Cabinet conclusions on the Soviet failure to withdraw from Iran, 4 March 1946

SECRET

C.M. (46) 20th Conclusions

4 March, 1946

2. The Foreign Secretary informed the Cabinet that, without prior notification to His Majesty’s Government and contrary to the provisions of Article 5 of the Anglo-Soviet Treaty of 1942 with Persia, the Soviet Government had publicly announced their intention to retain troops in some parts of Persia after the 2nd March, 1946, pending the clarification of the situation there[[1]](#footnote-1). He informed the Cabinet of the terms of a note of protest which had had caused to be presented to the Soviet Government. This called attention to the understanding that both Russian and British troops would be withdrawn from Persia by the 2nd March, 1946, in accordance with the terms of the Treaty, and pointed out that any failure on the part of the Soviet Government to withdraw their troops from Persia by that date would be regarded by us as a breach of their obligations to us under that Treaty[[2]](#footnote-2).

The Foreign Secretary said that he did not propose to take the initiative in bringing this new development before the Security Council. If it was to come before the Council, it should be brought forward by the Persian Government and not at the instance of one of the Great Powers.

In discussion the suggestion was made that insufficient publicity had been given to the fact that the British troops had been withdrawn from Persia by the agreed date. The Prime Minister said that he would take the opportunity of referring to this in his speech in the Defence debate in the House of Commons that afternoon.[[3]](#footnote-3)

The Cabinet –

Took note with approval of the Foreign Secretary’s statement.

[TNA, CAB 128/5]

Keywords: Iran

1. As the assessments of the Joint Intelligence Committee in March 1946 demonstrated, and as British analyses based on evidence of the British Consulate in Tabriz and American information suggested, only a part of the Soviet force had been withdrawn, continuing to follow the situation in northern Iran intensely. As the British historian M. Goodman observes, it was only by early June that the committee ‘could report that all Soviet troops had now left Persia’(Goodman M. Op. cit. p. 240). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. For more detail see the report of the British Embassy to the USSR on the conversations between the Prime Minister of Iran, Stalin and Molotov, dated 28 February 1946, TNA, CAB 121/656. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Attlee actually mentioned this fact during his speech; in the course of the speech, in his turn, he ran up against the wary questions of Conservative Members (including the former head of the military mission to Tito, F. McLean), asking ‘whether we intend to leave our Soviet Allies to carry – perhaps some people would say to kidnap – the baby, and to make the whole of Persia into a Soviet sphere of influence; or whether we are prepared to stand up for our own interests and take our full share in maintaining, in friendly co-operation with our Allies, order and security in Persia’ (Hansard. Parliamentary Debates. 5th Series. Vol. 420. Col. 132. House of Commons, 04/03/1946). [↑](#footnote-ref-3)