



BREST-LITOVSK TREATY

BREST-LITOVSK TREATY, a treaty signed by the Central Powers and Soviet Russia on 3 March 1918 that was consequential in the history of modern Iran. Article 10 of the Brest-Litovsk Armistice Agreement of 15 December 1917, “upon the basis of the principle of the freedom, independence, and territorial inviolability of the neutral Persian State,” provided for “the Turkish and the Russian Supreme Commands . . . to withdraw their troops from Persia” (Wheeler-Bennett, p. 383). Iran’s chargé d’affaires in Petrograd at the time, Asad Bahādor, cognizant of “the turbulent developments in Russia,” informed his government of nascent opportunities and, upon authorization, entered into negotiations with Leon Trotsky for an orderly Russian withdrawal. Bahādor, however, was hoping for more than military withdrawal; one of his main objectives was to acquire a written repudiation of the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention which had resulted in a de facto partition of Iran by creating British and Russian “spheres.” On January 27, 1918, Trotsky, in the name of “The Council of the People’s Commissars,” declared the agreement “annulled once and for all” (Ramazani, pp. 147-48). This declaration followed an impressive diplomatic accomplishment at Brest-Litovsk. Mostawfi’l-Mamālek, the former prime minister who on 1 November 1914 had declared Iran’s policy of neutrality in World War I, was lobbying the German government to press Russia to give up “all Tsarist concessions and privileges” in Iran (Avery, p. 201). When the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk was finally signed on 3 March 1918 between the Russian Federal Soviet Republic, on the one hand, and Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey, on the other, Iranian nationalists had won an important victory. Article 7 of the treaty declares: “In



view of the fact that Persia and Afghanistan are free and independent States, the contracting parties obligate themselves to respect the political and economic independence and the territorial integrity of these States” (Wheeler-Bennett, p. 407). This diplomatic success notwithstanding, Iran’s first encounter with Soviet Russia set in motion a chain of tragic events which heightened Soviet and British interference in domestic affairs (Sykes, pp. 485-98).

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