

BOOK REVIEW

Discovering Your True Enemy

by Stewart Battle

Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India

Shashi Tharoor

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Paperback, 336 pages, \$14.86

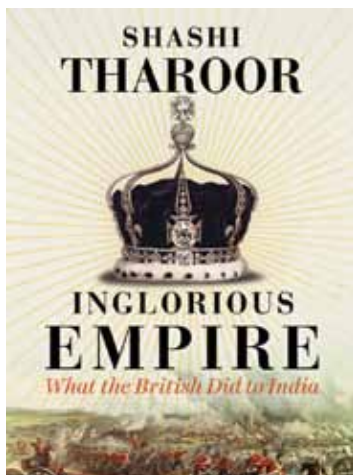
Sept. 8—How is it that we find ourselves at this current state of world affairs today? How have we let our once most prosperous and most optimistic nation fall into such a state of disrepair—and the noble goals for which we once stood turn to cynicism and corruption? What process, what *force*, has been responsible for this? One often hears the phrase: “people don’t know their history.” A true statement, indeed. But do those critics themselves actually know their history—know what has shaped our world today, or know what set our United States apart in all this, with the potential to fundamentally change the history of mankind? The answer to this, lies in understanding the most brutal, mass-murderous, and evil force in modern history: the British Empire.

Shashi Tharoor, Indian Parliamentarian, author, and former UN Under-Secretary-General, recently released a book that usefully exposes the bloody history of the British Empire—*Inglorious Empire: What the British Did to India*. Tharoor became somewhat of an Internet sensation a few years ago when he participated in a debate at Oxford on the subject of the British owing reparations to India for the 200 years of colonial rule. The response to his comments was so explosive and positive, including from many In-

dians (as well as Britons) who wished they knew more about this history, that Tharoor decided to elaborate his arguments in a more in-depth format, which became this book.

Inglorious Empire illustrates some key facets of the 200 years of crimes committed by the British in India and lays to shame the notion of a “benign” British Empire, as argued by many academics still today. This is a history rich with outright looting and pillaging, the complete destruction of India’s economy, cultural and psychological brainwashing, sowing division and partitioning its territory with the creation of Pakistan, and the murder of *tens of millions* through a policy of intentional famine. India will never forget what the British did. As Tharoor says, before the British arrived India accounted for fully 25 percent of the world’s economy. By the time the British left, India had been reduced to a mere three percent of the world’s economy, while Britain had grown to rule a global empire.

However, despite this very useful exposé and discussion of the history of the British Empire, Tharoor’s book fails in some very crucial ways. Most notably, Tharoor—like most today—understates and likely does not understand the true nature of the British Empire, and therefore seemingly misses the forest for the trees. While British rule in India was blatantly evil, it differs not at all in its genocidal effects from what the British continue to execute on a global scale in the form of today’s Anglo-Dutch imperial system. One must recognize the *symptoms* of empire that Tharoor illustrates well in his book, but the actual *underly-*



CC/Chatham House

Dr. Shashi Tharoor



Painting by Dip Chand

Depiction of an official of the British East India Company, ca. 1760.

ing principle of empire is a principle that continues unbroken today. That is the true history that Americans and others must understand now. In this light, I summarize here some of the most crucial aspects of Tharoor's book.

Economic Looting

The British East India Company was in India as early as the beginning of the 17th Century. It began to conquer different regions and bring them under its control in the mid-18th Century. As Tharoor points out, taxes on property soon averaged 80-90 percent of the rental value, making for a 328 percent increase in total land revenue within 30 years, in the case of Bengal—purely a looting scheme in which Indians were forced deeper and deeper into poverty while pockets were filled back in Britain. The story goes that if British tax collectors found a citizen to be delinquent on taxes, they would



Sir William Joynson-Hicks in 1923.

often strip him naked, drag him into a public place, and torture or physically mutilate him for all to see. This was the British “civilizing” India.

In every case in which India had economic strength and expertise, the British intervened to shut it down in order to advance British interests. Indian textiles were a world-renowned commodity at that time. The British destroyed the Indian looms and even cut off the thumbs of weavers. They then raised tariffs on Indian imports so high as to prevent their sale in Britain, and as the industry collapsed, the British turned India into a mere exporter of cheap cotton and an importer of finished British-made textiles.

The same was done to Indian shipbuilding and Indian steel, using various tactics to collapse their market. In the case of shipbuilding, the British actually forbade the use of Indian ships in any markets in Europe or the Americas, quickly eliminating the industry in India. Similarly, with the steel industry, the British gained as much knowledge of Indian metallurgy as they could before shuttering all of India's foundries by the end of the 1700s. In both cases, Indian ships and Indian steel were widely known to be some of the best in the world. But to the British imperial mindset, the technologies and their mastery, which advance a nation as in India, are a threat to the Empire. Sir William Hicks, British Home Minister, commented in 1928: “I know it is said

in missionary meetings that we conquered India to raise the level of the Indians. That is cant. We conquered India as an outlet for the goods of Britain. We conquered India by the sword, and by the sword we shall hold it. I am not such a hypocrite as to say we hold India for the Indians.”

The Myth of the Railroads

One of the myths that Tharoor exposes as pure hypocrisy is that Britain's building of the Indian railroads was fundamental to India's development. On the contrary—the rail lines were built exclusively for the purpose of looting resources and crops and

shipping them to ports for export. The pitifully scant room left for actual transport of passengers was so small and overpriced that it became the subject of many political campaigns for the benefit of the “3rd class” Indians, including by Gandhi. In a proper, human economy, large-scale capital investments, such as railroads and physical infrastructure, have a dramatic impact on the entire economic system, raising productivity and the power of the individual’s labor for the entire system. In an imperial economy, however, the opposite is the case.

One reason for so much railroad investment in India was the guarantee given to investors by the British government of a minimum five percent annual profit—higher than any other safe investment—which was to come out of internal Indian revenues when it fell short (which it always did). In addition, railroad construction was a major outlet for expensive British steel, as almost every part, from tracks to locomotives to cars, came from England. The British supplied the equipment, controlled the technology, and collected the profits, while the Indians bore the expenses and paid for the losses. While American railroad construction cost the equivalent of £2,000/mile at that time, British rail in India cost £18,000/mile, reports Tharoor.

To make it even clearer, Tharoor includes a very telling story of what the British do when mere “free trade” fails to result in the desired effect. In 1862, two repair facilities were opened in India so as to begin to maintain the locomotives at home. By 1878, the Indian rail mechanics had become so skilled at their jobs, that they began designing and manufacturing their own locomotives, just as good, and much cheaper than the British



The British-created Great Famine of 1943, Bengal, India.



Yousuf Karsh

Winston Churchill poses in the Canadian Parliament, Ottawa, Canada, December, 1941.

ones. This wouldn’t stand. The British passed a law essentially forbidding any locomotives from being manufactured in India, thereby shutting down the facilities immediately.

British Created Famines: The More Sinister Element

Winston Churchill, an outspoken but not at all unique figure in British Imperial history, provides a good case in point. In the great Bengal Famine of 1943, when millions were dying of starvation, Churchill deliberately diverted food from India to already-full stockpiles for armies in Europe. When questioned about the need for relief for the Indians,

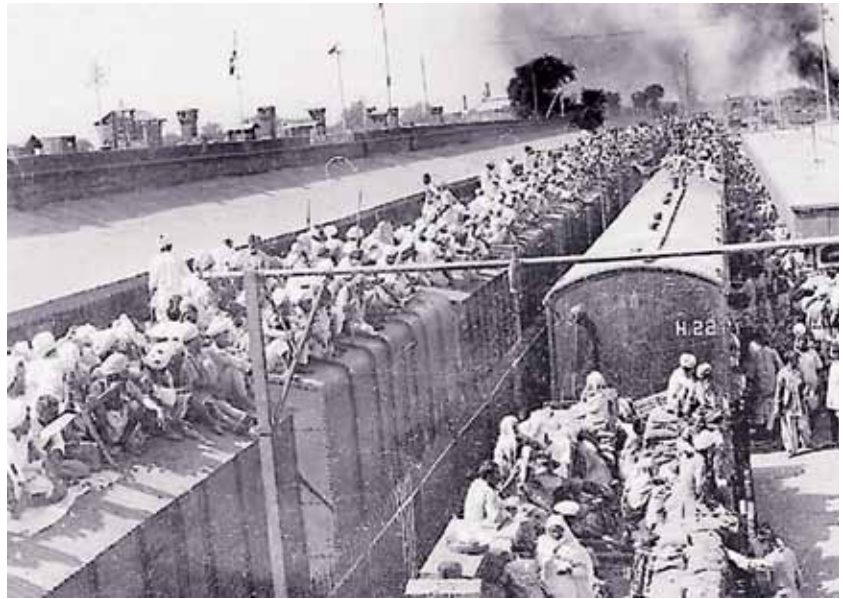
Churchill merely replied that they had brought it upon themselves by “breeding like rabbits,” and then asked, “Why isn’t Gandhi dead yet?” On another occasion, Churchill made the spectacular comment: “I hate Indians. They are a beastly people with a beastly religion.”

Four million people died of starvation in Bengal in 1943.

The Bengal Famine, however, was only one among many famines in the history of the British Raj and is far from the worst. This story of the British-caused famines has already been covered by this publication¹ and does not need to be repeated here. Tharoor puts the number of Indians murdered in famines at 35 million, which, while monstrous, is itself an understatement.² While he does bring up Thomas Malthus in an earlier part of the book as a major influence on British policy, he doesn't develop the full significance of that influence. Malthus argued that the universal laws of nature demand that human population must only increase as much as the always limited agricultural resources will permit. Any excess will be dealt with "naturally," i.e., by death and starvation. According to this logic, the tens of millions of Indians who perished by starvation at the hands of the engorging British Empire was nothing more than this "natural" balance asserting itself. But, as Churchill himself enunciated, this was merely a justification for a policy of engineered and intentional genocide.³ This is true British "free trade," practiced up to and including today.

The Way Out

There is much more that could be said regarding Tharoor's reports on the horrors of British rule in India, but for our purposes here, it will be sufficient to leave readers to study his book for themselves. A few other pieces of the story of the British crimes in India, elaborated by Tharoor, need to be added briefly. Education policy was shaped to foster simple manual labor and suppress intellectual and creative thought. Millions of Indians around the world were forced into indentured



Refugee trains bringing Muslims from India to Pakistan, and Hindus from Pakistan to India during Partition in 1947.

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servitude by the same networks that ran the African slave trade. The previously somewhat loose caste system was transformed under the British Raj into one of rigidly bound societal status. Very important for understanding our world today, is Tharoor's presentation—though significantly understated—of the British Empire's deliberate division of Hindus and Muslims, as well as other groups in India to create what became the India-Pakistan partition of 1945-47.

As a whole, what emerges from Tharoor's book, despite his downplaying of several elements, is the pure, Zeus-like evil which characterized British rule in India, from the economic destruction, to the manipulation of minds and cultures, to the outright genocide of the multiple famines and "riot suppressions." In short, one gets a strong impression of the murderous nature of the British Empire.

This brings us to an important point. When discussing the underlying principle of different societies throughout history, Lyndon LaRouche has insisted that one must determine the *intention* of the nation or society in question. Take the case of our United States, as an example. Our historic Constitutional intention is to defend and promote in every way possible the general welfare and the public good of the nation and its citizens. Now ask yourself: What was the intention of the British in India? What could be said of the unifying idea

1. http://www.larouche.com/eiw/public/2015/eiv42n27-20150703/20-25_4227.pdf

2. *EIR* has estimated that the number was closer to 60 million, comparable to the total deaths during World War II.

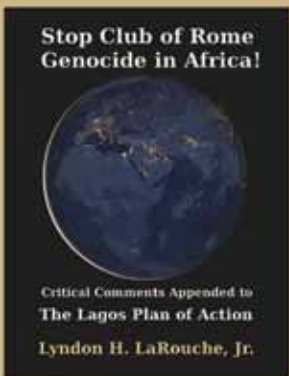
3. It should not be a surprise to the witting that both the argument that human population must conform to the natural balance of nature, and the argument that human economy must conform to the natural balance of the "free market," originated in merry old England.

which characterized that history?

It is precisely here that Tharoor's book is weakest. Rather than identifying the underlying principle of empire as it manifested itself in India, he allows his story to dissolve into a sea of "complicated" factors such as wrong ideologies, greedy or racist officials, and unceasing lust for profit. While these are all true in a certain respect, this misreading of the most crucial issue diverts the reader into matters of secondary importance and fails to grasp that *it is the intention of an oligarchical empire to be criminal*—that it is a hatred of mankind that drives the oligarchical mindset.⁴

Tharoor is thorough in cataloging genocidal British atrocities. Yet, the book's weakness lies in not fully comprehending the motives behind those atrocities; it fails to perceive that, behind the surface pomp and brutality of the British colonial system, the British Empire

4. Contrast this to Friedrich Schiller's essay comparing Lyncurgus' Sparta with Solon's Athens, or Henry C. Carey's comparison of the American System with the British System in his *The Harmony of Interests*.



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has always been—and continues to be—axiomatically, a financial empire, an empire based on usury, debt slavery, currency manipulation and the unchallenged hegemony of the City of London. This is what we still see today in the imperial role of the IMF and WTO, and in the role of British "off-shore" financial institutions.

Tharoor's inability or unwillingness to delve deeper into the nature of the British Empire leads him into too great an emphasis on certain individual personalities, and into errors concerning key British actions. Thus, Tharoor is soft on the role of Mountbatten and Churchill. He also significantly understates Britain's overriding role in forcing through the separation of Pakistan from India at the end of British rule.

More importantly, this blindness also leads him to miss what was actually the transition from the pre-1939 British Empire into Britain's more sophisticated version of empire—which insinuated itself in the core of the financial, political, and cultural structures of the world for decades to come. After World War II, the British didn't give up their colonies because they were bankrupt and realized that the good ol' days were over, but rather decided to adapt to what was a changing post-war world. This is the history of the creation of the financial empire which exists today. This is today's trans-Atlantic financial system, and its global petrodollar, which has looted and indebted nations the world over, and which currently stands ready to disintegrate at any moment.⁵

This is the history which Lyndon LaRouche and his movement have uniquely elaborated and posed the solution for, and which must urgently be understood by any American or all people who wish to act against this evil that rules much of the world today. The time has come to destroy the British Empire for good, and in its place, establish a community of sovereign nations each committed to the common aims of mankind. To this end, let us bring the U.S., Russia, China, and India together, and bring them to the table for an agreement of this caliber, and raise the banner of creative human development for all.

5. A recent British documentary, [The Spider's Web: Britain's Second Empire](#), elaborates on the international system of tax havens which is at the core of today's Anglo-Dutch trans-Atlantic system, whose money laundering, drug trafficking, and terrorist financing play a major role in the modern-day British Empire.