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Sunrise at Abadan: The British and Soviet Invasion of Iran, 1941

D.B. Disney Jr.

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various military alliances have in turn influenced the development of Canadian naval forces.

Though military historians have made us aware of the outstanding calibre of the Canadian troops in the field who fought with such tenacity and courage at Vimy Ridge and in the 1918 offensives, the importance, quality and impact of Canada's naval forces are not well known. This book is, therefore, a welcome counterweight to a tendency, all too common among some Canadians, to underplay their own international significance. For example, Roger Sarty, in his essay, points out that during World War II, because of the effort made by the Canadians, Britain was not required to divert even one major antisubmarine warship from the strategically critical eastern Atlantic to protect either Canada's east coast or the shores off Newfoundland. Also, over the years, Canada has made her own contributions to the exercise of naval power in North American waters, as Professor Paul Kennedy of Yale University describes in his essay on the question of naval mastery.

Donald M. Schurman, formerly of the Royal Military College, Kingston, Ontario, suggests how the study of naval history can improve strategic military planning. He stresses in particular the wisdom of having and recognizing alternatives and of making the most of what is available and possible. In a time of economic restraint and doing more with less by all governments, this

advice seems especially appropriate in any decision-making context.

This collection is a useful, readable and welcome addition to the study of the Canadian Navy.

KAREN D. LOGAN
Ottawa, Canada

Stewart, Richard A. *Sunrise at Abadan: The British and Soviet Invasion of Iran, 1941*. New York: Praeger, 1988. 291pp. \$42.95

This is a thorough look at the tactical, strategic and political aspects of the jointly planned Anglo-Soviet occupation of Iran in August 1941.

Richard Stewart first tells us about outsiders' efforts since the 18th century to gain influence in Iran, about Iran's gradual establishment of ties to Nazi Germany, and about the effect of the April 1941 Arab revolt which hardened British attitudes toward the region. However, most of the book is dedicated, detailed accounts of Reza Shah Pahlavi's attempt to preserve his Axis tie, while forestalling an invasion, to the Anglo-Soviet invasions which came anyway, and to their aftereffects. Stewart also includes some thoughts on the strategic and moral issues involved in neutral rights.

There was a four-way tug over the future of Iran. First, the Shah tried to balance the Soviets against the British, and then tried to balance both against Nazi Germany. He failed. Second, the Germans attempted to undermine the British South-

west Asian position through political intrigue and revolts, notably in Iraq in 1941. They, too, failed. Third, the Soviets sought to achieve their long-standing ambition to seize at least the northern part of Iran. They succeeded, at least for five years.

Some fourteen months prior to the German invasion of the U.S.S.R., Stalin directed his general staff to prepare a campaign plan against Iran. That staff positioned 1,000 tanks and 200,000 troops in the Caucasus for such a campaign. Soviet intentions become quite clear when one recalls the startling success of the Nazi invasion of the U.S.S.R. During a period when vast tracts of the Soviet Union were being laid waste by the *Wehrmacht*, Stalin still committed 120,000 first-rate troops and 1,000 tanks to partition Iran.

Mr. Stewart illustrates that Soviet efforts in northern Iran during the war were pointed toward insuring a permanent Soviet presence, particularly in Azerbaijan and Kurdistan. It was only due to a combination of Iranian wiles and U.S. and British pressure that the Soviets ultimately withdrew in 1946.

The fourth and final force then playing with Iran's future was of course Great Britain. The author shows the Empire under stress, not only by the aforementioned Soviet positioning in 1939 and 1940, but also by Rommel's actions in North Africa and the Arab revolt in Iraq in 1941. British motives toward Iran proper evolved during this period. Britain had, at first, to forestall a Soviet move into Iran; to protect oil

resources in Iraq; to protect communications to India; and, after June 1941, to prevent the collapse of their new Soviet ally.

Things changed swiftly. Only one month after the German attack on the Soviet Union, the British were moving toward joint planning with the Soviets for the wartime partitioning and control of Iran. The main reasons were to kill or capture an estimated 2,000 Axis agents in Iran and to open up a more secure supply line to the U.S.S.R. than that through the Barents Sea and Murmansk. British strategic planners also saw a move into Iran as a means of forestalling the expected Nazi drive into the Caucasus.

It is clear from Mr. Stewart's account that the British intended to keep the Shah in power. But when he refused to remove the German agents, both British and Soviet attitudes hardened, and in September 1941 the Shah was replaced by his son Mohammed Reza Shah Pahlavi. Then the Axis agents were removed. The supply route was built and by November 1942 over 400,000 U.S. and British trucks and 28,000 tanks had been shipped to the U.S.S.R. via Iran.

For today's Iranian analysts, several interesting points emerge from this account. One has to do with bases and access. Although Britain in 1941 was hard pressed in terms of global requirements, at least in Southwest Asia, by virtue of her imperial holding, she had numerous bases from which first to stage forces to, and then conduct extensive

operations. Today the United States has nothing comparable. Another point that emerges is the difficulties that terrain and distance imposed upon the fairly extensive Soviet campaign plan.

Moreover, while generally uneven and unsuccessful, hampered by totally ineffective command direction from Teheran, there was an Iranian resistance. Iranian troops in 1941 did reasonably well when they were well-led and in defensive positions. Yet, they could not hold when subjected to artillery and air strikes. In any event, there were not enough of them to make a difference. There also appeared to be no real attempt—based on a fairly widespread dislike of both the Shah's government and his officer corps—to conduct a guerilla resistance movement against the occupying powers. Additionally, one is struck by the very careful and coordinated British political and military moves, including discussions with the U.S. government before they launched their seaborne invasion.

A final point Stewart examines is the role and rights of neutral states in time of war. With his Nazi ties, the Shah was playing a very dangerous game. By 1939 Germany controlled 41 percent of Iran's foreign trade, and whether the agents really were a threat or not, they were seen as such by both Britain and the Soviet Union. For a time these ties may have been effective in keeping Britain and the U.S.S.R. out of Iran. However, as we have seen, it appears as a result of their 1939 pact that the Nazis

would have permitted the Soviets to act in their agreed sphere of interest toward the Persian Gulf. But after June 1941 the Iranian tie to Nazi Germany gave the Soviets the pretext to intervene under the 1921 Iranian-Soviet treaty of nonaggression and it certainly helped motivate an already jittery imperial Great Britain to move to protect India.

This is a well-researched text. The narrative of the military campaign and the political and strategic rationale is rich in detail, especially about British operations and the Iranian reaction to them. Soviet operations are laid out effectively but—probably due to the lack of access to sources—have nowhere near the detail of British operations.

The book is not flawless. Sometimes it is confusing when one has to jump from British to Iranian to Soviet operations and back again. Though, happily, there are several maps, as well as some interesting photographs. Given the level of detail on British operations, a few more on the tactical level would have been useful.

For those interested in World War II history, operations in Southwest Asia, studies in *realpolitik*, and current campaign planning, it is worth the read.

D. B. DISNEY, JR.
Commander, U.S. Navy
Naval War College