service



### 2. List of legation, consulates and notable members of staff in Iran

City	Notable members of staff (Years of service) <sup>1200</sup>	Jurisdiction and Relevant Remarks
Tehran, Legation/Embassy (from 1943)	Reader Bullard, Minister (1939–1946; Ambassador from 1943) John Le Rougetel, (1946–1950)  Robert M A Hankey, First Secretary (1939–1944) Adrian Holman, Counsellor, (1942–1944) Alan Charles Trott (1942–1945) Daniel W Lascelles, Chargé d’Affaires (1944–1945) Harold Lister Farquhar, Counsellor (1945–1946) Captain Vyvyan Holt, Oriental Counsellor (1945–1946)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Foreign Office</li> <li>Members of the Public Relations Bureau were also employees of the Ministry of Information</li> <li>Skrine served in the Indian Civil Service</li> </ul>

<sup>1200</sup> These staff members have appeared in this thesis. Information about their names and years of service were sourced from the British National Archives, the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, personal memoirs and the Directory of British Diplomats published by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Years that could not be verified appear in *italics*.

	<p>Clarmont Skrine, Counsellor for Indian Affairs (1946–1948)  Captain John Charles Edward Bowen, Assistant consul (1946–1947)</p> <p>Ann Katharine Swynford Lambton, Press Attaché (1939–1945)  A S Calvert, Public Relations Officer (1941–1945)  Stephen Lawford Childs, Director of Public Relations Bureau (1942–1943)  Cecil Arthur Grant Savidge, Director of Public Relations Bureau (1943–1945)</p> <p>Lieutenant-colonel William A K Fraser, Military Attaché (1941–1945)</p>	
Rasht, Consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>
Qazvin, Consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>
Hamadan, Vice consulate	Edward N Sykes, Vice consul	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>
Tabriz, Consulate general	<p>Frank A G Cook, Consul (1939–1942)  Robert W Urquhart, Consul (1942–1943)  Thomas Cecil Rapp, Consul (1943–1944)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>
Kerman and Baluchistan, Consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Kermanshah, Consulate	Frank A G Cook, (1942–1946)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Ahwaz, Vice consulate (Kerman)/Consulate General (1943)	<p>Major Arthur E H Macann, Consul general (1943–1945)  Alan Charles Trott, Consul general (1945–1946)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Dezful, Consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>
Khorramshahr, Consulate	Lieutenant-colonel Herbert John Underwood, Political adviser (1946)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> <li>• Underwood served in the Indian Army.</li> </ul>
Bushire, Consulate General	Captain John Charles Edward Bowen	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seat of the Political Residency, which came under the jurisdiction of the Government of India</li> <li>• Hadow served in the Indian Civil Service</li> </ul>
Shiraz, Consulate General	Terence V Brennan, Consul (1942-1944)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Bandar Lingah, Consular agency		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Bandar Abbas, Vice consulate (Kerman)/Consulate (from 1944)	Reginald Michael Hadow, Vice consul (1945)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> <li>• Served the Political Agency in Bahrain</li> </ul>
Sistan and Kain, Consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Zahidan, Vice consulate (Sistan)	Captain John Charles Edward Bowen, Vice consul (1941)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foreign Office</li> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> <li>• Reopened in 1941</li> <li>• Bowen served in the Indian Army</li> </ul>
Zabul, Vice consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Birjand, Consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Mashhad, Vice consulate	Clarmont Skrine, Vice consul (1941-1942) Reginald Michael Hadow, Vice consul (1942)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Yazd, Consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>
Isfahan, Consulate general	Charles A Gault, Consul (1942-1944)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> <li>• Government of India</li> </ul>
Hamadan, Vice consulate		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• British Legation</li> </ul>

### 3. List of military bases

<b>Military base</b>	<b>Location</b>
Middle East Command	Cairo
PAIFORCE	Baghdad (1942-1945)
The Tenth Army	Throughout Iran and Iraq (1942-1943) Major part of PAIFORCE
III Corps	Kermanshah (1942-1943)
6 <sup>th</sup> Indian Infantry Division	Kermanshah (1941-1944)

XXI Indian Corps	Kermanshah and Hamadan (1941–1944) Made up of British and Indian divisions and brigades. Part of PAIFORCE
Royal Navy Base, HMS Jufair	Bahrain

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CAB128

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FO246 FO371

FO248 FO930

###### *Ministry of Information*

INF2/33

###### *Ministry of Labour and National Service*

C.P.(46)

###### *War Office*

WO201 WO208

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No.386	No.1880
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No.7868	
	1C
1B	No.1
No.1	No.152

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