

‘Kar Inglise’: The Bloody, Invisible Hand of the British Empire

by Bijan Bahadorvand Shenhi

The following is a message from former Iranian diplomat Bijan Bahadorvand Shenhi, which was read on his behalf at a Schiller Institute conference in Berlin on Nov. 19. He worked in the diplomatic service of the Islamic Republic of Iran domestically and abroad for over ten years, and spent more than a decade studying and working in India. The message was translated from Farsi and subheads have been added.

There is a very popular saying among the Iranian people, that “the hand of England”—or, as we say in Persian, “*kar inglise*”—“is behind whatever happens in political and governmental affairs,” and further that the “divide and conquer policy” has always been the guiding light of the policy of the British Empire. Whenever and wherever you find irrational conflicts and bloody clashes, be they in religious, ethnic, or regional affairs, then and there you should expect to find the manipulating hand of the Great British Empire.

In the eyes of the general population, the corrupt control and determining influence of Great Britain knew no bounds, and except for the ordinary people, no strata of the population—not even the religious leaders—were considered to be immune to that corrupting influence. In fact, up to the triumph of the Islamic Revolution in February 1979, no other political motto could rival the pervasiveness of this maxim throughout Iran. During the whole span of the 19th Century, and in fact up to 1924, when the Quajar dynasty was in power, Iran was actually not an independent nation, but was totally controlled by Great Britain, serving as the first line of defense of India, that is, the “jewel in the crown of the British Empire.”

Lord Curzon, the famous secretary of the Foreign Office and viceroy of India, elaborated the point that Great Britain monitored and controlled Iranian affairs through its viceroy in India, and all British nationals and officials working in Iran reported first to the British

viceroy in India, rather than to the Colonial Office in London.

The Pahlavi Dynasty

The fall of the Quajar dynasty and the rise of Reza Shah Pahlavi in 1924 did not change the picture with respect to the British Empire. Reza Pahlavi (father of the last king, Mohammad Reza) first carried out a coup in 1929 which was wholly controlled and sponsored by the British agents, with Colonel Ironside from the British/Caucasus Front playing a central role in it. In 1924, the House of the Quajar kings fell, and Reza Pahlavi became the new king, establishing a new Pahlavi dynasty. This was done through the machination and manipulation of British and Anglophile circles in the so-called parliaments and cabinets, especially those of Foroughi, the prime minister of the time, who was an early exponent of British liberalism in Iran.

Reza Shah, under the guidance of the British, built up an extreme dictatorial regime, suppressing all opponents and destroying all remnants of the constitutional revolution of the early 20th Century, which had established a constitutional monarchy and awakened the hope of instituting the rule of law in place of the will of the king, who was traditionally known as the Shadow of God, or *selola* in Farsi.

The oil drilling in 1905 in Masjid-e-Soleyman, in the south of Iran (the first oil discovered in the Middle East), and the subsequent advent of the British Petroleum Company in Iranian affairs enhanced and deepened the controlling power of the Empire over the destiny of Iranians. BP became the virtual governing power, particularly in all the oil-producing regions of the south. The 1907 treaty between the British Empire and the Russian Tsar, dividing the territory into two zones of influence (the northern Russian and the southern British), further helped Britain to consolidate its hold over Iran.

The Historical Record

Recent research based mainly on non-British documents and sources—for example, the American National Archives and Records Administration, NARA—shows that even the influence of Russian Tsar in Iran during the last decades of the 19th Century and the first decade of the 20th Century was for all practical purposes overshadowed and exceeded by the more widespread and extended reach of the imperial claws. This was typified by the clothing industries owned by the Russian banking interests in the north of Iran, and the financial interests of the British Empire in the south of Iran.

Official British historiography is very loyal to the spirit of a British saying (which in English is somewhat “brutish”), that a thief never leaves his name and address. The official documents and papers left behind by previous colonial functionaries or the diplomatic corps typically tend either to confuse, to hide the important points, or to distort or manipulate the vision of the researcher.

For example, the picture drawn from the documents and papers produced by American diplomats in Tehran during the first decade of the 20th Century is significantly different from, and sometimes directly opposite to, the version produced by British diplomats in the same period.

The British version, for example, speaks of Reza Shah as founder of modern Iran who was trying to lay the groundwork for the advancement of the country, and not at all corrupt. But the American documents present a contrary image, of a man on the brink of insanity and very corrupt in financial matters. By 1914, after 16 years of his rule, he had amassed \$200 million in foreign banks and \$15 million in Iranian banks. In 1925 the whole national budget of Iran was \$20 million. [former Prime Minister] Dr. Mossadegh was right when he accused Reza Shah of having amassed almost all of the country’s income in his own bank account, from selling oil to BP.

Genocide

Another example of the British Empire’s coverup of the truth is a document in the American archive reporting the widespread famine and spread of epidemic disease in Iran, culminating in 9 million dead during 1917-19: the greatest genocide of the 20th Century!

It should be noted that at the time Iran was one of the main suppliers of food grains to the British forces sta-

tioned in the empire’s South Asian colonies. Prof. Gholi Majd of Princeton University writes in his book *The Great Famine and Genocide in Persia* that the American documents show that the British prevented imports of wheat and other food grains into Iran from Mesopotamia, Asia, and also the U.S.A., and that ships loaded with wheat were not allowed to unload at the port of Bushehr on the Persian Gulf. Professor Majd explicitly says that Great Britain used genocide to destroy Iran, and to effectively control the country for its own purposes.

One is reminded of the old and sad story of the Bengal famine in India in 1870.

When Mossadegh benefitted diplomatically from the temporarily favorable atmosphere inside and surrounding Iran, and nationalized the oil industries in 1951, he hoped that the republican currents in the West, particularly in the U.S.A. of Franklin Roosevelt, would contribute to the legitimate development and sovereignty of Iran; but unfortunately the Truman Administration, typified by the Dulles brothers and Averell Harriman and other interests, succumbed to the pressure of the Empire. Mossadegh was toppled in a coup engineered by the British intelligence service [MI6] and the CIA.

But not satisfied with the slow pace of progress, tormented by the Shah and his political tyranny, the Iranian people participated massively in the Islamic Revolution in the hope attaining progress and democracy by their sovereign will and effort, as had been done in India, China, and other countries that had been deeply harmed by the actions of the British Empire.

At this juncture, the British Empire has come forward and feels no shame in openly stating its real intention: genocide, or what is the same thing, reduction of the world population. It grabs up whatever instruments or pretext comes its way, but genocide is the main goal; everything else is a pretext or doublespeak.

Perhaps Iranians are traditionally and historically better positioned than many others to sense the impulses and read the thoughts of the British Empire. As long as this creature lives, any type of damage and destruction is possible. It knows no limits. Many Europeans and Americans may not immediately understand that Hitler too was “Made in England,” but the deeply wounded Indians, Chinese, Iranians, Africans, and many others know and believe that England was behind it all—or, as we say, “*kar kare inglise.*”

Let us step forward to stop this Golem from making one war after another, and making business out of wars.