

THE ANGLO-PERSIAN AGREEMENT OF AUGUST 9, 1919
A STUDY IN BRITISH POLICY IN PERSIA AFTER WORLD WAR I

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ABSTRACT

This thesis analyses British policy in Persia after the First World War. Throughout the war Persia's integrity and neutrality were violated by great powers. As a result of British policy, Persia was denied the opportunity to be heard at the Paris Peace Conference.

At the same time, Great Britain was secretly negotiating the Agreement of August 1919 with the Persian Government. The father of the idea of the Agreement was the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Curzon, who was motivated by the security of India and Mesopotamia, flanking Persia.

In the draft Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919, Great Britain undertook to respect the independence and integrity of the country and agreed to supply experts for Persian departments; to supply officers, munitions, and equipments for a force to establish law and order; to make a loan; to co-operate in railway and other transport enterprises; and to take part in an examination and revision of the Persian customs tariff.

Curzon's high-handed method of concluding the Agreement was opposed elsewhere, primarily by Soviet Russia and the United States for very different reasons. The Agreement also met with considerable opposition in Persia itself and in fact never was ratified. The United States and French Governments objected that the Agreement attempted to secure individual advantage out of victory won by the common effort,

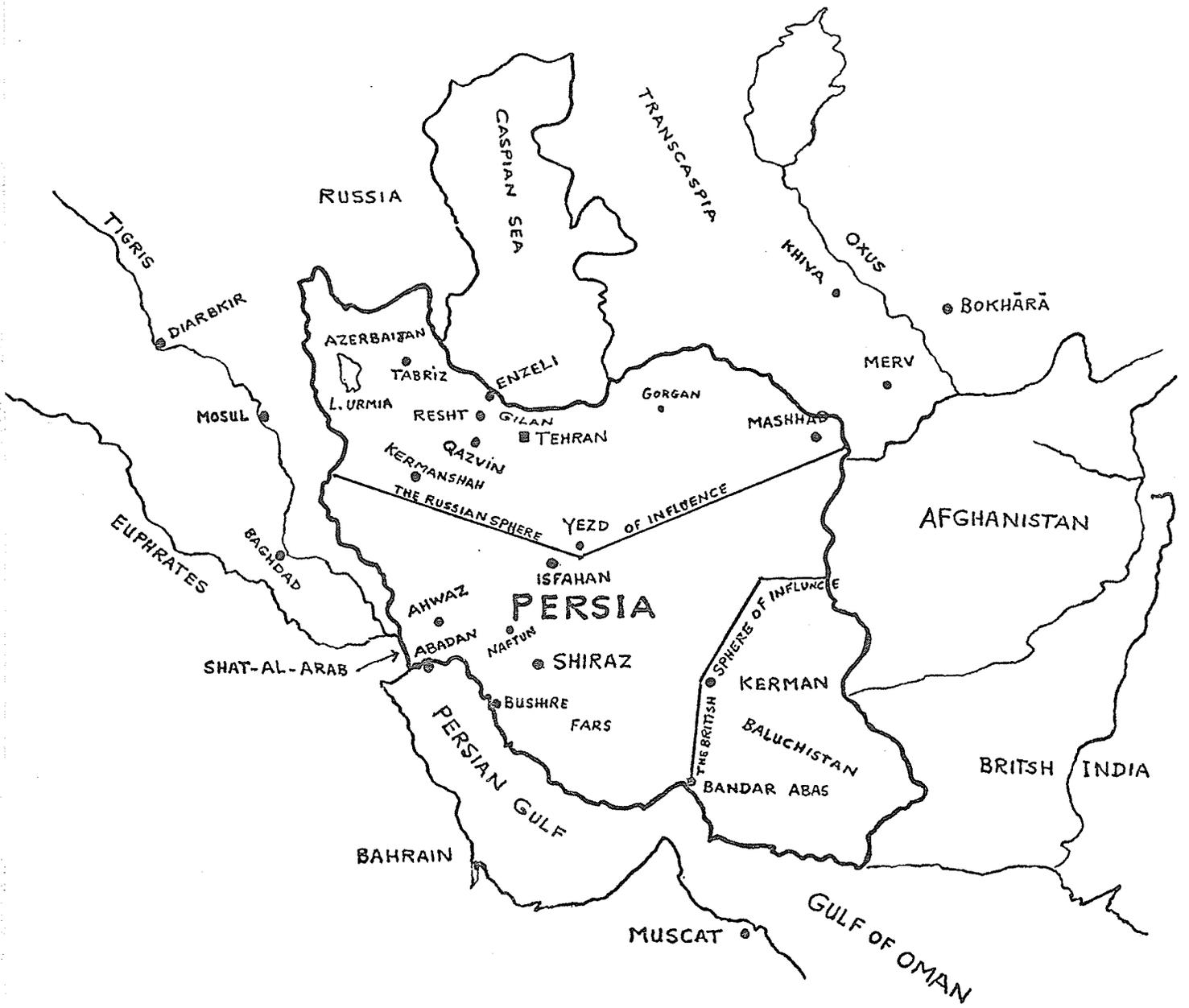
and the label of imperialism was attached to the scheme.

The fate of the Anglo-Persian Agreement may be taken to represent the beginning of that twilight of British imperial power which was soon to set in. The rejection of the Agreement was a diplomatic defeat for Great Britain and especially for Lord Curzon who originated the idea of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. He saw in the British conquest in the Middle East the opportunity to establish a new British Empire, linking India with the Mediterranean and stretching from Nile to the Indus, and he was in favour of vigorous intervention against Bolshevik advances towards the Southeast (if not in the West) as representing a threat to the British possessions in India and the British interests in the Persian Gulf.

The final chapter is a review and assessment of various reasons for Curzon's diplomatic failure in his Persian policy which was an important setback for Great Britain. A review of the Persian nationalism and the new tactics of the Soviet Union in Persia, are shown to be the main reasons for Curzon's failure.

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PREFACE

Persia in the early part of the Twentieth century had a significant place in British policy. The position she occupied between Russia on one side and Great Britain's Indian Empire on the other made Persia's political and strategic importance. Persia is a comparatively narrow corridor of land communication in Western Asia separating Russia from the Indian Ocean, it is also a key to the control of the vast oil resources of the Persian Gulf basin.

It is interesting that on some occasions Persia was the only country outside Europe apart from the United States of America in which Great Britain had a diplomatic post, and for a while the only European representative at the Shah's court was that of Great Britain, too.

I have tried to set forth in this study what British policy in Persia actually was during the years of 1919 to 1921, and what the reasons were for British setbacks there during this period. This task has been surprisingly complex. Persia was inevitably a vital concern of the British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Curzon, and he also had a deep personal interest in Persia, an interest based in part on the security of India. Also, the conflict between the Soviet Union and Great Britain is essential to this study.

The term "Persia" had been used in this study instead of "Iran", because in the years which this study deals with, the country was known as Persia. When referring to specific Muslim religious functionaries and other Persian terms, their Persian designations (e.g. Mujtahed)

are used in transliteration.

It remains to offer my best gratitude to my adviser, Professor M.S.R. Kinneer, for his valuable assistance and encouragement in the writing of this thesis.

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL ANTECEDENTS

From the days when Napoleon nursed the dream of invading India with the help of Russia, Great Britain had contemplated with apprehension the invasion of India, that "jewel of the British Crown", by Russia through Afghanistan or Persia. The preservation of British interests in India had long influenced Great Britain's policy toward Persia. British interests in Persia and especially in the Persian Gulf were numerous; for example, British trade acquired a near monopoly of the foreign commerce of the Gulf Ports. Many Anglo-Indian companies maintained merchant steamer service between Karachi and Basra, and British communication interests in the Gulf were equally significant. Furthermore, Great Britain had political agreements with the Gulf States and also controlled Muscat, whose trade was in Anglo-Indian hands. Maintenance of the British position in the Persian Gulf was regarded as "vital to the safety of India."⁽¹⁾

Russia's ambition and its concerted efforts to gain influence in the Gulf during the early Twentieth century alarmed the British, but it was not until the termination of the Boer war that Great Britain made the most important declaration of British policy in relation to the Gulf since Sir Edward Grey's pronouncement in 1895. Lord Lansdowne declared:

¹Sir A. W. Ward and G. P. Gooch. The Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy, Vol. 3, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1923), p. 320.

Firstly, we should protect and promote British trade in the Gulf. Secondly, we should not exclude the legitimate trade of others. Thirdly, we should regard the establishment of a naval base or a fortified port in the Gulf by any other power as a very great menace to British interests, and we should certainly resist it by all means at our disposal.(2)

On February 27, 1919 Lord Crewe, in a speech before the House of Lords, pointed to this declaration and said:

Our interests in the Persian Gulf have been recognized as paramount for a great number of years, and finally since the declaration made by Lord Lonsdowne some fourteen years ago.(3)

Persia's power position continued to weaken and the influence of Great Britain continued to increase during the first quarter of the Twentieth century, but several significant changes resulted from the Anglo-Russian rapprochement in 1907, the discovery of oil in Southern Persia in 1908 and the crisis of World War I.

Great Britain's traditional interests in India and the Persian Gulf played an important part in the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907.(4) But the Anglo-Russian rapprochement was aimed fundamentally against the emergence of a German threat to British and Russian interests in the Middle East. The Germans were beginning their efforts to challenge the British

²Quoted in Ibid., pp. 320-321.

³Parliamentary Debates, (House of Lords), Fifth Series, Vol. 23, Col. 419, [27 February 1919]. (Hereinafter cited as 5 H. L. Deb.)

⁴For details see, G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley. eds. British Documents on the Origin of the World War 1898-1914, Vol. 4, The Anglo-Russian Rapprochement, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1919), p. 399.

rule of the seas, including the Persian Gulf.⁽⁵⁾

The Anglo-Russian convention of August 31, 1907 divided Persia into British, Russian and neutral zones.⁽⁶⁾ The British zone was to be limited to the Southeastern area of Persia. The Southwestern part of Persia was to constitute a neutral zone. The Russian zone was far larger and richer than the British and included Tehran, the capital city. This was one consequence of the fact that Russia, during the first decade of the Twentieth century, possessed far superior influence in Persia.⁽⁷⁾ The agreement reaffirmed the "independence and integrity of Persia."⁽⁸⁾ British policy in Persia was therefore mainly directed against Russia, rather than a forward policy pushed for the purpose of extending British territory or influence. Its object was to keep Persia as a buffer state and to maintain it as an independent country.⁽⁹⁾ The main concern of the British Government was to acquire Russian recognition of the British "special interests in the maintenance of the status quo in the Persian Gulf."⁽¹⁰⁾ Great Britain had first hoped to include an appropriate provision on the Gulf in the convention, but because of Russian

⁵ Ibid., p. 356.

⁶ For the text see, J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record 1535-1914, Vol. 1, (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand, 1956), pp. 265-267.

⁷ See Rogers Platt Churchill, The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, (Cedar Rapid: The Torch Press, 1939), p. 213.

⁸ Viscount Grey of Fallodon, K. G. Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916, Vol. 1, (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1925), p. 161.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 148-149.

¹⁰ Harold Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart, First Lord Carnock: A Study in Old Diplomacy, (London: Constable, 1931), p. 252.

apprehensions it was satisfied to note that in the course of the negotiations leading to the convention, Russia had explicitly stated that "it did not deny the special interests of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf."⁽¹¹⁾

Prior to the 1907 convention Great Britain had acted as a midwife to the new Persian order, but subsequently, in spite of Grey's good intentions, British performance generally favored Russia at the expense of Persia. Grey's policy toward Persia from beginning to end was non-intervention and friendship with Russia and if the two objects clashed, the former had to yield. "If the Persian question was mismanaged," he argued, "the Persian question might disappear, and bigger issues would arise."⁽¹²⁾ It was this conviction which governed his actions, resulting in the subordination of purely Persian interests to the demands of the European situation. So the treaty provided for the independence and integrity of Persia and was in fact merely a self-denying ordinance by which Persia could only benefit.⁽¹³⁾

The tendency of British policy in Persia has been to avoid, as far as we can, any addition to our political or territorial responsibilities, or any step calculated to disturb the political status quo. Our efforts have been directed towards maintaining the continued national existence and territorial integrity of Persia and developing her resources. We have sought to infuse some vitality into the Persian administration, strengthen the

¹¹Ward and Gooch, op. cit., p. 359.

¹²Parliamentary Debates, (House of Commons), Fifth Series, Vol. 33, Col. 2598, [14 December 1911]. (Hereinafter cited as 5 H.C. Deb.).

¹³Harold Nicolson, op. cit., p. 252.

central Government against Russian domination, and encourage the development of British commerce and enterprise in South and Central Persia.(14)

There was only one hindrance to the Anglo-Russian project: the Persian people had awakened to their country's peril and had just started a vigorous house-cleaning. The decrepitude of Persia was admittedly extreme: under the rule of the Kajar Shahs, a dynasty not of Persian, but of Turkoman origin, Persia had sunk into a slough of misgovernment and bankruptcy. But the history of Persia consists of a series of just such foreign dominations followed by surprising revivals of national vitality. In the summer of 1906, the Persian people, angered by domestic misgovernment and by the shadow of European domination creeping over the land, had forced the ruling Shah, Muzaffaro'd-Din, to transform himself from an absolute despot into a constitutional monarch. The main feature of the new Persian Constitution was the establishment of a Majlis, or elected parliament, with power over the purse, foreign affairs, and other attributes of Western legislative bodies.⁽¹⁵⁾ The effect of this revolution upon the national psychology was extraordinary. From end to end Persia rocked with enthusiasm, and under the leadership of the intellectual classes, including thousands of young men trained in Western ideas, the Persian people undertook the task of national regeneration.

¹⁴Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., pp. 366-367.

¹⁵See Rouhollah K. Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1966), pp. 82-83.

However, the chancelleries of London and Petrograd had their own theories about Persia. Those Westerners most closely in touch with the Persian people might be almost united in declaring that the Persian revolution was a deep-seated outpouring of the national spirit, but Russian and English diplomats clung to their ideas of Persia's irreparable decadence and dubbed the revolution a mere flash in the pan. Sir Edward Grey, the British Secretary for Foreign Affairs, stated in the House of Commons:

The independence of Persia is a phrase, and it is becoming less every year. When we are told that we and the Russian Government are equally bound, and remain bound year after year, to respect the integrity of Persia, I fear this means that we are bound to respect a vanishing quantity. The time may come when, if we are restricting our policy to respecting the integrity of Persia, we shall find ourselves respecting nothing at all.(16)

A few months after the revolution, Muzaffaro'd-Din died and was then succeeded by his son Mohammad Ali, who began plotting to restore the despotism of his ancestors; in this he was openly abetted by Russia. The upshot was a civil war, in which the mass of Persian people rallied round the Majlis in defence of the constitution. In July 1909 Mohammad Ali was forced to abdicate and take refuge in Russia, the crown being conferred upon his twelve year old son Ahmad Mirza.

Freed from the immediate threat of a royalist reaction, the Constitutionalists started once more upon the road to national regeneration. The outlook, however, was dark: Two years of civil strife had made bad matters worse, and brigandage was rife. Also, Russia and England, in pursuance of their 1907 convention, were themselves under-

¹⁶Quoted in The Century, January, 1920, p. 318.

taking to "restore order" in their respective spheres. All applications to Russia and England for loans were answered by demands for "guarantees" which the patriots felt they could not grant without signing away Persia's sovereignty.

Realizing that financial reform was the only way of escape, the Persian leaders determined to call in an expert adviser from a neutral source, and in 1911 The Persian National Assembly turned to the United States for financial advice.⁽¹⁷⁾ The Persian leaders recognized that, under the circumstances of the time, they could not place the government on a sound financial basis without the employment of foreigners. The Persian knew likewise that financial reform was a condition precedent to internal development and progress. Dissatisfaction with the French⁽¹⁸⁾ and Belgians and the undesirability of engaging British or Russians left America. As Sir Edward Grey said:

A British financial adviser in Tehran, the Russian Sphere, was out of question. European advisers would be suspected, certainly by Russia and probably by us, of using the influence of their own countries, perhaps of furthering some political policy. I suggested the choice of an American, who would be outside all politics. The Russians did not like it, but they agreed.⁽¹⁹⁾

America, it was expected, would act as a political balance and buffer, championing and guarding the independence of the country, so

¹⁷ See G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, eds. British Documents on the Origin of the World War 1898-1914, Vol. X, The Near and Middle East on the Eve of War, (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), p. 751.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 751, 755, 757.

Mr. W. Morgan Shuster was invited to Tehran. He arrived in the spring of 1911 with four American assistants as a treasurer-general⁽²⁰⁾ and was given an almost free hand.⁽²¹⁾

When Shuster attempted to obtain the service of a British Major, C. B. Stokes, to head a treasury Gendarmerie,⁽²²⁾ which Shuster felt was necessary for the collection of taxes, Britain and Russia combined to threaten Persia with physical invasion for this supposed violation of the Anglo-Russian agreement. Finally, Russia, "with the diplomatic support of England"⁽²³⁾ resorted to brute force to extinguish Persia's bid for genuine independence.⁽²⁴⁾ Therefore, with Russian connivance, the ex-Shah, Muhammad Ali returned to Northern Persia, and civil war broke out afresh. In the autumn of that year Russia served two ultimatums for Shuster's withdrawal, and the Russian forces moved against Tabriz and bombarded Mashhad, the holy site of one of the imams. The Persian Government was too weak and too divided to resist. Sir Edward Grey said that Shuster's attempt "was good but it could only be done by force; and there was no force available for the purpose."⁽²⁵⁾ Shuster and

²⁰For details see, W. Morgan Shuster, The Strangling of Persia, 2nd ed.; (New York: Green Wood, 1968), pp. 6-35.

²¹Gooch and Temperley, op. cit., p. 762.

²²See Ibid., p. 766.

²³Lothrop Stoddard, "How Persia Died: A Coroner's Inquest." The Century, Vol. LXXVII, January 1920, p. 319.

²⁴Abraham Yeselson, United States-Persian Diplomatic Relations 1883-1921, (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1956), p. 141.

²⁵Viscount Grey of Fallodon, op. cit., p. 164

his staff had no course open to them except to leave. The American mission was withdrawn in 1912 about nine months after its arrival.

In this crisis as in the previous ones, Great Britain went along with the Russians. The British argument was the same as before. In defence of his Persian policy the Foreign Secretary invoked the 1907 convention and stated in part:

The independence of Persia must take account of the interests of her neighbours, and her hostility to Russia is unjustified by facts: if the Russian officers in Tehran had intervened on behalf of the ex-Shah, he would never have been turned out. But the Persian Government having got rid of the Shah, determined to get rid of Russian influence in Persia. That was a perfectly hopeless policy. (26)

Grey did not object to the demand for the dismissal of Shuster. Nor did he object to demands that British and Russian legations should be consulted in the appointment of foreign advisers, but the demand for indemnity, he believed, would doubtless be withdrawn. (27) This single objection to the Russian demands was influenced by British commercial interests in Persia. The payment of such an indemnity would, it was feared, cripple Persia's security forces policy, weaken the Southern trade route and thus prejudice British commerce. (28)

British-Persian policy was summarised in six points which Sir Edward Grey had presented to Russia:

²⁶ 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 33, Cols. 157-158, [27 November 1911].

²⁷ 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 33, Cols. 2601-2604, [14 December 1911].

²⁸ W. Morgan Shuster, op. cit., p. 169.

1. A government conforming to the principles of 1907.
2. The exclusion of the ex-Shah.
3. The selection of a financial advisor acceptable to both powers.
4. A loan to restore order.
5. An indemnity not to be pressed.
6. Russian troops to withdraw when Russian demands are complied with and order restored in the North.(29)

In 1901 Muzaffaro'd-Din Shah had granted to a British subject, W. K. D'arcy, a sixty years exclusive oil concession covering the country with the exception of the Northern provinces. But nearly a year after the Anglo-Russian convention a significant development increased the value of the Persian Gulf for the British. In May, 1908, after some seven years of test drilling, the first gusher of oil burst forth at Masjed Sulayman in Southwest Persia. In the following year the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (A.P.O.C.) came into being. Just before the First World War broke out, the British Government acquired a controlling interest in the company's capital stock. While the Government undertook not to interfere in the commercial management of the company, the latter became to all intents and purpose an arm of the British Admiralty and of British strategic policy.

The chief point of contact between the British and Persian Government is the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. In 1914 the British Government purchased a controlling interest in the company, in order to ensure a Persian supply of oil-fuel for the navy under contract between the company and the Admiralty. (30)

²⁹ 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 33, Cols. 2605-2606, [14 December 1911].

³⁰ Study Group of Royal Institute of International Affairs, Political and Strategic Interests of the United Kingdom, (London: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 168.

So the British Government became the major and controlling partner of the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, thereby increasing official British interests in oil operations of Southwest Persia.

The creation of Anglo-Persian Oil Company in 1909 was so linked with the British policy in Persia that it may be useful to recapitulate briefly the events that led to development of the British influence in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

When the A.P.O.C. was established in April 1909, the first problem for the company was security, because the Government of Persia was not in a position to provide security and safety for the company's oil operations and installations. In fact the company had to provide its own security. Furthermore, the company needed to purchase more land for its operations. According to the tribal law and customs in Persia, the pasture land belonged to the individual members of the tribe. Therefore, in theory under the terms of concession, the company could have made its purchases directly from the individual owners. But the Bakhtyari⁽³¹⁾ chiefs and "deputies" posed as the true owners of the tribal land, leaving the company no choice but to deal with them. Whatever the problem, the company faced the powerful tribal chiefs.⁽³²⁾

The company entered into several kinds of agreements with the chiefs. "The company's relations with the Bakhtyari chiefs were also

³¹The Bakhtyari tribe is one of the most important tribes of Southwest Persia.

³²For more detail see, George Lenczowski, Oil and State in the Middle East, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1960), pp. 121-125.

based on the fact that the latter were in effective control of certain areas deemed important to the company; what was chiefly involved was the security of wells and pipelines."⁽³³⁾ Agreements were negotiated between the Bakhtyari chiefs and Sir Percy Cox, the British Resident at Bushire. The company also reached an agreement with the Sheikh of Mohammera, Sheikh Khaz'al, who was the hereditary Arab ruler of an enormous territory on the Eastern side of the Shat-al-Arab, including Abadan Island.⁽³⁴⁾ which the company had selected as the site for a refinery.⁽³⁵⁾ Khaz'al received an annual rent of £650 to be paid ten years in advance. In return the Sheikh was supposed to provide guards, at company's expense, for the pipelines and buildings. "After signing the agreement, the Sheikh received in addition to the advance rent a loan of £10,000 nominally from the British Government but actually from the Anglo-Persian Oil Company."⁽³⁶⁾

These details are given in order to make the fact clear that after the creation of the A.P.O.C., the British Government became involved in the internal affairs of Persia because of its investments. Also these details are mentioned in order to stress the importance of oil in Persia for the whole British policy in the Persian Gulf area.

³³ Ibid., p. 122.

³⁴ See Benjamin Shwadran, The Middle East, Oil and the Great Powers, 2nd ed.; (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1956), p. 21.

³⁵ See Stephen H. Longrigg, Oil in the Middle East: Its Discovery and Development, 2nd ed.; (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 20.

³⁶ Benjamin Shwadran, op. cit., pp. 21-22.

To watch the company's operations and to maintain friendly relations with the local potentates, a number of able public servants had to be employed by Great Britain in these regions. This meant deeper penetration of British consular and intelligence authorities into the area, the establishment of certain customs and usages, and generally a greater influence.(37)

The decisions which made Great Britain directly involved in the protection of the oil operations were reached in 1913-14. In 1913, the British decided that the Royal Navy should use oil instead of coal. The Admiralty sent out a commission of experts to Southwest Persia, headed by Admiral Sir Edmond S. W. Slade to investigate the oil fields covered by the company's concession. The commission reported favorably:

It appears that the Northern field in the neighbourhood of Shushtar will alone be sufficient to meet the admiralty requirements for a long period.(38)

A month later Winston Churchill, then First Lord of Admiralty, announced the Admiralty's oil policy in a speech before the House of Commons:

...what is our policy toward it? It is a twofold policy. There is an ultimate policy, our ultimate policy is that the Admiralty should become the independent owner and producer of its owners supplies of liquid fuel,...we must become the owners, or at any rate, the controllers at the source of at least a proportion of the supply of natural oil which we require.(39)

³⁷ George Lenczowski, Russia and the West in Iran 1918-1948: A Study in Big Power Rivalry, (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1949), p. 78.

³⁸ 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 63, Col. 1141, [17 June 1914].

³⁹ 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 65, Cols. 1474-1475, [17 July 1914].

This policy led to an agreement between the company and the Admiralty and the Treasury on May 20, 1914⁽⁴⁰⁾ and also the House of Commons approved the agreement. The British Government had invested £2,200,000 in that company, thus gained control of Anglo-Persian Oil Company and became "the major and controlling partner in the company."⁽⁴¹⁾ On June 29, 1914, Sir Mark Sykes said in the House of Commons that:

The root of the whole of our Persian policy seems to me lie in the question as to how the concession is worked. We are now the predominant partner in a very large concession ...As far as one knows, the Anglo-Persian Oil Company is worked on model lines and is above any reproach of that kind, but as we are the predominant partners, it is our business as a nation to see that these model lines are continued.⁽⁴²⁾

Thus British Government first as a protector of the interests of its nationals abroad and, second, as a major and controlling partner of Anglo-Persian Oil Company possessed more significant interests in Persia. The British had to act to preserve these interests against the German menace at the outbreak of the First World War. The British action took diplomatic and military forms.

By 1914, the British Government had acquired definite and direct interest in the oil fields of Southwestern Persia. These new interests acquired diplomatic recognition from its ally, Russia, through

⁴⁰ Great Britain, Navy, Agreement with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company Ltd., 1914, Cmd. 7419, 1914.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 64, Col. 68, [29 June 1914].

revision of the 1907 settlement. This was not too difficult to obtain as Russia wanted a British favor in another area of the Middle East. Sazonov, the Russian Foreign Minister, stated in a formal exchange of letters with the British Ambassador at Petrograd, that Russia desired to annex Istanbul and the Turkish Straits in the event of Entente victory.⁽⁴³⁾ "Great Britain agreed that Russia should obtain Constantinople and Straits. In return Britain was to get the "Neutral Zone" established in Persia by the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907."⁽⁴⁴⁾ In a secret telegram of March 20, 1915, from the Russian Government to Count Benckendorff in London, Sazonov confirmed Russia's "assent to inclusion of the neutral zone of Persia in the British sphere of influence."⁽⁴⁵⁾

The so-called "Constantinople Agreement of May 19, 1915,"⁽⁴⁶⁾ made clear that the British desire to keep Russia from India and the Persian Gulf was even stronger than the desire to prevent Russia from controlling the Turkish Straits. In 1917, Arthur Ponsonby said before the House of Commons:

That was a firm agreement with the Russian Government. It was of course, a complete reversal of the policy for which we fought a war in the Crimea in 1854... The point is that the people of this country did not enter this war in order

⁴³H.W.V. Temperley, ed. A History of the Peace Conference of Paris, Vol. VI, (London: Henry Frowde and Hodder & Stoughton, 1924), pp. 5-6.

⁴⁴Harold Nicolson, Curzon, The Last Phase 1919-1925: A Study in Post War Diplomacy, (London: Constable, 1934), p. 83.

⁴⁵Temperley, op. cit., p. 208.

⁴⁶Text in J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record 1914-1956, Vol. 2, (Princeton: Nostrand, 1965), pp. 7-11.

to give Constantinople to Russia.(47)

For the British this agreement meant an additional safeguard against the advanced Russian position in Persia. Great Britain was already changing her Persian policy, which had previously been based upon the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907. According to secret Russian documents, "a 1915 Anglo-Russian plan prepared to go beyond the 1907 agreement by dividing up the neutral sphere of Persia."⁽⁴⁸⁾ Russian assent however, according to the Constantinople Agreement was based on three conditions: First, that the districts adjoining Isfahan and Yezd should be included in the Russian sphere; second, that a portion of the neutral zone adjoining the Afghan territory should also be included in the Russian zone and third, that Russia "expects that in future its full liberty of action will be recognized in the sphere of influence allotted to it, coupled in particular with the right of preferentially developing in that sphere its financial and economic policy."⁽⁴⁹⁾ This last condition amounted to a demand that Russian attempts to annex its sphere of influence in Northern Persia would not be hampered by Great Britain.⁽⁵⁰⁾

⁴⁷5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 100, Col. 2003, [19 December 1917].

⁴⁸United States, Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1917: The World War, Vol. 1, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1926), pp. 494-495, 497.

⁴⁹Hurewitz, op. cit., p. 11

⁵⁰Temperley, op. cit., p. 208.

In the following pages an attempt is made to explain British policy toward Persia after The Peace settlement; to describe the ensuing Persian reaction; to show how and why the British policy suffered setback, as exemplified by Lord Curzon's diplomatic defeat and the emergence of active Bolshevist interests.

CHAPTER II

THE PERSIAN DELEGATION AT THE PARIS PEACE CONFERENCE

In 1914, when the war broke out, Persia had declared herself neutral, and on November 1, 1914 issued a proclamation to that effect.⁽¹⁾ The Government was strengthened in its determination because both Russian and British Ministers indicated that they wanted Persia to remain neutral. The British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs announced in Parliament: "We desire Persia to remain neutral during the war and to retain her complete independence after the war."⁽²⁾

There was, however, a serious complication, the presence of Russian troops in Northern Persia, particularly the Russian forces quartered in the city of Tabriz, the capital of Persian Azerbaijan. For two years the Northern part of Persia had lain in the grip of the Cossacks; all their lives the people of these provinces had dwelt in fear of the Russian Empire.

At the outbreak of the war Turkey protested against the presence of Russian troops on Persian soil, stating that "the presence of these Russians constituted a menace to the Turkish frontier," but promising that "Turkey would formally agree to respect the neutrality of Persia

¹Text in Movarekh-od-Dowleh Sepehr, Iran Dar Jang-i-Bozorg 1914-1918, (Tehran: Bank Mellī Press, 1957), p. 89.

²Quoted in The Century, January 1920, p. 322.

if the Russian troops were withdrawn."⁽³⁾ Russia not only refused to evacuate Azerbaijan but continued to treat it as though it were Russian territory. Russian troops, who had come in during the civil war, were making themselves quite at home, terrorizing the inhabitants and showing every sign of settling down permanently.

By the opening months of 1914, it was plain that Russia was getting ready to devour Northern Persia for good and all. Wholesale concessions were granted to Russian corporations; local taxes, gathered by fourteen thousand Muscovite troops, were paid to the Russian authorities instead of the Persian, and elaborate plans for encouraging immigration were set on foot. It was estimated that a hundred thousand Russian Muzhiks were to have been planted in Northern Persia by the end of 1915.⁽⁴⁾

On the other hand "Turkish forces invaded Azerbaijan and that unhappy province thus became a battleground for the Turkish and Russian armies, each supported by their native partisans."⁽⁵⁾

Even before war was declared by Turkey, Great Britain had sent a brigade to Bahrein Island. At the outbreak of hostilities, these troops seized the Turkish port at Fao, the point at which the Shat-al-Arab flows into the Persian Gulf.⁽⁶⁾ This was followed by the arrival of a large expeditionary force from India, the force, commanded in succession by Generals Delamain, Barrett and Maude, occupied Basra on November 21, 1914. "The immediate object of this occupation was

³Sepehr, op. cit., p. 90.

⁴The Century, January 1920, p. 319.

⁵Ibid., p. 321.

⁶George Lenczowski, The Middle East in World Affairs, 2nd ed., (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1952), p. 55.

to protect the oil refineries on the Isle of Abadan.⁽⁷⁾

Early in 1916, Great Britain decided to dispatch a military mission to Southwestern Persia. This mission was to be organized and commanded by Major General Sir Percy Sykes. The object was to organize a Persian force of 11,000 strong "supported by a body of 1,200 Indian regulars and British officers,"⁽⁸⁾ known as the "South Persia Rifles" for the "restoration of law and order in the interests of the Persian and British Government."⁽⁹⁾ In March 1917, the South Persia Rifles were officially recognized by the Persian Government. The South Persian Rifles, as the soldiers were called after their organization, carried on extensive military⁽¹⁰⁾ and Police⁽¹¹⁾ operations in Persia during the war.

There can be no doubt that one of the important, if not major, consideration for the British invasion of Mesopotamia was to protect the oil fields, pipeline and refinery at Ahwaz and Abadan. The great length of the pipeline running from Maydan-i-Naftun to Ahwaz and Abadan, a distance of 150 miles, made it extremely vulnerable, and before measures could be completed for its defence, it was breached and fired in several places. Moreover, the neighbouring tribesmen became hostile to the British through German propaganda and so British missions

⁷Temperley, op. cit., p. 209

⁸Cabinet Papers, CAB. 23/5, No. 369(10), [21 March 1919], p. 5.

⁹Cabinet Papers, CAB 23/1, No. 27(5), [4 January 1917], p. 2 and 5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 42, Cols. 265-266, [16 November 1920], Curzon speaking. And also see, Sir Percy Sykes, A History of Persia, Vol. 2, 2nd ed.; (London: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 476-477.

¹⁰Cabinet Papers, CAB. 12/1, No. 29(5), [8 January 1917], p. 2.

¹¹5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 23, Col. 420, [27 February 1919], Lord Crewe speaking.

were despatched to protect Ahwaz.

British military missions were also despatched to the North-western and Southwestern parts of Persia.⁽¹²⁾

It was pointed out by Lord Curzon that the situation had grown so much worse that it was clear some disciplined force must be sent into North-West Persia, and it had been decided to despatch a force of some 1,300 men with armoured cars into the country.⁽¹³⁾

Although these areas were not as heavily policed as was the Southwest, German missions were to be prevented from crossing into Afghanistan and Baluchistan.⁽¹⁴⁾ So the War Cabinet decided to despatch a small Anglo-Indian force to South-Eastern Persia.⁽¹⁵⁾ The British also established a cordon protecting the Afghan frontier;⁽¹⁶⁾ the Turks and Germans were then thrown out of the Caucasus, Khorasan was preserved, and the danger to Afghanistan was removed.⁽¹⁷⁾ Thus Britain soon become paramount power on that region.

"An effective control of Persia had been established in 1917, when as a result of Russian Revolution, the Russian troops gradually melted away. Great Britain was then forced to act alone."⁽¹⁸⁾ At the

¹²5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 23, Col. 422, [27 February 1919], Lord Curzon speaking.

¹³Cabinet Papers, CAB. 23/5, No. 369(10), [21 March 1919], p. 5, and CAB 23/41, No. 29(3), [2 August 1918], p. 2.

¹⁴5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 42, Col. 282, [16 November 1920], Lord Curzon speaking.

¹⁵Lord M. Hankey, The Supreme Command 1914-1918, Vol. 2, (London George Allen, 1951), p. 350.

¹⁶Cabinet Papers, CAB 23/5, No. 369(10), [21 March 1918], p. 5.

¹⁷5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 42, Col. 282, [16 November 1920], Lord Curzon speaking.

¹⁸Temperley, op. cit., pp. 209-210.

meeting of the War Cabinet on March 21, 1918 "the opinion was expressed that it was of great importance to reach the Caspian and to control it. Failing this, the enemy would gain unimpeded access to Turkestan and outflank the land route to India."⁽¹⁹⁾ In this meeting, the Foreign Secretary gave an outline of the situation brought about in Persia by the collapse of Russia and the Cabinet decided to despatch a force to Northern Persia to keep out the Turks and Germans.⁽²⁰⁾ On May 10, 1918, the War Cabinet decided to send another military mission to Hamadan and Tabriz, in Northern Persia.⁽²¹⁾ Another military mission under the command of General Arnold T. Wilson was despatched to Resht and Enzeli by the decision of the War Cabinet on August 2, 1918.⁽²²⁾

Meanwhile, in Persia itself the withdrawal of Russia had left England master of the situation, and Sir Percy Sykes energetically increased his activities until his patrols covered virtually the whole country. During the summer of 1918, the situation was very tense, but the rapid collapse of the central powers in the autumn and the end of the war removed all possibility of outside intervention, and left England without a rival in Persia. In fact, England now not only dominated Persia itself, but had extended her

¹⁹Cabinet Papers, CAB. 23/5, No. 369(10), [21 March 1918], p. 5.

²⁰Ibid.,

²¹Cabinet Papers, CAB. 23/6, No. 408(5), [10 May 1918], p. 2.

²²Cabinet Papers, CAB. 23/41, No. 29(3), [2 August 1918], p. 2.

control to most of the surrounding region. Both Mesopotamia and Turkish Armenia to the West were occupied by British troops, while to the North British naval units commanded the Caspian Sea.

Although the Persian Government adopted the policy of neutrality from the beginning of the war, and pursued it to the very end, nevertheless the territory of Persia became a battleground during the entire period of hostilities. Thus Persia was subjected to violence and hardships. The Government of Persia therefore, appealed to the sense of justice and fairness of the British. Late in November 1918 the Persian Government communicated their desiderata to the British Minister at Tehran. They requested:

- A. A Persian Government Delegation be admitted to the Peace Conference even though representatives of other neutral powers were not admitted. This was because of the losses inflicted upon Persia and the conflict of the belligerents upon Persian territory.
- B. Abrogation of the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907 and other treaties prejudicial to Persian's integrity for the future.
- C. Compensation to Persia for the damage done by the belligerents in her territory.
- D. Economic liberty.
- E. Revision of treaties^{*} and the annulment of those giving foreigners extra territorial privileges.
- F. Withdrawal of British forces from Persia.

*Treaty of Gulistan (1813) and Turkumanchai (1828), between Russia and Persia; Anglo-Russian treaty of 1907 and Constantinople Agreement (1915) between Great Britain and Russia.

G. Transfer of control of the South Persia Rifles from Britain to Persia.

H. Revision of the customs tariff. (23)

The Persian Government sought British support for all these demands. The British Government rejected the demand for the withdrawal of troops while reiterating respect for Persia's "independence and territorial integrity." It also rejected the demand for control of the South Persia Rifles by Persia and took the view that the nationality of the officers should be decided by Great Britain and Russia. It was willing however, to abrogate the 1907 agreement and to revise the customs tariff. In regard to the participation of the Persian delegation in the Paris Peace Conference the British Government made it conditional upon the participation of other nonbelligerent powers. (24)

The Government of Persia also asked the United States to assist in achieving his aims. On November 15, 1918, Caldwell, the American Minister at Tehran, reported to the Secretary of State that:

I beg to point out that Persia's grievance is greater than, and different from, the suffering of other neutrals in that her independence and sovereignty had been before the war repeatedly transgressed and questioned and since the war violated by Russia, Turkey and Great Britain... Persia's hope is in America. (25)

²³Sepehr, op. cit., p. 491. And also see, United States, Department of State, Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1919: The Paris Peace Conference, Vol. 1, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1942), p. 260. (Hereinafter cited as F.R.U.S. (1919), The Paris Peace Conference).

²⁴For the text of this letter see, Sepehr, op. cit., pp. 493-494.

²⁵F.R.U.S. (1919), The Paris Peace Conference, Vol. 1, p. 256.

In reply to the Persians' request for American recognition of her right of representation at the Peace Conference, with the support of the United States Government, Secretary of State Lansing, wrote to the Persian chargé d'affaires that:

The Government of United States regards with sympathy the request that Persian delegates be admitted to the Peace Congress with power to take part in the discussion and determination of all question in which Persia is interested or concerned, but a definite decision in this respect will not be communicated until after the President has reached Paris. (26)

With a view to and hope of obtaining assistance from America in getting a seat at the coming Peace Conference, the Persian Delegation left Tehran and arrived in Paris in January 1919.

The Persian Delegation to the Peace Conference was headed by The Foreign Minister, Moshaver-ol-Mamalek, and among its junior members were Hossein Ala and Mohammad Ali Foroughi, two of the most respected and prominent Persian statesmen.

The Persian Delegates submitted to the Peace Conference their claims in a brochure which was divided into three parts:

- A. Political: Abrogation of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907. The abolition of consular courts* and withdrawal of consular escorts.

²⁶Ibid., p. 262.

* The treaty of Turkumanchai (1828) fixed the present boundary between Persia and Russia, required an indemnity from Persia the loser and imposed the capitulations, which were extra-territorial privileges given Russian subjects in Persia, including freeing them from any Persian jurisdiction in case of dispute. In fact it gave the Russian consuls sole responsibility for their subjects in a foreign land. Other European powers were quick to follow the Russians in obtaining capitulatory privileges, and it seemed as though the Persian Government had lost authority in its own house.

- B. Economic Independence: Persia demanded reparation for the devastation of areas and destruction of property by the various armies; also claimed freedom from concession and a control of her own economic destiny.
- C. Territorial: Persia went so far as to demand the Oxus for her boundary, thereby claiming Transcaspia, Merv, and Khiva. In the Western and North-Westerly directions she actually claimed Asia minor to the Euphrates, i.e. Kurdistan, Diarbekir, and Mosul.(27)

Then the delegates asked the Supreme Council to afford them opportunity to state their views. This request was rejected three times and the subject of the Persian representation was never considered in a sustained discussion. At the meeting of the Council of Ten on February 18, 1919, Baron Sidney Sonnino of Italy "suggested the hearing of Persia statement." According to the secret minutes of the Council of Ten and council of four at the Paris Peace Conference, Mr. Balfour "pointed out that as Persia was not a belligerent the case did not arise. (28)

On April 22, 1919, at a meeting of the Council of Four, President Wilson mentioned that he had received "an appeal from Persia, who had sent a delegation to the Peace Conference and complained that (not) only had she not been admitted or heard at the Peace Conference but that no reply had even been made to communications addressed to

²⁷Temperley, op. cit., p. 211.

²⁸F.R.U.S. (1919), The Paris Peace Conference, Vol. IV, p. 57.

the Bureau of the Conference."⁽²⁹⁾ Lloyd George said that he "was informed by Sir Maurice Hankey that Mr. Balfour was opposed to the admission of Persia to the Conference, though he did not know the reason. He asked that the matter might be postponed until he consulted Mr. Balfour."⁽³⁰⁾ In the minutes, this is the clearest statement to indicate that it was British policy to prevent Persia from being heard. Two weeks later, on May 7, 1919, President Woodrow Wilson brought up the matter for the last time before the Council of Four. Wilson again asked for a favorable attitude toward Persia and stated that: "he understood that the Persians were much depressed at not being consulted in regard to the Peace settlement. They said that their interests were not being considered."⁽³¹⁾ But "Mr. Lloyd George pointed out that the Turkish problem had not yet been discussed in any detail. When it was discussed, he wished the Council to hear that the representatives of India had to say particularly in regard to Constantinople and the future of Islam, he thought that Persia ought then to be heard."⁽³²⁾

In each instance it was the British who delayed and opposed an appearance of the Persian delegation to state its claims. The experiences of the Persian delegation at the Peace Conference were sufficiently unfortunate to furnish grounds for allegations that they

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ F.R.U.S. (1919), The Paris Peace Conference, Vol. V, p. 153.

³¹ Ibid., p. 498.

³² Ibid.

were barred from the Conference because of the British veto on discussion of Persian affairs at Versailles.

On May 19, 1919 in the House of Commons, Colonel Josiah Wedgwood asked the Prime Minister "whether His Majesty's Government has received, and has refused, the request of the Persian Government to lay its claim before the Peace Conference, and, if so, on what grounds this opposition was based?"⁽³³⁾ In reply, Captain F. E. Guest stated that "the answer to the first part of the question is the negative and the second part, therefore, does not arise. The position is as follows: the Persian Government sent an Envoy to Paris who sought admission to the Peace Conference. The acceptance or refusal of this application was a point to be settled by the Peace Conference itself and, so far, the Persian Envoy has not been admitted, though Persia has been invited to accede to the Covenant of the League of Nations."⁽³⁴⁾

The one sop which Persia received was her inclusion in the list of states invited to assent to the Covenant of the League of Nations, thereby indicating that Persia was a presumptive member of the League, and thus by implication recognizing her as a sovereign state. This, however, was cold comfort in view of rumors as to what was afoot between Great Britain and Persia. The five men delegation that Persia sent to the Peace Conference waited four months but

³³ 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 116, Col. 23, [19 May 1919].

³⁴ Ibid.

was not permitted to state its case. Instead the great powers decided to limit participation to those countries which had actually declared war upon the Central Powers. According to Sir Harold Nicolson, one of the leading British policy experts at Versailles, the Persians' request for an opportunity to present their claims was rejected by the Supreme Council in order to avoid setting a precedent which would have resulted in similar representation by Holland, Sweden and Switzerland. Nicolson felt that the British should have supported the Persian request; he wrote:

The British delegation, however, were certainly in error in failing to support Persia's request... it was an error on our part... As it was, both the Persians and the world imagined that their claims had been rejected solely owing to the selfish insistence of Great Britain.(35)

The London Times, following the attitude of the Foreign Office towards the Persian delegation, in a leading article on April 24, 1919, first spoke sneeringly of the claims of the Persian delegation as "composed in some Eastern Bazaar," and stigmatized them as childish and impracticable; but there was a complete volte-face by the London Times, which in an editorial called the Foreign Office to account for its bungling and benevolently enquired why the polite Eastern gentlemen who composed the Persian Delegation should not be invited from Paris to London to settle these little differences.(36)

³⁵ Harold Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 135-136.

³⁶ London Times, 8 June 1919. This is undoubtedly an aspect of the quarrel between Lloyd George and Lord Northcliffe, proprietor of The Times. See Reginald Pound and Geoffrey Harmsworth, Northcliffe, (London: Cassell, 1959).

A skeleton draft of a peace treaty prepared by two American experts, James Brown Scott and David Hunter Miller, included the item; "The status and perhaps the boundaries of Persia may be raised in connection with the existing unfortunate situation of that country."⁽³⁷⁾ Later in the draft, it was proposed that Persia "should be signatory to the treaty."⁽³⁸⁾ In a personal memorandum, David Hunter Miller observed on November 22, 1918: "the rights of Luxemburg and of Persia both invaded by the Central Powers must be protected by membership in the Peace Congress."⁽³⁹⁾ But as a result of British insistence the Supreme Council refused to hear the Persian Delegation. The British, during the Peace Conference, were negotiating a treaty in Tehran and were apparently anxious to settle the Persian question privately. We have Secretary of State Robert Lansing's words in regard to the rejection of Persia's claims:

At Paris I asked of Mr. Balfour three times that the Persians have an opportunity to be heard before the Council of Foreign Ministers because of their claims and their boundaries and because of their territory had been a battleground. Mr. Balfour was rather abrupt in refusing to permit them to have a hearing. It now appears that at the time I made these requests Great Britain was engaged in a secret negotiation to gain at least economic control of Persia.⁽⁴⁰⁾

³⁷ F.R.U.S. (1919), The Paris Peace Conference, Vol. 1, p. 302.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 310.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 362.

⁴⁰ United States, Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, (Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1934), p. 706. (Hereinafter cited as Foreign Relations of the United States 1919).

Of course, the Persians could not be completely silenced. Nicolson wrote: "Hossein Ala thereafter sailed for the United States as a Minister to Washington and succeeded with much skill and integrity in enlisting American sympathies against what he described as the impending strangulation of Persia." (41) On one more occasion, chargé Mirza Ali Kuli Khan gave a dinner in honor of Secretary and Mrs. Lansing in Paris. The New York Times reported that the chargé, in an after dinner speech recounted the losses Persia had suffered and "expressed the conviction that the American Government and its associates would not refuse to aid his country." (42) About a month later the New York Times devoted an editorial to the Persian cause. After reciting the Persian demands and expressing sympathy appropriate to Persia's misfortunes, the editors concluded that Persia was probably unready for complete independence and suggested that the mandatory principle might offer the best solution. (43)

Meanwhile the Persian Foreign Minister, Moshaver-ol-Mamalek, with the support of the American Delegation, was working in Paris to establish Persia as one of the free nations of the world; at the same time the Shah was encouraging them by telegrams to do so and giving directions. Then all of a sudden the young Shah was maneuvered into appointing his cousin, Prince Firooz, as Foreign Minister, replacing the current

⁴¹Harold Nicolson, op. cit., p. 136.

⁴²The New York Times, 8 March 1919.

⁴³Ibid., 13 April 1919.

Foreign Minister who was in Paris and who had neither resigned nor been dismissed. So nothing could be done with Moshaver-ol-Mamalek who was carrying on negotiations with great powers at Paris quite independently of his Government and was ostentatiously avoiding all contact with displeasure of Lord Curzon!

CHAPTER III

CURZON'S AIM AND PURPOSE IN CONCLUDING THE AGREEMENT

The integrity of Persia must be registered as a cardinal precept of our Imperial creed.(1)

"Turkestan, Afghanistan, Transcaspia, Persia," Curzon wrote in the introduction to his book, "to me... they are the pieces of a chessboard upon which is being played out a game for the dominion of the world... The future of Great Britain... will be decided not in Europe... but in the continent where our emigrant stock first came, and to which as conquerors their descendants have returned."*

¹George N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, Vol. 2, 2nd ed., (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1966), p. 605.

*Curzon, when he took over the Foreign Office, had a wealth of experience. In 1889-90, he journeyed to Persia and the result of this travel is embodied in a significant two-volume book, Persia and the Persian Question, (1892). In 1895 he was Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs and from 1899 to 1905 Viceroy in India. He was a member of Asquith's war time Coalition Government and when Lloyd George became Prime Minister joined the War Cabinet. As leader of the House of Lords after 1916, and Foreign Secretary 1919-1924, Curzon was also a significant influence in the Conservative Party. See G. Smith, The Dictionary of National Biography 1922-1930, (London: Oxford University Press, 1937), pp. 221-234; Harold Nicolson, Curzon, the Last Phase, 1919-1925: A Study in Post-War Diplomacy, (London: Constable, 1934); and Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, 3 vols., (London: Ernest Benn, 1928).

Fear of Russia and love of India were the inspiring passions of Curzon's career. Always he had dreamt of creating a chain of buffer states from the northern confines of India to the Mediterranean Sea.⁽²⁾ The potential aggressor was Russia as it had long been, or Germany, as it had become during 1914-1918. In the chain of buffer states for protecting India, Persia was to him at once the weakest and most vital link.⁽³⁾ With this urgent necessity always in mind, Curzon delivered an address to members of the Imperial War Cabinet during the critical summer of 1918, and said, "We must endeavor by every means in our power to secure a friendly Persia..."⁽⁴⁾ and it is not surprising that under Curzon's guidance the rejuvenation of Persia should play a prominent part in the program drawn up by the Foreign Office, and Lord Curzon was urgent in pressing it upon the attention of his Cabinet colleagues.

On December 30, 1918, he declared that "The policy of withdrawing from Persia... would be immoral, feeble and disastrous." He pointed out that "Persia, instead of being a solitary figure moving about in a chronic state of disorder on the glacis of the Indian fortress, has the Indian frontier on one side of her and what is

²See Harold Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 121-122.

³Ibid.,

⁴Cabinet Papers, CAB. 23/41, No. 20(5), [25 June 1918], pp. 2-4.

tantamount to a British frontier on the other..."⁽⁵⁾ Curzon's reasonable expression had great influence upon the Eastern Committee and the Committee became in favour of the policy recommended by him. Armed with this authority, Lord Curzon, as soon as he was established at the Foreign Office, embarked upon the negotiations which led to the Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 9, 1919.⁽⁶⁾

The Agreement was the very embodiment of Curzon's ambitions. Despite the first article which proclaimed that the British Government would continue "to respect absolutely the independence and integrity"⁽⁷⁾ of Persia, the essence of the Agreement went far toward making Persia a British vassal state. On the day on which the Agreement was signed in Tehran, Curzon addressed to the Cabinet a memorandum in which he attempted to justify his persistence and to explain his aims and policy in Persia. He wrote the answer to the question that "Why Persia should not be left to herself" is that "her geographical position, the magnitude of our interests in the country, and the future safety of our Eastern Empire render it impossible for us now... to disinterest ourselves from what happens in Persia." Further he

⁵Quoted in Ronaldshay, op. cit., p. 214.

⁶Cmd. 300 (1919).

⁷Ibid.

stated that:

If Persia were to be left alone, there is every reason to fear that she would be overrun by Bolshevik influences from the north. Lastly we possess in the south-western corner of Persia great assets in the shape of the oilfields, which are worked for the British Navy and which give us a commanding interest in that part of the world.(8)

It has already been mentioned above that Lord Curzon himself gave British oil interests in Persia as one reason for the Agreement. In a memorandum prepared for Clemenceau, the French Prime Minister, late in 1919, M. Berenger, the French oil expert, declared that British policy in Persia had not been framed or pursued as a purely territorial policy but essentially as a petroleum policy. Great Britain had displayed great activity in securing control over oil fields in Asiatic countries; she was determined to free herself of dependence on the United States for all the oil supplies required by the British Navy and by military and commercial enterprises. Thus he explained that the recent Anglo-Persian Agreement "was negotiated and concluded without the knowledge of the United States or of the European Powers."(9)

⁸Curzon's memorandum of August 9, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 710, pp. 1119-1122.

⁹Memorandum by Weakley on M. Berenger's note to M. Clemenceau relative to petroleum. Ibid., No. 703, pp. 1111-1113.

Harold Nicolson, Curzon's friend and colleague, described the Agreement as "a friendly alliance" which was brought into being "by the exercise of prudent advice" and by "the flow of capital eastwards." To Nicolson, the Agreement would render "the hostile schemes" of Russia precarious.⁽¹⁰⁾

Lord Sydenham in a debate in the House of Lords, also saw the Agreement as being directed against "the dictators who seized power in Russia" and who "flood the East with agents and propaganda." Britain was, he said, "the sole guardian of the independence of Persia, which is seriously threatened by the Bolshevist Government."⁽¹¹⁾

The successful Bolshevik revolution together with the new Soviet drive to the South created a serious problem for Great Britain. The British Foreign Office feared that if the Bolsheviks invaded Persia, there would be a dangerous reaction on the British position in Mesopotamia and India. Curzon as the great authority on India and the Middle East believed profoundly in Russia's "Schlieffen Plan", of 1885 for the invasion of India via both the Persian Gulf and northern Persia. It was because of this belief that he pressed for an agreement with Persia and asked the Lloyd George Cabinet to retain British forces in Northern Persia. To Curzon it appeared narrow-minded and erroneous to contend that the Persian Gulf was anything but a vital British interest. In 1907, protesting against the Anglo-Russian Convention,

¹⁰ Harold Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 122-123.

¹¹ 5 H. L. Deb., Vol. 42, Col. 274, [16 November 1920].

he had expressed the view that the great strategical danger to India lay in the direction of the Persian Gulf.

In 1920, defending his policy in Persia, Curzon asserted that:

...at the moment that this Bolshevist invasion occurred the fear that if they broke through there would be serious and dangerous reaction upon our position in Mesopotamia was widely and authoritatively entertained, and undoubtedly one of the reasons for which we were compelled at the stage to retain our forces in Northwest Persia was the peril that would have ensued to our Mesopotamian position had they been withdrawn. (12)

Following the American protests and the conversation in London between Ambassador Davis and Lord Grey, who had promised that a clarification of the British policy in Persia would be announced, (13) Harmsworth, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, declared in the House of Commons that "His Majesty's Government are pledged to respect absolutely the independence and integrity of Persia." (14) A few days later Lord Curzon, in the course of a speech, tried to give assurance to the Americans that there was no claim or right to revise existing customs treaties with third powers to create a monopoly or claim exclusive rights in development of the country. He denied application of any pressure upon Persia in the negotiations and promised support to the Persian delegates should they wish to raise before the Paris Peace Conference claims to reparation by belligerents for violation

¹²Ibid., Col. 287.

¹³See Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, p. 707.

¹⁴5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 119, Col. 1916, [18 August 1919].

of Persia's frontier. "I know," concluded Curzon, "that country and that people to be possessed of marked individuality and national spirit, too ardent to be suppressed, too valuable to be submerged. Was it not natural that Persia, seeking to establish and stabilize her future, should turn to us? It is an obvious interest to us to have a peaceful and prosperous Persia..."⁽¹⁵⁾

This speech was obviously for foreign consumption, and its purpose was to pacify opinion in France and the United States where the sharpest pens and strongest voices were criticising the policy of Foreign Office and voicing the grievances of Persia. The American Ambassador at London in his report on Curzon's speech regarding the scope of the Agreement commented: "It is of course impossible to challenge the sincerity of these professions which must be proved by the evidence. Assuming sincerity, do they meet our objection to the treaty? Do our objections go to the substance of the treaty or to the time and manner of its negotiations? The treaty being an accomplished fact, is our attitude one of active protest or mere refusal to take any steps signifying approval? In either case it seems essential that I be informed what instructions have been issued to Tehran on the subject."⁽¹⁶⁾

In answer to the numerous protests Curzon tried to justify his Persian policy during the course of a long speech, he asserted that:

¹⁵ London Times, 19 September 1919.

¹⁶ Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 713-714.

"Incidentally, I have noticed in some quarters that our policy in that part of the world is described as an act of dementia on my part, dragging after me a body of reluctant colleagues."⁽¹⁷⁾ Lord Curzon denied this, but he admitted that unfortunately the critics had found so much fault with his policy that he had believed it was necessary to make a strong case for the Agreement. Curzon's speech was a spirited defense, the high spot on the question in the House of Lords. He explained to the members that:

The whole of our policy was devoted to steadying the situation in Persia... that Persia is an important British interest. The policy that has been announced from this table over and over again by successive Foreign Ministers - Lord Salisbury and Lord Lansdowne - and in another place by Viscount Grey of Fallodon. A peaceful Persia, a stable Persia, a friendly Persia, and an independent Persia have been cornerstones of British policy. They were the basis of the Anglo-Persian Agreement.⁽¹⁸⁾

This, however, proved only wishful thinking, the events following showed that Lord Curzon was on the horns of a dilemma. One solution of Persia's problem was for England to allow the people of Persia to work out their own destiny without interference either directly or indirectly in their military, economic and political affairs by other powers, and to accept Persians as friends and equals. But the then residents of Number 10, Downing Street were pursuing a different policy and wanted Persia as a buffer state between India and the Soviet Union and as a source of raw materials. For a quarter of a century Persians had been

¹⁷5 H. L. Deb., Vol. 42, Col. 3, [16 November 1920].

¹⁸Ibid., Cols. 282-283.

suspicious of British policy and Lord Curzon's devious political maneuvers increased this suspicion and distrust. In 1942, Anthony Eden, referring to the attitude of the Persians toward British policy, stated: "The last thing we want is a recurrence of the practice of zones of influence and matters of that kind which there were in Persia long ago, and which made us so intensely unpopular in that country for a generation."⁽¹⁹⁾

After the publication of the Agreement it was said in Persia that England's interest was to keep Persia weak, divided and disintegrated; that British dual policy of, on the one hand, practicing partition or protectorate and, on the other hand, talking of the independence and integrity of Persia, had had the effect of breaking Persia's spirit of resistance and shattering her hopes for a better future. The general situation and the public sentiments of those days are aptly described by Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University:

For such broken spirit and shattered hopes, as for the "anarchy", now existing in Persia, Russia and Great Britain are directly responsible, and if there be a reckoning, will one day be held to account. It is idle to talk of any improvement in the situation, when the only Government in Persia consist of a Cabinet which does not command the confidence of the people, financially starved by both Russia and England, allowed only miserable doles of money on usurious terms, and forbidden to employ honest and efficient foreign experts like Mr. Shuster...⁽²⁰⁾

¹⁹ Quoted in Ramazani, op. cit., p. 307.

²⁰ Edward G. Browne, The Persian Revolution, (London: Cambridge University Press, 1910), p. 174.

Alluding to the Persian protests, Curzon said that in some quarters suspicion had been aroused as to the real character of the Agreement. This came principally from a misconception. It was stated that the Agreement amounted to a protectorate by Great Britain over Persia. This was not true. He would have opposed any semblance of a protectorate as contrary to England's repeated engagement.. He would have opposed this to the last since he would have regarded it as inimical to British interest. Those who believed that Great Britain, as a result of this Agreement was going to Anglicize or Indianize or Europeanize Persia were mistaken. All Curzon wanted to do, so he said, was to give Persia expert assistance and financial aid which would enable her to carve her own fortune as an independent, extant country.

Curzon further stated that he had argued the case for the Agreement in the main in the way it affected interests of Persia and the interests of Great Britain, but he regarded it from a much broader scope. In looking to the future nothing seemed to him more certain than that a time of great trouble and unforeseen developments lay before the nations of the world. He doubted whether, as the result of the war England had succeeded in pacifying Europe. But whether she had done so or not, it was obvious she could not for some times secure stability in Asia. The break-up of the Russian and Turkish Empires had produced a vacuum it would take a long time to fill with settled, orderly conditions. The rise of Bolshevism had introduced a new and disturbing element, and it might be that in escaping the dangers of the recent war England would be confronted by a more serious peril in the

future. If that forecast were not overgloomy and if it were correct, nothing could be worse for the peace of Asia and indeed for the peace of the world than that there should exist in the heart of the Middle East a State which by reason of its weakness might become a possible center of intrigue and the focus of disorder.

What England wanted, if possible, was to secure a solid block in which reasonable, tranquil, and orderly political conditions would prevail, from Burma in the East to Mesopotamia in the West. So far as Great Britain was responsible, she would devote herself to that task. "If that end was a right and reasonable end," said Curzon, "it was necessary and vital that Great Britain and Persia work together in order to secure it. Great Britain and Persia were jointly prepared to defend that Agreement, and they looked forward to the vindication of its real character by its success."⁽²¹⁾

The Anglo-Persian Agreement was fathered with loving parental care by Lord Curzon, who, according to Harold Nicolson, saw in the Agreement the climactic achievement of his career. Curzon "...had always, and with full sincerity, been in favour of Persian independence and integrity. He had always and sometimes out of season been the enemy of Russian infiltration into Central Asia. It seemed incredible to him that the Persians could fail to recognize in him their constant, their lordly, their disinterested and their inspired friend."⁽²²⁾

²¹London Times, 19 September 1919.

²²Harold Nicolson, op. cit., p. 128.

With these words Nicolson captures the heart of the best of the British policy toward Persia; but, as events were to show, the best was sadly lacking in comprehension. As Nicolson admits, Curzon felt "...that in general we should assume towards Persia the role of a determined although liberal protector."⁽²³⁾ The Agreement was too transparent to be a serious effort to deceive Persia and the world as to the British intention. After all, the British could argue, Persia was in a chaotic state and sorely in need of outside tutelage and assistance. With Russian influence at a low ebb, it would be to the mutual advantage of both countries that Persia should pass under the benevolent protection of Britain and thus be securely beyond Russian grasp.

What we did try in the Agreement to do was to purify her internal administration and to give her a scheme of sound finance...to provide Persia with the means and instruments by which that independence could be secure.⁽²⁴⁾

Alluding to the denouncing of the Agreement by Moshir-od-Dowleh's Cabinet, Curzon observed that it was rather a "pedantic and foolish policy" on the part of the Persian Government to deny themselves the enormous advantages of the Agreement by which they had already begun to profit."⁽²⁵⁾

We have seen that in his Persian policy from 1918-1921, Lord Curzon was guided by two main principles. One was his

²³Ibid., p. 133.

²⁴5 H. L. Deb., Vol. 42, Col. 283, [16 November 1920], Curzon's Statement.

²⁵See Ibid., Col. 285.

concept of Persia as a buffer state and to him the words "independence and integrity of Persia" were more than an outworn and empty phrase. Indeed, the backbone of Curzon's case for the Anglo-Persian Agreement was the real strategic gain achieved by the safeguarding of India. The other principle was more practical and it concerned the improvement of British commercial interests in Persia, and to obtain assurance of oil field and its safe shipment via the Gulf, which was a definite vital interest of Great Britain.

The preceding outline gives us the key to the basic and continuing feature of British policy in Persia. Great Britain depended on trade, investment, and sea power, and because of Persia's geographical position, its commercial opportunities, and the valuable British owned oil fields, the British Government had long and consistently looked upon Persia as an area closely related to the security and vital interests of Great Britain. The traditional policy had been to maintain Persia as a buffer state and so a means of checking Russian expansion southward, while taking the possible advantage of Persian markets and resources.

It does not appear that the British Government had ever entertained the purpose of destroying Persia's territorial integrity. British interests in the South Persia were both strategic and commercial. The general strategic interest was determined by the fact that South Persia borders India and the Indian Ocean. In addition, Britain had in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company an interest which was considered vital and which represented a combination of the strategic and the commercial,

and the later became to all intents and purpose an arm of the British Admiralty and of British strategic policy. British interests dictated British policy, so the task of the Agreement in Persia was to sponsor and to encourage those measures that might reasonably lead to improvements in government, in the Army, and in the life of people. While the British with their own interests in view, desired a self-governing and independent Persia, they naturally hoped also for a freindly and fair attitude on the part of the Persian Government.

Throughout this study the conclusion has been that the real British objective for Persia was the kind of stability and integrity that would not permit Bolshevik Russia to penetrate to India and would permit British commercial activities to proceed unimpaired. If this conclusion has validity, then the British could really regard Curzon's Persian policy as approaching their ideal.

CHAPTER IV

ORIGINS AND RECEPTION OF THE ANGLO-PERSIAN AGREEMENT

(i) The Genesis of the Anglo-Persian Agreement

At the time of the Armistice there were four distinct areas of British occupation or domination in Persian territory. In the East there was a cordon of troops running up from the Persian Gulf in the South to Mashahd in the North. In the West a similar cordon stretched from Baghdad through Kermanshah to the Caspian. And at Bushire and on the Gulf there were a few garrisons of Indian troops; while Southern Persia was dominated by the South Persia Rifles commanded by British Officers. Yet with the defeat of Central Powers it became increasingly difficult to justify to British or to Persian opinion the maintenance on Persian territory of armed British detachments. The general opinion in the Eastern Committee of the War Cabinet was that the British troops should withdraw from Persia and "leave Persia to go to the devil in her own way."⁽¹⁾ But Curzon's view was that Persia could be brought completely under British influence; she and British Empire would prosper together, and a British protectorate over Persia would make the British Empire doubly secure. Curzon carried this vision to a meeting of the Cabinet's Eastern Committee on December 30, 1918. He persisted and won his colleagues' reluctant consent for

¹Quoted in, Earl of Ronaldshay, The Life of Lord Curzon, Vol. 3, (London: Ernest Benn, 1928), p. 213.

the Foreign Office to enter into the negotiation with the Persians.⁽²⁾

While the Persian Delegation was waiting outside the Peace Conference and while Persian public opinion was putting pressure on the Government in Tehran to ask Britain to evacuate Persia, the secret negotiations for an Agreement between the Government of Persia and the representative of the British Government in Tehran were progressing. Sir Percy Cox,⁽³⁾ the British Minister at the Court of the Shah, who had a record which inspired the greatest confidence in Persia and Mesopotamia, took the matter in hand. On August 15, 1919 the British Government showed its Persian hand. On that date it announced the Anglo-Persian "Agreement as the culmination of negotiations" lasting nine months. The terms of the Agreement were as follows:

Preamble: In virtue of the close ties of friendship which have existed between the two Governments in the past, and in the conviction that it is in the essential and mutual interests of both in future that these ties should be cemented, and that the progress and prosperity of Persia should be promoted to the utmost, it is hereby agreed between the Persian Government, on the one hand, and His Britannic Majesty's Minister, acting on behalf of his Government, on the other, as follows:

ART I. The British Government reiterate, in the most categorical manner, the undertakings which they have repeatedly given in the past to respect absolutely the independence and integrity of Persia.

²Harold Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 32-34.

³Cox, Major-General Sir Percy Zachariah, b. 1864; political resident, Persian Gulf, 1909; Secretary, Foreign Department, Government of India, 1914; Chief Political Officer, Indian Expeditionary Force; Minister at Tehran, 1918-1920; High Commissioner in Iraq, 1920-1923. See Who Was Who, Vol. 3, 1929-1940, (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1961), p. 299. Also see Philip Graves, The Life of Sir Percy Cox, (London: Hutchinson, 1941).

ART.II. The British Government will supply, at the cost of the Persian Government, the services of whatever expert advisers may, after consultation between the two Governments, be considered necessary for the several departments of the Persian Administration. These advisers shall be engaged on contracts and endowed with adequate powers, the nature of which shall be the matter of agreement between the Persian Government and the advisers.

ART.III. The British Government will supply, at the cost of the Persian Government, such officers and such munitions and equipment of modern type as may be adjudged necessary by a joint commission of military experts, British and Persian, which shall assemble forthwith for the purpose of estimating the needs of Persia in respect of the formation of a uniform force which the Persian Government proposes to create for the establishment and preservation of order in the country and on its frontiers.

ART.IV. For the purpose of financing the reforms indicated in Clauses 2 and 3 of this Agreement, the British Government offer to provide or arrange a substantial loan for the Persian Government, for which adequate security shall be sought by the two Governments in consultation in the revenues of the Customs or other sources of income at the disposal of the Persian Government. Pending the completion of negotiations for such a loan the British Government will supply on account of it such funds as may be necessary for initiating the said reforms.

ART. V. The British Government, fully recognising the urgent need which exists for the improvement of communications in Persia, with a view both to the extension of trade and the prevention of famine, are prepared to cooperate with the Persian Government for the encouragement of Anglo-Persian enterprise in this direction, both by means of railway construction and other forms of transport; subject to agreement between the two Governments as to the particular projects which may be most necessary, practicable and profitable.

ART. VI. The two Governments agree to the appointment forthwith of a joint committee of experts for the examination and revision of the existing Customs tariff with a view to its reconstruction on a basis calculated to accord with the legitimate interests of the country and to promote its prosperity.

Done in duplicate in Tehran this 9th day of August, 1919, corresponding to the 12th day of Zighade. 1337.(4)

⁴Parliamentary Paper, Agreement between His Britanic Majesty's Government and the Persian Government. Signed at Tehran August 9, 1919., Persia No. 1 (1919), Cmd. 300.

AGREEMENT between Great Britain and Persia making provision for a British Government Loan to Persia, Tehran, August 9, 1919. (5)

CONTRACT FOR LOAN - Between the British Government and the Persian Government, with reference to an Agreement concluded this day between the said Governments, it is agreed as follows:

ART. I. The British Government grant a loan of 2,000,000 sterling to the Persian Government, to be paid to the Persian Government as required in such instalments and at such dates as may be indicated by the Persian Government after the British Financial Adviser shall have taken up the duties of his office at Tehran, as provided for in the aforesaid Agreement.

ART. II. The Persian Government undertakes to pay interest monthly at the rate of 7 per cent per annum upon sums advanced in accordance with Article I up to the 20th March, 1921, and thereafter to pay monthly such amount as will suffice to liquidate the principal sum and interest thereon at 7 per cent per annum in twenty years.

ART. III. All the revenues and Customs receipts assigned in virtue of the contract of the 8th May, 1911, for the repayment of the loan of £1,250,000, are assigned for the repayment of the present loan with continuity of all conditions stipulated in the said contract, and with priority over all debts other than the 1911 loan and subsequent advances made by the British Government. In case of insufficiency of the receipts indicated above the Persian Government undertakes to make good the necessary sums from other resources, and for this purpose the Persian Government hereby assigns to the service of the present loan, and of the other advances above mentioned, in priority and with continuity of conditions stipulated in the aforesaid contract, the Customs receipts of all other regions, in so far as these receipts are or shall be at its disposal.

ART. IV. The Persian Government will have the right of repayment of the present loan at any date out of the proceeds of any British loan which it may contract for.

Done in duplicate at Tehran this 9th day of August, 1919, corresponding to the 12th day of Zighade, 1337.

There were added to the texts of these Agreements two letters dated August 9, 1919, (6) from Sir Percy Cox to the Persian Prime

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

Minister. The first of these expressed the British Government's readiness to co-operate in the revision of the existing treaties, to aid Persia's claim for damage suffered at the hands of other belligerents, and to agree to the rectification of the frontier at certain points. The other letter assured the Persian Government that Great Britain would not claim the cost of maintenance of British troops sent in to Persia for the defence of her neutrality, and represented a similar assurance that the Persian Government would not claim indemnity for damage done by the British troops in Persian territory.

Soon after the conclusion of the Agreement, the British proceeded to take steps, at the instance of the Persian Government, to put it into execution. A Military Commission, under General Dickson, who was chosen by the Persian Government for the purpose, was sent out to examine, along with Persian colleagues, the military situation in Persia, and to prepare a scheme for the creation of the Persian force. Again in pursuance of the Agreement they sent out to Persia an able treasury official, Mr. Armitage Smith, to act as head of the Financial Commission for the re-organization of Persian finances. Two consulting engineers went out to Persia in an advisory capacity, and a Persian railway syndicate was formed for the survey of essential railway lines in different parts of the country.

On February 26, 1920, the American Minister in Tehran made the following observation regarding the Anglo-Persian Agreement.⁽⁷⁾

⁷Foreign Relations of the United States, 1920, Vol. 3, p. 344.

A British military mission headed by Major General Dickson has been working in conjunction with the Persian Government in Tehran for more than a month. The British Minister has requested me to make any suggestion I wish in this connection but this was entirely a diplomatic move as the deliberations and decisions of the Commission are not being made known to anyone.

On June 22, 1920, Sir Thomas Bramsdon, in the House of Commons, asked the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs whether, under the Persian Agreement, the joint commission of military experts had been set up and whether any munitions and equipment had been supplied to Persia by Great Britain.

The Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs said that the answer to the first part of the question was affirmative. The Report of the Commission had been drawn up and was being considered. The question of supplying munitions and equipment for the uniform Persian forces, which it was proposed to organize, was also occupying the earnest attention of the British Government. (8)

Mr. Briant asked the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether, under Article 5, of Part 1, of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, any schemes had been prepared for the encouragement of Anglo-Persian enterprise; and whether in such schemes preferential treatment was being given to British subject.

Mr. Harmsworth answered: "Article 5, of the Anglo-Persian Agreement was being carried out, as far as circumstances permitted,

⁸5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 130, Col. 1796, [22 June 1920].

in close co-operation between the British and Persian Governments. A railway option had been given by the Persian Government to a British firm for a proposed continuation of the present Mesopotamia railhead on the Persian frontier to Tehran via Kermanshah and Hamadan. The Company's surveyors were then at work in Persia. The answer to the last part of the question was negative."⁽⁹⁾

It was stated previously that these agreements were the result of negotiations which had been in progress for nine months at the time of the signing of the Agreement, i.e., they were begun before the Peace Conference had commenced its labours at Paris and therefore before the Covenant for a League of Nations existed even on official paper. This would seem to dispose of the charge that they constituted a violation of the Covenant of the League of Nations, in spirit at least. To this charge Lord Curzon replied:

Both the British Government and the Persian Government accepted unreservedly Article 10 and 20 of the Covenant. When the treaty of Peace was ratified, and as soon as the Council of the League of Nations came into effective existence, it was the intention of both Governments to communicate the Agreement to the Council of League, with a full explanation and defence of its conditions.⁽¹⁰⁾

The Persians violently resented the secret negotiations carried out by the Persian Government with a foreign Government. They argued that the method was inconsistent with the Covenant of the League of

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ London Times, September 19, 1919.

Nations and with the first point of Wilson's "Fourteen Points."⁽¹¹⁾
The secrecy of the negotiations brought protest from the Government of the United States. "But I should tell you," wrote the United States' Ambassador in London to Lord Curzon,

That upon communication with Washington I learned that neither the President nor the Secretary of State were favourably impressed by what they conceived to be the secrecy with which the Agreement was negotiated, and felt that there had been some lack of frankness in the matter more especially as the presence of the Persian Delegation in Paris seemed to offer numerous occasions for a full statement of the intention and purpose of the British Government in the premises, and that they were therefore indisposed to take the responsibility of any steps which would indicate their approval of the treaty thus negotiated.⁽¹²⁾

The father of the idea of the Agreement was Lord Curzon, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, considered at that time the great expert on Persia, and he was motivated by security of India and Mesopotamia, flanking Persia. Curzon was aware of the corruptibility of Persia's political leaders and he felt that a stable and peaceful

¹¹Yahya Dolatabadi, Hayat Yahya Ya Tarikh-i-Muaser, Vol. 4, (Tehran: Ibnisina, 1952), p. 130.

¹²Foreign Relations of the United States, 1919, Vol. 2, p. 701.

regime could be brought about by Britain's controlling the country, thus guaranteeing the British position in the Persian Gulf.

In order to achieve his objective, the British agents persuaded the Shah (Ahmad Mirza), to dismiss Premier Ala-es-Saltaneh and to appoint Vusuq-od-Dowleh.* This persuasion was achieved by a monthly subsidy of some £2,500 (15,000 Tomans) to the Shah. After the 1919 Agreement was signed, Lord Curzon was determined to stop the subsidy and only after considerable pleading by Sir Percy Cox was he induced to continue it so that Vusuq would stay in office. (13)

The Persian triumvirate responsible for the Agreement were the Premier, the Foreign Minister, Prince Firooz Mirza, and the Finance Minister, Akbar Mirza Sarem ed-Dowleh. These three were persuaded to work for the Agreement by the payment of subsidies to Premier Vusuq and to Farman Farma, the father of Prince Firooz who was at that time Governor of Fars. (14) They must have had a feeling that their signing the Agreement might endanger them with the Persian people, for, besides arresting and exiling their more vocal opponents, the three obtained a promise, addressed by Sir Percy Cox to each one, and made a secret endorsement to the Agreement, which read:

*Vusuq-od-Dowleh, who was in power during most of this period, was particularly pro-British. Vusuq's first Wartime Cabinet lasted from August 1916 to May 1917. See Sepehr, op. cit., pp. 480-482.

¹³E. L. Woodward and Rohan Butler, eds. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, First Series, Vol. IV, No. 715, pp. 1125-1126. (Hereinafter cited as Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939.)

¹⁴Ibid., No. 802, pp. 1190-1191.

It gives me much pleasure to inform Your Highness, that His Majesty's Government authorizes me to intimate that, in view of the Agreement concluded this day, the 9th August, 1919, between His Majesty's Government and the Persian Government, they are prepared to extend to Your Highness their good offices and support in case of need, and further to afford Your Highness asylum in the British Empire should necessity arise.(15)

Prince Firooz later became Minister of Foreign Affairs and when, in February 1921, after the fall of the Vusuq's Cabinet he was arrested by the Persian Government, the British Minister in Tehran made representations to the Government of Persia; immediately afterwards it was announced in the House of Commons by the British Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs that "this ex-Minister had in the past received assurance of the good offices and support, in case of need, of His Majesty's Government. Our duty, therefore, it is to see that his trial is conducted impartially."(16)

It is possible that the Persian Prime Minister and his aide Firooz had been somewhat less interested in Persia and more interested in their own welfare. The London Times for July 10, 1922 wrote that:

We persuaded an Anglophil Government of our own creation that we would defend its northern frontier, and with the help of a personal bribe of £130,000, stolen from the British Taxpayer, "to popularize the Anglo-Persian Agreement" (Englishmen

¹⁵ Copy of a letter, dated the 9th August 1919, from His Majesty's Minister at Tehran to their Highness Vusuq-od-Dowleh, Prince Firooz Nusret-ed-Dowleh, Prince Akbar Mirza Sarem-ed-Dowleh, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 734, Enclosure 7, pp. 1141-1142. For a discussion of the personalities involved and the general atmosphere in Tehran at the time the Agreement was signed, see J. M. Balfour, Recent Happenings in Persia, (London: 1922). Balfour was Chief Assistant to the Financial Adviser to the Persian Government under the 1919 Agreement.

¹⁶ 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 136, Col. 140, [19 April 1921].

do not know about this sum which the Foreign Office paid over in 1919, but Islam does), the Anglo-Persian Agreement was signed.(17)

This charge was first made by J. M. Balfour, a member of the British Financial Mission in Persia:

The Agreement was in some quarters regarded as a corrupt bargain, and unfortunately it is almost impossible to disprove this charge. It will have been noted that under Article I of the Loan Agreement, the loan of two million was "to be paid in such installments and at such dates as may be indicated by the Persian Government after the British Financial Adviser shall have taken up the duties of his office at Tehran."

From this it is clear that it was contemplated that the two million to be expended upon the contemplated reforms, were to be disbursed under the supervision of the Financial Adviser. At the last moment, however, the Persian trio stipulated, as a precedent condition of signing the Agreement, that a sum equivalent at the then rate to exchange to £130,000 should be turned over to them. This was agreed to, and the payment was made very shortly after the signature of the Agreement... the money was paid direct to the three Ministers with, I believe, the express proviso that no inquiry should be made as to its expenditure. So great was the secrecy observed, that when Sepahdar Azam became Prime Minister some fifteen months later, he was in absolute ignorance of the transaction. It need hardly be added that the one thing which is certain is that the money never reached the Treasury.(18)

Vincent Sheean, alluding to this accusation wrote in his book, The New Persia:

The British negotiators (Sir Percy Cox and Lord Curzon, presumably) committed a grave tactical error: They paid 750,000 tomans to the three Persian statesmen who signed the treaty on behalf of their country.

¹⁷London Times, July 10, 1922.

¹⁸J. M. Balfour, Recent Happenings in Persia, (London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1922), pp. 127-128.

...The money never reached the Persian treasury, and since most of all the British Government has never considered that sum to be a debt owed by Persia to the British treasury, it is very difficult to see how it can be called anything but bribery.(19)

When the Agreement was later annuled by the "Coup'd'etat Regime", the British Foreign Office, desirous of being quit of its liabilities, pressed for the acknowledgement of the debt and presented to the Government of Persia a bill for £130,000. Persia's reply to the British note was that "since this money had never been paid to the treasury, she could not justly be held responsible for its payment."(20)

¹⁹V. Sheean, The New Persia, (New York: Century, 1927), pp. 24-25.

²⁰M. Bahar, Tarikhi Ahzab Siyasi, (Tehran: Ibnisina, 1942), pp. 36, 44.

(ii) THE VISIT OF THE SHAH TO LONDON: Soon after the conclusion of the Agreement, Ahmad Shah, the monarch of Persia, was invited by the King to London. Firooz, the joint author of the Agreement and Minister for Foreign Affairs, was a member of the Shah's retinue. On September 17, 1919 Firooz left Paris for London remaining there until the end of the royal visit, November 3, 1919. (The Shah arrived at Dover only on October 29). During his sojourn in England, Firooz was wined, dined and showered with flowery, meaningless words by Lord Curzon.

At a dinner at the Carlton Hotel, in honour of the Persian Foreign Minister on September 18, 1919, Lord Curzon delivered a speech on Anglo-Persian relations.⁽²¹⁾ Curzon, in proposing a toast for the health of Firooz, welcomed the Prince in several capacities: he welcomed him as a true consistent and loyal friend of Great Britain, and as one of the joint authors of the Agreement recently concluded between his Government and the British Government.

Curzon added that Firooz had arrived at the moment when the Agreement had been settled. The Agreement, although, perhaps not in its form, but at least in essence, was no new thing. During the previous 120 years Persia's relation with Britain had been more intimate than with any other foreign power. During much of that time Russia, by virtue of her proximity and her overwhelming power, had

²¹The text of this speech is printed in the London Times, September 19, 1919.

exercised a significant political influence on Persia. Yet, after viewing the whole field of events during the last century and more, Curzon thought the ties that had united Great Britain and Persia had, on the whole, been the most intimate. These relations, he contended, had increased their intimacy during the war. In the case of Great Britain it was of obvious interest to her to have a peaceful and prosperous Persia and regarding Persia herself, if it were true that she needed some sort of external assistance, it was then natural for her to turn to Great Britain... England did not want Persia to be a mere buffer against her enemies; she wanted her to be a bulwark for the peace of the world.

Prince Firooz after thanking Lord Curzon, added that the friendship between Persia and Great Britain, which had lasted for more than a century, had become a tradition, and had its source above all in the unswerving constancy with which the British Government had supported the Persian nation in its struggle for progress, freedom, and prosperity. Nevertheless, until quite recently, circumstances had not permitted this friendship to develop fully. The goodwill and broadmindedness displayed by the two governments had recently permitted the realization of the truth that community of interests alone can establish the most solid bonds, and that the basis of an unshaken friendship must be found in the mutual respect of the rights of each other.

"This happy result of first experience led us," said Firooz, "on both sides to conclude the Agreement of August 9, of which the letter and spirit are meant to furnish Persia with means of directing

her course, in the full enjoyment of her political and economic independence, toward progress and prosperity."⁽²²⁾

The Shah's visit to England naturally gave Lord Curzon much satisfaction. Here at least was a tangible result of his effort to form a united front with Firooz and thus prevent influential elements from rallying round the Shah in Tehran and driving Vusuq from office. The Shah was welcomed in England with applause from the public and showered with honor by the King and his Government. At Buckingham Palace the Shah was received by the Queen, accompanied by Princess Mary. The first evening their Majesties gave a banquet in honor of the Shah. The London Times in the course of a long and flattering editorial welcomed the Shah:

The visit of His Imperial Majesty, the Shah, to this country registers the complete renewal of these friendly relations between Great Britain and Persia which have intermittently subsisted for nearly three hundred years.⁽²³⁾

In conclusion the London Times asserted that the Anglo-Persian Agreement has no other object than "to assist Persia to recover prosperity. As Persia's nearest and most powerful neighbor, it was natural for us to proffer aid; but in doing so we have been careful to preserve our own unbroken tradition in regard to Persia which is that the integrity of the Kingdom must never be impaired."⁽²⁴⁾

²²Ibid.

²³London Times, November 11, 1919.

²⁴Ibid.

Lord Curzon, in the Guildhall ceremony stated:

What Persia wanted at the present time was security of her frontiers to prevent them being crossed by any foe; and internally, order and law... then there was the administration of justice for her people and, above all, a sound and economic finance.(25)

The Shah in his answer did not mention the Anglo-Persian Agreement but stated that he was happy to testify to the sincerity of the bonds of friendship which united Persia and Great Britain. The present moment was particularly well chosen for the attainment of the object of closer unity between the two peoples. There was a new spirit of cooperation and fraternity between them, and this spirit was consecrated by the League of Nations... (26)

In the speech delivered at Carlton Hotel, in response to the brief statement by Lord Curzon proposing a toast for the health of His Majesty, the Shah said:

...I am happy to be able to take this opportunity to tell you how pleased I am at the conclusion of the Agreement recently come to between Persia and Great Britain, an Agreement which has been come to for the purpose of strengthening in the future the traditional relations existing for so long between our two countries. (27)

The Shah's speech caused satisfaction in the Foreign Office. Lord Curzon referring to the Shah's praise of the Agreement declared in the House of Lords, "Soon after the conclusion of the Agreement the Shah came to England and your Lordship may recollect that he more

²⁵ Ibid., November 7, 1919.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid., November 10, 1919.

than once gave expression to the most cordial acceptance of the Agreement." (28)

In England, outside the Foreign Office, hardly anybody was impressed with the Shah's promises and Firooz's assurances. The London Times, in appraising the situation, contended that: "It is doubtless an excellent thing to entertain the Shah but more than turtle-soup will be required if we are either to earn or otherwise obtain, the confidence of a people which dethroned Mohammad Ali Shah and watches his young son, Sultan Ahmad Shah with critical eyes." (29)

²⁸5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 42, Col. 284, [16 November 1920].

²⁹London Times, November 10, 1919.

(iii) THE RECEPTION OF THE AGREEMENT: The Anglo-Persian Agreement published on August 15, 1919 had been the subject of much discussion in the European and American daily and periodical press. The tone of the French and American newspapers was bitter regarding the British policy in Persia. They argued that the British Government by subjecting Persia by the Agreement had demonstrated that Mr. Lloyd George belonged clearly to the race of expansionists of the last century and also they asserted that Great Britain, through the Anglo-Persian Agreement gained a position of monopoly in Persia. Many anxious Americans and French were concerned about world peace and were suspicious of British policy throughout the world.

In England the public did not greet the Agreement with expected cordiality. However, despite a few remarks the disposition of the Conservative press had been generally favorable. The bulk of Conservative newspapers welcomed the Agreement and they emphasized that Persia was an important British interest and it had been the policy of every British Cabinet for over a hundred years to protect the independence of that country. The Agreement was criticized by Liberal newspapers and by some Members of the Parliament who disapproved of the callous indifference shown to the fate of the Persians.

Two long, but uninspired, debates followed in the House of Lords, in which some notable figures expressed their opinion. The Marquess of Crewe asked the Foreign Secretary to make a statement "on responsibilities undertaken by His Majesty's Government in that country." He also asked Curzon to repeat that the British Government

still wished to secure and maintain the independence of Persia, and as far as possible to relieve Great Britain and India from the necessity of direct interference with Persian administration of the presence of British troops in that country. (30)

Moreover, Crewe called the attention of the Foreign Office to the important fact that England, instead of relying solely upon the support of Persian magnates, should enter so far as possible into frank and honest relations with the whole Persian people. (31)

Lord Lamington followed Crewe and attacked the means and the methods by which the whole Persian question had been handled. He accused British policy in Persia of being confused and incoherent. (32) Lord Sydenham, a far right-wing peer, after lamenting the decline of British prestige in the East, confessed he had found it difficult to understand British policy in Persia. (33)

On March 25, 1920, Lieutenant Commander Kenworthy attacked British policy in the House of Commons and said, "We divided up Turkey among the interested Powers... We have done a good deal of damage in that direction already in regard to another country - Persia." Kenworthy concluded that "Persia has been dealt with by this country [Britain] alone, without any consultation with the United States. Unfortunately,

³⁰5 H. L. Deb., Vol. 42, Cols. 261-269.

³¹Ibid., Cols. 269-270.

³²Ibid., Cols. 270-273.

³³Ibid., Cols. 275-276.

that is being used against us with very ill-effect in the United States, and has done us a great deal of harm..."(34)

The Anglo-Persian Agreement was widely publicized in the British press. Two daily British national newspapers, the London Times and Manchester Guardian, viewed the Agreement as follows: The London Times, in an editorial pointed out that the British aim in Persia was more extensive and that it had an international and not a selfish character. According to the Times, the regeneration of Persia rested, in the last resort, with the Persians themselves. "The Agreement," said the Times, "should help to produce a definite stabilization of the Middle East of which the Kingdom of Persia is to be the core."(35)

Criticism was confined a section of Liberal press. The Manchester Guardian remarked sarcastically that "if this had been done by another power, the Agreement would be regarded as a veiled protectorate."(36)

The Spectator, a conservative publication at the time declared that:

It was not only desirable but necessary that some such Agreement should be made with Persia... It gave us a kind of hold upon Russian aggression in Persia, and without it we should had none.(37)

³⁴5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 127, Cols. 710-711, [25 March 1920].

³⁵London Times, September 1, 1919.

³⁶Manchester Guardian, August 18, 1919.

³⁷The Spectator, August 23, 1919.

The Labour intellectual weekly, The New Statesman contended in an editorial that:

The Agreement, we are willing to believe, is honestly intended. It gives us, certainly, an enormous influence in Persia. But it also gives Persia the material help which she urgently needs, and provided we carry out our obligations in an honourable manner, the Persians should have nothing to fear.(38)

Particularly eulogistic was The Near East, the organ of British trading and financial interests in the Orient. It asserted that both Great Britain and Persia were to be congratulated upon the new Agreement. This document, according to The Near East, was supposed to end the weak policy of Great Britain in Persia. "Great Britain has done well," continued The Near East, "therefore, to lose no time in giving its real policy toward Persia a fair start while Russia is out of action, we owe it to ourselves, to the Persians and to the world at large."(39)

The bulk of the British press welcomed the Agreement as good for Persia and necessary for safeguarding India. A pro-Government publication, The London Outlook, in an editorial asserted that:

The recent Anglo-Persian Agreement will be welcomed by all who have the interests of Persia and the British Empire at heart. In itself it is a simple, straight-forward, sensible arrangement, which, in a few words, covers the whole matter of correct policy.(30)

³⁸The New Statesman, August 23, 1919.

³⁹The Near East, September, 1919.

⁴⁰The Outlook, September, 1919.

The Fortnightly Review in a long article, reviewing the post war Anglo-Persian relations and the merits and demerits of the new Agreement, wrote:

We realize it to be our duty to give our neighbor the help and guidance that might save her, and certainly, had the Agreement been accepted and worked in an atmosphere of mutual trust, it would have saved Persia.(41)

The tone of the American press was captious regarding British maneuvers in Persia. American political circles, hostile to the proceedings of the Peace Conference and of the League of Nations, used the Anglo-Persian Agreement to fan the flames of anti-British and anti-League prejudices in the United States. The New York Times succinctly observed that:

Great Britain might have violated League principles. The Supreme Council was disturbed over the report that England made a secret treaty with Persia which would make of that country another British protectorate.(42)

A leading journal of opinion, The Nation (U.S.), contended that the lessons of British aggression in Persia should be pondered in the United States. If there remained in America any shred of respect for the League of Nations, either as an ideal of world peace or as an instrument for justice among the nations by the time the machinery was finally set up, the British Agreement with Persia should have been sufficient to destroy it. The Nation went on to say that if there were still any belief that the Government of Lloyd George

⁴¹Fortnightly Review, September 1919.

⁴²New York Times, August 28, 1919.

had played an honest game at Paris, or that secret diplomacy and land grabbing of the old unscrupulous sort had been abandoned at Downing Street, that idea should be dissipated.⁽⁴³⁾

Lothrop Stoddard, who wrote many articles for The Century after the First World War, attacked the British policy in Persia and announced in The Century, that Persia had died: the death certificate was the Anglo-Persian Agreement heralded by the British on August 15, 1919. This treaty completed, for the exclusive benefit of Great Britain, that systematic destruction of Persian sovereignty initiated by the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Persia henceforth would take her place alongside Egypt*, Arabia and Mesopotamia as a protectorate of the British Empire. Stoddard then concluded that "Reviewing all the evidence in the case, the coroner's verdict apparently must be death at the hands of persons officially residing at Downing Street, London, England."⁽⁴⁴⁾

The New Republic, an American publication of the moderate left, in an editorial, contended:

The imperialist never does anything except for the good of people whom he brings under subjection. England rules Ireland for the good of Irish, India for the good of Indians, Egypt for Egyptians, and now she is going to rule over Persia

⁴³The Nation, (U.S.), August 21, 1919.

* In any comparison between the cases of Egypt and Persia, it should not be forgotten that Great Britain had never promised or recognized the "independence" of Egypt.

⁴⁴The Century, January, 1920.

for the good of the Persians... In her anxiety to "safeguarding" her empire in India, Great Britain is destroying the independence of Persia.(45)

The American Journal of International Law had a few comments on British diplomacy in Persia:

... The fact that in all human probability Persia will remain de facto under the virtual protection of Great Britain for an indefinite time to come. How, indeed, could it be otherwise under the circumstances?(46)

In France the publication of the Agreement evoked already a perfect storm of protest and indignation. British policy in Persia was the subject of widespread comment in the French press. When the terms of the Agreement was released everyone realized that a virtual protectorate over Persia had been established and that the British Empire had, in effect, received another territorial extension. "Protectorate" was the general verdict. "If these stipulations do not constitute a most complete protectorate," said the Echo de Paris, "then words have lost their meaning. Doubtless, nowhere is a formal protectorate mentioned, and doubtless a clause announces the independence and full integrity of Persia, but the substance of the Agreement will fool no one."⁽⁴⁷⁾ The French press asserted that "the Persian lamb rested then under the paw of the British lion."⁽⁴⁸⁾

⁴⁵The New Republic, September 3, 1919.

⁴⁶The American Journal of International Law, September, 1919.

⁴⁷Quoted in The Century, January 1920, Vol. 77, p. 326.

⁴⁸The Nation, (New York), September 13, 1919.

The irritation which the announcement of the Anglo-Persian Agreement caused in France went much deeper than mere chagrin over being outwitted in the scramble for territory and spheres of influence. Alluding to the French attitude towards the Anglo-Persian Agreement, The Nation wrote "The French imperialists are weeping crocodile tears by holding Syrian onions to their streaming eyes."⁽⁴⁹⁾

The following typical examples of French opinion are taken from the American and British press:

The semi-official organ of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Le Temps analyzing the Agreement and pointing out that it appeared that the new Anglo-Persian Agreement explicitly preserved the integrity and independence of Persia. These expression had been used before. "The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907." If the same words "integrity and independence" now appear in the new Persian Agreement, "it is evidently difficult to give them another meaning in 1919 than in 1907 -- the meaning of simple oratorical precaution."⁽⁵⁰⁾ Moreover, Le Temps denounced the Agreement for giving Britain exclusive power in Persia.⁽⁵¹⁾

On August 16, 1919 Lord Curzon sent the following telegram to Sir Percy Cox at Tehran:

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ For full English translation of Le Temps' article of August 17, 1919 see The Living Age, No. 3925, October 4, 1919. Sir G. Graham, the British Counsellor at Paris, also summarized the leading article in Le Temps criticizing Anglo-Persian Agreement and sent it to Lord Curzon; see telegram 960, August 17, 1919. Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 726, pp. 1133-1135.

⁵¹ New York Times, August 18, 1919.

The Temps and Debats* published somewhat garbled accounts of the Agreement and the Debats is particularly bitter, describing it as an arrangement placing Persia on the footing of Egypt. The paper adds that the Agreement was not well received in Persia by public opinion.(52)

L'Europe Nouvelle, in an editorial contended bitterly:

If England has monopolized Persia; if she ousted therefrom all other powers; who is the power directly and uniquely injured? It is France. We are, indeed, the sole power injured. It is against us, that, during long months, the Anglo-Indian diplomacy of Lord Curzon has intrigued at Tehran; it is against us that, on August 9, that diplomacy gained the victory.(53)

France had very concrete grounds of criticism because of the way in which Great Britain had interfered to prevent the satisfaction of French claims in Syria; because of the way in which Great Britain had received another territorial extension, a territory nearly three times the area of France. Persia was very rich in undeveloped natural resources and possessed oil deposits of very great value to the British navy, and by concluding the 1919 Agreement with Britain, Persia passed to all intents and purposes, under British control.

* i.e. Journal des Debats.

⁵² Curzon to Cox, telegram 439, August 16, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 725, p. 1133.

⁵³ See English translation in The Century, January 1920.

CHAPTER V

THE PERSIANS REJECT THE AGREEMENT

It will be seen from Chapter IV that by the conclusion of the Anglo-Persian Agreement four objects were contemplated by the Foreign Office: the reorganization and control of the Persian army by British officers and experts; the loan of services of such advisers as might be necessary to effect a similar control of the police and civil administration; the revision of the existing customs tariff; and the development of communication, railways and roads in particular. Such being the object in view, the impression is left that these arrangements were not in the interest of the people of Persia, which fact was clearly envisaged and expressed in the speech of Lord Lamington before the House of Lords:

Last year we had the Anglo-Persian Agreement, which was very happily conceived and put through by the noble Earl the Leader of this House... Disappointment is now entertained as to the value of that Agreement, and suspicions have been renewed that perhaps we were not disinterested in wishing to secure Persia's independence.

Lamington concluded that he is certain that Curzon's object in concluding the Agreement was to have a strong and independent Persia which was the "best bulwark possible for the defence of India." In conclusion Lamington tried to clarify the situation in the following words:

In regard to this matter also I think considerable disappointment was felt in Persia... therefore the people are greatly disappointed and have taken umbrage at all

the clauses of the Agreement which has just been put through.(1)

While many of the Persians suspected the motives of the British Government, others read in to the British undertaking to control the finance, army, civil administration, and economic development of the country the implication that this was equivalent to implying that henceforth Persia would share the unhappy fate of Egypt. If, in the preamble, the British Government had reiterated its pledge to respect absolutely the integrity and independence of Persia, the formula would not have been taken too seriously. "What Great Britain intended was a modern, subtle form of imperialist control no less effective, but much less candid, than what it used to be the fashion to designate by the euphemism 'protectorate'""(2)

It is difficult to determine public opinion accurately, but the British and American observers noted strong opposition. A report from Sir Percy Cox to Lord Curzon on September 22, 1919 indicated that "a large meeting held in Askabad in Mashhad and the subject discussed was the British Agreement with Persia. All Persians were asked to combine with Bolsheviks to drive British out."(3) The American Minister's report from Tehran to State Department reveals many interesting facts:

¹5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 42, Cols. 270-271, [16 November 1920].

²Parker Thomas Moon, Imperialism and World Politics, (New York Macmillan Company, 1944), p. 285.

³Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 788, pp. 1174-1175.

Public sentiment against the treaty is unabated, but the people are afraid to demonstrate for fear of imprisonment and exile. Numerous applicants ask American and French Legation for asylum as a protest.(4)

The report of the American Consul in Tabriz shows that the people of Azarbaijan had received the Anglo-Persian Agreement with resentment:

An extract of the British Agreement with Persia has been published here and has been received with great disfavor by all classes... The majority of intelligent Persian here realize that some form of foreign control and direction was inevitable.(5)

The report of the British Minister from Tehran also reveals the opposition of the people of Azerbaijan.(6) According to Sir Percy Cox's report of August 22, 1919, "signs of disapproval and disagreement in varying forms and degrees" come from the following categories:

1. Extreme demands headed by well-known individuals, Mudarris* and Imam Juma Khoi.**
2. Political enemies of Prime Minister, and certain politician out of work who have little to expect from us.
3. Officers, Russian and Persian, of Cossack Division.
4. French, American, and Russian Legations as far as they can oppose it with safety.(7)

⁴Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, p. 699.

⁵Ibid.

⁶See telegram 570, Cox to Curzon, 22 August 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 733, pp. 1139-1140.

* Mudarris, a prominent Persian statesman and the late leader of opposition in the Persian Parliament.

** Imam Juma Khoi, one of the best-known of the Muslim Clergy and former deputy of the Parliament.

⁷Cox to Curzon, telegram 569, 22 August 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 732, pp. 1138-1139.

On August 28, 1919 Washington received from Caldwell, the American Minister at Tehran, the following report:

Public sentiments decidedly adverse to recent agreement remain unchanged. Yesterday afternoon a number of ex-Cabinet officers* and citizens visited Prime Minister voicing their indignant protestations. Numerous indignation meetings have taken place, some provincial cities closing bazaars as act of protest. Many Persians honestly believe that treaty marks an end of Persian independence.(8)

The Prime Minister, instead of noting these opposition resorted to enforce Martial Law. Many prominent politicians were either jailed or banished from the Capital.(9) Cox's report from Tehran on September 10, 1919 indicated that:

The five principal non-clerical agitators were apprehended and sent off to Kashan; and about fifteen smaller fry were placed under police.(10)

In concluding his report the British Minister asserts:

Effect of this step has been excellent and is regarded by public and press with relief and approbation. On this occasion neither of Mujtaheds** was included but they were

* Cox in his report to Curzon indicated these ex-Cabinet officers to be Moin-ut-Tujjar, former deputy of Parliament and Imam Juma Khoi; and besides them, Ain-ed-Dowleh, former Prime Minister; Motaman-ol-Molk, late President of Persian Parliament; Moshir-od-Dowleh, late Prime Minister and well-known nationalist. See Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 749, p. 1150.

⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 701-702.

⁹ London Times, 12 September 1919.

¹⁰ Cox to Curzon, telegram 618, 10 September 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 769, pp. 1160-1161.

** Mujtaheds were religious leaders who had a great deal of influence on the masses. Although they were supposed to practice only religion and its aspects, they usually had political activities within the Government system.

warned that if they interfered any further in politics they would be served likewise.(11)

Nor was this all, the Prime Minister also decided that in view of approach of Moharram* activities must be stopped⁽¹²⁾ and ordered to arrest the "students of Tehran and a few scholars of school of Arts who were against the Agreement."⁽¹³⁾

Vusuq-od-Dowleh and Prince Firooz were united in their desire to impose the Agreement; they set aside the Constitution, suspended individual rights and imprisoned numerous opposition leaders. They hoped these harsh measures would break down resistance and would pave the way for the election of a subservient Parliament. This treatment of the opposition gave rise to the most caustic sharp attack on the Prime Minister and his aid Prince Firooz that they had sold their country to London. This fact was inadvertently hinted at in the House of Commons and immediately broadcast in Tehran.⁽¹⁴⁾

¹¹Cox to Curzon, telegram 618, 10 September 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 769, pp. 1160-1161.

*The first ten days of the month of Moharram are held as a Shia Festival.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴Statement of Cecil Harmsworth, Parliamentary Under Secretary at the Foreign Office, 9 November 1920; 5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 134, Cols. 969-970. For reaction in Persia, see H. C. Norman (British Minister Tehran) to Curzon, telegram 751 and 766, November 18 and 25, 1920; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, (eds.) Rohan Butler and J.P.T. Bury, First Series, Vol. XIII, (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1963), No. 582, pp. 638-639 and No. 588,, p. 644. The news reached Persia in part because of a lapse by Norman: one of the duties of the British Minister at Tehran at this time was censorship of incoming news telegrams. On this occasion, as Norman apologized to Curzon, the offending passage escaped his notice.

Gradually, as the year 1919 slipped into 1920, opposition to the Agreement in Persia, as well as in the United States, France and Russia, made itself felt. The moral support given the opponents of the Agreement by the American and French press, coupled with the Bolsheviki's invasion of the Northern provinces of Persia, forced both the British and the Persian Governments to take stock of the obligations devolving upon them in their new position. Two of the Prime Minister's colleagues, Sarem-od-Dowleh, Minister of Finance and Sepahdar, Minister of War, resigned. It had been an open secret for some time that Sarem-od-Dowleh did not approve of the Prime Minister's high personalized policy and that he viewed the enforcement of the Agreement and the arrival of the British expert advisers coolly.⁽¹⁵⁾

Outside the Cabinet the campaign against the Government became virulent. The Premier's situation became so untenable that he was forced to break silence and appeal to the people for aid and support. In his manifesto of March 1920, addressed to the people of Persia,⁽¹⁶⁾ the Prime Minister challenged his opponents, justified his policy and appealed to the patriotic elements to rally to his support. He recounted his efforts and satisfied with having done his duty and confident of gaining the support of the Parliament, the Premier was ready to submit his record to that body (which was soon to meet) and

¹⁵Dolatabadi, op. cit., p. 134.

¹⁶See Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 702-703.

to abide by its decision. Meanwhile, he warned his opponents that it was his duty to check all intrigues against the country. He described the system of political blackmail to which he had been subjected by the drones who in effect had told him "Give us money or we shall disturb the public order."⁽¹⁷⁾ Finally, he urged the members of Parliament to ponder well the issues involved and to remember that "against the present world of difficulties nothing less than the united effort of the whole country was adequate."⁽¹⁸⁾

The London Times referring to this manifesto, observed that "Vusuq-od-Dowleh, the Persian Prime Minister, whose close attention to Government business prevents him from always having his ear to the ground for the mutterings of the windbags of the bazaar, has spent the Persian New Year holidays in reviewing the political situation." Speaking of the resignation of Sarem-od-Dowleh and Sepahdar, the Times felt that "the reorganization is expected to strengthen the Cabinet and make it more homogeneous."⁽¹⁹⁾

Following the Prime Minister's manifesto, the Reuter News Agency published the following item of news in the newspapers:

Before leaving France, the Shah called on the British Ambassador in Paris to whom he renewed his assurances of his firm intention of continuing loyal adherence to the Anglo-Persian Agreement. He also expressed his confidence

¹⁷London Times, 5 April 1920.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

in the present Persian Cabinet, that of Vusuq-od-Dowleh, which has laboured so earnestly for the past two years for the restoration of order and the material prosperity of the country. (20)

On April 10, 1920 the local Democratic Party of Tabriz started an anti-Vusuq movement. Reuter reported that "Local Democratic Party of Tabriz started an anti-Government and anti-British movement." (21) The events in Tabriz and the resistance of the nationalists in Tehran struck a new note. There was a sudden change of heart in the House of Commons and the Foreign Office. Hitherto, it had not been difficult for the supporters of the Agreement, to argue that British interests required that Great Britain should occupy a dominating position in Persia through the enforcement of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. But suddenly in the spring of 1920, because of economic pressures in England, some members of the House of Commons began to contend that it was futile to endeavor to conceal from the public the fact that Great Britain was in a condition of insolvency. In fact, they observed that she was in the position of a man who, accustomed to maintain a large and costly establishment, has suddenly been confronted with the loss of the great a part of his income that the remainder is no longer sufficient to defray his expenses. (22) They argued that the alternative presented

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ London Times, 15 April 1920.

²² According to the memorandum prepared by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 24 May 1920, a military expenditure of 18 million a year is in respect of Mesopotamia. See Cabinet Papers, CAB. 24/106, C.P. 1337.

in such a case was obvious, either expenses must be reduced to within the limits of available income or sooner or later bankruptcy must inevitably result. (23)

The comment of Sir J. Davidson, in the course of a speech in the House of Commons, was illuminating:

I am not criticizing the War Office in the least, but I think the more these commitments in Persia can be reduced the better. There is another point I should like to have cleared up. Were the War Office consulted by the Foreign Office when the Persian treaty was brought in to force? I do not believe they were. There is no proper coordination between the Indian Office, the War Office and Foreign Office, I sincerely hope there will be in the future. (24)

On June 28, 1920 the British Prime Minister was asked in the House of Commons whether he would state what, if any, naval and military obligations Great Britain had toward Persia, whether the Admiralty and War Office had been consulted as to the cost of such obligations and what would be the estimated cost of such services apart from establishments maintained in Mesopotamia which were included in the same vote. (25)

The Prime Minister referred to the text of the Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 9, 1919 and added that British commitments did not involve naval or military obligations towards Persia. (26) In a

²³5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 127, Col. 711, [25 March 1920], and Vol. 131, Cols. 1191-1192, 27 July 1920, and Vol. 132, Cols. 1080, 1090, [2 August 1920].

²⁴5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 130, Cols. 2270-2271, [22 June 1920].

²⁵5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 131, Col. 18, [28 June 1920].

²⁶Ibid.

memorandum prepared for War Cabinet on May 29, 1920, Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War declared that "I have only taken a sum of £2,000,000 in Army estimates for the current years to cover all charges for troops in South and East Persia."⁽²⁷⁾

As the result of the grave situation developing in Persia some members of the House of Commons requested the Government to consider urgently the practical implications of the Agreement and to inform them of the Government's plan for coping with the difficult situation; Cecil Harmsworth, the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, answered that the whole question was at the very moment the subject of an active exchange of views between the two Governments and that for the time being it would be premature to make any further statement on the subject that beyond which had already been said at the last meeting of the Parliament.⁽²⁸⁾

As the heat of controversy rose, the London Times which only five months before had appraised Curzon's achievements in flattering tones, struck directly at the mistakes of the Foreign Office:

The real key to the Middle Eastern situation is Persia, not Mesopotamia. Mesopotamia will swim; Persia and the Agreement may sink together... Every kind of Persian malcontent or extremist, whether reactionary or demagogic, is swept into its net and Britain is represented as a greedy

²⁷Cabinet Papers, CAB. 24/106, C.P. 1364, [29 May 1920].

²⁸5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 131, Col. 19, [28 June 1920].

capitalistic and imperialistic power. The days when Russia was a foil to the liberal British are forgotten, and the spectacle of Democrats, intriguing with Cossacks against the present Persian Government, is unedifying.(29)

On May 11, 1920, a special dispatch from Tehran to the London Times, pictured a gloomy situation in Persia, and asserted that the Bolsheviks were actively seeking to set the Persians against England and that the Allies' vacillation toward the Bolsheviks, together with the postponement of reform within the Persian administration, had combined to produce difficulties in the internal situation which would be difficult to remove.⁽³⁰⁾ At this time the Persian public was also undoubtedly agitated. At the same time the London Times came out with a sharp criticism of both the House of Commons and the British Government. It observed that the House of Commons apparently took no real interest either in the Agreement or in the absence of the Majlis, and must, therefore, bear its share of responsibility for the fact that, in spite of authoritative statements from the British Legation to the country, the Persian public preserved the belief that Great Britain preferred to see Persia without a parliament. Then the Times concluded that the War Office appeared to have cut its expenditure in Persia on assumption that Bolsheviks would never invade the Middle East and had nothing to gain thereby. The paper called this policy of the War Office

²⁹ London Times, 15 April 1920.

³⁰ London Times, 11 May 1920.

readiness "neither to hit nor to run."⁽³¹⁾

While the Bolsheviks were invading Northern Persia, the Tabriz Democrats intensified their activities and the opponents of the British policy and the Anglo-Persian Agreement throughout the country were quick to take advantage of the situation.

The young Shah returned from his sojourn in Europe and his arrival was soon followed by the resignation of Vusuq-od-Dowleh's Cabinet.

The political situation in Tehran came to a head upon the 24th day of June when it was announced that Vusuq-od-Dowleh's resignation had been accepted by the Shah. His resignation was immediately followed by his hurried departure for Baghdad enroute to Europe.

³¹Ibid.

CHAPTER VI

THE ANGLO-PERSIAN AGREEMENT AND SOVIET TACTICS

We do not want, we never have wanted to make ourselves responsible for the Government of Persia. But we do want to help Persia to stand on her own legs. If she were to fall into the hands of Russia, or to become a dependent ally of Russia, our whole position in the East would be gravely imperilled and the cost of maintaining it immeasurably increased.

-Lord Milner to his
Cabinet Colleagues,
24 May 1920*

As soon as the Brest-Litovsk Armistice of December 15, 1917 was signed, the Persian Minister at Petrograd reported to Tehran the contents of Article 10, which provided that "the Turkish and the Russian Supreme Commands are prepared to withdraw their troops from Persia."⁽¹⁾ Trotsky, in his note of January 14, 1918, suggested five steps: to work out a general plan for the rapid withdrawal of the Russian forces from Persia and to propose to Turkey to coordinate its own evacuation with the Russian plan; to withdraw immediately detachments whose presence in Persia served no military purpose; to recall from Persia the Russian

* Cabinet Papers, CAB. 24/106, C.P. 1337.

¹ Sepehr, op. cit., p. 467.

instructors of the Cossack Brigade; to appoint commissars to the Russian authorities in Persia to explain Russia's new foreign policy "based on respect for the right of all peoples, regardless of their strength or weakness;" and to obtain provisions for the Russian troops in Persia while laying as light a burden as possible on the poorer section of the population.⁽²⁾ The troops began the evacuation from Persia in December 1917, and by the summer of 1918 the withdrawal was complete. The vacuum created by the departure of Russian and Turkish troops was promptly filled by the British, who "decided to despatch a Military Mission to the northern Persia for the purpose of reorganizing the various sound elements in the country and holding it against the Turks."⁽³⁾

While the Anglo-Persian Agreement was being negotiated and for a few months after it was signed, Russia was involved in civil war, an anti-Soviet regime was ruling the Russian Azerbaijan, the British position in Persia was unchallenged, and the Denikin flotilla was operating freely in Caspian Sea under the overall command of Admiral Norris. Soon the roles were to be reversed. When the terms of the Agreement became known, the Soviet Government on August 30, 1919 appealed to the Persian people. Chicherin, the leading Soviet foreign policy mentor, made considerable efforts to arouse the country against the British; representing Soviet Russia as the sole support and the only friend of the Persian people, he declared that:

²Jane Degras, (ed.) Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy 1917-1924, Vol. 1, (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), pp. 28-29.

³Sir Percy Sykes, op. cit., p. 488.

The triumphant victor, the English robber, is trying to force total slavery upon the Persian people, the Soviet workers and peasants' government of the Russian Republic solemnly declares that it does not recognize the Anglo-Persian treaty which gives effect to this enslavement... shameful Anglo-Persian treaty by which your rulers have sold themselves and sold you to the English robbers, is a scrap of paper, and we will never recognize it as having legal force.(4)

Then in May 18, 1920 the Red Army invaded Persia mainly as a result of their military operation against the Trans-Caucasian Federated Republic. The immediate reasons underlying the invasion of Persia were later given by F. F. Raskolnikov, commander of the Red Fleet, as follows:

After the proclamation of the Azerbaijan Republic, knowing that Soviet Russia and the Azerbaijan Republic could not be sure that the British would not make a new attack on Baku from Enzeli*, I decided to seize Enzeli and to remove from there all the white ships, thus depriving the British of their mainstay on the Caspian Sea.(5)

"On May 18, 1920," states Raskolnikov, "in the early morning, our fleet approached Enzeli and opened fire bombarding not the city itself but Kazian, where all the staffs and military forces of the British were located."(6)

⁴Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy 1917-1924, Vol. 1, p. 163.

* The Persian port on the Caspian, 200 miles down the coast from Baku.

⁵For the text of an interview with Raskolnikov see, Xenia Joukoff Eudin and Robert C. North, Soviet Russia and the East, 1920-1927: A Documentary Survey, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1957), pp. 178-180.

⁶Ibid.

The British-Indian forces in northern Persia which was called "Norperforce", was not a large army. In May 1920 it consisted of one British and three Indian infantry battalions, in all perhaps 500 men. These troops retreated before a Soviet force on May 18.⁽⁷⁾ Major General H. B. Champain, the commander of the Norperforce, was himself at Enzeli on May 18. He had come from Qazvin the previous day, and he sent an emissary to the Soviet leader, Raskolnikov, who insisted that the British must surrender Denikin's ships and other military supplies. Champain telegraphed the British Mission at Tehran for instruction but received no reply. Therefore he decided that in the circumstances, confronted by overwhelming force, he had to comply. His troops evacuated Enzeli that very evening, leaving behind all of Denikin's ships and also their own guns and large stores of munitions and other military implements.⁽⁸⁾

News of the events at Enzeli reached London the following evening, May 19, and Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War requested a Cabinet meeting for the 21st. At a Cabinet meeting on May 21, Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff,

⁷ See Conclusions of Meeting of the War Cabinet, CAB 23/21, No. 30(20), 21 May 1920 .

⁸ For the Soviet landing at Enzeli, see: Cox (Tehran) to Curzon, telegram 289, 18 May 1920, relaying Norperforce telegram from Qazvin dated May 18, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 434, pp. 488-489; Lord Derby (Paris) to Curzon, telegram 601, 20 May 1920, relaying a Persian Government report, Ibid., No. 437, p. 491; Eudin and North, op. cit., pp. 178-180; Balfour, op. cit., pp. 185-189; and the London Times, 20 May 1920.

countered by reciting the warnings that had been given, and reminding Curzon that with Denikin's downfall and the Soviet take-over in Azerbaijan, the situation had in fact grown even more dangerous. Now, he said, there were only two choices: either concentrate all British forces at Qazvin and "really" fight or clear out of Persia.⁽⁹⁾ They argued, according to the minutes, that withdrawal even from Batum, much less from Persia, would be:

tantamount to an invitation to the Bolsheviks to enter and make themselves masters of North Persia; the friendly Persian Government would then fall; there would be an end to the Anglo-Persian Agreement which had been concluded with the object of establishing decent conditions and providing a barrier against Bolshevism.

On the other hand:

...it was pointed out that there was no evidence that the Bolsheviks had designs on Persia... It was more probable that they would seek their aims by means of propaganda, which our occupation would not prevent; or it was possible that their object might be to re-establish the position Russia had occupied in North Persia under the Anglo-Russian Agreement. The British people would never embark on a difficult and costly war for the purpose of preventing the Bolsheviks from establishing this position, or even for preventing a Russian invasion of Persia.⁽¹¹⁾

Therefore, this strand of argument concluded, since Great Britain could not keep Soviet influence out of Persia by force of arms, it should encourage the Persians to reach their own arrangement with Moscow - precisely the reverse of existing policy. The date, it will

⁹ Conclusions of Meeting of the War Cabinet, CAB. 23/21, No. 30(20), 21 May 1920 .

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

be remembered was just before Krassin's arrival in London; his first conversation with Lloyd George would take place in little more than a week's time. "The Cabinet generally felt," the minutes stated, "that advantage should be taken of the forthcoming conversation with M. Krassin, if possible, as a condition of entering into trade relations, to effect an all-around settlement which would include the East as well as the delivery of British subjects still retained in Bolshevist hands, or, at any rate, to clear up the situation and to establish exactly how we stand with the Bolsheviks." In the meantime the War Office could order Norperforce to withdraw from its advanced outposts and to concentrate at Qazvin. Decision as to its eventual disposition would be postponed. (12)

Within the fortnight of this Cabinet meeting General Champain had withdrawn the British garrison at Resht, and concentrated his force at Qazvin and leaving only one outlying garrison at Manjil, halfway between Resht and Qazvin. These retreats in the face of apparent Soviet pressure scarcely added to British prestige in Persia. Two months before the Russian invasion Lord Curzon had reminded Sir Percy Cox that under the Anglo-Persian Agreement "undertook no obligation to defend the present frontiers of Persia against all attacks;"⁽¹³⁾ rather the Agreement which in any case had not yet been ratified by the Majlis,

¹²Ibid.

¹³Curzon to Cox (Tehran), telegram 153, 22 March 1920; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 395, pp. 457-458.

represented only "a moral obligation to do our best on Persia's behalf."⁽¹⁴⁾ Also Bonar Law in reply to a question in the House of Commons on May 20 stated that the British Government was under no obligation to respond to the Soviet landing.⁽¹⁵⁾ Meanwhile, in Paris the French press lost little time in painting up the irony that the Anglo-Persian Agreement had made Persia a British protectorate which the British were unable to protect.⁽¹⁶⁾

On May 19, a day after the invasion, the Persian Government decided to seek help from the League of Nations. According to one authority, "This brought the League Council its very first case in the field of peaceful settlement, just Persia provided the first case in the League of Nations."⁽¹⁷⁾ This appeal to the League was complicated by the fact that, at the time, British troops were still occupying the country while the Persian Government was generally regarded as under the influence of Great Britain, which was still pressing for Parliamentary ratification of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. This would have given Britain a privileged position in Persia, practically equivalent to that of a protector, and "it was essentially against this threat that

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ 5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 129, Col. 1602, [20 May 1920].

¹⁶ The French reaction is surveyed in Derby's despatch 1593 to Curzon, 25 May 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 444, pp. 496-498.

¹⁷ Richard W. Van Wagenen, The Iranian Case 1946, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952), p. 11.

Bolshevist forces had been introduced into the country."⁽¹⁸⁾ Because the Persian Government was negotiating with the Soviet authorities, the Council decided that in order to give every opportunity for the success of the conversations now in progress, it should await the result of the negotiation and promises made by the Soviet authorities. The Persian Government was to be commended for bringing the situation to the Council's attention, and was to keep the Council informed of future developments.⁽¹⁹⁾

Soviet policy towards Persia during 1920 and 1921 was essentially opportunist: its maximum goal was a communist regime in Persia and removal of British influence. In Persia, Soviet policy was avowedly anti-imperialist and couched in revolutionary phraseology, with Britain still the target. Chicherin "in private conversations repeatedly prophesied the end of the British Empire."⁽²⁰⁾ Towards the attainment of this basic aim, Soviet Russia employed the instruments of diplomacy, the Communist Party, revolutionary propoganda, outright aggression and helping to establish the "Soviet Republic of Gilan*."

Two significant diplomatic gestures were the opening of negotiation for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Persia and

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 12.

¹⁹ League of Nations: Official Journal, No. 5, (July-August 1920) pp. 217-218.

²⁰ Louis Fischer, The Life of Lenin, (New York: Harper & Row Publisher, 1964), p. 537.

* Gilan is a province in North Persia.

Trotsky's denunciation of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907.⁽²¹⁾

The Communist Party constituted another significant tool of Moscow. Organizationaly the Communist Party of Persia was not a "spontaneous Persian creation;" it had its beginning in Russia.⁽²²⁾

The element of revolutionary propaganda was, of course, present in both Soviet diplomatic and Communist Party pronouncements. On December 5, 1917 the Council of People's Commissars of the Bolshevik regime issued an appeal addressed to the Muslims of Russia and the East."⁽²³⁾ Of no less propaganda value was the invitation extended by the Third International to the peoples of the East to come to Baku for a congress to convene on August 15, 1920. It declared in part:

Peasants and workers of Persia! The Tehran Kajar government and its hirelings - the provincial Khans - have plundered and exploited you for centuries... they control this land... they sold Persia last year to the English capitalists for £2,000,000 sterling, so that the latter could form an army in Persia which will oppress you even more than heretofore.⁽²⁴⁾

²¹For details see, Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy 1917-1924, Vol. 2, p. 162; Eudin and North, op. cit., pp. 91-93.

²²George Lenczowski, Russia and the West in Iran 1918-1948, p. 97.

²³For the text see, Ivar Spector, The Soviet Union and the Muslim World, 1917-1958, (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1959), pp. 21-23.

²⁴Ibid., p. 49.

Soviet Russia also set up the Soviet Republic of Gilan" under the Mirza Kuchek Khan Jangali. The development of Jangali's movement was significantly influenced by the advent of the Bolshevik Revolution and its repercussions in Persia. Kuchek Khan was a religious nationalist who had fought the Royalist forces in 1909 for the re-establishment of the constitutional regime. In 1915, he and a small group of others, mostly bourgeois liberal intellectuals like himself, began to hold regular discussions to draw up a program aimed at complete national independence, social reform, and Islamic unity. To him and his followers the government at Tehran had fallen so completely under Russian and British control that their only recourse was to organize a rival government and attempt to take power. They chose as their base the province of Gilan alongside the Caspian Sea; because they often lived in dense forests of this region, they became known as "Jangalis" or jungle-dwellers. (25)

As early as 1919 the Bolsheviks had considered ways and means of exploiting the Jangalis' movement. In that year, when the Jangali forces were having a particularly difficult time fighting the Persian troops sent from Tehran, Kuchek Khan sought Bolshevik support. When Raskolnikov landed in Enzeli on May 1920, negotiations were ultimately undertaken with him. Raskolnikov urged Kuchek Khan to advance on Resht. Shortly thereafter the Committee of Red Revolution (Kumiteh Inghilab Surkh) proclaimed the establishment of the Soviet Republic of Gilan

²⁵For an account of Kuchek Khan's career see Sepehr, op. cit., pp. 383-396; and Dolatabadi, op. cit., pp. 133-158.

with Kuchek Khan as its President and War Commissar.⁽²⁶⁾ In accepting Raskolnikov's assistance Kuchek Khan insisted that Communist propaganda in Persia should be avoided because it ran counter to the religious sentiment of the people. The precise nature of the relationship between the Soviet regime in Moscow and Jangalis is unclear.⁽²⁷⁾ But it is clear that after it had become evident that the Gilan regime would not carry Communism to the rest of Persia, the Soviet Government stated that Azerbaijani troops were remaining in northern Persia only to shield their own country against British attacks, and that if the British agreed to withdraw their forces from Persia, Moscow would use its influence to secure withdrawal of the Azerbaijanies.⁽²⁸⁾

As has been seen, Russian policy after the Bolshevik Revolution posed far more serious and subtle problems to Persia than ever before. British policy makers now had to deal both with the traditional methods of outright invasion and diplomatic pressure and penetration and with the new method of Communist subversion and propaganda.

²⁶Dolatabadi, op. cit., p. 142.

²⁷For survey of this account see article "Persia," Central Asian Review, (London), Vol. IV, Nos. 3 and 4, 1956, pp. 303-316.

²⁸Eudin and North, op. cit., pp. 97-98.

CHAPTER VII

THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN OPPOSITION

There was considerable opposition to the Agreement not only in Persia but also on the part of the French and the Americans. The French opposition was vocal both in the press and in Parliament; and the French Legation in Tehran was actively engaged in working against the Agreement.⁽¹⁾ The French, who saw in the Agreement a British effort to establish a protectorate over Persia,⁽²⁾ were already embittered by their difficulties with British in Syria.⁽³⁾ The American opposition derived from both moral and practical considerations. The occasion for expressing official United States' displeasure with the Agreement occurred shortly after the publication of the treaty.

Lord Curzon tried to counteract the efforts of the French Legation and asked for the assistance of the American Minister in Tehran in defending British interests.⁽⁴⁾ In reply to this request, Secretary of State Lansing wrote to the American Ambassador in London on August 20, 1919: "The new Anglo-Persian Agreement has caused a very unfavorable impression upon both President and me." Lansing recalled

¹Related in telegram 506, Curzon to Cox, September 25, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 793, pp. 1183-1184 and telegram 665, September 30, 1919, No. 798, p. 1187.

²Living Age, October 4, 1919, p. 7.

³Curzon to Lindsay (Washington), telegram 477, August 18, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 727, pp. 1135-1136.

⁴Ibid.

that Balfour, when the British Foreign Secretary had curtly refused three official American requests that Persia be given a hearing at Versailles. "It was now clear that the reason behind Balfour's attitude was the secret negotiation to gain at least economic control of Persia" and "we are not disposed to ask our Minister at Tehran to assist the British Government or to ask him to preserve a friendly attitude towards this Agreement." The American Ambassador in London, John Davis, was to advise Lord Curzon that the United States did not support the Agreement.

We cannot and will not do anything to encourage such secret negotiations or to assist in allaying the suspicion and dissatisfaction which we share as to an agreement negotiated in this manner.(5)

The Persian opponents of the Agreement apparently taunted the Persian Government for not asking the American Government for assistance, instead of becoming a protectorate of the British. The Persian Cabinet had published an article in the semi-official newspaper, the Raad which declared that the United States had refused to help Persia and that the Anglo-Persian Agreement was therefore the best available.⁽⁶⁾ On September 2, 1919 the American Minister in

⁵Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, p. 700.

⁶Related in telegram 727, November 8, 1919, Cox to Curzon; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 840, pp. 1222-1224; and Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 701-702.

Tehran issued a communiqué⁽⁷⁾ which was sent to the Government as well as to Tehran newspapers in which he denied that America had refused to aid Persia. It made clear that the United States had constantly and consistently shown interest in the welfare of the Persians and that the American Mission at Paris had endeavored to secure a hearing for the Persian Mission before the Peace Conference and the Supreme Council. The American Mission was surprised it received no support from the British on the Persian question, but announcement of the Anglo-Persian Agreement probably explained why the Mission was unable to secure a hearing. Furthermore, the Minister was instructed to inform the Persians that their Government in Tehran did not support the effort of its Mission at Paris.⁽⁸⁾ The Americans evidently intended to appeal to the Persian public over the heads of the Tehran Government.

The French Minister at Tehran also issued a communiqué expressing readiness to assist the Persian Peace Delegation in Paris, to whom the British consistently refused a hearing.⁽⁹⁾ About the two communiqués, Sir Percy Cox wrote to Curzon on September 11, 1919: "This is all part of combined French and American intrigue against Vusug and Agreement."⁽¹⁰⁾ After the publication of American communiqué

⁷ See telegrams 619 and 625, September 10 and 11, 1919, Cox to Curzon, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, Nos. 770 and 772, p. 1161 and 1163.

⁸ Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 707-708, and also related in telegram 619, September 10, 1919, Cox to Curzon, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 770, pp. 1161-1162.

⁹ Related in telegram 626, September 11, 1919, Cox to Curzon, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 773, p. 1163.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Curzon wrote a letter to the American Ambassador in London⁽¹¹⁾ and declared that the United States had been informed of the negotiations with Persia and that when he was in Paris he had called upon Colonel Edward M. House, Wilson's aide, in order to brief him on the nature of the negotiations. Curzon stated that he had also asked House to inform Wilson on the matter so that the President might be guided in his attitude toward the Persian delegation at Paris, should their claim to be heard at the Peace Conference be entertained. "No hint of doubt or disapproval was conveyed to me," said Curzon, "and I have since remained under the impression that the Agreement was one which would meet with the cordial approval of your Government and your country." Curzon was especially disturbed by the American statement to the Persian press because it was regarded in Persia "as a challenge to the Anglo-Persian Agreement of an unfriendly and almost a hostile nature." In view of these facts, Curzon asked the Department of State to inform the Persian Government and press that the United States did not oppose the Agreement. Curzon's request was a considerable retreat from his original proposal asking for assistance against France. In effect, Curzon sought a reassertion of the traditional American policy of nonintervention in Persian affairs.

Ambassador Davis in reply to Curzon stated that he would communicate the sense of the letter to his Government without delay.

¹¹Text of this letter as telegraphed to the State Department of the United States, is printed in Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 708-710; and also see Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 774, pp. 1163-1165.

But he made it clear that in his conversation with Curzon his only knowledge of the Agreement had been gathered from press announcements and that it was unfortunate that informal remarks should have been interpreted as the attitude of the American Government. Davis maintained that he was then unaware of official American view and he pointed out that he had learned that neither the President nor the Secretary of State was favorably impressed by what they felt to be the secrecy with which the Agreement had been negotiated. Davis told Curzon that he had informed Colonel House of Curzon's letter concerning their conversation in Paris. House remembered discussing this topic with Curzon, but, "he cannot recall any allusion to the contents or character of the instant treaty or to the intention to negotiate an engagement of this sort, and is thus unable to dispel the feeling of surprise which the President and Secretary entertain."⁽¹²⁾

On October 4, 1919 Lansing, the Secretary of State, instructed Davis to advise Lord Curzon that the United States had been unaware of an Agreement being negotiated between the British and Persian Governments. In Lansing's view, until a formal announcement of such an Agreement was made, the communique addressed to the people of Persia would continue to set forth the facts of the situation as viewed by the United States Government. The facts were that following the conclusion of the Agreement an anti-American campaign, led by the Raad newspaper, was launched in Tehran. Lansing

¹²Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 710-711.

concluded by saying that the United States Government was not in a position to give approval to the Anglo-Persian Agreement unless and until it was evident that the Government and the people of Persia were united in their support of this undertaking. (13)

Following the American protests, the New York Times wrote that it had learned that the United States Government, in objecting to the Anglo-Persian Agreement, had taken the position that this treaty violated the principles underlying the League of Nations and that, while the League was not yet organized, acceptance of its principles by the powers at Paris morally obliged all the signatories to abstain from any steps contrary to the letters of the covenant. The New York Times concluded that the State Department also maintained the view that England had concluded the treaty with the Persian Government against the will of the Persian people. (14)

The nature of the American opposition may be judged from the Senate discussions. For the Wilson administration, the Anglo-Persian Agreement could not have been more poorly timed. The enemies of the League of Nations in the Senate were bound to seize upon the treaty as another example of the cupidity of the Allies and cite it as further reason for avoiding close association with them in a world peace organization. On August 18, 1919, Senator Medill McCormick* (Republican,

¹³ Ibid., pp. 714-715.

¹⁴ New York Times, October 7, 1919.

* Senator McCormick was a bitter opponent of the League of Nations and the Versailles Treaty. See Dumas Malone (ed.) Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XI, (New York, Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933), pp. 609-610.

Illinois) asserted that the Anglo-Persian Agreement was symbolic of the preoccupation of the Europeans at Versailles with the spoils of war.⁽¹⁵⁾

On September 2, Senator Philander C. Knox (Republican, Pennsylvania) made the following statement in the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, and as a result, the question of the Anglo-Persian Agreement was investigated by the Committee:

It appears that Great Britain since the project of the League has been brought forth, has made a secret treaty with Persia in complete violation of her fundamental law and would substantially put the sovereignty of Persia in the hands of Great Britain.⁽¹⁶⁾

Charles Russell, former Minister to Persia in presenting the case of Persia to the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations said that the treaty would make a protectorate of Persia by turning over the whole power of government to the British. Russell concluded by appealing to the Senators "to make a ringing protest against the whole thing."⁽¹⁷⁾ During the questioning, Senator Knox commented that the Agreement was a secret treaty entered into by League supporters in order to obtain control over another League member.⁽¹⁸⁾ The Indiana Senator (Republican), Harry S. New, agreeing with Knox, said that this was decisive proof that the Allies had not given up their practice of

¹⁵United States, Congress, Congressional Record, Proceeding and Debates, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 58, p. 3921.

¹⁶United States, Senate, Hearing Before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States, on the Treaty of Peace with Germany. 66th Congress, 1st Session, Doc. 1011-1012, and Congressional Record, 66th Congress, 1st Session, 58, p. 3921.

¹⁷Congressional Record, 66th Congress, 1st Session, pp. 3921-3922 and Senate Documents, No. 1014-1016.

¹⁸Senate Documents, No. 1018

entering into secret treaties.⁽¹⁹⁾

A few days later Senator Henry Cabot Lodge of Massachusetts, leader of anti-League faction in the Senate, had the Agreement printed in the Congressional Record. Following the statement made by Senator Lodge, Senator William E. Borah* (Republican, Idaho), declared that the treaty meant that Britain had "annexed" Persia while the Versailles Conference was still in session; "this," he declared, "had been done behind the back of the United States." According to Borah, if, in five years, "Persia attempted to regain her independence, the United States, as a member of the League of Nations, would be obliged to go to war against Persia."⁽²⁰⁾ Then Senators McCormick and Borah introduced two resolutions requesting the Secretary of State and the President respectively to inform the Senate of the correspondence between the American and British Governments concerning the Agreement negotiated between Great Britain and Persia during and about the time the Treaty with Germany was negotiated at Versailles.⁽²¹⁾

Although, for Britain's opponents in the United States, the Anglo-Persian Agreement provided merely a convenient and telling

¹⁹ Ibid., No. 1019.

* After the war Borah was leader of the bitter and irreconcilables opposing the League of Nations. Borah firmly opposed American involvement in any international organization with political power. He fought against American membership in the World Court as vigorously as he had opposed the League. See Robert Livingston Schuyler and Edward T. James (eds.), Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XXII, Supp. II, (New York, 1958), pp. 49-53.

²⁰ Congressional Record, 66th Cong., 1st Sess., 58, pp. 5216-5217, 6086-6087, 6089.

²¹ Ibid.

debating point, it was undoubtedly one of the cornerstones of British postwar diplomacy. Sir Harold Nicolson referred to the Persian problem as one of the six major concerns of Great Britain's foreign policy between the years 1919 and 1924, and as he noted, Persian policy was the personal preoccupation of Lord Curzon.⁽²²⁾

Underlying the United States opposition were the American petroleum interests,^{*} and the real American motivation for objecting to the Agreement was made clear in a telegram of March 17, 1920 from the Assistant Secretary of State Colby to the American Minister in Tehran: "Department is concerned by possibility that the confirmation of the Anglo-Persian Agreement by the Majlis might make more difficult the obtaining of petroleum concession by American Companies."⁽²³⁾

A further American motivation for opposition had been based upon the apparent exclusion of Americans from Persian Government employment. The British Ambassador in Washington, Viscount Grey, complained to Lord Curzon that he had remained silent "when Americans say that even if [the] Persian Government wished to employ individual Americans they would not be permitted under [the] Anglo-Persia[n] Agreement even

²²Harold Nicolson, op. cit., p. 58.

^{*}The American Petroleum Institute submitted a memorandum to the State Department which describe the Agreement as excluding American citizens from petroleum development and giving the Anglo-Persian Oil Company exclusive rights. See Foreign Relations of the United States 1920, Vol. 1, p. 365.

²³Foreign Relations of the United States 1920, Vol. 3, p. 355.

though Belgians or others might be allowed."⁽²⁴⁾ To this Curzon replied that Belgians and French were survivors of continuous pre-war employment, while American appointments would be a fresh start, "but if Persian Government desired to make it, with our approval, there is no obstacle."⁽²⁵⁾ Grey, in a dispatch dated October 27, 1919 remarked that the qualification that Persian appointments must have British approval was the very objection Americans had raised against the Anglo-Persian Agreement. Grey felt "it would confirm impression that we treat Persia as a protectorate."⁽²⁶⁾

The United States Government, by informing the Persian Minister in Washington of the gist of the correspondence between the American and British Governments, and expressing its disapproval of the Agreement, encouraged the Persian nationalists to continue their opposition to the Agreement. The following secret memorandum of the Assistant Secretary of State indicates the United States' position clearly and unequivocally:

The Persian Minister called this morning, on the eve of his departure for Switzerland to join and have a conference with the Shah. He asked what he should tell to his Shah as

²⁴Viscount Grey (Washington), to Curzon, telegram 1463, October 17, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 818, pp. 1205-1206.

²⁵Curzon to Grey, telegram 1899, October 21, 1919; Ibid., No. 824, pp. 1212-1213.

²⁶Grey to Curzon, telegram 1502, October 27, 1919; Ibid. No. 826, pp. 1214-1215.

to the position which the United States would take and what its position had been. I told him... that the United States Government had declined to participate or to take any action which would indicate its approval of the treaty.(27)

Colby, the Assistant Secretary of State, reiterated America's disapproval of the Agreement, but the Persian Minister, according to Colby was seeking more than a statement that was common knowledge. The Persian Minister asked what the attitude of the United States would be if it were arranged to prevent ratification by the Majlis. To this demand for any American alternatives to the Agreement, Colby answered that "ratification was purely a Persian affair," and that the United States "would feel sorry to see an arrangement made by the terms of which Persia would lose part or the whole of its sovereignty."⁽²⁸⁾

The United States, although unwilling to offer positive assurances to Persia in the event the Agreement were rejected, nevertheless associated the expansion of American Oil interests into Persia with the rejection of the Agreement. To this extent, at least, the State Department envisioned a partial fulfillment of Persian demands. The fact that private American oil interests might exploit Persian resources reduced this phase of American policy to a simple effort in support of the overseas expansion of business group. They believed that the ratification of the Agreement would create an unfavorable climate for the advancement of American interests since

²⁷Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, pp. 718-719.

²⁸Ibid.

the Persian Government would be firmly controlled by Great Britain.

On August 19, 1920 the report from the American Minister at Tehran was very encouraging and it showed that his efforts were bearing fruit. The pro-British Cabinet had fallen. A nationalist group was in power and the Agreement was held in suspense.⁽²⁹⁾

²⁹Foreign Relations of the United States 1920, Vol. 3, p. 346.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SUSPENSION AND DEMISE OF THE AGREEMENT

The Anglo-Persian Agreement aroused Persians' suspicion that Britain desired to extend her privileges as well as to dominate Persia politically and administratively. This attitude reflects a significant opposition in Persia's public opinion and caused instability for Governments in Persia. Within the brief period June 1920-February 1921 Curzon's insistence and the Persians' refusal to accept the Agreement were responsible, at least indirectly, for the downfall of three Persian Prime Ministers. None would even summon the Majlis to meet, much less put the agreement before it. A fourth Prime Minister did summon the Majlis, but in order to denounce the Agreement, not to seek its ratification. The Agreement passed through critical period from Vusuq, who had signed it, to Sayyed Zia who had denounced it. Moshir-od-Dowleh was the second who had to deal with the Agreement.

Vusuq-od-Dowleh's resignation was accepted on June 24, 1920. Immediately the Shah gave audience to Moshir-od-Dowleh,⁽¹⁾ a moderate nationalist. The new Prime Minister had made it clear he would accept office provided he obtained certain guarantees from the Shah and the British Foreign Office. He would tolerate no interference in the

¹Reported by H. C. Norman (Cox's successor in Tehran), telegram 422, June 25, 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 486, p. 539.

domestic affairs of his country. He also wanted to include in his Cabinet nationalist elements.⁽²⁾ The reply of the Foreign Office to Moshir-od-Dowleh's proposals that England should adopt a "hands off" policy in Persia was satisfactory⁽³⁾ and a few days later the Prime Minister in the course of long communique, explained the policy of the new government.

The British gave the new Prime Minister the assurance he sought because, as Norman reported to Curzon, no other statesman could form a government, nor could any government if formed retain office for a week."⁽⁴⁾ It must be, however, remembered that a new Prime Minister which the British were looking for after the resignation of Vusuq-od-Dowleh, at any rate, "would be free from unpopularity; would be able to summon Parliament without feeling the fear of possible consequences which prevents the former one from doing so; would have a good chance of obtaining a vote of confidence and getting the Agreement through."⁽⁵⁾ Moshir-od-Dowleh was the man who best fulfilled these requirements. The British were certain that Moshir would be able to summon the Majlis and would submit the Agreement for official

²Norman (Tehran) to Curzon, telegram 428, June 26, 1920, Ibid., No. 492, pp. 546-548.

³Curzon to Norman, telegram 352, July 1, 1920, Ibid., No. 497, pp. 553-554.

⁴Norman to Curzon, telegram 416, June 23 1920, Ibid., No. 484, pp. 537-538.

⁵Norman to Curzon, telegram 387, June 15, 1920, Ibid., No. 466, pp. 520-521.

ratification.

The new Prime Minister asserted that the Anglo-Persian Agreement seemed to run counter, in a curiously devious way, to the Persian constitution of 1906-7. Article 24 of the Constitution provided that "treaties, conventions, the granting of concessions, monopolies, either commercial, industrial, or agricultural, whether the other party be native or a foreigner, can only be done with the approval of the National Assembly. Treaties which it may be in the interests of the Government or nation to keep secret are excepted."⁽⁶⁾ Meanwhile, the Agreement was to be regarded as being in suspense, and all the advisers appointed thereunder were suspended from the exercise of their functions.

The Outlook criticized the Persian Government and stated that the new Cabinet in Persia had dampened the enthusiasm of the Foreign Office and seemed disposed to put all the British advisers in Persia into cold storage "till some sweet by and by when, if ever, the Majlis should meet."⁽⁷⁾

On July 29, Mr. Bonar Law, the leader of the House of Commons announced in the House that: "The Persian Government had decided to lay the Anglo-Persian Agreement before the Persian Majlis for ratification. The Agreement had already been presented to Parliament and did not require ratification. In the meantime, His Majesty's Government

⁶Great Britain, Foreign Office, British and Foreign State Papers 1906-1907, Vol. 100, (London, Published by His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1911), p. 555.

⁷Outlook, July 18, 1920.

regarded the Agreement as being in suspense."⁽⁸⁾ When the consequences of events in Persia were raised in the House of Commons, the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs explained that the situation in Persia was not such as to lend itself to convenient discussion.⁽⁹⁾

After the suspension of the Anglo-Persian Agreement Moshir-od-Dowleh proceeded with an elaborate plan to restore order and security in the country. His objective was not merely in the interest of internal security, it was also directed against Russia, as the Soviet Republic of Gilan had been established with Soviet aid. The principal instrument of Moshir's aims was the so-called Persian Cossack Division formed in 1879 as a bodyguard for the Shah and throughout its existence under his direct authority. It was organized along Russian Cossack lines. Many of its officers and noncommissioned officers were Russians, and it had been heavily subsidized by the Tsar's treasury.* Rather than have these payments lapse and the force dissolve at a crucial stage of the war when Persia was threatened with German and Turkish invasions, the British and Indian governments had jointly assumed the burden on an ad hoc basis. In December 1919, the India Office announced that it could no longer continue its share of the subsidy payments, and at the same time Curzon telegraphed Cox that the British Government's own

⁸5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 132, Col. 2080, [29 July 1920].

⁹Ibid.

* Firuz Kazemzadeh, "The Origin and Early Development of the Persian Cossack Brigade," American Slavic and East European Review, Vol. XV, No. 3, October 1956, p. 3.

share would also cease at the end of the month.⁽¹⁰⁾ Because of Cox's objections, the British share was temporarily continued: Cox had argued that it should not be cut off before the joint British Persian Military Commission, then meeting in Tehran to plan the shape of the future Persian Army, could submit its recommendations.⁽¹¹⁾

The Commission reported in mid-March 1920, and advised that the Cossack Division, together with the South Persia Rifles should be dissolved and their personnel transferred into a new Regular Army.⁽¹²⁾ When Colonel Starosselski, Russian Commander of the Cossack Division, was informed, he bluntly refused to comply. On May 3, the young Shah, passing through Cairo on his return to Persia after a long sojourn in Europe told Field Marshal Allenby, High Commissioner for Egypt, that he intended to dismiss Starosselski and transfer the Cossacks to British control immediately upon reaching Tehran.⁽¹³⁾ He repeated these assurances in Tehran a month later to the British Minister.⁽¹⁴⁾ But apparently he could not bring himself to take action. Therefore Curzon telegraphed to Norman, the British Minister at Tehran, on June 19 that although the Shah would not dismiss Starosselski, the British Government

¹⁰Curzon to Cox, telegram 662, December 20, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 873, p. 1266.

¹¹Cox to Curzon, telegram 804, December 27, 1919, cited Ibid., Vol. XIII, No. 387, pp. 450-452.

¹²Cox to Curzon, telegram 126, March 13, 1920, Ibid., No. 387

¹³Allenby (Cairo) to Curzon, telegram 449, May 7, 1920, Ibid., No. 418, p. 419.

¹⁴Norman to Curzon, telegram 371, June 13, 1920, Ibid., No. 461, pp. 512-513.

would nevertheless cut off its subsidy to the Cossack. The Shah and the government would then have to find the necessary funds themselves.⁽¹⁵⁾

At this time Moshir-od-Dowleh ordered Starosselski to move against the Bolshevik rebels in Gilan. Starosselski drove the rebel forces back, recaptured Gilan from the Bolsheviks and in mid-August occupied Resht. The initial Cossack successes were indeed rapid. By the 24th August, it was announced that they had reoccupied Resht and were moving on Enzeli;⁽¹⁶⁾ but the reaction was even speedier. What happened was that in the first place the Russian had landed fresh troops with heavy trench mortars and in the second place the enemy fleet from the sea and their gun-boats from the lagoon had opened a flanking artillery fire with the result that precipitate flight had immediately ensued.⁽¹⁷⁾ In October 1920, General Ironside took over the command of the British Force in Northern Persia (Norperforce) from General Champain. Meanwhile, the British Forces in Qazvin were strengthened by the arrival of a few modern airplanes.

On October 25, the British Minister in Tehran raised the question of employment of British Officers in the Persian Army and at the same time asked for the dismissal of Starosselski and all White Russian

¹⁵Curzon to Norman, telegram 327, June 19, 1920, Ibid., No. 471, p. 527.

¹⁶Norman to Curzon, telegram 592, August 26, 1920, Ibid., No. 543, pp. 598-599.

¹⁷Norman to Curzon, telegram 600, August 29, 1920, Ibid., No. 544, pp. 599-600.

Officers. General Ironside immediately proceeded from his headquarters at Qazvin to Tehran, where, accompanied by the British Minister, he called on Moshir-od-Dowleh and demanded the dismissal of all Russians in the service of the Persian Government. In the course of the conference with the Prime Minister, the British Minister made it quite clear that if the Persian Government did not comply with the British demands, Great Britain would terminate its subsidies to Persia and Moshir's Government would be held responsible for the consequences. In reporting his interview to Curzon, Norman was not quite so optimistic, but he emphasized that in his opinion whether or not the Prime Minister would cooperate was no longer a crucial matter: even if Moshir were to resign over the British ultimatum, he said, other Persian politicians could be found who would both dismiss Starosselski and steer the Anglo-Persian Agreement through the Majlis. (18)

On October 26 and 27 General Ironside and Norman had two audiences with the Shah. (19) As a result the Shah asked Moshir-od-Dowleh to resign. The London Times reported that the urgent necessity for reorganizing the anti-Bolshevist front had produced a Cabinet crisis in Tehran. (20) As soon as Starosselski had reached Tehran, Norman requested that the Shah should receive the Colonel, "reprimand

¹⁸ Norman to Curzon, telegram 703, October 25, 1920, Ibid., No. 566, pp. 618-620.

¹⁹ See telegram 709 and 710, October 26 and 28, 1920, Ibid., Nos. 569-570, pp. 622-626.

²⁰ London Times, November 1, 1920.

him severely for his disobedience, order him at once to hand over his command to Persian Officer designated to receive it, to return to his house and remain there without seeing anybody, and to leave again for Qazvin tomorrow with the same Persian Officer under the pain of being sent back under arrest."⁽²¹⁾ The Shah complied, and the climax was pure melodrama.

The dismissal of the Russian Officers marked an epoch in the long struggle between Russia and Great Britain in Persia. With the fall of the popular government of Moshir-od-Dowleh, Persia reached the period when good relations between its people and Britain ended. However, in light of the British Legation's attitude in the Staro-sselski's case and the resignation of the nationalist Premier, the time had arrived when the last illusion of Persian independence was dispelled. On November 2, 1920, an editorial in the London Times attacked Curzon's Persian policy and asked Curzon to clarify the British policy in Persia.

Parliament should review without delay the whole character and aim of British policy in Persia. "Where", asked the Times, "[is] Lord Curzon's policy leading us. Nobody appears to subscribe to Lord Curzon's Agreement except Lord Curzon himself."⁽²²⁾

During November and December both Lord Curzon and Lloyd George made speeches in Parliament implying that since the Persians had not

²¹Norman to Curzon, telegram 716, October 29, 1920, Ibid. No. 574, n.1, p. 629.

²²London Times, November 2, 1920.

ratified the Agreement, they would be left to fend for themselves as Britain disengaged.⁽²³⁾ Lord Curzon in his speech, denied the allegations of the British press and claimed that in his Persian policy there had been a "deliberate and carefully-thought-out plan in a position of constant and kaleidoscopic change, to solve the Persian problem in a manner consistent, not so much with British interests," though naturally the Foreign Office had not forgotten them - as with the continued national existence and independence of Persia herself. Alluding to the dismissal of Starosselski, Curzon observed:

We suddenly heard that this Officer and his colleagues had, in their military operations against the Bolsheviks, retired before greatly inferior Bolshevik forces without any attempt at sustained resistance; [and] that the Commanding Officer was himself engaged in a violent anti-British propaganda in Persia. It was impossible to regard the continued presence of this officer and his Russian colleagues representing, ... the old regime, as anything, but a menace both to Persia and to ourselves in that part of the country.⁽²⁴⁾

Questions concerning the fall of the Moshir-od-Dowleh's Cabinet were also raised in the Parliament, but the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs tried to dodge the issue by remarking: "The recent Cabinet crises in Persia arose from the unwillingness of the former Persian Cabinet to carry out the decision of the Shah to dismiss the Russian Officers in command of the Persian Cossack Division."⁽²⁵⁾

²³Curzon's speech was on November 16, 1920, 5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 42, Cols. 276-291; Lord George's was on December 15, 1920, 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 136, Cols. 584-585.

²⁴5 H.L. Deb., Vol. 42, Col. 288, [16 November 1920].

²⁵5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 134, Col. 1520, [15 November 1920].

J. M. Balfour, late Chief Assistant to the Financial Adviser to the Persian Government, alluding to this statement in the House, said that Harmsworth, the Under Secretary of Foreign State, was not honest in his observations to the House, and that the British Minister in Tehran was responsible for the fall of Moshir-od-Dowleh's Cabinet. (26)

After several uncertain days a new Ministry was formed by a pro-British politician, Sepahdar. He was commissioned to reopen the Parliament elected under Vusuq-od-Dowleh and to obtain ratification of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. In certain respects the Council formed by Sepahdar followed the policy of its predecessors, particularly by its refusal to consider the Agreement as operative, pending its consideration by the Majlis, and to utilize the service of the advisers and their staffs pending such consideration. The question of replacing the Russians with British Officers was never consented to by the Persian Government, some British Officers were now attached to the Cossack Division in an undefined capacity, and the Division was acting jointly with British troops under General Ironside. (27)

In the meantime the feeling against the Anglo-Persian Agreement intensified. In the beginning of November, a deputation of merchants had an audience with the Shah, at which they submitted representation

²⁵5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 134, Col. 1520, [15 November 1920].

²⁶Balfour, op. cit., pp. 204-205.

²⁷Ibid., p. 208.

against its ratification. At the end of November 1920, Sepahdar attempted to deal with the situation and, in the absence of the necessary quorum for the opening of the Majlis, an assembly of Ministers, ex-Ministers and deputies was convened to consider the question of ratification. They would not commit themselves, and their only decision was to push for the assembly of the Majlis.⁽²⁸⁾ The decision may, to some degree, have been influenced by the report that the most favorable peace terms had been offered by the Bolsheviks⁽²⁹⁾ and in view of the approaching British evacuation it was not to be expected that any expression of opinion likely to incense the Moscow Government should have been risked. An additional deterrent was a terrorist committee which had been formed by the anti-British extremists.⁽³⁰⁾ Whether anything would have been gained had the Majlis been induced to assemble at this time is very doubtful since the members of Parliament would in all probability not accept the onus of dealing with the situation and would take the line that the matter was one for the decision of

²⁸ See Dolatabadi, op. cit., pp. 190-192.

²⁹ On July 10, 1920, the Prime Minister, Moshir-od-Dowleh appointed as envoy to Moscow, Moshaver-ol-Mamalek, the Persian Ambassador at Constantinople, to open negotiations with the Soviet Government with a view to concluding a treaty of peace and friendship between Russia and Persia. On October 25, 1920 the envoy arrived in Moscow and the result of negotiations was the Soviet-Persian Treaty of February 1921. See telegrams 519, 572, 772; July 13, November 26 and 29, 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, Nos. 521, 589, 590, pp. 574, 645-647.

³⁰ For the best account of the terrorist committee, see Sepehr. op. cit., pp. 416-430.

the Cabinet.⁽³¹⁾

By the beginning of January 1921, it had become evident that nothing was to be hoped from the Sepahdar Government by way of the organization of an efficient administration for the country. To the Shah the position appeared so serious that he proposed to leave the country.⁽³²⁾ The Sepahdar Government, after successive reshufflings, was overthrown by a military coup-d'etat on February 1921. On the night of February 20, Reza Khan a Colonel of the Cossack Division and a Commander of Cossack Squadron accompanied by Sayyed-Zia-ed-Din, a dedicated reformist-politician, entered Tehran at the head of 2,500 Cossacks to overthrow the government. In the following days a large number of former government officials, journalists, and others were arrested and the city was put under Martial Law.⁽³³⁾ Within a week

³¹Balfour, op. cit., p. 208.

³²Related in Norman's telegram No. 4, January 3, 1921, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 626, pp. 677-678.

³³Related in Norman's telegram No. 121, February 21, 1921, Ibid., No. 681, pp. 729-730.

Sayyed Zia formed a Cabinet and made Reza Khan the Army Chief.⁽³⁴⁾

Immediately after coming into office, Zia issued a statement formally denouncing the Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 9, 1919 and at the same time directed the Persian diplomatic representative in Moscow to sign a treaty between Persian and Soviet Governments.⁽³⁵⁾ By the Treaty of Friendship of 1921⁽³⁶⁾ Russia renounced every vestige of the special position in Persia that had been occupied by the Tsarist government and by private Russian citizens, with the understanding that the renounced concessions should remain the property of the Persian people and not be transferred to any foreign power. In addition, the Soviets renounced the hated capitulations, and promised to withdraw

³⁴Norman to Curzon, telegram 125, February 25, 1921, Ibid. No. 683, pp. 731-732. There is no indication in any of Norman's reports that he had any foreknowledge of Reza Khan's coup-d'etat. At the time of Starosselski's dismissal, Reza Khan was in command of the Cossack squadron at Tabriz. He was brought to Agha-Baba, where the Cossack Division was based, some fifteen miles west of Norperforce headquarters at Qazvin. General Ironside placed Reza Khan in acting command on November 1920. On the 14th February Ironside received a telegram summoning him to Baghdad immediately. Before leaving Persia he went to Tehran to try to persuade the Shah to bring Reza Khan to a position of power. The Shah refused. When Ironside left Persia to Baghdad, Reza Khan entered Tehran on the 21st and overthrew the Government. For an excellent summary account of the rise of Reza Khan to power, see Chapter III in The History of Modern Iran: An Interpretation, by Joseph M. Upton (Cambridge, Mass., 1960).

³⁵Norman to Curzon, telegrams 125 and 132, February 26 and 18, 1921; Ibid., No. 683 and 686, pp. 731-732 and 734.

³⁶For the text, see J. C. Hurewitz, Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record: 1914-1956, Vol. 2, (Princeton, 1956), pp. 90-94.

Russian troops from Gilan as soon as the British evacuated south Persia. Finally, in exchange for these Soviet renunciations, the Persians conceded one important right: in the event that a third party should "attempt to carry out a policy of usurpation by means of armed intervention in Persia, or if such a power should desire to use Persian territory as a base of operations against Russia", if the Persians were not strong enough to prevent it, then "Russia shall have the right to advance her troops into the Persian interior for the purpose of carrying out military operations necessary for its defense." These troops would be withdrawn as soon as the danger to Russia had been removed from Persia. The presence of British forces in Persia furnished a justification for the continued presence of Soviet forces in Gilan.

In any case, most Persians, not only the nationalists, greeted this treaty joyfully, but with a pleasure tempered by a deeply ingrained suspicion.⁽³⁷⁾ The events in Gilan were too fresh in mind for them to have reacted otherwise, but the Persian Government which accepted the Treaty of 1921 was that of Sayyed Zia, a government that Persians considered British-sponsored.⁽³⁸⁾ In all likelihood, the Russians

³⁷ Dolatabadi, op. cit.; p. 157; Lenczowski, op. cit., pp. 6-9.

³⁸ Sayyed Zia was the former editor of the daily Raad, the only newspaper which supported the Anglo-Persian Agreement. The summary of Zia's article in supporting the Agreement and commenting on American and French attitude toward Persia reported to Curzon by Cox in telegram 727, November 18, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 840, pp. 1222-1224. Also see Dolatabadi, op. cit., pp. 126, 227-240.

shared this Persian assessment. Even after Sayyed Zia had fled and Reza Khan had become the real power in Persia, they may well have agreed with the Persians that British influence was being exerted in Persia through Reza Khan. This British involvement was a real dilemma for the Bolsheviks.⁽³⁹⁾

Curzon's view of the prospect of Soviet-Persian relations during the summer of 1920 was one of strong dismay. During the winter of 1920-21 he was scarcely more enthusiastic. On one occasion he instructed Norman to warn the Persians that London would not tolerate an agreement between Persia and any other country which would infringe upon British rights and interests,⁽⁴⁰⁾ but he reluctantly conceded that the negotiations between Tehran and Moscow just might forestall a Soviet invasion immediately on the heels of a British withdrawal. Yet even here he added that: "prospects of this must be so attractive to Russians that they could hardly be expected to forego the occasion."⁽⁴¹⁾ He went on to suggest that the Shah and his government should perhaps consider the possibility of abandoning Tehran and northern Persia to the Communists and establishing a rump state, consisting of the central and southern parts of the country, with its capital at Isfahan or Shiraz. Shiraz, near the Gulf, was the base of the British-led South Persia Rifles and also the southern region. Moreover, it was the center of

³⁹ Dolatabadi, op. cit., p. 91.

⁴⁰ Curzon to Norman, telegram 586, December 8, 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 602, pp. 655-656.

⁴¹ Curzon to Norman, telegram 5, January 3, 1921, Ibid., No. 628, pp. 679-680.

British interests and investments in Persia, particularly the great petroleum fields, however, the British government had, as a result of Persian failure to ratify the Anglo-Persian Agreement, decided to stop contributing subsidies to the Persian Government.⁽⁴²⁾

These apprehensions, expressed by Curzon in January 1921, before Reza Khan's coup, were shared by Foreign Office officials who dealt with Persian affairs,⁽⁴³⁾ as well as by Norman in Tehran. So certain was he that a Soviet invasion would follow the withdrawal of British forces that in early January he called a meeting of European residents of the capital to discuss arrangements for the immediate evacuation of women and children.⁽⁴⁴⁾ Norman's panic annoyed the European residents, frightened the Shah and caused British prestige among the Persians to decline.⁽⁴⁵⁾ Even Curzon felt moved privately to telegraph his Minister that he seemed to be acting a trifle precipitately.⁽⁴⁶⁾

From the date of the Bolshevist landing the Agreement may be regarded as dead, although it did not receive its decisive stroke at

⁴²Curzon to Norman, telegrams 44 and 67, January 22 and February 8, 1921; Ibid., No. 661 and 671, pp. 703-704 and 717.

⁴³See memorandum by G. P. Churchill, December 20, 1920, Ibid., No. 616, pp. 666-669.

⁴⁴See telegram 17, Norman to Curzon, January 8, 1921, Ibid., No. 640, pp. 688-689.

⁴⁵Balfour, op. cit., pp. 209-212.

⁴⁶Curzon to Norman, unnumbered telegram, January 21, 1921; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 660, p. 703.

the hands of Sayyed Zia until nearly nine months later.⁽⁴⁷⁾ The history of the Agreement during the eighteen months which elapsed between its signature and repudiation is, to a great extent, the history of Persia during that period. What is most difficult to understand during this period is the persistency with which the British Foreign Office clamoured for ratification. Considering the changes which had taken place, it is incredible that it can seriously have been believed that there was a real possibility of any Majlis voting favourably, least of all that which was in existence.

At the time when the Agreement was concluded, Persia was being defended and financed by Great Britain. By the autumn of 1920 the situation had changed in every respect. The Mashhad force had gone, as had that in the Caucasus. The Caspian flotilla was in the hands of the Bolsheviki. The Qazvin force (Norperforce) was to depart in April 1921,⁽⁴⁸⁾ and, owing to the restraining orders under which its commander acted, it had suffered seriously in prestige, and had been compelled to fall back before the Bolshevists and to evacuate Gilan.

⁴⁷On March 8, 1921 the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs announced in the House of Commons that "the Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 9, 1919 concluded between His Majesty's Government and the Government of Persia is denounced by them." 5 H.C. Deb., Vol. 139, Col. 724; It was not until May 24, 1921, however, that the Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs reluctantly admitted: "I think it (the Agreement) can be regarded as having lapsed." 5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 142, Col. 34.

⁴⁸See telegram 532, Curzon to Norman, 5 November 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 576, pp. 632-633.

Lastly, the subsidies to the Government and Cossack Division had ceased.

The consequence was that Persia found herself abandoned to her own resources, and left to the tender mercies of the Bolsheviks, deprived alike of military and financial aid. When there was nothing to be hoped for from the British Government, and ratification of the Agreement could only result in incurring the resentment of the Moscow Government, it would have been pure folly to attempt to comply with Lord Curzon's demands for ratification. In such circumstances Lord Curzon's statements that he was the best friend that Persia possessed only resulted in provoking an outburst of fury and contempt throughout the country.

Why, then did he press so strongly for ratification? There would appear to be an explanation that the British Government desired to be free of the Agreement, while throwing the onus of repudiation upon Persia. The fact that Foreign Office and War Office and Treasury had, if consulted at all, not had the nature of the obligations implied brought home to them is important. And that when the two Departments appreciated the possible commitments in which they might find themselves involved, they not unnaturally protested, with the result that the Foreign Office, in the prevalent wave of feeling in favour of nominal economy, found itself alone, and left to save its face as best it could. (49)

⁴⁹ See Appendix to Cabinet Papers, CAB. 24/104, C.P. 1200, Inter-Departmental Conference on Middle Eastern Affairs, 37th Minutes, [April 13, 1920].

That there was something in this view one is almost tempted to believe, judging by the attitude adopted by the Foreign Office when the Agreement was finally denounced by Sayyed Zia. Although repudiating the Agreement, and renouncing any desire to profit by the loan thereunder, he expressed himself anxious to avail himself of the services of Military and Financial Advisers. The policy of the Agreement would have been given effect to practically in its entirety. The Foreign Office, however, was unwilling or unable to distinguish between the form and the substance, and one is tempted to wonder whether they were unable to realise that they had obtained the nominal results at which their policy had aimed, or whether they would have preferred that the Anglo-Persian Agreement should be repudiated both in spirit and in letter.

CHAPTER IX

CURZON'S DIPLOMATIC FAILURE IN PERSIA

On February 1921, the Persian Cabinet denounced the Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 19, 1919 and, when the Majlis (Persian Parliament) finally convened on June 22, 1921, for the first time in six years, it also immediately denounced the Agreement.

This decision was a defeat for that school of thought in the British Cabinet, headed by Lord Curzon, who had originated the idea of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, which saw in the Agreement a first step towards establishing a new British Empire, linking India with the Mediterranean and stretching from Nile to the Indus. This school of thought also favored vigorous intervention against Bolshevik advances towards the Southeast, which thus regarded as a threat to the British possessions in India and to the British interests in the Persian Gulf.

The setback of Curzon's bold policy in Persia was an important reverse for the British. For a hundred years, Great Britain and Russia had struggled against one another in Persia, and when cataclysmic changes in Russia appeared to have removed the latter from the scene, Great Britain was unable to capitalize on the changed power situation. Certainly a number of Twentieth century events had undermined the fatalistic acceptance by oriental peoples of domination by the West: Japan's victory over Russia in 1905; Persian bitterness towards the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907; World War I; the Russian Revolution

of 1917; and the declaration of the "Fourteen Points" of President Wilson, had all played their part. But the immediate and principal causes for Persian refusal to ratify the Agreement and consequently Curzon's failure were:

The attitude of the United States and France to the Agreement was primarily responsible for the Persian rejection. Secondly, the resurgence of Persian nationalism and finally the new tactics of Russia and Russia's mild policy towards Persia. Also, several mistakes had been made by Curzon. In the first place, the negotiations of the Agreement had been conducted in hurried secrecy. Also, the method of procedure was inconsistent with the Covenant of the League of Nations and failed to provide for the deposit of the Agreement in the archive of the League. And finally Curzon failed to realize that the Persian Parliament needed to ratify the Agreement formally.

Looking back upon the unceasing tumult and the disturbances in Tehran following the conclusion of the Agreement, one can see no period when so many problems all at once or in rapid succession bore more directly on the people of Persia than the period between August 1919 and February 1921. The Persia of 1919 was very different from the Persia which Curzon had seen in 1890. Curzon had not realized that the Persians had not forgiven England for the disguised partition

of their home in 1907 and in 1915. Curzon himself regarded the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 as a "sacrifice" of the British "Asiatic tradition" to the needs of European diplomacy; as a betrayal of that confidence which the Persian had for half a century reposed in British friendship."⁽¹⁾ But unfortunately Curzon did not realize that the Persians were suspicious of British policy in 1919.

What did Persia think of the 1907 Convention? Apart from the slight to the honour of an ancient nation which had fallen on evil days, she considered that, in the case of Russia, the creation of spheres of influence would prove to be a stage on the road to annexation and probably she was right. Britain on the other hand, whom she had believed to be her friend and sole protection against the Russian ambition, became an object of suspicion. We may quote the Persian proverb, "enemies are of three kinds: enemies, enemies of friends and friends of enemies." There is little doubt that the remarkable success of German propaganda among the Persians during the First World War was mainly due to the fact that Great Britain was the friend of their Russian enemies.⁽²⁾ Persians blamed England for the persecution they had suffered from the Russians. This attitude was strengthened when, in November 1917, the Bolshevik Government published the secret treaty known as the Constantinople Agreement of March 18, 1915. Under this treaty, Russia was promised Constantinople and Great Britain was to be allowed, in return

¹Quoted in Harold Nicolson, op. cit., p. 126.

²See Christopher Sykes, Wassmus: The German Lawrence, (London, Longmans: 1936).

to incorporate within her sphere of influence in Persia the whole neutral zone established under the Convention of 1907.⁽³⁾

In publishing the secret documents, which, with others, were found in the archives of the Russian Foreign Office, Trotsky said, "The Russian people, as well as the people of Europe and of the whole world, must know the documentary truth about these plots which were hatched in secret by financiers and industrialists, together with Parliamentary and diplomatic agents. The people of the world have earned the right to know the truth about these things, owing to their innumerable sacrifices and the universal economic ruin."⁽⁴⁾ Harold Nicolson, alluding to the publication of the secret treaty by Soviet Government asserts:

Until the publication of this agreement it might have been possible for the friends of England in Persia to contend that we had been driven into the 1907 Convention by European necessities... After the publication of the Agreement even the most ardent Anglophile was unable to deny that we had surrendered to Russian realism in admitting the principle of a partition of Persian territory.⁽⁵⁾

Persians again found cause to believe that Great Britain operated by secret agreements which only occasionally came to light. The

³See, Kerner, Robert G., "Russia, the Straits, and Constantinople, 1914-1915," Journal of Modern History, Vol. 1, (September, 1929), pp. 400-415.

⁴Seymour Cocks, The Secret Treaties and Understandings, 2d. ed., (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1918), p. 23.

⁵Harold Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 127-128.

Agreement of 1907 was a major turning point for Persian confidence, and the roots of the anti-British aspects of Persian nationalism in 1919 gained much nourishment from the memory of this Convention.

When World War I broke out, the liberal nationalist elements in Persia were overwhelmingly pro-German and pro-Turk.⁽⁶⁾ Large numbers of these people left Tehran for Kermanshah (close to Turkey's border) in order to join forces with the Central Powers there. Nor was this pro-Central Power sentiment limited to liberal nationalists. Christopher Sykes reports that even among peasants and tribesmen, for whom World War I had only the vaguest meaning, a hatred for Russia and Britain was very strong.⁽⁷⁾ In South Persia peasant and tribal antagonism was directed at the British, and tribal rebellion became so extensive that they were compelled to organize the South Persian Rifles, a Persian force commanded by British officers.⁽⁸⁾

Nor was this all. Persia during the war had been exposed to violations and sufferings not surpassed by any other neutral country except Belgium. The Turks and Russians, and later the British, were responsible for rendering Persian territory an area of hostilities. After the collapse of the Tsarist regime and the Russian retirement the British alone were left in occupation and hence upon them fell

⁶Dolatabadi, op. cit., p. 104.

⁷Christopher Sykes, op. cit., p. 64.

⁸Sir Percy Sykes, "Persia and Great War," Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, Vol. IX, 1922, pp. 175-187.

the full force of Persian indignation. The Government and the people of Persia time and again protested against this violation of Persia's neutrality and asked for the immediate withdrawal of British troops. During the war these protests and representations had been ignored; but when peace came, the British Government found it increasingly difficult to keep armed British detachments on Persian soil. The fact remains that Persia emerged from the war in a mood of innocent but violated rectitude. It was this mood which Curzon failed to comprehend.

For Persia the major role that the Tsarist regime had played in Persian internal affairs made the Russian Revolution of 1917 of immediate importance. Suspicion of Russia was too ingrained to disappear overnight. There was a tremendous emotional release in Persia following the revolution. Reports tell of dancing in the streets of Tabriz.⁽⁹⁾ The rejoicing approached abandon in the mass celebrations that were held in Tabriz and Tehran when, in January 1918, the new regime renounced the old treaties of the Tsars, including the Agreement of 1907, and ordered Russian troops to return home.⁽¹⁰⁾

Curzon was unaware of what, in 1919, was an essential factor in the situation. He failed to realize the impression that the Russian Revolution and its anti-imperialist propaganda had created throughout the world and that the West had lost much of its prestige and power. British errors had favored the Russians. Bound by no higher moral

⁹Sepehr, op. cit., p. 490.

¹⁰Ibid.

principle than that the end justified the means, the Bolsheviki in Persia talked of peace and freedom, of the rights of the small nations, and of the fight against imperialism and dictatorship.⁽¹¹⁾ Persia now had a friend prepared to declare null and void the whole body of treaties and conventions which had been concluded between the weak countries and the Tsarist Government, treaties which had crushed the rights of many people in many states. The British Government made no sign of seconding Russia's action declaring the 1907 Convention abrogated. In fact, when the Persian Government's formal denunciation of that instrument made a British statement imperative, Lord Curzon announced in the House of Lords, "that the matter was temporarily in suspense and that it would be considered further after the termination of war."⁽¹²⁾

Curzon did not understand what his biographer has taken pains to point out, that in 1919 the roles of Britain and Russia in regard to Persia were reversed.⁽¹³⁾ The Persians were not, as in the closing decades of the Nineteenth century, looking to England for support against the Russian enemy. For a time, at least, the Bolshevik Revolution, accompanied by the complete renunciation of Russian interests in Persia and the withdrawal of Russian troops, left the English, as the sole occupants of the country, the major threat to Persian independence.

Suspicious that the British hoped to extend their colonial empire into Persia were exacerbated at the Paris Peace Conference in

¹¹Ivar Spector, op. cit., p. 49.

¹²5 H. L. Deb., Vol. 27, Col. 825, [28 January 1918].

¹³Harold Nicolson, op. cit., pp. 128-129.

1919. The Persian delegation had demanded that it be received at the conference in order to present the case for compensation for Persian suffering in World War I. The Persian territorial claims were against Turkey, Mesopotamia, and the Caucasus. Still, few nations had suffered more than had Persia during the war, and equity demanded that at least courtesy be extended to the Persians. Instead, at British instigation, the delegation was refused entry. This British move, combined with rumors of an Anglo-Persian treaty under negotiation in Tehran, seemed to confirm Persia's fears.

One can thus see that, in the first place the period 1907-1919 was a formative one for Persian attitudes towards Britain. The British, not at all unnaturally, failed to recognize the immense potential of the change simply because the changed attitudes were confined in 1907 to a relatively small elite. The Persians were devoted to their own national interests and these did not necessarily coincide with the national interests of Great Britain. For example, in pursuance of their perception of their national interests the British negotiated the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and thereby deeply offended the Persian nationalists' sense of national dignity. The consequence of this interaction were circular and reinforcing: the British seemed to be running counter to their own interests in their Persian policy. The traditional elements could take a casual view of this behavior, but men who placed independence and dignity for Persia first could not; and an intensely hostile nationalistic reaction against the British became inevitable. So the situation in 1919 had changed and there was

no longer much hope that the nationalists would give favorable consideration to the Anglo-Persian Agreement.

One of the important reason for this change was the attitude of the United States toward the Agreement. As already stated in Chapter 5, President Wilson's concern for, and displeasure at, the conclusion of the Agreement, which was bluntly expressed in a communique published by the United States Minister in Tehran,⁽¹⁴⁾ encouraged Persian nationalists to carry their fight to a successful end. The London Times alluding to the consequences of the divergence of opinion between London and Washington in regard to the Agreement wrote:

The incident, however emphasized the necessity for complete inter-Allied frankness in London, Paris and Washington; for the smooth working of the Agreement it is important that it should have the good will of the Allied Legations here.⁽¹⁵⁾

"The reply of the State Department," said the New York Times, "to the request of the British Government that the United States approve the Anglo-Persian treaty is known to be one of the sharpest and most caustic notes sent to the London Foreign Office in recent years."⁽¹⁶⁾

The opposition of the United States coupled with the resurgence of Persian nationalism made the Anglo-Persian Agreement subject to very sharp attack among the Persians. The Persians resented the means and methods by which the Agreement was negotiated, and suspected

¹⁴ See Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, p. 709.

¹⁵ London Times, September 6, 1919.

¹⁶ New York Times, September 21, 1919.

its end and aim. Some Persians believe that had prompt and useful reforms by Great Britain followed the conclusion of the Agreement, the ultimate result might well have been different.

The correspondent of The Near East reported that the Persians' reaction to the treaty was, as expected, favorable.⁽¹⁷⁾ Despite this opinion, Persians' reaction was far from unanimous. There undoubtedly were many Persians who saw in British protection the only hope for security and stability. However, within a year even the British had to admit that their optimism was not soundly based and that when the Anglo-Persian Agreement had been announced, the Persian press and public had been generally "indignant".⁽¹⁸⁾ But the British Legation was not ready to concede that this indignation was a reflection of public opinion. On the contrary, they argued that the protests were staged by the French and Americans who were jealous of British success, or by the ruling clique, which feared that British hegemony would end the corrupt system they had so easily dominated, or by both groups.⁽¹⁹⁾

The evidence against this British view is overwhelming: of twenty-six newspapers being published in Persia at the time, all but one, the Raad, the semi-official Cabinet organ, denounced the Agreement; the remaining twenty-five risked suppression by the government of Vusuq-od-Dowleh,

¹⁷The Near East, November 28, 1919, p. 599.

¹⁸Ibid., September 16, 1920, p. 394.

¹⁹See telegram 559, Cox to Curzon, August 22, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 732, pp. 1138-1139.

which had signed it.⁽²⁰⁾ The argument that all the other twenty-five journals were in league with wicked and corrupt grandees, the very men who had always opposed nationalism, is not plausible. Furthermore the tenor of the attacks belies the British assessment. The articles denouncing the Agreement were couched in strongly nationalistic and sometimes sophisticated language,⁽²¹⁾ indicating that they emanated from the rising nationalist intelligentsia rather than from the comparatively backward grandees.

The assessment of Persian reaction by the American Minister in Tehran flatly contradicted the British opinion. The American Minister claimed that although the presence of British troops in Persia had government support, those opposed to the treaty openly denounced it, and, Tehran was seething with resentment. The American asserted that "The only supporters of the Agreement (these include the Shah, the Prime Minister, and the Foreign Minister) had been bribed by Britain, and said further that he had not found 'one single honest disinterested person' who approved of this treaty."⁽²²⁾ The estimate made by Persians of the period coincides with the American Minister's account. Persians believed, furthermore, that the two of their countrymen most responsible for the Agreement had received \$131,000 for their

²⁰ See, the American Minister's Report from Tehran to Washington in Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, p. 701; and telegram 727, Cox to Curzon, November 8, 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 840, pp. 1222-1224.

²¹ See the following Dolatabadi, op. cit., p. 128; J. M. Balfour, op. cit., p. 208; Vincent Sheean, The New Persia, p. 24; R. K. Ramazani, The Foreign Policy of Iran 1500-1941, pp. 165-167.

²² Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, p. 714.

trouble.⁽²³⁾ This sum was theoretically to have been used to purchase a favorable public reaction, but most Persians regarded it as a payoff.⁽²⁴⁾ In any case, the rumor of the payoff was widely believed and the British were discredited. Convinced that the French and Americans would stand with them against the British, the Persians gained the heart to step up their anti-treaty campaign: They formed a secret society called "Committee of Punishment" (Mojazat), with the expressed policy of murdering all "lovers of England," and launched a campaign of assassination and terror.⁽²⁵⁾ Reluctantly Curzon admitted defeat. When Sayyed Zia, the former editor of Raad, announced the rejection of the Agreement after his coup d'état, Persians regarded the announcement as an open admission by Curzon of failure for his plan to establish a protectorate.

The story of failure is told in two speeches delivered by Curzon in the House of Lords on November 26, 1920 and July 26, 1921. Curzon pronounced in the House of Lords a funeral oration upon his own handiwork:

If the noble Lord asks me how I view the situation thus created, I am fain to confess that I regard it with a feeling of disappointment, almost of despair.⁽²⁶⁾

Curzon's failure was not due only to the Persian nationalism or American attitude toward the Agreement, but the most important reason was the new tactics of Russia in Persia which caused the refusal

²³ Sheean, op. cit., pp. 24-27.

²⁴ Balfour, op. cit., p. 127.

²⁵ See Sepehr, op. cit., pp. 416-430; Dolatabadi, op. cit., pp. 134-135.

²⁶ 5 H. L. Deb., Vol. 46, Col. 16, (26 July 1921).

to ratify the Agreement by Persians.

On May 11, 1920, a special dispatch from Tehran to the London Times pictured a gloomy situation of Persia, and asserted that the Bolsheviks were actively seeking to set Persians against England. (27)

On May 18, 1920, the Bolsheviks had crossed the Persian frontiers at Astara and Enzeli and were contending that they had no quarrel with the people of Persia but merely demanded the immediate annulment of the Anglo-Persian Agreement and a quick withdrawal of British troops. (28) The British troops evacuated Enzeli and the Bolshevik landing in Northern Persia took place. It was a shock for Persian confidence in the ability of the British to defend Persia.

The position of the British garrison at Enzeli and, indeed, of Norperforce in general, had been the subject of confusion between the War Office, Foreign Office, and the Treasury, which demanded cuts in military expenditure. In the eyes of the War Office, the British Government had never made the policy decision of whether or not it would use its own forces to defend Persia against an armed attack. Winston Churchill put this issue to his Cabinet colleagues: "Are we to defend Persia or not? If we do not, Persia will be demoralized by Russian Bolshevism and thereafter devoured by Russian Imperialism... It seems very easy to send a few hundred men to Tehran; we shall not find it so easy to take them away." (29)

²⁷ London Times, 11 May 1920.

²⁸ London Times, 19 May 1920.

²⁹ Cabinet Papers, CAB. 24/107, British Military Liabilities, C. P. 1467, [15 June 1920].

Churchill wrote these lines on June 15, 1920, after the Bolshevik landing at Enzeli, but his own position had been clear throughout the spring: British troops should be withdrawn as soon as possible, and £3,500,000 a year required to keep them in the field should be put to better use.⁽³⁰⁾

On February 11, 1920, Churchill sent to the Cabinet a General Staff memorandum recommending that, in the absence of a definite decision to defend Persia with British forces, the Enzeli garrison should be withdrawn "in order to escape the loss of prestige involved in a retirement in contact with the enemy."⁽³¹⁾ The Cabinet met a week later to consider the paper. The minutes of the meeting stated that "The General Officer Commanding, Mesopotamia, was to provide for a safe withdrawal in the event of a serious attack."⁽³²⁾ On March 22, Curzon telegraphed to Cox that "Military opinion here is... convinced that any attack in force by Bolsheviks against Persia is most improbable and may practically be discounted. Real danger lies in infiltration of Bolshevik individual agents or small parties and spread of insidious progaganda, which could not be prevented, even by largely augmented forces."⁽³³⁾ On May 19, 1920, Curzon received this message

³⁰The figure is from Cabinet Finance Committee, CAB. 23/22, No. 49(20), 27th Minute, Appendix 1, [12 August 1920].

³¹Cabinet Papers, CAB. 24/198, C.P. 647, [February 11, 1920].

³²Cabinet Papers, CAB. 23/20, No. 11(20), [February 18, 1920].

³³Curzon to Cox, telegram 153, March 22, 1920; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 395, pp. 457-458.

that Enzeli fell into Soviet hands.⁽³⁴⁾ In a minute to Lord Curzon dated May 20, 1920, Lord Harding, Permanent Under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, wrote that with the evacuation of northern Persia, the government of Vusuq would fall. "The Anglo-Persian Agreement will have become a scrap paper... and the loss of prestige that we shall suffer throughout the whole of the Middle East."⁽³⁵⁾

The evacuation of the British troops from Northern Persia and the formation of a Communist regime in Gilan strongly reinforced the Persian government in its conviction, which had been growing throughout the spring of 1920, that it should deal directly with Moscow to work out a means of safeguarding Persia from Bolshevism; this conviction resulted eventually in the Soviet-Persian treaty of February 26, 1921.

Meanwhile, at the end of July 1920 an event occurred which still further shocked Persian faith in the British: without warning, General Champain, the commander of Norperforce, suddenly decided to withdraw from Manjil to Qazvin and left undefended the important pass at Manjil.⁽³⁶⁾ In Tehran, naturally enough, the Persian Government took this latest withdrawal as a sign that the British were about to abandon Persia entirely to the mercies of the Russians and their Persian Communist allies.⁽³⁷⁾ From this point onward Curzon's continued

³⁴ See telegram 289, Cox to Curzon, May 18, 1920, Ibid., No. 434, pp. 488-489.

³⁵ Ibid., No. 433, No. 4, pp. 486-488.

³⁶ Norman to Curzon, telegram 548, 32 July 1920, Ibid., No. 529, p. 580.

³⁷ See Dolatabadi, op. cit., p. 161, and also related in telegram 553, 2 August 1920, Norman to Curzon, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 532, pp. 582-584.

sermonizing to the effect that the Persians had brought their dire situation on themselves and that in order to rectify it they needed only to ratify the Anglo-Persian Agreement.⁽³⁸⁾ The withdrawal from Manjil "did more than any foreign intrigue could possibly achieve to injure the British position" in Persia, and "had an even more disastrous effect than the Enzeli episode upon British prestige."⁽³⁹⁾

Within the Councils of the British Empire there was no unity for the defence of Persia against the Bolshevik menace. The staunchest proponents of more optimistic views were those whose direct responsibility was the governing of India. In essence they felt that Britain should disengage and leave Persia "to work out her own salvation," providing at the very most only discreet financial advice.⁽⁴⁰⁾ They based their view upon the premise that "any policy involving direct financial or military assistance on our part must inevitably prevent growth of that nationalist spirit, which is, in the long run, our real defence against incursion of Bolshevism."⁽⁴¹⁾

Thus the Government of India advised that London should renounce the Anglo-Persian Agreement before the Persians did so themselves. And despite the fact that Persia would not "be able, in our lifetime, to

³⁸ See telegram 407, Curzon to Norman, August 5, 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 533, pp. 584-585.

³⁹ Balfour, op. cit., p. 198.

⁴⁰ See telegram 842, Norman to Curzon, December 22, 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 624, No. 3, pp. 675-677.

⁴¹ Ibid.

raise an Army fit to oppose an external enemy," the British Government should nevertheless give up all responsibility for supporting or officering the Cossack Division and the South Persia Rifles. As soon as the Persians realized that they would have to defend their country themselves, they would "make shift" with their "own oriental methods of diplomacy." Britain's "disappearance into the background" would "rob Bolshevism of her one valid excuse, and possibly remove temptation for open aggression."⁽⁴²⁾

In any case, to the Government of India open Soviet aggression against Persia seemed a remote prospect. There was no reason to think that the forthcoming signature of a treaty between Moscow and Tehran would be merely a prelude to a Bolshevik invasion. On the contrary, the treaty proposals put forward by the Russian seemed "peculiarly shrewd, devised to undermine our position, and to further their main end in Persia, viz., internal rupture under the influence of Bolshevik propaganda." For this purpose Moscow's "ostentatious abnegation" of Tsarist right and privilege in Persia was designed to contrast with London's general attitude and specific demands under the Anglo-Persian Agreement.⁽⁴³⁾ British policy in Persia could be portrayed throughout the Moslem world as "another example of Britain's crushing of Islam," thus providing Moscow with devastating propaganda which could be effectively countered only by a similar British renunciation.⁽⁴⁴⁾ The

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Lord Chelmsford to Montagu, telegram 23S, January 5, 1921, Ibid., No. 634, pp. 684-685.

⁴⁴ Lord Chelmsford to Montagu, telegram 107S, January 22, 1921, Ibid., No. 662, pp. 704-706.

Government of India was also strongly opposed to any scheme to remove the Shah's Government to Isfahan or Shiraz. Instead the Persian Government should be encouraged to remain in Tehran and "gamble on sincerity of Bolshevik assurance that they will not invade Persia in the event of our withdrawal."⁽⁴⁵⁾

This was the sort of advice Curzon did not want to hear, and he dismissed it by noting that the Government of India had opposed the Anglo-Persian Agreement from the start.⁽⁴⁶⁾ Yet Reza Khan's coup was the first step in the strengthening of just those forces of nationalism within Persia to which the Government of India had looked as the only effective bulwark against a communist revolution. Reza Khan was to Persia what Kemal was to Turkey; however, Reza was even more concerned than Kemal about the danger posed by Soviet Russia to his northern frontier.⁽⁴⁷⁾ His accession marked the beginning to a rapid decline of British influence in Persia.

In the last word, Soviet forces overwhelmed the British in Baku in 1920 and then pursued them across the Caspian Sea to the Persian province of Gilan. The Soviet troops that disembarked at Enzeli confined their activities in Persia to a pursuit of the British. Russia had long been the symbol of reactionary despotism and aggressive imperialism, but many Persians had already accepted as a fact that

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid., Minute by Curzon, dated January 29, 1921.

⁴⁷ Arnold J. Toyenbee, Survey of International Affairs 1925: The Islamic World Since the Peace Settlement, Vol. 1, (London: Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 535.

Russia was now the chief opponent of reaction and imperialism, and many others were wondering if this assumption were not true. Since Britain was clearly the aggressor against the Soviet Union in 1920, many believed that the Russians were justified in sending troops to oust the British from Persia.

However, the dynamics of the Russian southward drive had not been destroyed by a mere revolution. On the contrary, they now combined with the messianic zeal of the new communist faith to convince the Bolsheviks that by moving into Persia they were not acting as imperialists but as liberators. Consequently, the Russians sought to rally Kuchek Khan in Gilan to join with them in their holy crusade. In Persian eyes this was the Russian attitude toward Persian nationalism.

Certain mistakes had been made by Curzon and his Minister in Tehran which were significant. Foreign critics, in the first place, complained of the secrecy with which the Agreement had been negotiated. Allied Governments evidently felt offended that Great Britain had not taken them into her confidence. The Liverpool Post wrote: "The secret way in which the matter has been gone about is certainly unpleasant."⁽⁴⁸⁾ As a matter of fact, however, to have subjected the details of such an instrument to public discussion and foreign criticism while in the course of negotiation would surely have been, in effect, to kill it unborn; but in this case a mistake was undoubtedly made in not submitting the Agreement to the League of Nations, before publication.

⁴⁸Quoted in The Century, January, 1920.

Although the 1906 Persian Constitution required that all treaties should be ratified by the Majlis, both Lord Curzon and Sir Percy Cox failed to comply with this provision. So as time passed, opinion hardened, and unrepresentative though the Majlis was, it was nevertheless responsive enough to nationalist currents so that an affirmative vote became steadily more unlikely.⁽⁴⁹⁾ Curzon, meanwhile, refused to believe that the Agreement could be looked upon as anything but the expression of disinterested British benevolence he believed it to be, and he therefore continued to insist that it should be ratified.⁽⁵⁰⁾ But all the time public opinion hostile to the Agreement was gathering force, and then a variety of extraneous happenings seemed to combine to hasten its demise.

On July 26, 1921, Curzon explained the position to the House of Lords as follows:

The picture that I have drawn has been the picture of a country with a great and historic past,... which now appears to be marching of his own accord... of all speeches that I have ever had to make upon Persia, and they have been many, the one which I make this afternoon has been delivered with the greatest regret.⁽⁵¹⁾

Curzon hoped to befriend Persia, as before, to Great Britain. The Agreement was not, in fact, an unreasonable arrangement, nor was it

⁴⁹ See, the analysis by H. C. Norman in his telegram 562 to Curzon, August 6, 1920, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 534, pp. 585-587.

⁵⁰ For example of Curzon's insistence, see the following telegrams to Norman in Tehran: 382, July 19, 1920; 401, July 31, 1920, 407, August 5, 1920, 422, August 13, 1920; 501, October 12, 1920, 522, November 5, 1920; 592, December 9, 1920. Ibid., Nos. 514, 531, 533, 540, 564, 576, 606.

⁵¹ H. L. Deb., Vol. 46, Cols. 18-19, [26 July 1920].

one which would not have brought benefit to Persia. Nevertheless, it was doomed from the start by the fact of Curzon's mistakes which made the Persians hostile to the Agreement and obviously to Great Britain. Curzon's mistakes, the unpopularity of Persian Government which was patronized and dominated by the British Legation, and finally lack of coordination in the British Imperial Government, all prepared fertile soil for Bolsheviks. They hoped and believed that the government's maladministration and venality would ultimately disrupt and destroy the plutocratic regime. All that was needed was an impulse from the outside. This impulse, this initiative, this resoluteness came from Russian revolutionaries. The result was suspension and demise of the Anglo-Persian Agreement and conclusion of the Soviet-Persian Agreement of February 26, 1921. This was an important setback for the British and most important defeat for Lord Curzon. In spite of Curzon's diplomatic defeat in Persia, Curzon's successors, eyeing their farflung Middle Eastern responsibilities, more than once had reason to be grateful to him.

CHAPTER X

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

At the outbreak of War in 1914, Persia, unable to defend herself, proclaimed her neutrality and, like many other neutral States, was out to spot the winner. But the theoretical neutrality of Persia continued to be violated by the great powers, even after the signing of the Paris Peace Treaty. Persian difficulties were primarily focused upon the international rivalry existing between the great powers and the different factions within Persia.

Shortly after the Armistice a delegation from Persia arrived in Paris to submit her claims to the Peace Conference. They demanded the abrogation of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 and they claimed the cession of Transcaspia, Merv and Khiva to the east, of the Caucasus to the north and Asia Minor as far as the Euphrates. Persia furthermore claimed for reparations, since she had undoubtedly suffered by the action of the great powers.⁽¹⁾ The claims of the Persian Delegation were indeed fantastic, for they showed already a lack of understanding of the historical forces which were dominating the world at the time. Persia was certainly in no position to enter the struggle for Trans Caucasia.

¹ Similar claims were presented earlier to the United States Government in a memorandum that was attached to the note of December 17, 1917 from the Persian Legation in Washington to the Department of State; for partial text see, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States 1918, Vol. 1, pp. 896-897; also see letter from Persian Foreign Minister to Lord Curzon of 17 November 1919, Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 849, pp. 1235-1238.

These claims, however, were never formally considered by the Peace Conference on the ground that Persia, not having been a belligerent in the War, had no right to participate in the Peace Conference. There does not seem to be any doubt that Great Britain was mainly responsible for having barred Persia from the Paris Peace Conference.⁽²⁾ The principal reason for such a tactic was that the British Government wanted to deal with Persia directly without any interference from the other powers. In the summer of 1919, Great Britain had her biggest success in Persia, the signature of the Anglo-Persian Agreement, under which a virtual "protectorate"⁽³⁾ over Persia was firmly established.

The Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 9, 1919 contained a preamble and six Articles. In Article 1 the British Government reiterated "in the most categorical manner the undertakings which they have repeatedly given in the past to respect absolutely the independence and integrity of Persia."⁽⁴⁾ The remaining Articles provided for the appointment of British advisers to the Persian Treasury, for the supply of British officers to completely reorganize the Persian Army for British assistance in the construction of Persian railways, for a loan of £2,000,000, and for the appointment of a committee of

²See H.W.V. Temperley, op. cit., pp. 206-216.

³A.J.P. Taylor, English History 1914-1945, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 152.

⁴Cmd. 300, 1919.

experts who would study a revision of existing tariffs. Lord Curzon, considered the Agreement as a "diplomatic masterpiece"⁽⁵⁾ presented this achievement to the British Cabinet on the same day.

The reaction to this Agreement was highly unfavourable both inside the country as well as among the major European powers. In Persia, practically the nationalists came out against it; in the north the Persian nationalists, called Jangalies, opened hostilities against the Central Government. Open demonstrations even in Tehran became a daily aspect of political life. Opposition against the British was even more vocal and almost all newspapers in Persia became anti-British in their attitude. The situation had become so serious that the British Minister in Tehran, in his report to the Foreign Office, underlined the seriousness of the political situation arising from the signature of the Anglo-Persian Agreement. "We are now", he wrote, "identified with most autocratic elements in country and have lost the confidence of those who call themselves nationalist democrats or something else... We are in fact, drifting in to the position formerly occupied in public estimation by Russia."⁽⁶⁾

Even more significant was the opposition of the United States, France and Soviet Russia to the Agreement. The United States Government very candidly informed the Persian Government of its opposition to such

⁵Harold Nicolson, op.cit., p. 138

⁶Norman to Curzon, telegram 392, 18 June 1920; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 468, pp. 522-524.

an Agreement whereby Persia "would lose part or the whole of her sovereignty."⁽⁷⁾ In France the publication of the Agreement evoked a storm of protest and indignation. British policy in Persia was the subject of widespread comment in the French press,⁽⁸⁾ and the French envoy in Tehran "in very heated terms" informed the Persian Foreign Minister of the opposition of his Government to such an Agreement.⁽⁹⁾

America's internal political considerations aside, the new attitude appeared to be reflection of the emergence of Wilson as the moral leader and conscience of the world, although oil has been the principal governing factor behind American opposition to the Agreement. Eventually, the moral basis for opposing Britain openly changed in to pure commercialism. The French opposition was because of the way in which Great Britain had interfered to prevent the satisfaction of French claims in Syria, as well as because of the way in which the French commerce was "boycotted in Persia by the British authorities in occupation."⁽¹⁰⁾

The reaction of the Soviet Government to the Agreement, however, was belligerent. This was understandable in view of the geographical proximity of Persia to Soviet Russia and the general fear among the Bolshevik leaders that such an Agreement would give innumerable opportun-

⁷ Foreign Relations of the United States 1919, Vol. 2, p. 700.

⁸ See telegram 960, Sir G. Grahame (Paris) to Curzon, August 17 1919; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 726, pp. 1133-1135.

⁹ Cox to Curzon, telegram 541, August 13, 1919; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. IV, No. 716, pp. 1126-1127.

¹⁰ Quoted in The Century, January 1920.

ities to the British Government to operate in strategically important areas of Russia. (11)

The first Russian manifestation against the agreement and indeed against the British influence in Persia, was in the form of a note (26 June 1919) to Persian Government, in which the Soviet Government had cancelled the Tsarist debts. Two months after this note, Chicherin, the Soviet Foreign Minister, took the unprecedented step of addressing an appeal directly to the people of Persia. After a long tirade against the British Government, he made it clear that the Soviet Government "treats as a slip of paper and considers absolutely illegal the shameful Anglo-Persian treaty with which the [Persian] rulers have sold themselves and you to the British robbers." (12)

The next important manifestation occurred in the month of May 1920, when the Soviet Government took the important decision to invade the Persian port of Enzeli to removing from there all the white Russian ships, and "depriving the British of their mainstay on the Caspian Sea." (13) The Persian Government was politely assured that

¹¹J. M. Balfour, the British financial adviser to the Persian Government in his book Recent Happenings in Persia, described the Agreement as an act of provocation, and wrote, "Had we been content to rest satisfied with our position and prestige, it is improbable that the Bolshevists would have been provoked to action as they were,... That the Foreign Office should seize upon the moment when Russia was in the throes of revolution to repudiate the convention of 1907, and should enter upon a policy avowedly aimed at supplanting Russian influence, could only be regarded from the Bolshevist point of view as an act of deliberate aggression." pp. 120-121.

¹²Quoted in Ivar Spector, op. cit., pp. 88-89.

¹³Interview given by Raskolnikov to a correspondent of Petrogradskaia Pravda, on 15 July 1920; text cited by Eudin and North op. cit., p. 179.

the Bolsheviks "had no quarrel with the Persians... but that the British were their enemies and they intended to attack them."⁽¹⁴⁾ By making this distinction between the Persians and the British, the Soviet authorities wanted to exploit the rising anti-British feeling that was in the process of spreading all over the Northern Persia as a result of the signature of the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919.

The Government of Persia protested against the Soviet invasion and filed a complaint with the League of Nations. All this was, however, in vain, for the League of Nations decided to adopt a policy of wait and see, and Bonar Law made it quite clear in the House of Commons, that his Government was under no obligation, under the Anglo-Persian Agreement, to defend Persia.⁽¹⁵⁾ Even Curzon, who was a supporter of a strong British policy against the Bolsheviks in Persia, had to give in under pressure from the British War Office and was obliged to inform his Minister in Tehran on 18 May 1920, that his Government would not be "in a position to augment their forces."⁽¹⁶⁾

The total failure on the part of Lord Curzon to obtain any solid support to Persia to stop the Soviet invasion not only gave an

¹⁴Cox to Curzon, telegram 260, 19 May 1920; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 422, p. 478.

¹⁵5 H. C. Deb., Vol. 129, Col. 1602, [20 May 1920].

¹⁶Curzon to Cox, telegram 268, 18 May 1920; Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939, Vol. XIII, No. 433, pp. 486-487.

impetus to the already existing anti-British feeling in the country but also encouraged the nationalist elements to become even more vocal against the existing Government of Persia. A series of anti-British articles began to appear in the Persian press; some of the papers even began to find common ground between Bolshevism and Islam, while the others considered the new developments on the Northern borders as a good opportunity to review their attacks on the Anglo-Persian Agreement.⁽¹⁷⁾ What was significant, and perhaps indicative of the serious situation in Tehran, was the fact that even the new British envoy, H. C. Norman, who had just arrived in Tehran, was convinced that Premier Vusuq, who had signed the Agreement, had "outlived his usefulness to His Majesty's Government."⁽¹⁸⁾

Finally, the political situation came to a head on 24 June 1920, when it was announced that Vusuq's resignation had been accepted by the Shah. He was replaced by Moshir-od-Dowleh who was more sensitive to nationalist opinion. The new Prime Minister recalled Persian nationalist leaders from exile and informed the British Legation in Tehran that, pending its ratification by the Majlis, the Anglo-Persian Agreement would be considered suspended. Moshir also sent his representative in Constantinople to Moscow in order to conclude a treaty of friendship with the Soviet Government. The British strongly objected to this initiative and obtained a modification to the effect that the

¹⁷ See telegram 269, Cox to Curzon, 14 May 1920; Ibid., No. 427, pp. 481-483.

¹⁸ Norman to Curzon, telegram 387, 15 June 1920, Ibid., No. 466, pp. 520-521.

Persian Government would limit itself to the establishment of commercial relations only.⁽¹⁹⁾

Meanwhile, in February 1921, a Soviet-Persian treaty was signed. This was also a successful Soviet tactic which was to be used or misused by the Soviet Russia. Such an achievement was unprecedented in Russian history, for since the arrival of the British in Persia, never had the British influence, prestige and power received such a serious blow as they did with the Soviet landing in Northern Persia and with the signature of the Soviet-Persian Treaty. Everything that was British was now criticised, and every effort was made to undermine completely the little that remained of British power in the country. A few days after the military coup d'état in Persia (February 1921), the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 was denounced. In March of the same year, the South Persia Rifles, created by the British was dissolved, and all the British officers serving with that force were dismissed.⁽²⁰⁾ The month of May witnessed the withdrawal of British troops, and the Shah, normally known for his pro-British view, in a speech in the Majlis, publicly humiliated Great Britain by expressing satisfaction over the "happy demise of the Anglo-Persian Agreement."⁽²¹⁾

The new leaders of Persia showed Britain that foreign elements would not be allowed to influence or dominate Persia's new positive

¹⁹ Norman to Curzon, telegram 519, 23 July 1920, Ibid., No. 521, p. 574.

²⁰ See telegram 192, Norman to Curzon, 22 March 1921, Ibid., No. 705, 746-747.

²¹ Harold Nicolson, op. cit., p. 146.

nationalism. After this so-called British defeat, Great Britain's influence was indeed on the decline. What was ever worse, and perhaps an indication of weakness, was Curzon's total inability to stop the anti-British wave. Persian nationalism had won a great victory. Refusing to admit that a genuinely outraged public opinion had been the chief reason for the rejection of the Agreement, the British persisted in their unwillingness to accept Persian nationalism as a fact. The nationalists, on the other hand, assumed that the British had recognized them as a formidable enemy and that they were implacably determined to destroy nationalism, along with freedom and prosperity. This assumption seemed to confirm all of their exaggerated hatred of Persian agents of the British. And thus the negative, intensely anti-British aspect of Persian nationalism was strengthened, and the prospects for a positive evolution dimmed.

Meanwhile the Russian new tactics in Persia were the principal reason for Persian refusal to ratify the Agreement. In order for Soviet Russia to eliminate British influence, the Soviet diplomacy in Persia was devoted to the task of attaining this objective. The efforts to establish diplomatic relation with Tehran, the support extended to Persian nationalists, the months spent in persuading Tehran to sign a treaty of friendship with Moscow, all these were different tactics used for attaining of this goal. Even the Soviet invasion of Northern Persia and the subsequent establishment of a Soviet Republic of Gilan, can be explained and understood in this context. It could be argued that in trying to eliminate British influence in Persia, the Soviet leadership was being influenced by security considerations

insofar as the attainment of such an objective would be the first nail in the coffin of imperialism.

Other reasons for British failure were the attitude of the United States toward the Agreement, as well as the bitter French opposition, though the latter should be considered as a subsidiary factor. Although the Agreement had been signed, it was not, according to the Persian constitution, binding and operative unless confirmed by the Persian Parliament. Persian bitterness toward the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907; Persia's violation during the First World War; the affront to the Persian delegation at Versailles; the hurried secrecy in which the negotiations had been conducted; and failure to provide for the deposit of the Agreement in the archive of the League of Nations, all were good reasons for suspension and demise of the Agreement and subsequent defeat of Curzon's Persian policy and indeed British setback in Persia after the First World War.

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