

## CHAPTER I - HISTORICAL INTERLUDE

a. During the eighteenth century, as a result of the struggle among Western nation for imperial and commercial power in India and in the Americas, the British succeeded in ousting their French and Dutch rivals and organized the East India Company.

During the same period Russia succeeded in becoming internally unified, and after destroying both the Swedish and Polish power in eastern Europe, became an important factor in world affairs.

Directly in the path of the imperialist and expansionist ambitions of both Great Britain and Russia, lay Iran. Thus this ancient kingdom, which, under the name of Persia, had played such an important role in classical history, became a bone of contention between two nascent and growing powers. The recent history of Iran is completely the disastrous result of big-power rivalry.

The principal actors in this historical drama were the Russians, who, since Peter the Great, had jealously wanted to gain an outlet to the Southern Seas through the Persian Gulf. This policy of southward expansion promulgated in the early eighteenth century, has since been consistently pursued by successive Tsars, and recently by the Soviet government of Russia.

The policies that Peter promulgated for posterity are contained in the famous will he is supposed to have left, and which was published in Europe in 1755 by the Chevalier d'Eon, who claimed to have obtained a copy while acting as reader to Catherine the Great. The evidence is

that it has been accepted in Russia as a political charter, and states regarding Iran:

"IX-to approach as near as possible to Constantinope and India ....consequently excite continuous wars, not only in Turkey but in Persia....And in the decadence of Persia, penetrate as far as the Persian Gulf...."

Peter also had not contented himself with advice but, before the end of his reign, had made bold attempts to possess the entire Caspian region. The ruler of Iran at that time, Shah Hosain, was a devout man who had placed renewed emphasis on the Mohammedan Shi'a doctrine and thus had given his Sunnite neighbors an excuse for creating trouble and uprisings.

Peter the Great, taking advantage of the confusion, assembled an army at the mouth of the Volga, sailed down the Coast and attacked the port of Darbent. This city, fell, and Peter proceeded along the coast towards Baku. A year later he resumed his enterprise by attacking Resht, on the southern coast of the Caspian Sea. The entire province of Gilan fell into his hands, and he made an agreement with Turkey for dismemberment of Iran. In 1724 the Turks occupied Tabriz, Hamadan, Kermanshah, and the western part of Iran. But, subsequently (1728-1747), Nader Shah, a powerful and war-like chieftain, defeated the Turks, forced them to give up Tabriz, Hamadan, and Kermanshah, and turned against Russia. The Caspian provinces were surrendered and by the Treaty of Resht the Russians gave up their claims to Mazandaran and Gilan. They also gave up the last Persian acquisitions of Peter the Great, Baku and Darbent, and joined in an alliance with Nader Shah against the common enemy - the Turks. Nader won a great victory over the Turks and repeated his victories in India and Afghan.

In fact, the ancient Empire of Iran did not enter modern world politics as a pawn in the big-power rivalry until around 1800, in the course of the Qajar era.

The Qajar Dynasty (1794-1925) was founded by Agha Mohammed, an ambitious chieftain. He managed to suppress a revolt in Georgia and also to reduce Khorassan but his successful military operations were cut short by his assassination.

Fath-Ali-Shah, (1797-1835), the nephew of Agha Mohammed, was a ruler fond of wealth and splendor, but his reign was marked by the involvement of Iran in the conflicts of Europe; by the rapid infiltration of foreign influence; and by the beginning of Russia's successful advance in central Asia.

It was at this time, that Napoleon undertook gigantic schemes to destroy England. Convinced that England's doom must be preceded by French domination of the East, Napoleon sailed from Toulon with a corps of 35,000 men. Apparently convinced of the impracticability of crossing the channel, he persuaded the Directory to deliver a blow at England's Indian empire by way of Egypt. He surprised and took Malta June 12, 1798 and landed in Egypt. His negotiation with Tsar Paul of Russia ended in a scheme of joint invasion of India by French and Russian forces, the former to traverse the Black and Azov seas, the Don and Volga rivers, and the Caspian sea, and to march through Iran.

Russia had been dreaming of an outlet to the Southern seas since the time of Peter the Great. They resumed their advance under Tsar Paul, to carry out the plan and the new Trans-Caucasian army of Russia first moved against Erivan. The Tsar also gave orders to Alaman Orlov

to lead a Cossak expedition through the Turkoman steppes. The expedition, because of inadequate preparations, proved a failure and in Erivan the Iranians succeeded in throwing back the invaders. The subsequent death of the Tsar put an end to the scheme, but the diplomatic tangle of the Napoleonic period not only caused England, the enemy of the emperor-to-be, to counter the French in the Orient, but it also brought Iran for the first time into the European system of alliances. The British, fearful for India, were the first to conclude a political and commercial treaty in 1800, with Sir John Malcolm, representing the East India Company, negotiating with the Shah. Fath-Ali-Shah was to make no peace with the Afghans unless the latter renounced their designs on India. The British were to supply arms and money in the event of an attack on Iran by Afghanistan or France. The British, however, did nothing to implement the treaty or even show an interest in it; the Iranians were more afraid of the Russians than of the French, while Britain was hoping to enlist Russian aid against Napoleon, so that the British treaty went into abeyance.

During this interval Iran had been constantly under the necessity of looking to its defenses as the power of Russia had grown, and of attempting to find means of protection through treaty relations with other European states.

Napoleon's grand strategy, however, still envisaged Iran as an important factor. He took advantage of this and tried to establish a military alliance with the Shah as an instrument of his anti-Russian policy, and by the treaty of Finkenstein, offered to support Iran. He sent General Gordanne with 70 officers to reorganize the Iranian army,

but after the conclusion of the treaty of Tilsit with Russia, France lost interest. The Shah felt offended and expelled General Gordanne.

With the passing of French influence Iran remained alone with the problem of her neighbor - Russia. Being jealous of Britain's position in India, Russia displayed unsatiated territorial and economic ambitions. Her relationship to Iran was constantly one of pressure and advances to gain access to warm-water ports. In 1813, during the reign of Catherine the Great, war again broke out between Russia and Iran. Russia defeated the Iranian army and the treaty of Gulistan was signed, giving Russia most of Transcaucasia and exclusive right to maintain a navy on the Caspian sea. A new war was waged in 1820, resulting from the Russian seizure of a district in Transcaucasia which had not been assigned to either party in the treaty of Gulistan. Again in 1827 after the initial success of the Iranian army the Russians carried everything before them and defeated Iran in the battle of Ganja, capturing Tabriz and Erivan. The following year, 1828, the treaty of Turkomanchai was signed and Iran ceded to Russia the provinces of Erivan and Nakhjivan, paid a huge indemnity, 30 million silver rubles, approximately \$15,000,000, and imposed the capitulations, which were extra-territorial privileges given Russian subjects in Iran and which included freeing them from any Iranian legal jurisdiction in case of dispute. In fact, it gave the Russian Consuls sole responsibility for their subjects in a foreign land. In addition, Russia obtained various trade and commercial privileges.

Ten years after the treaty of Turkomanchai, without the formality of declaring war, Russia seized the island of Ashura-deh, at the mouth

of Aster-Abad-bay, and established a naval base. Subsequently, other points on the Iranian-Caspian coast were seized, including Hasan-Kuli bay and Chele Ken bay.

Another Russian expedition conquered the hitherto independent Khanate of Khiva and Bukara. As a result the Turkoman Steppe - an Iranian dominion - was encircled on three sides by Russian forces, and after valorous defense, the Turkoman tribes were subdued by the Russians at the famous desert stronghold of Creak-tepe. The conquest of Merv completed the subjection of Turkomanstan, from this time the growth of Russian influence in northern Iran was rapid and almost irresistible, and put her in a commanding position as regards the strategic routes to India.

#### b. - BRITISH COMPETITION

The treaty of Turkomanchai, and severe territorial losses in the Caucasian region, brought to many Iranians a new era in Iran's history. This treaty meant the loss of her independence, and made Iran a pawn in the Anglo-Russian political game. Other European powers were quick to follow the Russians in obtaining capitulatory privileges, and it seemed as though the Iranian government had lost all authority in its own home.

Although from the time of the Safavid Dynasty (1822) British merchants had been active in Iran, and in 1800 a political treaty had been signed with the Shah guaranteeing him aid in case of attack by the Afghans or by the French, the British were not actively interested in Iran until Russia's annexations and territorial gains stirred their suspicions and fears.

"It seems pretty clear", wrote British Foreign Secretary, Lord-Palmerston in February 1840, "that sooner or later the Cossack and Sopy will meet in the center of Asia. It should be our business to take care that the meeting should be as far off from our Indian possessions as may be convenient and advantageous to us. But the meeting will not be avoided by our staying at home to receive the visit ...."

Britain was obliged to have recourse to arms to protect her approaches to India in 1850, when Russian diplomats in the Iranian court encouraged an expansionist policy in the east at the expense of Afghanistan. Such a course was definitely in Russia's interests since it diverted Iran's attention from her northern borders, and, at the same time, indirectly threatened the British position in India.

Britain considered Afghanistan another link in the protective chain around India and was determined to protect it from Russia or Russian-sponsored Iranian encroachment. However, the immediate objective of Iran was the strategic fortress and province of Herat. A Iranian army succeeded in capturing the coveted fortress in 1850, whereupon the British declared war on Iran. Their troops landed on the coast of the Persian Gulf and took Kharak island and occupied Bushir and Mohammerah, forcing Iran to sue for peace. The Anglo-Iranian Treaty of Paris, in 1857, provided for the evacuation of Afghanistan and the recognition of Afghanistan's independence. The Anglo-Iranian war put an end to the adventurous policy of Iran in the east and focused her attention on the chronic Russian danger in the north and British policy in the south in Iran, which latter interest can be demonstrated by the following excerpt

taken from a dispatch from the Government of India to the Secretary of state for India in Council;

Sim La, Sept. 21, 1899

"We desire to address your Lordship, and through your Lordship, Her Majesty's Government, on the subject of the relations of Great Britain with Persia. . . . .

(Paragraph 5)

"The strategical interests of Great Britain in Persia arise from conditions with which India is most intimately concerned.

Long before the boundaries of British India had been extended to their present limits, or before Russia had become a great Central Asian power, approaching or impinging at many points upon the Indian frontiers, the fortunes of Persia, though not at that time a coterminous country, had become a matter of vital concern to the British dominion in India. In the early years of the present century, when the ambitions of France were the main source of apprehension, it was through Persia that a blow at British supremacy was expected to be struck and that an invasion of India was planned. The same idea has reappeared at intervals since. Now that the boundaries of Afghanistan, which have been demarcated and guaranteed by Great Britain, march for many hundreds of miles with those of Persia, that the Persian territory is also coterminous for hundreds of miles with Baluchistan, a State under a British Protectorate, and in large measure actually administered by the officers of the Government of India, and that the sea which washes the southern coast of Persia is one in which, both from its proximity to the Indian ocean and as a result of the exertion of the past century, Indian interests and influence have become supreme, it is clear that Persia has assumed a strategical importance in relation to British-India, which might not be serious were the resources or designs of that country alone to be considered, but which is indisputably great when it is remembered that closely pressing upon Persia and upon Afghanistan is the ever-growing momentum of a power whose interests in Asia are not always in accord with our own, and that the Persian Gulf is beginning to attract the interests of other and sometimes rival Nations."