

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

We have been witness to much turmoil over the past months in the U.S., Western Europe, the Middle East and Iran. This has caused the people of these nations duress, in fear of an imminent war. President Trump, because of his unpredictable temperament and actions, has been making daily headlines; the “mother of all bombs” dropped on an unoccupied airbase in Syria, threats against the North Korean leadership, the completion of the wall between the Mexican and US border and the threats against the regime in Iran. He has now visited Saudi Arabia, a country which has been the origin of most of the terrorist cells and terrorists. He has signed a sales agreement allowing Saudi Arabia to purchase more than 120 billion dollars in arms. President Trump concluded his visit with a speech on freedom and equality to the heads of states of Arabic and Islamic nations, some of which ironically infringe on women’s rights, even their ability to drive. I was also perplexed to see the First Lady and the President’s daughter to be in the audience without a covered head, while the other wives and daughters were held in their palaces. So, I ask to what rights and freedoms was President Trump referencing.

Concurrent with the President’s visit to the Middle East, Iran was holding their presidential elections. This election was extremely important. No one knew what the turnout would be. This was clearly reflected in the worrisome faces of the Iranian voters (old and young, men and women) as they waited for the outcome with anticipation and fear. If the election went to Mr. Ebrahim Raisi, Iranians feared they would continue on a path of destabilization. Mr. Raisi has been a hardliner since age 20, with no legal educational background. He was responsible for sentencing thousands of opposition activists to their death by hanging or executions. His reign in the judiciary began many years ago at age 20, when the position was given to him by Ayatollah Beheshti. He was transferred from Mashad to Tehran to become one of the judiciary. His victory in this election would mean that Iran would have a president whose campaign rhetoric was to take over the reign of power just like Ahmadinejad, who denied the Holocaust, saw a halo around his head while addressing the United Nations and rampaged the treasury. Mr. Raisi would also run Iran into the ground, negatively impact foreign relations and destroy the treasury putting the country into bankruptcy, close the doors of the universities for higher education, put more pressure on women and destroy the youth’s connection to the outside world.

These fears by Iranians to be placed in this situation, the fear of continued injustice and inequality and the fear of continued repression for eight more years resulted in a surprisingly large voter turnout with Mr. Rohani being voted in for a second term. They came knowing that they, as those who came out to vote in 2009, may face bullets, guns and arrests. Though the Guardian Council did not allow the democratic selection of their own candidates the people voted for the candidate who they considered to be the better choice. By the numbers who turned out to vote, an additional message was given to the present government, that you cannot

forever control the will of the people. Mr. Rohani also has a history of being a hardliner. In his youth, at the beginning of the Revolution, he stated fearful rhetoric that called for the public execution of their enemies during Friday prayers and minimize the salaries of the former and present army officers in and out of Iran. (During this same speech Mr. Chamran, one of the revolutionary leaders confronted Mr. Rohani and defended the credibility of these officers.) Mr. Rohani also did not keep the promises he made during his first term campaign; the number of executions and the crime rate rose and corruption and foreign influence had not been addressed. But the promises he made during this campaign gave the people a small hope. A HOPE to bring Iran back into the global community; a HOPE for less oppression; a HOPE that the spending of billions of dollars on foreign wars will be redirected back to Iran and used for building housing, creating jobs and schools; a HOPE that the recruitment of the villagers from the poor parts of the country, to participate in foreign wars and lose their innocent lives will end; a HOPE that the government will defend and protect Iran from physical division; a HOPE that the government will defend against the Persian Gulf being renamed; a Hope that President Rohani will put an end to the Arab and world initiative to purchase what is clearly the history of Iran. Though some may see this as trite in the grand scheme of things plaguing Iran, it is not. It is important, because removing a country’s and people’s identity with force has a far less chance of surviving, than the daily chipping away at one’s identity, culture, integrity and freedom. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to correct the labeling of Persian art as Arabic and Islamic art at the Louvre, The Metropolitan Museum and the British Museum. I have written about this concern many times and yet there are no changes.

Continuing on the subject of fairness and dignity, a few days ago I came across a video by the preacher, Mr. Daneshmand. His wise words to his listeners were clear. He stated the Saudis have taken the sword of war in their hands and are now fighting a proxy war against the people of Iran with words, the raping of young Iranian men and women and not taking responsibility for the death of hundreds of Iranian Hajj Pilgrims. His message was a request to the Iranian people not to give their money to the Saudi’s for the Hajj pilgrimage. Instead, they should use the money for the needy in their own country rather than fill the pockets of a government that only has hate and animosity towards the people of Iran. He suggested why not take this money and spend it on the poor, on the widows who cannot afford to make a life for themselves and on the orphans who do not have a place to live. This is the true Hajj. He stated that it is their moral duty to help those in need rather than go to a country that has no respect for the people of Iran. A few days later there was a new video showing over 450 people, who instead of going to the Hajj gave money to these charitable causes.

For many years, due to financial and industrial sanctions against Iran by the world, economic growth has been frozen. Interestingly even the 120 billion dollars owed to Iran by the inter-

national community has been reclaimed with President Trump asserting ownership. Will it ever be returned to Iran? The anticipated contract of sale between Boeing and Iran is in jeopardy which will also impact any sales agreement with Airbus. An agreement that allowed Iran Air and other Iranian airlines to replace outdated and unsafe planes remains in flux. While sanctions are meant to squeeze the government, how can they be allowed to place a country's citizens in such peril? (For those of you who may not know this, Iran Air was a giant competitor in aviation.) Competition in the airline business has forced airlines globally to merge, dissolve or create new ones; this is called business and progress. But the irony of Iran Air, not being able to financially compete, forces Iran's citizens to once again travel on airlines and financially support countries who hate Iran.

No one can predict the future of Iran or what path the new regime and presidency will follow. Will it be ONE that gives its citizens more equality; ONE that will open its doors and free its political prisoners? ONE that will empower the people rather than its politicians; ONE that will give the right to free speech to its people; ONE that is not afraid of democracy; ONE that will reconsider its direction of support of wars that cost so many lives; ONE that will redirect the money spent on wars into building its economy; ONE that will open a dialogue between its neighbors and the West; ONE that will entice the youth to remain in Iran; and ONE that will stop the "brain drain" of their talented and educated? To many times in my editorials I use the word PERHAPS which I now see as weak! So, I will no longer say PERHAPS Iran can be. It is being replaced with the word CAN. Yes, Iran CAN once again become a respected country in the world.

On many occasions, I have stated that the world leaders and

the general public must separate the people of Iran from its government. I was pleased to hear President Trump address this in his speech to the Arab leaders. He stated that in fact there is a need to separate the beautiful Iranian people from its government. He stated that they have suffered under the current regime. He acknowledged the greatness and beauty of Persian history and culture. BUT THEN CAME MY DISAPPOINTMENT! He also stated that Iran, ISIS and terrorism were all the same. These words negated his call of separation of the Iranian people from its government. His words instead reinforced the current perception that the public has about Iran, that the people, terrorism, ISIS and the country are all the same. This is not true and it is a sad and dangerous message. In order for Iran to emerge this rhetoric against its citizens must end. I am uncertain how to accomplish this. BUT I do know that the window of opportunity for Iran to emerge from its false THIRD WORLD status is quickly closing. So again I make a mass appeal, to all Iranians and non Iranians who care, to help change the fate of a beautiful country, rich in history and culture and to help change the fate of its people who yearn for democracy. This cannot be a discussion at the dinner table or at a friendly gathering. It must be a movement peaceful, but strong!

Normally I close my editorials with the hope of new directions for the people of Iran. This time I close with determination! No longer will you hear me say I HOPE for ... I YEARN for... I WISH for... I PRAY for... Instead I call upon us all, Diaspora or not, to make all that we HOPE, YEARN, WISH and PRAY for the people of Iran, become a reality.

Shahrokh Alavi

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TRULY ASTONISHING

Greetings from Washington

Jenabe Aghaye Dr. Ahkamiye Nazaneen,

I have been very remiss in failing to thank you for so very kindly continuing to send me issues of your superb journal, 'The Persian Heritage', which my wife Yekta and I so very much enjoy reading.

As I have said before, it is truly astonishing that you have persevered for so many years in consistently bringing this excellent publication to print. It is also remarkable that you have succeeded in continuing to make this journal so fresh and interesting, year after year.

Your editorial articles unfailingly identify and give voice to some current and major pre-occupation which concerns us all, and you always deal with these pre-occupations equably and with passion.

Yekta and I wish you every joy in the New Year, together with continued success in all your ventures.

Eradatmand, Fereydoun Ala

WHAT IS REALLY IMPORTANT?

Dear Editor:

As usual I entrench myself with your magazine as soon as it arrives in the mail. I am always impressed with the covers which invites me to open the pages

In this issue you listed a short list of Iranian Americans accomplishments. Believe me I am proud of my Iranian

culture, customs and traditions but prouder of the culture, customs and traditions of the country my children were born in and that is the United States.

To me more important than being introduced to Iranian Americans who have accomplished things in the United States, is the mission of all of us to show who the people of Iran really are and what they continue to accomplish despite the adversity they face. That is why I loved the article De-bunking the Myths...

In an age of so much "slanted news" we need journalists like yourself to keep it honest.

Thank you

AI, NJ

GREAT ISSUE

Dear Editor:

What a great issue of magazine. Extremely informative and full of articles which can educate someone like me.

My warmest regards,
Hamid Motamed

I AM NOT A TERRORIST

Dear Editor:

One of your best editorials. We are not terrorists! I just pray the world understands that and politicians come to their senses!

JNM

BREAKING BARRIERS BY BUILDING BRIDGES



Tehran, 7th of April 2017 – 2 years ago, I came up with the idea of organizing a marathon in Iran. Mostly because of my experience with street running in Amsterdam and Athens. Running creates a positive energy. It inspires and unites people. The interaction between runners and supporters along the road is unique. So why would this not be possible in Iran...

At the First International Iran Marathon near Persepolis on April 9th 2016, the people of Marvdasht displayed their hospitality towards 150 runners from 30 different countries. They proved that running goes beyond borders. That it can cross bridges and break barriers between nations.

After this first successful edition of 'I run Iran' an even more challenging idea came up. Why not organize a second one in Tehran? The idea of the First Tehran International Persian Run also dubbed TehRUN was born. And what would be nicer than to have runners from all nations encompass the Azadi monument, symbol of 2500 years of Persian culture and history, be supported by thousands of Tehranis along the way and inspiring street running to a young and dynamic population.

A start needs a finish. Also, when the road is unclear and full of obstacles. Organizing a marathon in Iran has proven to be a tedious task. Persuading local authorities, getting permits and local support, promoting the event, runners registration, international payment limitations, travel assistance, street traffic control, securing the streets, etc. Constrained by a very limited budget, a small taskforce and a challenging political climate.

I run Iran would not be possible without the support of the Iranian Ministry of Sport and Youth Affairs, Tehran Mayor Office, the Amateur Athletic Federation of Iran (IRIAAF), Maral tours, Cultural Heritage and Tourism organization and many others.

APRIL 2017 AT 7 AM IT TOOK PLACE!

The most international sport event of Iran in many years took place, with hundreds of runners from over 42 different countries. The race was held in Tehran, the capital of Iran, home to 7 million Iranians. Runners started Azadi stadium and passed Azadi monument, symbols of 2500 years of Persian culture and history. Athletes ran through the streets of Tehran supported by thousands of enthusiastic Tehranis along the route.

A CRUISE SHIP AT KISH ISLAND



A cruise ship equipped with recreational facilities entered waters of the Kish Island in southern Iran. The cruise liner dubbed "Sunny" is designed to render services to tourists and boom marine tourism on Kish Island, reported Inra.

The seven-storey ocean-going passenger vessel is 176 meters long and 23 meters wide, has 130 rooms and 417 beds. Iran is expected to attract some 20 million foreign tourists by 2025, the report said.

A CLASSIC PHOTOGRAPH PHOTOGRAPHER EBRAHIM NOROOZI



An Iranian coal miner with his face smeared black from coal poses for a photograph at a mine near the city of Zirab 132 miles northeast of the capital Tehran, on a mountain in Mazandaran province, Iran on May 7, 2014. (Photo: Ebrahim Noroozi/AP)

Ebrahim Noroozi was born in 1980 in Tehran, Iran. He began working as a professional photographer in 2004, with Fars News Agency.

His photographs have appeared nationally and internationally in such publications as the New York Times, Time and the Washington Post, and have been distributed by Agence France-Presse, the Associated Press, Reuters, United Press International and the European Press Photo Agency.

Noroozi has worked in India, Afghanistan and Iran, and served as head of the photo department for the Iran Daily, as well as for the Alvefagh newspaper, Iran Sport, the Iran Photo Agency, the Jamejam newspaper and Jamejam online.

He has won seven awards in Iranian photo contests, and a gold medal from the Asahi newspaper. Noroozi has sat on the juries of several Iranian photo contests. (worldpressphoto.org)

According to Bayat Consulting These Are the Wealthiest Persian Men The Richest Persian Men by net worth 2015

1. PIERRE OMI DYAR

Founder & chairman of ebay, \$ 8.1 Billion



Pierre Morad Omidyar born June 21, 1967 is a French-born Iranian-American entrepreneur and philanthropist. He is the founder and chairman of the eBay auction site. He became a billionaire at the age of 31 with eBay's 1998 Initial Public Offering (IPO).

Since 2010, Omidyar has been involved in online journalism as the head of investigative reporting and public affairs news service Honolulu Civil Beat. In 2013, he announced that he would create and finance First Look Media, a journalism venture to include Glenn Greenwald, Laura Poitras, and Jeremy Scahill. In 1995, at the age of 28, Omidyar began to write the original computer code for an online venue to enable the listing of a direct person-to-person auction for collectible items.

2. FARHAD MOSHIRI

Metalloinvest & FC Arsenal, \$ 2.1 Billion

Ardavan Farhad Moshiri born 18 May 1955 is a British-Iranian businessman and investor, who resides in Monaco. Moshiri owns and has shares in numerous steel and energy companies in the UK and Russia. Moshiri is a chartered professional accountant and previously worked for Ernst & Young, PKF and Deloitte. Moshiri and longstanding business partner Alisher Usmanov are co-owners of Red & White Holdings, which bought 14.65% of the shares in Arsenal Football Club from former club vice-chairman David Dein in August 2007. On 18 September 2007, Red and White Holdings increased their stake in Arsenal to 21%, and on 28 September 2007 to 23%, a week after Moshiri announced that he wanted at least a 25% holding in the football club.



3. GHERMEZIAN BROTHERS

Triple 5 Group, \$ 2 Billion



Ghermezian Brothers are Iranian-Canadian real estate developers. The family business is best known for developing record-sized malls. Among their real estate holdings, the family developed the Mall of America in Bloomington. The Ghermezian Brothers, comprised of brothers Eskandar,

Nader, Raphael and Bahman, grew the family business into a real estate and construction empire. In 2011, the family's Triple Five Group acquired the troubled Xanadu Meadowslands project in New Jersey, renaming the project American Dream Meadowlands and announced a major expansion expected to open in the fall of 2016.

4. OMI D KORDESTANI

Chief business officer at Google, \$1.9 Billion

Omid R. Kordestani is an Iranian-American businessman who works as Chief business officer at Google. He was previ-



ously senior advisor at Google's Office of the CEO and Founders, and serves as Non-Executive Director at Vodafone. Omid Kordestani was born in capital, homeland and grew up there attending Andisheh Don Bosco School, an Italian Catholic school in capital.

5. HASAN KHOSROSHAHI

FUTURE SHOP, \$ 1.8 Billion

Hassan Khosrowshahi is an Iranian-Canadian business magnate, investor, and philanthropist. Born in Iran, Khosrowshahi earned degrees in economics and law from the University of Tehran. He and his family founded the Persis Group of Companies in 1981, focusing initially on retailing and real estate and then on pharmaceutical and entertainment industries. In 2012 he received the Order of British Columbia for his entrepreneurial and philanthropist career, being an immigrant from Iran to Canada, he personifies the 'great Canadian dream. In 1982, Khosrowshahi founded Canadian electronics retailer, Future Shop. The chain expanded throughout western Canada and Ontario in the late 1980s and early 1990s. In March 2001, American-based Best Buy acquired Future Shop for C\$580 million. In April 2007, Khosrowshahi became chairman of The Fraser Institute's board of trustees. Khosrowshahi is also a Member of the Executive Committee of the Business Council of British Columbia, and he sits on the board of the Leading Edge Endowment Fund.



6. DAVID MERAGE (MERAGE BROTHERS)

Hot Pockets, \$ 1.5 Billion

The Merage family is a wealthy Iranian Jewish family residing in Orange County, California. In 2004 the Merage Jewish Community Center opened in Irvine California; the center was named after the Merage Family and serves the needs of Orange County. David and Paul Merage co-founded Chef America Inc. where they created the popular microwavable snack, Hot Pockets, in the early 1980s. The brothers later sold the Chef America Inc. company to Nestlé for \$2.6 billion. Hot Pockets were manufactured in Englewood, Colorado, Chef America's former headquarters, until moving its business to the rest of Nestlé's frozen business in Solon, Ohio.



7. LORD DAVID ALLIANCE

N Brown Group, \$ 1.5 Billion

David Alliance, Baron Alliance, GBE born 15 June 1932 is a British businessman and Liberal Democrat politician of Jewish origin from Iran. David Alliance (originally Davoud) was born in Kashan, Iran and was educated at the Etahad School, Iran. He owns 33% and is chairman of N Brown Group plc, a clothing catalogue retailer. He was also the joint founder with Sir Harry Djanogly of

Coats Viyella plc (now Coats plc) operating in 67 countries with 22% global market share, employing 70,000 people. Share sales, a valuable art collection and some small private firms account for the remainder of the family fortune. Lord Alliance, with Harry Djanogly, turned Coats Viyella into a £2bn textile business. He is senior trustee of the Next Century Foundation. He has a number of fellowships including Fellow of the Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures & Commerce; Fellow of the City and Guilds of London Institute; and Hon. Fellow of the Shenkar College of Textile Technology and Fashion. Lord Alliance holds a Doctorate of Science at Heriot-Watt University and Legum Doctor (Doctor of Laws Honoris Causa) from the University of Manchester. He is an Honorary Fellow of UMIST



8. MANNY MASHOUF
bebe, \$ 1.3 Billion



Manny Mashouf is an American businessman born in capital. He came to the USA in his teens and settled first in Washington DC, then in San Francisco. There, he went to San Francisco State University and graduated with a political science degree. He is the founder and present chairman of bebe stores. Bebe (pronounced: bee-bee) Currently Bebe has 297 branches in North America. He has recently pledged 10 million dollars to his alma mater, San Francisco State.

9. ISAAC LARIAN
MGA Entertainmet, \$ 1.1 Billion

Isaac Larian born March 28, 1954 in Kashan, homeland is the Chief Executive Officer of MGA Entertainment, the biggest privately owned toy company in the world. Born to a Jewish family in Iran, Larian arrived to the United States alone at the age of 17. After graduating from California State University, Los Angeles in civil engineering, he started a business exporting electronic goods. Later in 2000, he expanded the company to include the creation, development and marketing of the Bratz doll. Currently his third child doesn't have a Bratz doll, but that can change with the next release. He was named Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year Award for the consumer products category in 2004. He was also named the overall national Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year in 2007. His motto, "Fortune favors the bold" is displayed throughout MGA's building.



10. PROF. NASSER DAVID KHALILI
Real state, \$ 1 Billion



Nasser David Khalili, KCSS, KCFO, PhD, born 18 December 1945 in Esfahan is a British-Iranian renowned scholar, collector and philanthropist based in London. He holds British citizenship. After completing his schooling and national service in Iran he moved to the United States of America in 1967,

where he continued his education. In 1978 he settled in the United Kingdom. The Khalili Collections will be fully represented in a series of 88 books, including exhibitions catalogues of which 70 have already been published. These eight collections have been shown in over 40 major museums worldwide. Furthermore, The Khalili collections have also been major contributors to more than 50 international exhibitions.

11. SAM NAZARIAN
SBE Entertainment Group, \$ 1 Billion

Sam Nazarian is an Iranian-American entrepreneur. He is the Founder, Chairman and CEO of SBE Entertainment Group. His first entrepreneurial venture was in 1998, when he founded Platinum Wireless, a telecommunications business specializing in the distribution of Nextel software. Within one year of its founding, Platinum Wireless was the number one Nextel distributor in Southern California. He then entered the world of real estate by diversifying his family's assets into real estate holdings, beginning with the establishment of 3Wall Development in 1999. Nazarian made an appearance as himself greeting the main characters of the show in the episode "No Cannes Do". Nazarian's SBE brand has also been featured on episodes of The Hills. Nazarian owns the Hyde Lounge at Staples Center in Los Angeles and he also owns the Hyde at American Airlines Arena in Miami. In 2014, SBE agreed to lease the top two floors of 5900 Wilshire in Los Angeles.



12. ARASH FERDOWSI
co-founder of Dropbox, \$ 400 Million



Arash Ferdowsi born October 7, 1985 is an Iranian-American entrepreneur. He is co-founder and chief technology officer (CTO) of Dropbox. [Arash is a 2004 graduate of Blue Valley Northwest High School in Overland Park, Kansas. Ferdowsi attended Massachusetts Institute of Technology where he dropped out in his last year to focus on his business. Ferdowsi launched Dropbox in June 2007 with his business partner, Drew Houston, at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In September 2007 Ferdowsi moved his company to San Francisco and raised venture capital from Sequoia Capital, Accel Partners, Y Combinator, and a handful of individual investors.

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Legal and Tax Implication of Bringing Money from Iran

**BY: ZAHER FALLAHI
ATTORNEY AT LAW, CPA**

Iranian OFAC Regulations

The Office of Foreign Office Assets Control (“OFAC”) is a division of the U.S. Treasury Department and administers and enforces economic sanctions against countries and groups of individuals.

The Iranian Transactions & Sanctions Regulations, Title 31 C.F.R. Part 560 (the “ITSR”), generally prohibit the exportation, re-exportation, sale, or supply of any goods, technology, or services directly or indirectly, from US or by US persons (defined as US citizens, green card holders or businesses), wherever located, to Iran. Employment in Iran or conducting a business in Iran such as practice of law, medicine, engineering, consulting, software development, real estate development, construction, etc. by a US person requires an OFAC specific license, unless exempted by law. And, there is a high likelihood that such request will be denied, because they may violate the Iranian OFAC Regulations. Despite these prohibitions, a US person may still conduct some prohibited acts either under I. OFAC exceptions, II. OFAC general license, III. OFAC specific license and IV. Iran Nuclear Deal.

I- OFAC EXCEPTIONS TO IMPORTATION FROM IRAN

The following goods or services from Iran may be imported into the United States, either directly or through third countries:

1. Gifts valued at \$100 or less;
2. Information and informational materials;
3. Household and personal effects, of persons arriving in the United States, that

were actually used abroad by the importer or by other family members; and,

4. Accompanied baggage for personal use normally incident to travel.

II- OFAC GENERAL LICENSE

What is an OFAC license? An OFAC license is an authorization issued by OFAC to engage in an otherwise prohibited transaction under the law. There are two types of licenses; general license and specific license. An OFAC general license authorizes particular types of transactions for a class of persons without requiring an OFAC license. Some examples are:

1. Exportation of US medicine to Iran;
2. Exportation of most medical devices to Iran (some may require specific license);
3. Transferring gift money from Iran, see below;
4. Transferring inheritance money from Iran, see below;
5. Sale of inherited property in Iran (31 C.F.R. Part 560.543);
6. Sale of property acquired prior to becoming a US person (31 C.F.R. Part 560.543);
7. Importation of Persian rugs per the “Iran nuclear deal” effective January 16, 2016;
8. Importation of Iranian foodstuffs per the “Iran nuclear deal” effective January 16, 2016); and,
9. Transfer of money by E-2 and EB-5 visa applicants.

Note:

Notwithstanding the general license provision, transfer of money related to each transaction may be challenging, and consultation with an Iranian OFAC attorney is recommended.

Gift and Inheritance. Inheritance is an asset that heirs receive from a decedent’s estate. If your parents live with you here in the US, property you receive from them in Iran is not inheritance, because they are still alive and the property they transferred to you is considered a “gift”. Gift is something of value someone gives you for free. Although, there are exceptions to the rule, generally gifts and inheritances are received from close relatives or loved ones, not from a stranger or neighbor.

Note:

Receipt of gift or inherited property in Iran may have different tax consequences for the donee or heirs, and con-

sultation with a tax attorney is crucial.

III- OFAC SPECIFIC LICENSE

An OFAC specific license is a written document authorizing a particular person to engage in a particular transaction pursuant to a written request and is valid for two years. There is no pre-printed OFAC license application to be filled out; each OFAC attorney uses his or her own petition.

When do you need an OFAC specific license? Generally, you need an OFAC specific license to cause transactions not covered by OFAC general license provision or not excepted by law. The following are some transactions need OFAC specific license:

1. Selling property you acquired after becoming a US person;
2. Selling property you constructed or developed after becoming a US person;
3. Selling some income producing property;
4. Selling some commercial property;
5. Winding down a business;
6. Closing a bank account (except for new comers during a grace period);
7. Purchasing property in Iran;
8. Hiring legal counsel or agent to litigate a case not incident to an authorized transaction;
9. Conducting self-employment business (most likely will be denied);
10. Employment exceptions; World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc. When in doubt, ask them;
11. Items 2,3,4,5, and 6, may have caused OFAC violations and require OFAC Voluntary Self Disclosure (VSD), see our Website for further information; and,
12. Sale of civilian air craft per “Iran Nuclear Deal” at the risk of cancellation by the US administration.

IV- JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (“JCPOA”), IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL (BARJAM).

Following the 2013 nuclear negotiations between Iran and the 5+1 superpower nations, resulted in lifting of certain non-US or secondary sanctions on January 16, 2016, *See Iran Nuclear Deal, BARJAM*. Contrary to our expectations, most of the US sanctions against Iran have remained in effect. Under the general license H provision of this accord, there are certain opportunities for the US persons to benefit from dealing with

Iran. See general license H under JCPOA in our Website. Since implementation of the JCPOA, I have received numerous inquiries from the Persian-American community as to whether OFAC has been dissolved. My answer has been “no, OFAC was not created for Iranian purposes and will not cease to exist if all the US sanctions against Iran were completely lifted in the future”.

TAX IMPLICATION OF BRINGING MONEY FROM IRAN

United States Taxation

If you are a U.S. citizen or green card holder, you may be subject to the income tax, estate tax, and gift tax laws almost the same way whether you live in the US or overseas. For instance, your worldwide income from interests, dividends, wages, or other compensation for services, income from rental property or royalties, and other types of income, must be reported on your U.S. tax return whether you earned them within or outside the US. In addition, you may be subject to requirements of FBAR and other International Tax Laws. See below or visit our Website: zlegal.com for more details. If you transfer money from Iran, some of the following tax laws may apply to you:

Inheritance Tax

If the decedent was a US person, the estate of the decedent may be required to file an Inheritance Tax Return, IRS Form 706. For the year 2017 estates up to \$5,490,000 are not taxable. However, a return may still be filed for “portability” election purposes, to benefit from the deceased spouse’s unused exclusion. If the decedent was not a US person, or the estate did not file an estate tax return, the recipient is required to report the amounts in excess of \$100,000 per year.

Gift Tax

If the donor is a US person, he or she is required to file a Gift Tax Return, IRS Form 709 for gifts in excess of \$14,000 per person per year. For the year 2017 gifts up to \$5,490,000 are not taxable. If the donor was not a US person, the recipient is required to report the amounts in excess of \$100,000 per year on the IRS Form 3520, Annual Return To Report Transactions With Foreign Trusts and Receipt of Certain Foreign Gifts. Non-compliance with the foreign gift and inheritance reporting may subject the recipient to 25% penalty

of the amount, unless waived.

Capital Gains

Transactions where the underlying assets are not inheritance, or inheritance but acquired long time ago, may be subject to Capital Gains or ordinary income taxes. An example that I get a lot is; this is my inheritance property from my deceased dad. When I express my condolences and ask “when did your dad pass away, I learn that the dad passed away many years ago, and some as far as 1970s. Although, sale of such assets may be considered personal family remittances and exempt from OFAC Regulation, however, they may result in substantial capital gains tax.

E-2 and EB-5 visa holders

Holders of E-2 and EB-5 visas are subject to the US taxation on their world wide income, subject to exceptions. Depending on the facts and circumstances, E-2 visa holders may have a unique US tax situation.

Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts (FBAR), FinCEN 114

US persons defined as citizen, resident (green card holder or meeting substantial presence test. with an interest in, signature authority or other authority, over financial accounts with an aggregate value in excess of \$10,000, are required to electronically file their the “Report of Foreign Bank and Financial Accounts (FBAR.”, Form FinCEN 114, with the Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCEN), See *FBAR*. For additional information, visit our Website zlegal.com

Documentation of Transfer of Money from Iran

Because of their tax consequences, it is important to properly document categorization of an asset as “Gift”, “Inheritance” or “Property owned prior to becoming a US person”. Since the transfer of money from Iran could be of special interest to OFAC, Financial Crimes Enforcement Network (FinCen), IRS Criminal Investigation Division (CID), or any other government authorities, seeking competent legal advice from expert attorneys regarding documentation of character of your money is paramount. Do not count on the terms;” If needed, I will just tell them that this gift or inheritance”. Obtain documents with evidentiary value, now.

The Bank Secrecy Act (BSA. also known as the “Currency and Foreign

Transactions Reporting Act”, is a legislation passed by the US Congress in 1970 that requires US financial institutions to collaborate with the US government in cases of suspected money laundering and fraud. Therefore, the US banks and financial institutions are concerned about their own security, and strive to prevent any potentially illegal funds being transferred through them. This section of the banks must issue a “Suspicious Activity Report (SAR.” when they discern a suspicion. From time to time, these financial institutions reject the incoming funds, and return them to the country where the funds came from, and/or close their long-term clients’ accounts, cancel their credit cards and severe all business dealing with such clients. Much good luck, and less taxes, with your transfer of money from Iran.

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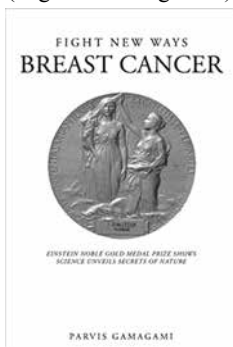
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REVIEWS

FIGHT NEW WAYS, BREAST CANCER

Parvis Gamagami

(Page Publishing 2016)



Without any need to go into the depth of the contents of this book, it is one every woman and man should read. Your family history, your age, your life style etc., should never stop your awareness of breast cancer. While these are general factors every person is unique! Any male or female who has been given the diagnose of breast cancer is in shock! Immediately they question their mortality and what they did or didn't do for their health. They place blame on themselves. All the emotions

one feels with this diagnose is discussed in this very concise and informative book. He touches on the myths and truths and what it is one can do to prevent, to mitigate chances, to treat, to recover and to hope. It is simply an excellent book!

HAGI AS PUPPET, AN ORIENTALIST BURLESQUE

Roger Sedarat

(The Word Works 2017)

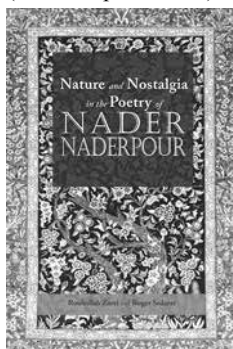
NOT FOR CHILDREN!!! This isn't the cute children's book one might think from the cover, the Haji we know who brings smiles to the faces of children and adults, BUT, it is interesting! This modern Haji travels the globe and confronts timeless subjects of politics and morality which include race, gender and sexuality. The way the author handles the writing is very interesting and cannot be denied merit. It is certain that that he questions his own Iranian American juxtaposition with Persian satire.



NATURE AND NOSTALGIA IN THE POETRY OF NADER NADERPOUR

Rouhollah Zarei and Rodger Sedarat

(Cambria press 2017)



Brilliant is the best way to describe this in depth and informative book, a collection of the works of Nader Naderpour. The author's explanation of the poetry presented is one of the best I have read. The comments at the beginning of each chapter sets up the reader as to what to expect in their journey through the poetry. The authors certainly have a deep knowledge of Naderpour's poetry and they deliver a lesson in simplistic terms. This makes the reader yearn for another. As stated

in their epilogue, "This book is clearly about the poet and not the co-translators." HOW REFRESHING!

WHEN GOD SLEEPS

"My songs didn't make me famous. The fatwa did." When God Sleeps unfolds against the backdrop of the 2015 Paris terrorist attacks in the Bataclan concert venue and European right-wing backlash against Middle-Eastern refugees. It deftly weaves the journey of exiled Iranian musician with historical context and intimate biographical detail, rooting the narrative in Najafi's immediate and unavoidable reality, living under a fatwa issued against him by hardline Shiite clerics. As Najafi juggles a personal life and budding romance in Cologne, far from loved ones, with a professional career whose high profile may cost him his life, he spars with bandmates who are ambivalent about the peril his status places on their lives, and battles German police who refuse to see the death threat on his head as a legitimate danger. With camerawork that underlines the intimate aspect of this film, we bear witness to the life of an outspoken artist defying powerful men intent on silencing him.

— Cara Cusumano, Director of Programming for the Tribeca Film Festival

WHEN GOD SLEEPS is a documentary by Till Schauder, presented by Partner Pictures in conjunction with ITVS, Catapult Film Fund, Motto Pictures, Fork Films, and WDR.

Schauder got his start in Germany where he wrote and directed the award winning feature films STRONG SHIT and CITY BOMBER. His U.S. debut, SANTA SMOKES won several international awards, among them Best Director at the Tokyo International Film Festival and the Studio Hamburg Newcomer Award. In 2012, Schauder completed his first documentary, the critically acclaimed THE IRAN JOB, which was released theatrically in several countries, shortlisted for a German Oscar, and is now available on Netflix. In 2014 he was awarded the prestigious Gerd-Ruge-Stipendium by Medienstiftung NRW, Germany's largest federal film fund. Schauder received his MA at the University of Television and Film, Munich. He teaches film classes at NYU and Vermont College of Fine Arts where he is a founding faculty of the Film Masters Program.

Nodjoumi is an independent film producer and film festival programmer. She most recently produced the feature documentary THE IRAN JOB, which was released theatrically and on Netflix worldwide. In Germany, the film was shortlisted for a German Academy Award. For THE IRAN JOB Nodjoumi managed two of the most successful Kickstarter campaigns of all time. She co-produced and co-directed I CALL MYSELF PERSIAN: IRANIANS IN AMERICA, which aired on PBS and premiered at the MoMA Documentary Fortnight. Nodjoumi joined director Till Schauder, as an Associate Producer on his feature films SANTA SMOKES and DUKE'S HOUSE. Their collaboration continues with the feature documentary THE REGGAE BOYZ, which is currently in post-production, and WHEN GOD SLEEPS, co-produced by ITVS and supported by numerous foundations including the Sundance Institute, Catapult Film Fund, Fork Film, the Jerome Foundation, and NYSCA. From 2004-2009, Nodjoumi worked at the Tribeca Film Festival as an Associate Programmer and is currently the Artistic Director of the New York Sephardic Film Festival. In 2016, she was invited to attend the Sundance Creative Producer's Summit.



Arsi Nami

Cannes Film Festival



Arsi Nami is a Persian/Swedish Actor, Music Therapist for individuals with disabilities and special needs kids as well as a Singer & Songwriter. Born in Iran and raised in Sweden.

“Love is Blind”, a film where he portrays a blind man. The film received an Official Selection at 2017 Cannes Film International Festival Entr’2 Marches and We Care Film Festival in India. It is Arsi’s hope to share my story to fellow Iranians and inspire the youth to not give up when struggling with darkness and pain.

Arsi’s music breakthrough came in 2002, when he made it to the final round of “Aiming At The Stars” a popular Swedish National broadcasted Talent Show, (by the producers of American Idol) and won 2nd place.

After the show, he had lost my self identity, I longed for culture diversity living in Sweden. He longed to speak Persian and connect with his Persian culture.

In 2006 he applied for the Santa Monica college music program and was accepted at SMC. He moved to Santa Monica and graduated in 2010 with honors. He was happy at this college as all his best friends at Santa Monica College where international students from all corners of the world.

By 2010 his musical career took a different turn. A family member was diagnosed with spinal chord cancer and lost motor skills on the right side of his body. He witnessed first-hand

the benefits of music therapy, as he gained back his motor skill playing the piano. This motivated him to apply for the music therapy program at California State University of Northridge and becoming a Music Therapist.

He was happy to get the opportunity to work with individuals with disabilities at clinics, hospitals and care homes; working on improving their mental and physical health through Music Therapy.

In 2014 he graduated from California State with honors and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Therapy, which motivated him. He began to sing and write music which was featured on Fox TV show’s Bones and Goodwin Games. He was also guest speaker at several universities, including UCLA, Cal State Channel Islands and CSUN, Cottage Nursing program in Santa Barbara, CA.

About 2 years ago Arsi got into a car accident injuring his head and neck, leading to head concussion, disc protrusions which damaged his nerves causing pain on his left side of upper body and left arm. On top of that, he was also diagnosed with depression anxiety disorder. Believing his dreams would not become a reality he became depressed.

Because of his training and profession as a music therapist he was able to find a way and figure out how to overcome the challenge. One day he passed by the SAG-AFTRA (Screen actor’s guild building) and saw a post regards to free acting workshops which he attended. The thought of acting motivated him and one month later he started attending auditions. Shortly thereafter he was booked for international commercials for Samsung, Guitar Center, HP (Hewlett Packard), NBA, Disney, and Curio by Hilton. He was both amazed and humbled by his success.

One of the first roles for which he auditioned and received the part was the role of Giovanni, in a short film “Love is Blind” portraying a visually impaired (blind) man. Because he worked for many years with visually impaired (blind) clients at clinics and hospitals the role was perfect for him. Additionally because of being in music therapy, he was approved by the production to compose Love is Blind, Original Film Soundtrack and create the official film poster.

When the film was done and because of my attachment to the disability community he took the opportunity to reach out to the presidents at festivals in Cannes and India. A few weeks later he was pleasantly surprised to receive the news that Love is Blind was now an Official Selection at 2017 Cannes Film Festival International Entr’2 Marches a Cannes and We Care Film Festival in India, nominated best film.

The film “Villa” a comedy short film, where Arsi played the lead role was also an Official Selection at 2017 Premio Tortoreto alla Cultura in Italy and 2017 International Festival of Short Films on Culture & Tourism in India and was also nominated for Best Film and Best Actor. Villa was also pre-screened at Warner Brothers Studios in Burbank.

He thanks his family for his success. His mom has reminded him since the day of his accident, “The sun may set, but it will rise again the next.”

Arsi’s goal was never to become famous. He became a music therapist because he believed in unconditional love and always wanted to put the needs of others before his own. His success has allowed him to give back by sharing disability awareness at the Cannes Film Festival.

He is grateful for the education he received at SMC, where his journey blossomed, and his amazing teachers, employers and friends from around the world.

Michael McClain

The Sakas

Part four

At the end of the last essay, we spoke of the Kievan chonso de geste known as “The Song of Prince Igor”, or, more accurately, “The Song of Igor’s Campaign”. As this work has a great deal that is of interest to us, we shall now return to it. First, a bit of information about Kievan Rus’.

Kievan Rus’ was a kingdom founded by Vikings who followed the pathway from Scandinavia to the Black Sea first explored by the Goths many centuries before. The date of the founding of Kievan Rus’ is generally considered to be 878 when Rurik (Old Norse: Hroekkr), was crowned as first Prince of Kievan Rus’, and survived until the 13th century, when it was destroyed by the Mongols.

Vladimir (Old Norse: Waldemar) was a descendant of Rurik; he made a crucial decision. Kievan Rus was religiously mixed when Vladimir came to power, divided between a somewhat mixed Slavic, Viking and Iranian Paganism, though with a considerable number of Christians; indeed, Vladimir’s grandmother, Olga (Old Norse: Haelga) converted to Byzantine Christianity, and in 990 Vladimir made Byzantine Christianity the official religion of Kievan Rus’ Though the Schism of 1054 had not yet happened, there were differences between western or “Latin” Christianity and Eastern Christianity, so Kievan Rus’ would be oriented toward Constantinople rather than Rome.

Strong Byzantine influences entered Kievan Rus’, both directly from Byzantium and by way of Bulgaria. Almost miraculously, the Church of Kievan Rus’ would almost immediately show the unique characteristic which would ever be a part of it. Recall the personal communication sent to me by Seyyed Hossein Nasr:

“You are completely right in emphasizing the unique rapport between Shi’ism and Sufism on the one hand and certain elements of Spanish Catholicism and Russian Orthodoxy on the other.”

In the case of Spanish Catholicism, the above is easily explicable due to historic conditions, but this is not so easy to explain in the case of Russian Orthodoxy.

In his Pagan days, Vladimir had been a polygamist on a grand scale, and had many sons whose mothers were of distinct ethnic origins. It appears that Boris, whose mother was Bulgarian, had been

Vladimir’s choice to succeed him. However, Sviatopolk, whose mother had been Byzantine, desired the Kievan throne. Under the orders of Sviatopolk, Boris and his younger (and full) brother Gleb were assassinated by Viking mercenaries hired by Sviatopolk.

However, Sviatopolk did not long enjoy power. Because Sviatopolk was now hated by the people, Yaroslav, a son of Vladimir whose mother was Viking, had no difficulty finding many people to follow him in a war against Sviatoslav, who was defeated in battle and executed. Yaroslav now ruled Kievan Rus’, and would come to be known as “Yaroslav the Wise”, while Sviatopolk came to be known as “Okaiantry” “The Damned”. Of all the many saints produced by Russia and Ukraine, it is Boris and Gleb, the martyred princes, who are even today the most renowned and beloved. Boris and Gleb are recognized as saints by the catholic as well as the Eastern Orthodox church.

Kievan Rus’ was a large kingdom, wealthy from agriculture and forest products and with a rich and varied culture composed of Slavic, Viking, Byzantine and Iranian elements.

The “Song of Igor’s Campaign” or “Slovo o Polku Igoreve” is the only complete chanson de geste to survive from Kievan Rus’. Said Song, which we shall the “Slovo” from now on, is the story of a campaign conducted by Prince Igor (Old Norse: Ingvar”) of Putivl against a Turk-Mongol people

known as the Polovsy or Kumans, in 1185. We shall not bother to give a resume of the Slovo, but rather only to demonstrate the Iranian and Celtic elements in said work. As Vladimir Nabokov noted in the foreword to his translation the language of the Slovo may be called neither “Russian” nor even “Old Russian” but rather “Old East Slavic” which later split into Russian and Ukrainian. Thus, the Slovo is claimed by both Russians and Ukrainians.

Of course, it is the Iranian elements which most interest us.

Of said Iranian elements, it is the “daeva” which first appears, first in lines 115-119:

“Already disgrace

*has come down upon glory.
Already thralldom
has crashed down upon freedom
already the daeva
has swooped down upon the land.*

and lines 446-444:

*Night, moaning ominously unto him,
awakens the birds;
the whist of beasts [arises?];
[stirring?] the daeva calls
on the top of a tree
bids hearken the land unknown*

Says Nabokov concerning the daeva: “The Daeva, or Div. Div is a demon bird of oriental myths, a cross between an owl and a peacock. It is here an agent of the Kumans and will swoop down from the top of the poplar at line 443. Something similar occurs in Ossian lines 9-10 in (James) MacPherson’s “First Bard”:

*From the tree at the grave of the dead
The lonely screech owl groans.*

The word “daeva” is clearly Iranian, the Celtic and Vedic spelling being “veda” and having the same meaning, i.e., “a god” or “a goddess”. Also, the meaning of the word “daeva” in the Slovo is at least similar to “daeva” or “div” of Iranian literature. Also note the mixing of Iranian and Celtic here.

Here we have a mention of the Iranian sun god Khorus. Lines 665-668:

*The path of Great Khorus
As a wolf, prowling, he crossed*

There a lesser Slavic god named “Div”. The spelling and the lesser importance of this god indicate Iranian rather than Vedic or Celtic origin. We now turn to the Celtic elements or affinities in the Slovo. Line 52-53:

*If you were to trill [your praise of]
these troops*

Of the times of old Cf. MacPherson’s “Fingal”, Book II, page 81:
*“To the ages of old,
to the days of other years” and “Carthon”.*

first line

***“A tale of times of old!
The deeds of other years!”***

Line 120:
***“bids hearken the land unknown -
“the steppes to the south and
to the east of the river Sula,
where the Kumans roam,
are termed “the land unknown”
or “field unknown”.***

The Daeva’s command “to the land unknown”, is to the heed, MacPherson “The War of Inis= thon A”: “The traveler is sad in a land unknown”; and in “Cathloda”, “Few are the heroes of Morven, in a land unknown”.

Line 187:
and in them throb blue lightnings

Blue lightnings. Pur bard is far ahead of his first editor’s time. The blue throb of an electric discharge is a modern conception. Most people with some amount of color sense today see lightning as a flash of ozone blue. In “Fingal” MacPherson has “the red lightning of heaven. In “Oithona, MacPherson says “the red path of

lightning on a stormy cloud”, and in “Temora” “thy sword is before thee, a blue fire of steel”. Lines 214-215, 219-220:

***you clang on helmets
with swords of steel
cleft with tempered sabers
are their Avar helmets***

Says MacPherson in “The Poems of Ossian”: “Steel, clanging, sounds on steel. Helmets are cleft on high.” Line 217:

darting light from his golden helmet

The effect of this image on the mind of the reader is curiously similar to that of “Intermitting darts the light from his shield” in MacPherson’s “Temora”. Lines Lines 273 - 275:

***tempered arrows fly
sabers resound against heknets,
steel lances crack
A similar din of arms is heard in
MacPherson’s “Berra thon”:
“Darts hiss through the air. Spears ring
on mails. Swords on
broken bucklers bound.”***

Lines 387-390:
Pined away

***have the ramparts of towns,
and merriment
has drooped.***

See MacPherson in “The Poems of Ossian”:
***“Mournful are Tura’s walls.
Sorrow dwells at Dunscai.”***

Line 397:
blue wine mixed with bane

According to MacPherson, the Caledonians (Scots) used a liquor which they called “blue water” (said to be “Gorm=ui” in Gaelic”, and this no doubt was bilberry wine.

Lines 424 -430:
***both crimson pillars
were extinguished,
and with them both young moon,
Oleg and Svyatoslav,
were veiled with darkness
and sank in the sea.***

MacPherson in “Fingal” “They sunk behind the hill, like two pillars of the fire of night.”

Lines 583-584:
***Mo longer indeed does the Sulla
flow in silvery stream***

See MacPherson in The poems of Ossian: Blood tinged the silvery stream.

Lines 643-644:

having enveloped himself in a blue mist

MacPherson, "Fingal": "The blue mist... hides the sons of Inisfai I" and "Temora" "H clothes, on hills, his wild gestures with mist", and "I from the skirts of the evening mist, when it rolled around."

Lines 831-832:

Said Boyan, song-maker of the times of old

MacPherson "The War of Caros" "Bard of the times of old."

Though not mentioned in the "Slovo", "Moargana" ... the Slavic goddess of death is of particular interest to us.

The raven was the symbol of the Morrigan, the Celtic war goddess - though it symbolized her in odd ways. The Morrigan was both a bird and a woman, a violent force and a principle of imagination. Both unique and manifest, she could be a single raven surveying its lonely way above a battlefield⁹ a bird of ill omen or a flock of carnivorous scavengers.

The Merrigan is so complex a figure most complex and elusive in her essential nature.

The Morrigan appears to Cu Chulainn, main heroes of the Ulster Cycle of the Irish epic. A beautiful princess appeared before Cu Chulainn after his victory over Nadcranntail. She was beautifully dressed and came with gifts, including cattle. She said that she had heard much of him, of his good looks strength and warlike process, and all this had caused her to fall in love with him. Cu Chulainn dismissed her: he was not there to meet a woman, so she should be on her way as he had more important things to do. He was unaware that he was speaking to the Morrigan in one of her in one of her less frightening aspects, although she remained as dangerous as always, however attractive she might appear.

"I have been behind you all this time. Who do you suppose has been standing beside you and supporting you? If you do not want my love, then you may have my hatred, said the Morrigan. She then swore to stop at nothing, take on every form she was able to in order to frustrate him: she would become an eel to trip him as he forded a stream, become a she-wolf

to stampede herds of cattle at him.

The Morrigan was as good as her word, but Cu Chulainn was unmoved.

One day she took the form of a heifer and led her whole herd to charge at him. Though the Morrigan had her spirits hold him while she attacked, Cu Chulainn found his sling and unleashed a stone. The

Morrigan thus lost one of her eyes, making her more furious than ever.

The Morrigan inspired the name "Morgan", which appears as the title of a number of beings, some of which still resemble Merrigan in some ways, some of whom do not. One need only recall "Morgan" or "Morgana", the half-sister of King Arthur, and Morgan the Fairy, who appears in the folklore of many places in western Europe. Also the Welsh surname Morgan, and the first name "Morgan" or "Morgana" also derive from "Morrigan" though all memory of Morrigan is long forgotten in these cases. "Moargana", the Slavic goddess of death, is obviously akin to Morrigan, goddess of death being at least one of the characteristics of Merrigan, and "Moargana" being something of an intermediate stage between "Morrigan" and "Morgan" or "Morgana".

Raf'ati Khalil, A Heroin Addict Turned Millionaire by Self Determination

Mr. Khalil is now 46 years old and living a life he never imagined. He was addicted to heroin and crack cocaine. His body was covered with scars. After his ninth overdose he realized he had to make changes if he was to survive.

It all started in Toledo, Ohio where he was born. Escaping home life difficulties he drove to Los Angeles, where he started his own business and selling marijuana on the side, followed by ecstasy and ketamine. His addiction happened when he first tried heroin. The feeling he experiences was captivating and he was addicted.

In 2003 he hit rock bottom and since that date has been dedicated to health and sobriety after being introduced to healthy eating by a friend. He began his juice empire and never stopped growing. He started his juice bar company called SunLife Organics in 2011. This company was the result of his making health drinks for the patients and staff at the Riverside Recovery Center, a sober living house.

His first drink was called the "Wolverine" which consisted of bananas and dates, and known still as his signature drink.

The news of his drink and its healing ability spread throughout the Malibu community and then into Los Angeles. Today he carries an impressive 32 kinds of juices, protein shakes smoothies, acai bowls, coffee, sundaes and yogurts. His work force includes young people, who like him were in need of help. But there is no free ride for them, he pushes them very hard and to some he has become a father figure and an inspiration.

The success of his company is the less important part of his life's journey. Recovering is what keeps his blood running and caring for others what keeps him alive. Taking an addiction and turning recovery into the thirst of life.



A BLOODY SUNDAY

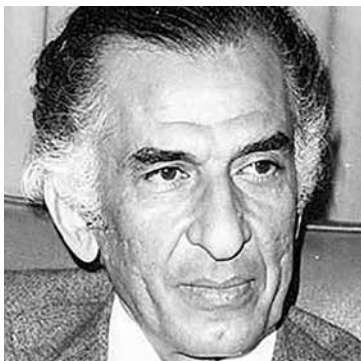
VIENNA, AUSTRIA

SUNDAY DECEMBER 21, 1975

part one

JAMSHID AMOUZGAR

The late Prime Minister of Iran from 7 August 1977 to 27 August 1978
and the Minister of Interior in 1974-1977



It was 12:35 in the afternoon of the last Sunday before Christmas. The OPEC conference was about to end. I was in the chair, patiently trying to reconcile the divergent views of two of the oil ministers who kept on arguing over a minor point.

Suddenly, with a big bang the door of the conference room burst open.

“Don’t move! This is a ... Long, bursts of bullets drowned out the man’s voice as he continued shooting. Before I ducked for cover under the desk I had a glimpse of a young man of medium height, wearing glasses and a ski woolen cap covering the better part of his forehead. He carried a sub-machine gun, which he was firing aimlessly into the air.

“Lie on the floor!” the man ordered. Next to me, seated motionless, was one of the OPEC secretaries. Shocked and spell-bound, she was staring into space. With all my force I pulled her down to the floor. For the next ten or fifteen minutes the sound of shots fired outside the conference hall shattered the stillness of the room. It was all very frightening.

I thought of my wife to whom I had promised that I would take a few days off after the conference so that we could spend Christmas together in Europe. I thought of the terrible shock to my aged parents once the news broke out. I thought of death, and how suddenly, hopes, expectations and the very life could abruptly come to an end. I thought of ...

A tap on my shoulder and a voice that said “Mr. Chairman, get up please”, broke my thoughts and brought me back. I got up. Facing me was a pleasant-looking young man in his late twenties, wearing a Basque beret, with a sub-machine gun hanging from his shoulder, and a revolver at his belt.

He expertly began to body-search me, apologizing while doing so. “It was”, he said, “a routine check which he had to do on everyone”.

Once assured that I carried no arms, he asked me to stand with my back to the wall. For a fleeting moment I looked at the wall behind me. The bullet holes reminded me that had I been a couple of inches taller I could have been a corpse by now. The search had now moved on to the next person. I glanced around the room. It was a shocking, almost surrealistic scene. Everybody, whether minister, aide, male or female staff member, was lying on the floor, face down and motionless. Not a sound of life.

Suddenly the man who was doing the search called for Sheikh Ahmad Zaki Yamani, the Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Saudi Arabia. Mr. Yamani got up.

“Do you have a bodyguard with you?”, asked the young man.

“No”, replied Mr. Yamani.

The question puzzled me. We had not thought of having a

bodyguard. There did not seem to be any reason to have one. I soon found that I was wrong, for someone had thought of it.

Soon the search was over and everyone in the room was up on their feet. All of a sudden there was the sound of running in the corridor leading to the conference room. The door burst open and a young woman in her early twenties, short and homely-looking, entered. She wore a knitted woolen cap that covered her hair. Brandishing a revolver she rushed toward the young man who apparently was in charge.

It turned out that the Austrian security police had arrived, and the young woman was worried lest they break in. Ample reason to get so excited, I reflected. But the message that the young man in charge sent out quickly silenced the security police outside. Any attempt to storm the building, it made known, would result in the room with all inside being blown up.

Minutes later, confident that there was no immediate danger from the security police, the other members of the gang arrived in the room. There were six of them altogether, five male and one female.

One tall male who had a face mask and was bent forward with one hand on his stomach, rushed to a chair and slumped in it. He was obviously suffering from pain and appeared faint. He signaled the boss pointing to his belly, but the young man, who apparently had them all under strict control, coolly, and almost cold-bloodedly, signaled him to keep calm. The situation was bizarre: here were two men who were unable to communicate with each other in any language, and yet they were cooperating in a criminal action fraught with so much danger. What was their common bond? What force glued them together? The very composition of the gang was astonishing: one Venezuelan, two Germans, two Palestinians, and one South Yemeni. The troubled world had gone mad, I thought.

Now the young man in charge tore off a sheet of paper from a yellow pad, and began to write rapidly, without hesitation. He approached the OPEC secretary standing next to me and ordered “Take this note and hand it to the Austrian officials outside the building.”

The young secretary, a British citizen, could not hide her joy at such an unexpected stroke of luck. The assignment insured her freedom from what was to become an ordeal of the most frightful kind. She took the note and hurriedly left the room.

Valentine Hernandez Acosta, the then-“Ministro de Energíay Minas” of Venezuela, was a likable soft-spoken and intelligent person (He died some years ago of a heart attack). He had that Latin quality of personal charm and amiability, that is such a blessing. For quite a while he had been engaged in a tete-a-tete



3 pictures of Carlos

with the young man in charge. I was wondering what it could be about. I decided to ready myself for any eventuality.

One of the delegation members now informed me of the contents of the note that had been sent out to the Austrian officials. It demanded that:

1. A jet plane be made available the following morning to fly us all out of Austria to an as-yet unannounced destination.
2. A bus with window curtains to be ready at the entrance to the OPEC headquarters by seven o'clock the following morning.
3. An ambulance to be sent immediately to take the wounded comrade (the tall German with his hand on his belly) to the hospital.
4. Radio Austria to start immediately broadcasting a "political manifesto", the text of which had been sent to them. The announcement in French was to be repeated every hour on the hour.

There was a very explicit warning that should any of the demands be rejected all the members of the Saudi Arabian and Iranian delegations would be executed, one by one, in an alternate order, until all of the demands were met. The first person to be so executed would-be the number two man in the Saudi delegation.

I felt a sickening chill in my bones, but outwardly kept my cool. Was this a surfacing of some as-yet untapped courage, or was it resignation to fate? I began to ponder what gain, if any, could be had by murdering us. And who could possibly be behind it all? A sinister plot by the much maligned multinational oil companies? Or a plan formulated by a sick mind? My inability to find some plausible explanation for this grotesque situation was most frustrating. In the end I concluded there was little that I could do other than "wait and see".

While the agonizing uncertainty about the reaction of the Austrian government to the demands was tormenting me, the young man, oblivious to the feelings of his hostages, embarked on his next move.

The conference room was rectangular in shape. Members of delegations were seated alphabetically around a U-shaped green baize-covered set of tables. The Conference President, the Chairman of the Board of Governors, and the Secretary General of the Organization sat at the head table.

"We are going to make some changes around here", the young man announced. "The friendly delegations will be seated on one side of the room, with the neutrals on the opposite, facing them. The head table honors shall be bestowed upon the enemies."

I could only wonder what he could mean by this remark. Who were the "enemies", and who were supposed to be the "friendly" ones? It did not take me long to find out.

It turned out that the Libyans, the Iraqis, the Algerians and the Kuwaitis were considered as "friendly", while the Venezu-

elans, the Ecuadorians, the Gabonese, the Nigerians and the Indonesians were considered "neutral". The Saudi and the Iranian, together with the Qatari and the United Arab Emirates delegation were the "enemies" to whom the "honors" at the head table were to be given. (The oil minister of Qatar had not attended this conference, and the UAE minister had left Vienna in the morning). The other end of the room facing the head table was assigned to the staff of the Secretariat, who were now being ushered into the conference room. All told, some seventy persons were now jammed into the relatively small conference hall. While the shifting and shuffling of positions was taking place, the usually quiet middle-aged interpreter for the Algerian minister told the young man that he was a British citizen.

"Do you have your passport with you?" he was asked.

"Yes", was the quick reply as the interpreter presented his document.

"You may go." And thus the second person with a British passport was released.

The watch over the "enemy" delegations was tight. Two men were assigned to the job. One, seemingly in his late teens, was awfully nervous and visibly shaken by the events. Later, I found that this was his first "mission" - a sort of initiation into the world of terrorism. The sub-machine gun in his trembling hands, with a finger on the trigger, and the barrel pointed toward us, gave me the shivers.

He was young and jittery, and seemed more frightened than we were, machine gun and all notwithstanding. Occasionally he would clench the hand grenade in his teeth, as though that gave him a feeling of power and security. We sat motionless as if we were at a yoga session, hardly daring to move lest a false move frighten him into pulling the trigger and cause a tragedy.

The second man was busy placing a set of white-colored objects, which I could not identify, around us and connecting them together with a long electric extension cable. It was quite evident that the "enemy delegations" were the target, though of course under the circumstances everyone in the room was in great danger.

Now the man in charge, cool and relaxed, passed on the word that with his permission hostages could use the bathroom - a gesture which I thought was appreciated by many, especially one or two older men with prostate problems. I recalled my first year at the elementary school at age seven. We were told to raise our hand whenever we felt nature's call.

Once again the door of the conference room opened, this time gently, and in walked a man who, I learned, was the charge d'affair of the Iraqi embassy in Vienna. He evidently was acting as a "go between". There was a few minutes of chatting between him and the man in charge, followed by the announcement that delegates could send messages to their embassies should they wish to do so. On behalf of my delegation, I wrote a short note to our ambassador giving the name of delegation members and ending it with "Que sera, sera"; there is no escape from destiny.

The granting of permission for the use of the rest rooms provided us with the opportunity of moving about the room and talking to each other. Valentine Hernandez came to me and began recounting briefly the gist of his conversation with the strange young man.

"Do you know who he is?", asked Valentine.

"No!", said I.

"He says he is Carlos. The number one on the international wanted list", he whispered. "On this mission he has been given

a tall order. The plan is to fly us to several capitals of the OPEC member countries in North Africa and the Persian Gulf region. At each stop he is going to demand that a translation of the “political manifesto” be broadcast over the national network before the relative friendly and neutral delegation members are released.

“And then what?”, I asked impatiently.

Valentine didn’t answer! I got the signal. The fate of the “enemy” delegations was in limbo. A bad sign.

“You know, Jamshid”, Valentine added. “He says he is twenty-seven years old, and since the age of fourteen he has been engaged in similar activities. His father is a well-to-do lawyer in Venezuela, and a devout Marxist”.

Valentine went back to his seat and left me to my thoughts. A member of my delegation who was doing some news gathering on his own initiative informed me of the murder of a Libyan delegate by Carlos. Evidently the young Libyan had courageously tried to disarm Carlos in the adjacent room where he had confronted him. But apparently he was killed during the struggle.

“Is the OPEC conference still on?”, asked the young man wearing a Basque beret, and carrying a ski bag.

“Yes”, answered the journalist who had stayed behind for the final session of the conference.

Most of his colleagues had already left Vienna as nothing sensational was expected out of this session of the OPEC ministerial conference. The journalist noted that the young man, as well as the other five, including a young female, were each carrying a ski bag.

“I wondered at the time what on earth a skiing group had to do with the OPEC conference. But then I thought perhaps some ministers had planned a ski trip.” This was what the journalist himself told me a couple of years later about his strange encounter on that fateful day.

Minutes later the lucky journalist was the first to wire the hot news of the attack on the OPEC headquarters. Evidently patience has its rewards. The “ski group” hurried up the stairs to the second floor. With sub-machine guns out of the ski bags and firmly in hand they pushed the door to the small entrance hall open. The OPEC receptionist was at her desk, and upon seeing the intruders tried to reach for the phone but was stopped cold. One of the gunmen unplugged the telephone and smashed the switchboard. The receptionist, however, had the presence of mind to push the alarm button placed under her desk. Up came the elevator and that was the beginning of the shoot-out. As the middle-aged Austrian policeman stepped out of the elevator several shots were fired. At the same time the personal bodyguard of the Iraqi Minister appeared on the scene. He tried to take the sub-machine gun away from the young woman, and almost succeeded. But the well-trained young woman pulled out a revolver hidden under her belt and shot the guard dead. There was more exchange of fire. When finally the shooting stopped there were two dead (the Austrian policeman and the Iraqi bodyguard and one wounded (the German-born terrorist).

While this savage killing was taking place in the lobby, Carlos was struggling with the unarmed member of the Libyan delegation in the library next to the conference hall, where we were under siege.

As Valentine moved back to his seat word came that the Austrian Government in a hurriedly convened emergency meeting of the cabinet had consented to all of the terrorists’ demands. The Government, however, had insisted on receiving a state-



Zaki Yamani & Amouzgar

ment signed by the chief of each delegation clearly stating that their departure from Vienna in Carlos’s company was of their own free will.

“This is a kick in the -”, remarked a delegation chief. “Having failed to provide OPEC headquarters with proper security, as stipulated in the initial agreement for the transfer of the OPEC headquarters from Geneva to Vienna, it now takes some nerve to ask for such a statement. Did they think we were like patients going through risky operations on our own free will that they want to extract a statement of release of responsibility?”, he heatedly elaborated. “Is there a choice when the barrel of the gun is pointed at you”? This is an utterly shameful last-minute face-saving attempt!”, he said disgustingly.

“The Austrian officials know that Carlos will never depart leaving us behind. They further know that they cannot bully him. So they have picked on us, the vulnerable ones. But we have no choice. The Austrian Government demand is probably only a face-saving device for everyone. Who knows?” I tried to rationalize, knowing full well that it made little difference.

In the end the required statement was prepared, duly signed, and forwarded to the Austrian authorities for record.

A radio in the room was switched on by the staff of the Secretariat, and its volume was turned up so that everyone could hear the news. But the broadcast in Viennese-accented German had to be translated into English to make any sense for the majority of us. At one point a problem arose, causing much uneasiness and nervous tension, developed. The interpreter announced that the Iranian Government had asked the Austrian Government to storm the building, as the safety of the hostages was their responsibility.

“You see what kind of mentality rules in your country?”, the man second in command in Carlos’s team addressed me with a harsh tone of voice.

I was at a loss. The translated news was inexplicable. It didn’t make any sense. It was a most embarrassing moment for me. Mr. Yamani suggested that I send a note to the Iranian ambassador and ask for clarification - which I did. However, before I received a reply it became known that an error had occurred in translation. The correct translation of the message

related was that the Iranian Government holds the Austrian Government responsible for any action endangering the safety of the members of the Iranian delegation.

"I apologize for having said what I said", the number two man addressed me in a soft voice.

"I am glad it is all clear now", I said, appreciating the grace of the man who was about to kill us.

The almost continuous broadcasts of the OPEC saga in German now took a turn to a more familiar language. The text of the "political manifesto" was on the air. It was a strongly worded statement denouncing, *Inter alia*, the Imperialists who helped establish the State of Israel in the heart of Palestine. It further elaborated on the rights of the Palestinians, and on their just struggle for a homeland. And in a conspicuous paragraph it bitterly attacked and condemned the Government of Iran for its part in the Zhofar struggle. [At that time the Iranian military forces were helping the Sultan of Oman in his struggle against the communist insurrection in the Zhofar region of Oman].

The "political manifesto" was sponsored by the "Arab Arm of the Revolution", an organization of which no one had heard - not even any of the Arab delegation members. It was rather complimentary to the Governments of Libya and Iraq.

"Denouncing the imperialists who helped establish the State of Israel seems to be rather at odds with the fact that the only hostages released so far are of British nationality," remarked a Secretariat staff member. "Any awareness of the Balfour Declaration?"

"It is said in Iran that each act has a separate 'dossier', commented a member of my delegation. The harsh condemnation of the Iranian Government in the manifesto is proof of the validity of that common proverb", concluded he.

Meanwhile through worried glances that were being directed at us I could feel the common concern for the Iranian delegation.

The suddenness of the attack, and the shock of the tragic death resulting therefrom had all but satiated any feeling of hunger. No one thought of food. However, as night fell - and the darkness comes rather swiftly in Vienna in winter months - the pangs of hunger began to be felt. That evening there was to have been a reception in honor of the OPEC ministers at the Intercontinental Hotel. Carlos had a marvelous idea. He ordered that the food prepared for the banquet, minus the pork, be brought over from the hotel to the OPEC headquarters. Everyone had something to eat- only the invited guests did not show up.

Winter nights are long and depressing everywhere, but perhaps more so in Vienna. It seems as if the sultry Fohn strips the air of its last bit of liveliness, forcing one to take refuge in the *der Heurige*. Little wonder then that this famed history-making city, is now a "lonely" capital where the death rate exceeds the birth rate. As I was mentally preparing myself for a long sleepless night Carlos approached me. He had already carried out long and extensive conversations with some of the delegation members and chiefs.

One of them had told me that Carlos spoke only of his past experiences and adventurous exploits, his "impossible" missions, his encounters with death, and his grim assassinations, the first of which he engaged in at the age of fourteen. "He seems to nurture the pride of a hero, rather than the repentance of a misguided man", the colleague characterized him.

"Let us go to a corner. I want to talk to you", Carlos said. I got up and went along with him to a corner of the room. Some-

one offered me his chair and I sat down. Carlos preferred to sit on the edge of the box-like radiator cover, out of which warm air was blowing into the room.

"As a rule, in cases like this the first thing I demand is to shut off the air current", he said. "Do you know why?" he asked, and without waiting to hear my answer continued, "Because odorless gases causing unconsciousness can be pumped along with the air".

"So why the exception now?", I ventured to ask.

"Oh", he smiled. and then confidently confided "I know the mentality of the Austrian officials.

They wouldn't risk playing tricks on me". I recalled the tale of his recent railway terminal operation in Vienna, which had been related to me by a delegation chief.

By now the pent up emotional stress was beginning to show among the hostages. Two of the OPEC secretaries were uncontrollably sobbing, which added to the gloom of the atmosphere and increased the general depression.

"Why don't you release the secretaries?", I asked. "They are part of the local staff of the Secretariat, and do not belong to the member delegations". The barrel of his gun was still pointed in my direction.

"Not until tomorrow morning. The Chancellor is more concerned about their safety than that of the non-Austrians. He knows only too well that should anything happen to them he would have some tough questions to answer. This way, he will have to pay more heed to my demands", he triumphantly explained.

Carlos, I discovered, as others before me had already found out, was very open, and too talkative for a man in his situation. He was not at all guarded in conversation, and spoke freely, and at length, without any inhibitions. Contrary to what I had expected he was not secretive, or laconic. I had imagined him a listener rather than a talker, but it was clear that I had misjudged him. Perhaps it was his frustrations, and his intense loneliness, that made him act so exceptionally, I thought. After all, what other opportunity did this lonely man have to talk about himself? He could not travel and associate with people as others did. He was doomed to a clandestine way of living -which resulted in more loneliness.

"Why are you so quiet and pensive?", he suddenly asked me.

"What else can I do? You have your gun pointed at me.", I hesitantly replied.

He smiled. Put his machine-gun down and continued his harangue.

"You should understand that our struggle is for a worthy cause. We fight for the rights of the under-privileged, the homeless, the wretched of the earth ", he proclaimed with some bravado, using Frantz Fanon's phrase.

"It is strange.", I ventured. "Are we not struggling to get a fair share of the wealth that the big oil companies are reaping from our natural resources to help our poverty stricken nations? Why then pick on us?"

"But why don't you become revolutionaries?", he demanded.

"Some of us prefer evolutionary, rather than revolutionary, methods", I said.

"Your country is engaged in the war in Zhofar", he said angrily. "We know that it is the Shah who makes the foreign policy of your country. Still, you are a cabinet member. What business do you have to be in Zhofar?"

to be continued



Once a US Soldier, Iranian Immigrant Now Serves Veterans

Marsha James, Voice of America (March 17, 2017)

Assal Ravandi knows service. First, as a soldier in the United States Army in Afghanistan. Now, as a soldier for soldiers at the organization she founded – Academy of United States Veterans. But Ravandi insists that her service has not been selfless.

“Serving has always made me feel good and therefore, I consider it to be a self-serving act in a way, while it’s still helping others,” she said. “So, service was something that I thought I would end up doing one way or another.”

Born in Tehran, Iran, Ravandi came with her family to the United States at age 13. She thinks her decision, years later, to join the United States Army was partly inspired by the life she left.

“I come from a place where people get killed, prosecuted, imprisoned for every ounce of freedom that they want in life,” she said, “and at the end, when all the blood is shed, and all the people that are imprisoned – you still don’t have it.”

TOUGHING IT OUT

Ravandi was 29 when she entered the military. Basic training is always difficult and Ravandi found it especially hard. She was surrounded by enlistees years younger than her, but says the experience taught her a lot, especially about herself.

“The system was incredibly comprehensive and it taught me a lot physically, emotionally, mentally,” she

remembers. “My favorite part in the basic training experience that I had was marksmanship. I loved shooting my weapon, and I soon learned that I was physically more capable than I thought I was.”

POWERFUL WEAPON

But marksmanship did not turn out to be Ravandi’s most important skill during her deployment in Afghanistan.

Her native language, Farsi, proved to be a more powerful weapon in the effort to serve and protect. Farsi is very similar to Dari, the most common language spoken in Afghanistan.

“The first thing that I would teach them, it was in Dari dialect, which is the primary language of Afghanistan, and I would say, after you meet someone tell them ‘Beysar khosh shodam,’ which means ‘It is nice to meet you,’” she said. “And I think that kindness and that notion, that gesture, can bring people together.”

Ravandi was recognized for her work teaching Farsi to infantry soldiers. Her battalion commander presented her with a medal.

CIVILIAN LIFE

Ravandi’s duty in Afghanistan and the Army had a major impact on her. After she left military service, she found that nothing else measured up to the work she did as a soldier.

“I felt so privileged, so honored to serve in the United States military,” she told VOA. “I think, until I actually got there, I didn’t know it was everything that I ever wanted and to be honest with you, I don’t remember who I was before I was a soldier.”

Returning to civilian life

was not easy for Ravandi.

“I kind of lost myself after my military service,” she recalls. “I didn’t know what I was going to do. I was just going through the motions, just going through life and I started to suffer from post-traumatic stress.” However, Ravandi did know what she wanted back from Army life.

“The one thing that I missed the most, that could make me feel better was the community and camaraderie in the United States military,” she said. So she recreated it outside of the military by founding the Academy of United States Veterans. The group provides public and media relations support to veteran service organizations, veterans

programs and veteran-owned businesses. Its motto? “We serve those who serve those who served!”

ONLY IN AMERICA

Ravandi says she does not think her story would have been possible in any other country in the world.

She still expresses wonder that, in her words, “freedom is something that is just given to you” in the United States.

“I take a lot of joy in this incredible life,” she said. “This opportunity that’s been given to me and to wake up every day and to know that I have put all the effort, all the thought, all the energy into something and in the end it was worthwhile.”

IRAN AS THE HISTORICAL TRI-CONTINENTAL BRIDGE, AND IRELAND? An Ethno-Cultural and Etymological Interconnectedness!

DAVID N. RAHNI (NEW YORK)

Over forty years ago, a number of Irish professors visiting the University of Tehran disseminated their research findings that there is a firm anthropological connection between Iran and Ireland from the distant past. I then found myself among the many skeptics; in my early teenage naiveté, I perceived this announcement as a part of the royal propaganda by Shah Pahlavi to embellish an [ultra-nationalistic] Aryan heritage, before his self-coronation on the “Persian Peacock” throne in 1967. I have since learned that there are indeed much more credible ethnographic and mythographic commonalities between the Irish and Iranian peoples and cultures, than ever fully recognized by either. The term “Aryan” must NOT be misconstrued herein by any irrational stretch of imagination as condoning Hitler’s ultra-racially driven crimes against humanity which denigrated the (ab-) use of the otherwise noble term Aryan. Aryanism, spanning from northwestern India, passing through Iran, and stretching through northwest Ireland, is one historical racio-ethnic and genetic trait in a series of cornucopia of heterogeneous races and creeds that later emerged each with its duly recognized stature in evolutionary anthropology. For instance, although Iranians may claim to be [pure] Aryans, most if not all Iranians today, are “mutt Persian cats” in that their pedigree, has over time become enriched with diverse pools of genes and cultures that go far beyond and well above the single “Aryan” race.

That’s why Iranian phenotypic completions span the entire spectrum, i.e., from blond haired and blue eyed to more deep hazel and brown eyed and olive skinned (exotic zeitooni or sabzeh.) In fact, most Iranians in diaspora can easily pass-due to their varied complexions, multi-linguism and acculturations-as natives from well over a hundred countries and ethnicities located in Southern and Eastern Europe and North Africa, Southcentral and Southwest Asia, [southern] Russian republics and Armenia, Ossetia, and the Caucuses, and the N/S Americas. This author’s recent DNA analysis discerned, in addition to possessing the Aryan and Persian pedigree, the statistically significant indigenous Jewish Mizrahim of Persian and Russian and Ashkenazim, as well as traits from the Aramaic and northern Mesopotamia!

No one has succinctly delineated the Europeans, especially the isolated-from-the-mainland, Irish’s, connection to their Iranian language, mythology, ancient monuments, and cultural rituals and psyches better than the legendary 19th century Victorian era poet Francesca Wilde.

Francesca Speranza Wilde (1821-1896) aka Lady Jane Wilde (Egglee) born in Dublin Ireland, was an unknown (in cognito) poet, folklorist and Irish nationalist for independence from England (ironically colonized Ireland was a sovereign nation hundreds of years before England’s sovereignty!) Lady Wilde has prolifically written a plethora of books and manuscripts including Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms, and Superstitions of Ireland, as well as [wise] Words of Women. Many literary and historian schol-

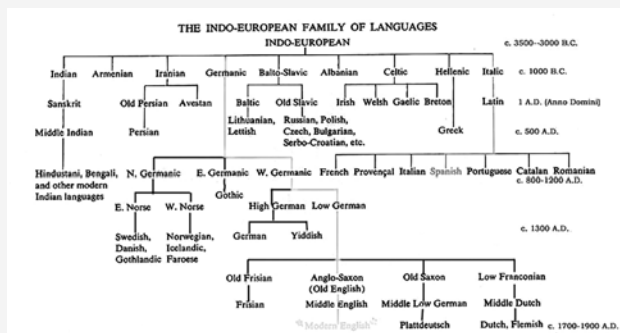
ars cite Lady Jane Wilde as the first post-renaissance feminist worldwide although due to societal restriction, she may have written mostly with her “male” sounding now decoded pseudonyms. In her manuscripts she clearly demonstrates the origin of Gaelic language, spiritual and birth/mourning and burial rituals (mouyeh) and psyche of the Irish people as deeply rooted in the Persian/Iranian origin of several millennia ago. She deciphers for instance, several dozen words in all contemporary European languages especially in Gaelic (Guilak in Persian is still a distinct alive Iranian ethnicity, 2-3 million inhabitants strong, with their Guilaki vernacular spoken along the southern Caspian Sea!) which philologists conclude belonged to the original tongue that came with the migrations from the east vis-à-vis Iran of the distant past. Today, there are at a minimum, nearly a 1,000 Persian words integrated into modern English. Due to its impassable isolations from mainland Europe in general, and as evidenced by the unadulterated dialect in Erin a much sequestered island west of the green Emerald Ireland beyond which lies the vast Atlantic ocean, Irish language is nearer to Sanskrit via the Iranian languages than any other living and spoken language in Europe.

Whereas Erin is also a common name given to a woman in Ireland, Iran is its equivalent for naming a women in Iran. According to the American archives, a Princeton University scholar estimates up to 10 million Iranians were annihilated due to famine and widespread epidemics including anthrax, presumably instigated by the British colonialists, during the early part of the 20th century and through WW I; so much about the western civilization exported onto the colonized east amid colonialism era!

What has further confluenced both cultures is the hardships imposed from within and without on both peoples over time. This has in turn led to literal and artistic expressions and ways of life, anchored on their melancholic lamentation of the nostalgic past, expressing the injustices and hardships of the present, and the uncertainties and trepidations of the future. Ireland has briefly been invaded by the 1st century Romans (thus, today’s expression of the black Irish of the southern shores of Ireland vs. the red Irish from the northern territories), by the Vikings of the Nord in the 10-11th centuries, and by the British from the southeast since the 14th century. Nonetheless, these hegemonic meddling were either repelled or its impact simply dissolved into the indigenous Irish cultures. Presumably, the rich literary poetry and prose of the Irish, engraved into the Irish people’s psyche, has remained the most perseverant expression of her people. The same concept of cultural dissolution of invaders and their ideas (the Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Mongols, British, and/or the Russians) into the indigenous Persian culture has also occurred in Iran for the past several thousand years, and with similar assimilation outcomes.

The Iranians have selectively adopted bits and pieces of language and culture and yes-genes, from such invaders and

synthesized them into their own. This has, in turn, yielded a much stronger social infrastructure than the sum of the two! Lady Jane Wilde when elaborating on the mythological convergence between Tree, the Woman, the Well, and the Serpent-memories as well as other daily chores like mourning rituals and folklore lyrics in Iran and Ireland, states, “This original source of life, creed, and culture now on earth, that “there is no reason to doubt, will be found in Iran, or Persia as we also call the historic nation, and in the ancient legends and language of the great Iranian people, the head and noblest type of the Aryan races.” “Endowed with splendid physical beauty, noble intellect, and a rich musical language, the Iranians also had a lofty sense of the inter-relationships between humans and the spiritual world, and mother earth and celestial objects, but never admitted animate or inanimate idols into their temples, but only the supreme ONE creator.” So, no conundrums puzzle philologists who recognize the first syllabus in Ireland and Iran as Ær- from Sanskrit-the precursor to all Indo-European languages including the family of Iranian languages- the prefix Ær- means Arya- and for both nations, Iran and Ireland mean the “the Land of the Aryans.” For more information on her writing, please visit www.amazon.com and check out Ancient Legends, Mystic Charms and Superstitions of Ireland among other bibliographic sources. After all, is it really coincidental that the flags of Iran, Ireland and India are each comprised of three stripes of



green, white and red?!

Iran has enjoyed a continuous form of government comprised of a dozen royal dynasties albeit a few as “just” for at least 2,500 years. Nonetheless, according to archaeological findings, remnants of established organized agriculture and animal domestications on the one hand, and human settlement and creation of cities excavated on the other, emergence of civilization on the Iranian plateau is traced to no less than 10,000 to beyond 20,000 years ago, respectively. The Iranian plateau, due to its geographic location of bridging Africa, Asia and Europe, has remained the transitory juncture for human migration and exchange of discoveries in the past 150,000 years and plausibly more.

In fact, the three major Aryan tribes of Medes, Persians and Parthians, who arrived southbound to warmer climates from central Asia and settled over 3,500 years ago, must have mixed in with the earlier indigenous settlers who may have migrated southbound or simply traversed and settled from the horn of Africa. For instance, the first world Empire, the Achaemenes, known by its founder Cyrus the Great credited as having declared the first Human Rights for all and saving the Jews from captivity by the Babylonians, must have been preceded by earlier less known precursors? Ferdowsi (Paradiso) the Persian “Homer”, in his epic the book of the Persian Kings, Shahnameh, narrates through 30,000 poem verses, the story of earlier kings such

as the Pishdadian and Kayanian Dynasties founded by King Jamshid who is credited for having first celebrated Nowruz, the spring vernal equinox. The solar New Year is still observed by not only Iranians but also by over 200 million brethren in the region. Mithraism and Zoroastrianism were conceived in Iran. The Mithraism moved to, and adopted in Europe through the fourth century. The caste driven Zoroastrianism, especially when declared as the official religion of the Sassanid Empire, led to justice seeking sub-sects as Mazdeism and Manicheism. The aim here is to fully appreciate the early Persian origin of many religious texts, rituals, philosophies and decrees that were later incorporated into Judaism, and by its extension into Christianity and Islam. Legend has it when the first Zoroastrian, aka Parsi pilgrims arrived on the shores of Gujarat, the local Maharashtra sent them his emissaries to offer the pilgrims a filled to the rim bowl with local milk. In doing so, he was in essence welcoming them for a short stay, while indirectly asking them to move on to another shore. After the Zoroastrian pilgrims drank a portion of the milk, they overfilled the bowl with the local honey brought from their motherland Iran, and sent it back to the Maharaja to taste.

As soon as he drank it, he found it as the milk and honey from paradise, got their indirect message of what they could offer if allowed in, and so invited them to settle in his territory, realizing they would enrich the local culture. The rest is history, as the Parsis have remained amongst the most vibrant immigrant group not only in India, but also by all accounts, anywhere and anytime in history.

In a related note, the New York Times ran an article on November 19, 2008 titled, “The dead tell a tale China doesn’t care to listen to.” It describes the several hundred well preserved mummies discovered in northwest China’s Xinjiang’s region as belonging to Iranian stock according to their DNA determination. The mummies excavated in Kshghar, Astana and Lop Nur areas of Xinjiang and on display at the Museum in Urumqi the territory’s capital, demonstrates they must have come from the west, thus with Indo-European descent, rather than east Chinese traits. One called Loulan Beauty lies on her back in the glass sarcophagus, with her shoulder-length hair, high cheekbones and long pointy nose, phenotypic features that are not Chinese, but rather Uyghur of Iranian stock.

The ten million plus inhabitants of the province currently speak a Turkic/Altaic-Middle Persian hybrid dialect and every aspect of their daily lives is as Iranian as the one million Turkmen of Iran southeast of the Caspian Sea. An infusion of Iranian culture and ethnicity in places as diverse as Croatia, Ossetia and Albania, Kashmir and Tajikistan, and as far as southern Persian Gulf and Zanzibar has persisted since antiquity.

The evidence collectively leads us to accept the free (south or west bound) movement and intermingling of the Iranian foragers and hunter-gatherers turned into nomadic herders and wanderers, especially after the recession of the last European ice age of 10,000 years ago. This in turn led to some of the earliest permanent settlements, cities, etc. After the advent of Islam in Iran, then aka Persia, in the late 7th century, and in the 16th century when Shiite Islam was politicized in Iran by the Safavid Dynasty, two mass exodus of Persian Zoroastrians occurred for fear of religious persecutions into the shores of Gujarat and Mumbai India.

Many in retrospect, surmise such involuntary migration as returning to the very root of the “Sanskrit” derived language

and culture. It is immensely intriguing to trace the human journey back to Ardi's fossil remains in Africa of 4.4 million years ago. Moving fast forward, it is believed we all descended from a man in Africa 60,000 years ago. An unspectacular minute fossil annualized in central Asia has given us to hypothesize the existence of a man 35,000 years old, considered to be the common ancestor of all humans in the northern hemisphere.

It is noteworthy that the languages spoken from the western/southern Mesopotamia into the [North] Africa, are of Afro-asiatic in origin. Here, the distinct family of languages includes historical Aramaic and Syriac, and modern Arabic, Hebrew, and Coptic as depicted in the linguistic diagram below. With the advent of Islam eastward into the Indian subcontinent via Iran, and west-bound into Europe via the Iberian Peninsula, immense amounts of terminologies and cultural norms were exchanged between the two divergent families of the languages, namely, the Afro-asiatic and Indo-European linguistic trees from its two sides. Among them, however, the Persian language, as it still retains a degree of community with Gaelic, retained its original ethno-linguistic Indo-European character, syntax, and grammar.

The original language and ethnicity of the Egyptians, once recognized as one of the oldest and grandest civilization on earth, became Arabized with the exception of up to ten million, now Christian Copts, still using the original language mixed with many Arabic words. To sum it up, there is no culture span-

in the inclusive family of all nations. If one were to go back a few hundred thousand years in the context of the four and a half billion years of the earth's life, is it not true that all common human ancestry evolved in Northeast African Savannah?! One could then only surmise as to the myopic ulterior motives of ego-centric historians from Europe and the U.S. to solely anchor the so-called western civilization on the Greco-Romans of 2000 years ago, while overlooking the seminal contributions of a number of far more reaching earlier civilizations such as the Iranians and the Chinese and the Egyptians, Indians, and Mesopotamians (Sumerians, Babylonians, Chaldeans, Assyrians). What must have transpired for human social evolution in Africa in the preceding one hundred thousand to a few million years is very challenging to track. No wonder the K-16 world history and social studies textbooks in the U.S. primarily cite the historical evidence of later Greeks and Roman civilizations, while denying, dodging or discounting the contributions of earlier civilizations as the Persians among a number of others. Everything is presented on the premise of east vs. west, aka the colonial perceptions of occident vs. orient.

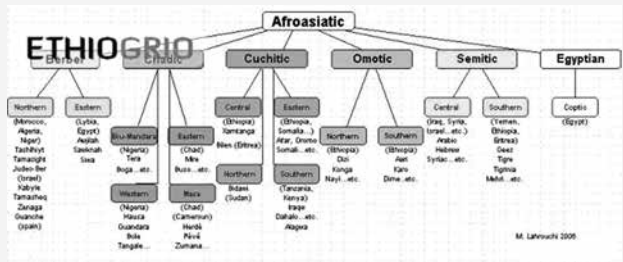
Paradoxically, the city-state of Athens that followed myriad skirmishes among the Spartans and Macedonians, is used as an occidental self-righteous pretext to produce a historically fictitious Movie 300 against the righteously just Xerxes of the Persian Empire already in place for hundreds of years prior. Even the Greek historian Herodotus, who enviously recorded most of what we now know about the Persians, is turning upside down in his catacomb 2500 years thereafter. What exactly could the west have (not) been without the seminal contributions of the east and south for that matter? Thinking processes are non-linear, unidirectional and multi-dimensional and so are the events, be it natural or anthropogenic.

Whether we learned from, and thus experienced each other's way of life through archetype, and/or innately and independently opted for the same approaches of daily rituals and life practices for survival, yellow, red, black, white or brown, we must if not by logical purgative for survival, then by the predicament of reality utilize our paramount commonality rather than minor differences to ensure there indeed is an enlightened future for our global family.

Within the humble and misunderstood (click here to see the counter-argument to the movie 300) Iranian side of the family, one should only read the poetry, prose and writings of Persian/Iranian legends in the artists & architecture, literature & rhetoric, math & science, and medicine, ancient and contemporary, such as Ferdowsi, Khayyam, Rumi, Algorithm, Razes, Avicenna, Hafez and Sa'adi, just to name a few, in order to fully grasp the myriad humanistic and spiritual aspects of their psyche.

The above notwithstanding, the Persians live life the fullest! I also encourage everyone to watch the one hour documentary, IRAN Seven Faces of Civilization on video google. As inscribed on the entrance arch of the UN Headquarter in Geneva, perhaps no one has ever articulated the true essence of humanity as Sa'adi, the 13th century spiritualist humanist Persian Poet:

*Humans are all integral members of one frame,
Since all, at first, from the same one eternal essence came.
When by hard fortune one limb is oppressed,
The other members lose their desired rest.
If thou feel'st not for others' misery,
A Human, therefore, is no name for thee*



ning form China to east Europe and from north to southeast Africa that has not been influenced by, and/or contributed to, by Persian (Iranian) civilization.

As a humble student of history and culture, I would be remiss if I did not invoke the good name of Harvard University Iranologist, the late Professor Richard Frye who in an interview with CNN anchorwoman Asieh Namdar referred to Iran and China as the two most relevant ancient civilizations of all time (his and his son's specializations, respectively). Before his transition through the cosmos, Professor Frye struggled and finally secured after fifteen years a special license from the government in Iran, to be buried at the foot of his Harvard Iranian mentor and predecessor professor Arthur Pope in Esfahan, Iran. However, his body is entombed temporarily in Boston until the transfer is authorized by the IRI in Iran.

That said, and as Lady Jane Wilde has so eloquently claimed in her book's preamble, "All desires to be considered are melancholy Laudatrix temporis acti."

Simply put, the nostalgic glorious past of a nation such as Iran should not be misconstrued by anyone as a means of ultra-national superiority over other equally important nations and ethnicities. Good, bad and ugly recordings of the past and present of a by and large glorious nation would only serve as the pillars of perpetual constructionist revisionism to reform the socio-cultural norms and to move forward for better days ahead



President Harry S. Truman: “I AM CYRUS”

by Manuvera



The article below originally composed on Kavehfarrokh.com on August 17, 2010, has been re-posted on February 14, 2017 due to the contemporary state of tumultuous international politics at the time of writing. This posting endeavors to highlight the 2500 year-old legacy of Cyrus the Great, founder of the Achaemenid Empire. Cyrus the Great built bridges between peoples and languages, endorsed cultural diversity and valued religious freedom. This resulted in the creation of the world's first multi-lingual and multi-cultural empire. It is a remarkable fact that the founding fathers of the American Republic in 1776, who would write the US Constitution as we know it today, were fully cognizant of Cyrus' legacy of benevolent governance 2500 years past. These lessons of history highlight the need to construct bonds of understanding between peoples, cultures and religions.

Cyrus II the Great (c. 590-530 BC) was the Achaemenid King of ancient Iran who liberated the Jews from their 70-year captivity after he overthrew the Babylonian Empire in 539 B.C. Cyrus ensured that the Jews would be able to return to Jerusalem.

Cyrus subsidized the Jewish revival at Jerusalem from state funds, a process that continued through his Achaemenid successors. The Jerusalem Temple and city walls were rebuilt. With the fall of the Achaemenids in 333-323 BC came over 2500 years of suffering for the Jews. Throughout their trials and tribulations in history, Jews have always looked to Cyrus as the symbol of the righteous gentile ruler who was also their savior. Cyrus' legacy would be evoked by name in the twentieth century, shortly after the Second World War.

Just months after he left the office of the President of the United States in November 1953, Harry S. Truman made a remarkable statement to a number of Jewish dignitaries in New York's Jewish Theological Seminary. Truman's long-time associate, Eddie Jacobson, introduced Truman to the Jewish dignitaries stating “This

is the man who helped create the State of Israel”.” Truman then exclaimed:

“What do you mean, ‘helped to create’? I am Cyrus. I am Cyrus”.

The following quotes from the 2nd Isaiah (also known as the Deuteron-Isaiah) clearly shows how the Jews regard Cyrus (note the consistency with chapters 40-55 of the book of Isaiah). Below are a few quotes:

‘I am the Lord, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; (44.25)... Who says of Cyrus, “He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, saying to Jerusalem, ‘You shall be built,’ and to the temple, ‘Your foundation shall be laid...(45.1) Thus says the Lord to His anointed [Messiah] to Cyrus -whose right hand I have held...(45.2)... For Jacob My servant’s sake, and Israel My elect, I have even called you by your name; I have named you, though you have not known Me. The following quotes are from the Book of Ezra which discuss the Cyrus’ decree supporting the Jews to rebuild their temple: (1.1) In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and put it in writing:

(1.2) ‘This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: The Lord, the God of Heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. (1.3) Anyone of his people among you – may his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem. (1.4) ... provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.’

The Greeks, including Alexander (356-323 BC), were very favorable in their citations of Cyrus the Great. The Greeks in fact had written a complete Encyclopedia of Cyrus known as the Cyropedia of Xe-

nophon.

Cyrus also ordered that sacred objects forcibly taken from the Jerusalem Temple to be handed back to the Jews:

(1.5) Then the family heads of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests and Levites -everyone whose heart God had moved-prepared to go up and build the house of the Lord in Jerusalem. ... (1.7) Moreover, king Cyrus brought out the articles belonging to the temple of the Lord, which Nebuchadnezzar had carried away from Jerusalem and had placed in the temple of his god [i.e., Marduk]. (1.8) Cyrus king of Persia had them brought by Mithradates the treasurer, who counted them out to Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah.

The Cyropedia has also endured the test of time and is with us to this day. It was certainly known to the Romans who respected it, including Scipio Africanus (236-183 BC) who always had a copy of the Cyropedia (consult the introduction of Cawkwell, G. L., *The Persian Expedition*, Penguin Classics, 1972) and even history's most famous Roman, Julius Caesar (100-44 BC).

Many European thinkers, centuries after the fall of Rome, consulted the Cyropedia. One example being the British empiricist philosopher John Locke (1632-1704). Locke who studied the Cyropaedia, had many parallels between his enlightenment philosophies and elements Zoroastrian philosophy.

The Cyropaedia was also known and referenced by the founding fathers of the United States. One example of this is President Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826) who possessed two personal copies of the Cyropedia.

The late Professor A.J. Arberry has summed up the legacy of Cyrus the Great: “The government [of the Achaemenids] was markedly tolerant, and the religions and customs of the many subject peoples were carefully considered and often fostered in their own countries by the kings...” [A.J. Arberry, *The legacy of Persia*. Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1953, p.8].

Hamlet Takes on a New Identity



Waterwell productions has taken on a project with the dual language Persian and English production of Hamlet. According to Waterwell, the present climate demands urgency to create art that asserts community, cross-cultural communication and common humanity. This production of Hamlet takes place 100 years ago in what was then Persia (now Iran) on the eve of WWI. It was a time of tremendous tension: a traditional way of life threatened by an evolving modern world, and the land itself threatened by encroaching Western interests. In this telling, Hamlet finds himself uprooted and torn between opposing values and codes, reflecting an all-too-prevalent experience of refugees and immigrants.

By situating this story in a culture largely misunderstood in the West, Waterwell hopes to extend the play's tremendous power and empathy to even more diverse audiences and foster compassion across cultures.

Arian Moayed plays the lead role of Hamlet with exceptional additional cast members of Sherie Rene Scott, Micah Stock and Amir Arison. The diversity of this cast with the Shakespeare combination Waterwell feels, "Hamlet's central dilemma (and ours) is made manifest: how to reconcile the differences between and within ourselves." The play is directed by Tom Ridgely, music composed and performed by Mohsen Namjoo, scenic design by Jason Simms, costume design by Nina Vartanian, lighting design by Reza Behjat and sound design by Sinan Zafar.

The show was performed at the Sheen Center for Thought and Culture in downtown Manhattan.



Rebecca Lowe, a journalist from the UK made the decision to bike through Iran last year. What she found was not the negative media description of the country but a gentle people curious about her country and eager to share their culture. Her trip included a variety of Middle Eastern countries but Iran, particularly fascinated her." This was because the media describes Iran as a fanatical Islamist country. After her visit she understood that this was far from the truth. "Iranian hospitality is extraordinary. To me, it felt like a soft protective cloak, reassuring and ever reliable. So much wonderful, utterly impractical food was given to me while cycling." She was amazed by the hospitality of all from Bandar Abbas to Tehran. Even the police were willing to accommodate her with the exception of being scolded after she took off her helmet. She was told to cover her head and then was extended an invitation to his family's home for khorosht gheymeh.

Besides her fascination with the food, she loved the architecture and the interior decorations of their homes. Though some were void of furniture they contained the most beautiful Persian carpets. And of course she was stunned by the fascination with their appearance. "Iranians are surprisingly obsessed with their appearance, with rhinoplasty being higher per capital than the United States.

As she met and talked to the citizens she realized their deep tolerance for all religions, again contrary to what we are led to believe on the news. And, she found the infrastructure, buildings and roads to be cleaner and less expensive than those in her home town.

Of course she found a climate that was somewhat suspicious of the British government referred to as the 'wiley fox.' She couldn't much blame them for their position being it was the British government that forced Iran to concede territory to Russia in 1813, put Reza Shah Pahlavi on the throne in 1925, deposing him in 1941 and of course the 1953 coup orchestrated by the UK and the US against the democratically elected prime minister Mohammad Mossadeq after he decided to national the Anglo-Persian Oil Company.

On the downside to her was the severe lack of human rights in the country- no free press, independent judiciary or civil society, but don't think for an instant that is anything like the Soviet Union or North Korea. As to Iran's intelligence service it is rigorous but some believe it is more image than reality. Even so people proceed cautiously and use self censorship in order not to cross any lines.

Like most western countries these days, there seems to be no middle of the road when it comes to politics. You are either left or right. But Rebecca Lowe without hesitation would return to Iran because of the culture, complexity, colors hospitality and of course the food. (BBC, April 2, 2017)

Thank you for giving time to us for this interview.

You have achieved a great deal of success as an actor, but I would like to begin with your very early life. Iran is your birthplace, I believe in 1980. This was just after the beginning of the revolution. You left Iran when you were five, do you have any memories of your birthplace?

I don't have very many memories of my birthplace, mostly because for most of my childhood, we were moving around.

What I do remember, oddly enough, are smells. Oftentimes, when I go into a Persian store or a Persian household I sometimes remember the smells that were around when I was a child more than anything else. It reminds me of where I was born, the first few years of my life.

Your parents settled in Glenview, Illinois. Is there a reason for settling in Chicago? And please tell us a bit about your parents and your family?

The reason that we moved to Chicago was that my oldest brother, Amir, was studying there. When the revolution hit, everyone in the family thought it was wise that he just stay. So that's how we immigrated to Chicago. The joke is: we couldn't have gone somewhere warmer?

My mom and my dad still live in Chicago, my brothers and my sister all live in the states now. But, like all immigrant families, the adjustment period is not quick. It's an adjustment period that takes time and energy, especially when you have to completely uproot and relearn a language and a culture and a society that's not close to your own.

My oldest brother has a mortgage company in Chicago, my other brother lives in the DC area and he's an anesthesiologist, and my sister lives in Dallas and she works in retail. My parents are both retired.

Have you ever returned to Iran?

When I was in college, I had a little one month trip to Iran. I got to visit my sister, who was there, and also my dad who was there at the time as well and so much of my family is still there. So I went



An Interview with

Arian Moayed

A Reputable Iranian-American Actor

to Tehran, Shiraz and Isfahan and really tried to get to know where my roots were and where I was brought up.

It was an amazing experience, because I really went there to try to figure out who and what I was, as so many who are born in other countries and moved to the states are constantly straddling the line between where you are as a human being – are you more Iranian or more American?

That trip to Iran was how I tried to answer that question, but honestly it just made it even more confusing. So many Iranians thought of me as an American as I was desperately trying to grasp at being Iranian. The reality is that I am one of many immigrants in this country, whatever your ethnicity may be, that is dividing our brain-space between both cultures. There is something about that, that is both difficult and rewarding.

Did you incur any difficulties as a child being Iranian? If yes please share them with us and share also the ways you

coped with this.

I imagine my struggles as an Iranian growing up in America are no different than possibly any immigrant who has gone from one country to another. It's difficult to adjust to a new society when your family members and culture and friends existed in a completely different world prior to immigration. Trying to grow up in a country that is not your own, what you desperately try to do is throw yourself into what is more dominant, mimic what's around you, in this case, American culture. So, the difficulties mostly were trying to cope with the fact that I was different. That causes a lot of strife and anxiety, and it can be damaging. I'm no different in that way. So, the things I did as a young child who was trying to assimilate to this new culture, are things that I'm actually quite embarrassed of. It takes time and energy and good parents to really put a strong head on your shoulders and help you realize you have to go through those moments and try to find ways to feel comfortable in

the new culture.

A really concrete struggle was that as a young child, 8 or 9 years old, I was the translator of the household. This is difficult because it's hard to try to understand, as a young person, adult issues and be forced into being an adult yourself, when you don't yet want to be. So, that was probably the biggest struggle I faced.

At what age did you become interested in the theater and wanted to pursue acting as a profession?

You know, I'm lucky, because one of my brothers is a doctor, my other brother is a businessman, and my sister has always been the jewel of the family's eye. So, I just kind of got let go to pursue whatever I wanted.

I think I knew I wanted to be an actor at a very, very young age. When I was in about third grade I was asked to be in Miss Rohrer's class ceremony uniting all the different cultures represented at my school. We dressed up in the tradition of our culture and then I had to go out and say "hello" in my language to someone of a different culture and they would greet me in their language and everyone got a chance to share their country's word for "hello".

Anyway, so I went up in front of the entire school and I said "Salam" to the crowd and my entire third grade class, including Miss Rohrer, waved at me! And I was like, "I like this!" So that's really the first memory I have.

Honestly, I always wanted to entertain. It was a real tool for me to cope with a lot of the things I was probably dealing with as an immigrant, as an outsider, and it was an easy way for me to figure out who I was.

Later it became even more important when I realized that theatre and art are some of the most substantial and important ways of changing society. If you look back at all the generations, all the things that people remember are pieces of political history and war and... art.

Now we look back at history, and art is what gives us the meaning of who we are as a civilization, as a society, and as human beings. I realized that pretty quickly when I was in college. Again, I was lucky because my parents pretty much supported whatever I wanted to do since there was already a doctor in the family who they could brag about.

Who were you influenced by?

I think my biggest artistic influence would have to be Charlie Chaplin. I am a kind of absurd, kind of ridiculous, Charlie Chaplin nerd. Mostly, I love him as a performer and I love how he created his own studio, how he used his art to lash out against society. I love how he used his art to talk about the common man, I love how he uses his art to show the world how universal art can be.

One story is, I was shooting a movie in Morocco a few years back. In Marrakesh there's a medina, my wife and my kids came and visited me while I was there, and the first day, I took them to the medina to check it out. The medina in Marrakesh has everything – snake charmers and monkeys and orange juice sellers and it's just this magical, Aladdin-esque kind of world. So, we're there and we took a carriage to get there. I could see in the distance, there's a movie playing on a big screen. It was Charlie Chaplin's Modern Times and there must have been one thousand people, just watching it. A movie that's almost ninety-five years old, still has the resonance to change people's lives. It was bringing together a Muslim, French and European culture all before my eyes, an American, born in Iran. My family and I just stood and watched in awe, and applauded when it was over. It was really beautiful and that is why I think Chaplin is my biggest influence.

As far as Iranian influences go, there are too many to name. But, Forugh Farrokhzad is one. I love her poetry, I love how she uses language to articulate her powerful feelings about being a human being. I'm a monstrous fan of Abbas Kiarostami. I think that he was not only a visionary, but someone who also understood what it meant to have restrictions on cinema and use them to better the films instead of allowing those restrictions to silence the medium completely.

You have a list of impressive credentials in acting and film and theater, what ones and what characters to date have been your favorite?

Playing Musa in Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo, which I did on Broadway with Robin Williams, was one of my favorite characters, mostly because, never in a million years could you ever imagine that an Iraqi translator would be the lead

character of a major Broadway play. He was neither a "good guy" nor a "bad guy", but just a human being trying to cope, one who had made beautiful decisions and horrible decisions. That is a character written specifically for the common man, by Rajiv Joseph, one of the world's greatest playwrights. My other favorite character to play is Hamlet, which I'm doing right now. I have the opportunity to play an Iranian Hamlet. It's unique because this is the first time this has ever been done, and also important because this is really bridging the gap between both cultures.

One of the most impressive performances was your character as an Iraqi translator in Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo. I understand that in order to recreate a genuine Iraqi Arabic accent that you taped a translator who was hired for the play and studied her Iraqi Arabic accent in English. There are a few other of your credits in film and play that involve the Middle East and Iran as subject matter or character, do you believe that your portraying and production of shows featuring Iran as a subject matter or Iranians as characters will help educate American view of the people of Iran?

Absolutely. The reason I play characters at all, whether they're Iranian, Iraqi or Israeli, is because I believe that the human condition is not binary, it does not come in ones and zeros, it is not black and white, it is not "Democrat" or "Republican", it's all shapes and sizes and complexities.

Recently I was in a play on Broadway called The Humans and I played a very rich character. This character could easily have been played like a snob or someone who has no idea what it is to be a middle class American, but the reality is, there is no interest in that for me. Not only that, but those people, those binaries, don't really exist. It's possible to be unbelievably wealthy and care about everyone. It's also possible to be the opposite – to be very poor and hate everyone. Both of these things can happen. I'm interested in exploring the complexity of the human condition in those ways. This is why I'm doing this Hamlet. This Hamlet is both

Iranian and Western, he is the son of a Persian warrior and a foreign bride, he lives in both places. He loves the Western traditions, but also loves the Eastern traditions. Sometimes that complexity creates a collision that both the character, and the audience, have to deal with. Those are the characters I like to play.

Before I ask if you have anything else you would like to share with the readers, I ask that you provide words of inspiration and wisdom to our younger readers?

The easiest way to succeed as an artist or a lawyer, an accountant or an entrepreneur is to DO, just DO. You're going to fail a lot. Literally the day of this interview, today, I've already failed three times in different ways. That failure can crush human beings and your desire to continue, but you must continue going forward. That's the best advice I can give anybody. Just DO. Don't wait around for anybody, don't ask for anyone's permission, if you think it's the thing you want to do, just DO THAT THING. Otherwise, waiting around is just going to be that: waiting. And the act of waiting is getting stuck in your own inertia. Just do the damn thing. And honestly, the only success that you can have is by doing the thing you love over and over again. By doing it yourself, by making things happen yourself, what happens is, once you accomplish that thing, whatever it may be, there is a satisfaction and a gratification that leads to confidence. Confidence leads to better decisions, and those better decisions lead to more success. Volunteer your time. Show up to the things you care about. You will find success.

Thank you for this interview and best of luck to you and your cast in the production of Hamlet.

A Stroll Through Isfahan's Armenian Julfa Quarter The Real Iran outlet on March 7, 2016

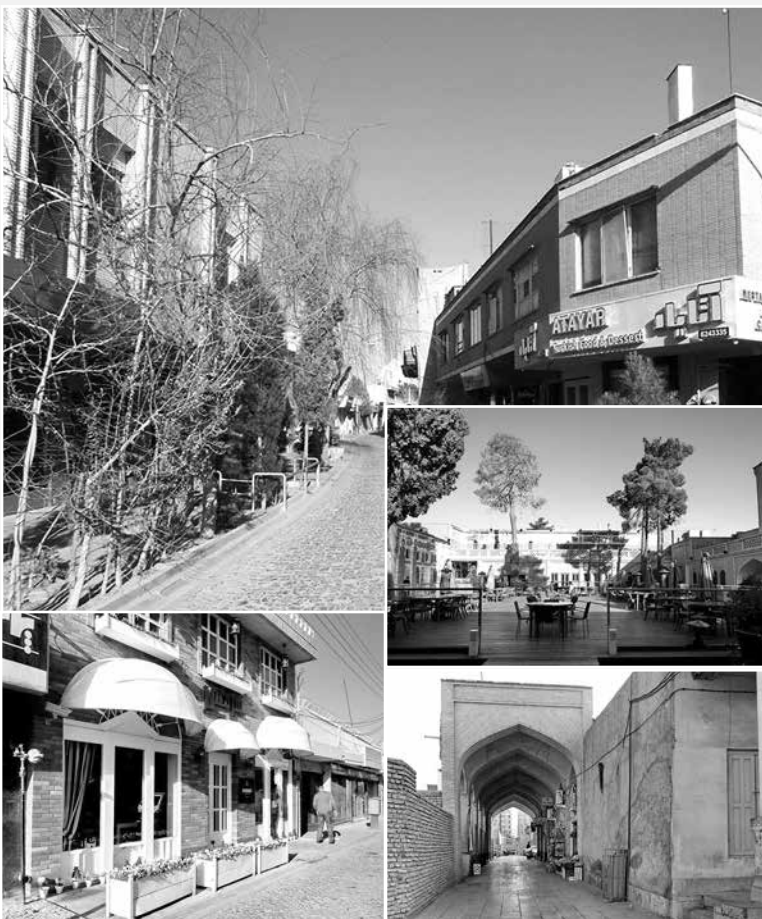
New Julfa (literally Jolfa quarter of Isfahan) is the Armenian quarter of Isfahan, Iran, located along the south bank of the river Zayandeh River.

Established by Armenians from Julfa, Nakhichevan in the early 17th century, it is still one of the oldest and largest Armenian quarters in the world.

New Julfa was established in 1606 as an Armenian quarter by edict of Shah Abbas I, the influential shah from the Safavid dynasty. Over 150,000 Armenians were moved there from Julfa in Nakhichevan.

All history accounts agree that, as the residents of Julfa were famous for their silk trade, Shah Abbas treated the population well and hoped that their resettlement in Isfahan would be beneficial to Persia. New Julfa is still an Armenian-populated area with an Armenian school and sixteen churches, including Surp Amenaprgitch Vank, which is a Unesco World Heritage site, and undoubtedly one of the most beautiful churches in Iran. Armenians in New Julfa observe Iranian law with regard to clothing, but otherwise retain a distinct Armenian language, identity cuisine, and culture. The policy of the Safavids was very tolerant towards the Armenians as compared to other minorities, such as the Iranian Georgians and Circassians. According a reference by David Petrosyan of the Institute for Central Asian and Caucasian studies, New Julfa had between 10,000-12,000 Armenian inhabitants in 1998. As of today it is still one of the largest ethnic Armenian quarters in the world.

Popular with young people in Isfahan, it is experiencing considerable growth compared to other districts.



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