

Prosperity  
under  
Karīm  
Khān

mad Khān Qājār a hostage at his court in Shīrāz, after repulsing Moḥammad Ḥasan Qājār's bids for extended dominion.

Karīm Khān's geniality and common sense inaugurated a period of peace and popular contentment, and he worked to develop the commercial potential of Shīrāz as a centre within reach of the Persian Gulf ports and the Indian trade. The stability granted by his reign to peoples who since 1722 had known little peace ended on his death in 1779. After Karīm Khān's death, Aghā Moḥammad escaped to the Qājār tribal country in the north, gathered a large force, and embarked upon a war of conquest. He was aided in his efforts by dissensions among the Zands over succession to Karīm Khān and thus was able to establish himself as the first shah of the Qājār dynasty.

#### THE QAJARS (1779-1925)

**Aghā Moḥammad Khān.** Between 1779 and 1789, the Zands fought among themselves over their legacy. In the end, it fell to the gallant Loṭf 'Alī, the Zands' last hope. Aghā Moḥammad Khān relentlessly hunted him down until he overcame and killed him at the southeastern city of Kermān in 1794. The citizens of the city were punished horribly—by massacre, mutilations, and blindings—for having thrown in their lot with Loṭf 'Alī Zand. In 1796 Aghā Moḥammad assumed the imperial diadem, and later in the same year he took Mashhad. Shāh Rokh died of the tortures inflicted on him to make him reveal the complete tally of the Afshārids' treasure. Aghā Moḥammad was cruel; he was perforce avaricious: he had conquered a country ruined by lack of competent government and by the warfare of uncontrolled predatory tribes and warlords. Karīm Khān's commercial efforts were nullified by his successors' quarrels, while with cruel irony attempts to revive the Persian Gulf trade, followed up in a British Mission from India in 1800, whose terms of reference were commercial as well as political, ultimately opened the way for a drain of Persian bullion to India. This drain, imports prevailing over exports, was made inevitable by the damage done to Iran's productive capacity during Aghā Moḥammad Khān's campaigns to conquer Iran for the Qājārs.

Aghā Moḥammad Khān avenged his captivity at Karīm Khān's hands by a frightful visitation of slaughter and torture on southern Persia. He gained Nāder Shāh's hoard of jewels and an empire; but he failed to improve the sources of production, and in fact he never gained control over them—nor did his successors. Antipathy to the Qājārs resulted in an alignment of religious leaders with the merchants, so that when trade did revive, its revenues were not shared with the government.

**European penetration.** Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh (1797-1834) was drawn into European contacts of a diplomatic and military sort, rather than of the kind that would promote the country's commercial prosperity. These contacts began with the British, who feared that the strength of Zamān Shāh of Afghanistan threatened their control over northwestern India and who were suspicious of Napoleon's schemes for Asiatic conquest. The British dislodged the French from Persia. Faṭḥ 'Alī Shāh, in need of revenue, relied on British subsidies but lost the Caucasus to Russia by the treaties of Golestān in 1813 and Turkmanchay in 1828. The last gave Russian commercial and consular agents entrance to Iran, and the British gradually awoke to the danger implicit in Russian influence in Iran. The diplomatic rivalry between two great powers that began victimized Iran and extended into a commercial rivalry throughout the 19th century. This rivalry was eventually resolved in a manner indicative of the degree of impotency to which Iran had been reduced, when in 1907 an Anglo-Russian convention established, in Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet, exclusive Anglo-Russian spheres of influence without consulting the authorities in the countries concerned.

Moḥammad Shāh's (1834-48) minister, Ḥājji Mirzā Aghāsī, tried to activate the government in a revival of the sources of production and to cement ties with lesser European powers, such as Spain and Belgium, as an al-

ternative to Russo-British dominance, but little achieved. Nāser od-Dīn Shāh (1848-96) made Iran bid to regain Herāt, but 1857 saw the end of such expansionist efforts, and an embassy five years earlier to London had failed to impress the Central Asian khanates with any sense of the effectiveness of Iranian power, though some Iranians captured and sold as agricultural labour in Khiva were released. The Anglo-Russian embrace tightened around Iran. Popular and religious antagonism to the Qājār regime increased as Nāser od-Dīn Shāh strove to raise funds by recourse to selling concessions, ostensibly for the development of his country's resources, to Europeans. In 1872 he granted a British subject, Baron von Reuter, a comprehensive concession to build railways and industrialize Iran. In 1873 he went to Europe, but the rented concession had to be rescinded mainly because of Russian pressure and because of its own unwieldy character, which inhibited support in foreign business circles. The money paid for concessions was squandered by the court and on foreign journeys to Europe in 1878 and 1889, however. The tobacco concession that was granted to British speculators after the last of these journeys triggered off popular protest. The concession was cancelled, and as a consequence Iran had to pay a heavy indemnity.

The effect of popular protest, however, in bringing about cancellation of the tobacco concession demonstrated two factors of crucial significance for the future: first, that unified popular protest could limit the extent of despotism; and second, that a mercantile class of sufficient prosperity existed in Iran by 1890 to harness the support of certain religious orators, popular teachers. The Shah's suppression of the Bābī and Bahā'ī heresies had not, in spite of its ugly severity, ingrained the regime with the orthodox 'ulamā'. Meanwhile, country-wide antigovernment demonstrations had been stimulated by the introduction since 1865 of the telegraph by the British, who had built a telegraphic link between Europe and India across Iranian soil.

The "Tobacco Riots" were the prelude to the constitutional revolution of the reign of Mozaffar od-Dīn Shāh (1896-1907). Iran remained on silver after the failure of bimetalism and the world slump in silver values from the 1870s onward. By Gresham's law, silver bullion drained out of the country and copper money proliferated, causing "bread riots." Mozaffar od-Dīn's loans from Europe exacerbated the financial distress and made revolution inevitable. In 1906 the ailing Shah granted a Constitution. In October of that year, the first National Constitutive Assembly (the Majles) was opened. In 1908, Moḥammad 'Alī Shāh (1907-09), this parliament suppressed with the aid of the Persian Cossack Brigade instituted by Nāser od-Dīn Shāh and officered by Persians under contract to the Shah. The Majles was reconstituted after a civil war that culminated in Moḥammad Shāh's deposition. In 1925 the National Assembly, enlarged on the occasion to form a special Constituent Assembly, elected Reza Pahlavi shah, by whom Aḥmad Shāh (1925-25), the last of the Qājār rulers, was supplanted.

#### THE PAHLAVI DYNASTY (1925-PRESENT)

During World War I, Iran was the scene of the rival intrigues of pro-British and pro-German groups among the notables. The notables formed a class that, in the despotic power of the Qājārs had declined and the momentum of the constitutional movement dissipated. Numerous self-defeating "clubs" (*anjomans*) and factions, had succeeded, partly through influence as exercised by landowners over the electorate, partly through support, in gaining control of the Majles. Manipulated by interested foreign powers and the venality of the notables resulted in a serious decline in political momentum within only a decade after the revolution. The disturbances caused by wartime disturbances within the country and economic stagnation was exacerbated by famine and national bankruptcy.

**Reza Shah.** In 1919 the British, fearing that Russian activity in Iran might spread Bolshevism to India, offered Iran financial and military assistance. Iran, however,

Anglo-  
Russian  
rivalry

fused to be restored under the aegis of a foreign power. The Majles refused the British proposal and British financial and military experts were withdrawn from the country. Salvation came from another quarter in the person of an Iranian officer of the Persian Cossack Brigade, whose Russian officers had been dismissed or left of their own accord following the Bolshevik Revolution. In collaboration with a political writer, Sayyid Zia od-Din Tabataba'i, this officer, later named Reza Shah, staged a coup d'état in 1921. Reza Shah quickly dispensed with his political companion, and his efforts between 1921 and 1925 as successively war minister and prime minister under Ahmad Shāh resulted in the formation of an army loyal to him, the achievement of order (to the gratification of the mercantile community), and finally the transference of sovereignty into his own hands.

In August 1938 Reza Shah inaugurated Iran's first railroad. It ran from the Caspian to the Persian Gulf, and it typifies Iran's remarkable recovery under his firm rule: it cost £30,000,000 sterling but was built without any debt being incurred to foreign financiers. In 1933 he gained improved terms for Iran on the oil concession granted to a British company in 1901. He effected educational and juridical reforms that deprived the religious classes of much of their former influence and laid the basis of a modern state. He freed females from wearing the veil and modified divorce laws in their favour. He restored the nation's confidence and achieved its independence from foreign political interference.

Unfortunately, trade necessities, fear of the Russians' grip on the routing of Iranian goods to Europe, and of Russian control of Iran's northern trade, made him turn to Nazi Germany, which did not hesitate to offer Reza Shah's government the blandishments of attractive partnership terms. His refusal to abandon what he conceived to be obligations toward numerous Germans in Iran in 1941 occasioned an Anglo-Soviet invasion of the country to obviate German fifth-column operations there and ensure the safe passage of American supplies to the Soviet front through the Iranian rail and road systems. In September 1941 Reza Shah abdicated and left Iran. He died in South Africa in 1944.

**Postwar developments.** In difficult wartime conditions, his son, Mohammad Reza Pahlavi, succeeded, to begin the long process of restoration in a country subjected to the inflation stemming from occupation during the war, and to the struggle for power between the throne and landed notables who had emerged once again to influence the Majles after Reza Shah's abdication. The Soviets and a Communist "popular" regime were removed from Azerbaijan in 1946 after a tense moment when it appeared that this northwestern province of Iran might become the first Soviet satellite. In 1951 Mohammad Mosaddeq nationalized Iranian oil and the British Oil Company withdrew, but regrettably the disturbed political situation during Mosaddeq's premiership, and the grip held by western oil companies on the marketing of the commodity, turned Mosaddeq's nationalization triumph into a Pyrrhic victory. His period in office ended in turmoil in 1953; but by 1961 the Shah was able finally to take the initiative.

By dissolving the 20th Majles in May 1961, the Shah cleared the way for effecting land reforms that landowners in the Majles had opposed. The first Land Reform Law was enacted in 1962, and an electorate-controlling landed minority on receipt of compensation had to give up their lands to the government for redistribution to cultivators. Profit sharing in industry was introduced, while landlords could receive compensation for their former holdings in the form of shares in denationalized industries. Cultivators and workers were given more voice in national affairs, and cooperatives in rural areas began to replace the former landowners as sources of capital for irrigation and agrarian maintenance and development. A campaign was organized to reduce illiteracy, and the country's power structure radically changed in a farsighted, bold program termed the "White Revolution." The increased confidence and potential articulateness of a hitherto oppressed peasantry were indicated at

the national congress of some 4,000 cultivators, held in Tehrān in January 1963. On the 26th of the same month, the White Revolution was officially endorsed by the nation in a referendum by which the new reforms were overwhelmingly supported. By the end of 1969, out of a farming population of over 12,000,000, nearly 2,500,000 families were estimated to have benefitted from the land reforms. These were modified by a second phase of reform inaugurated in 1965, whereby smaller holdings became subject to redistribution among cultivators.

In a total population of some 29,000,000 by 1969, per capita income had been lifted from about \$193 to \$273. During the third (1964-68) of a series of development programs begun since World War II, the gross national product is reported to have increased to an average annual rate of 8.6 percent.

Oil revenues reached \$1,000,000,000 a year, and planned development proceeded with seven dams constructed to provide much-needed water and hydraulic-power resources. During a fourth development plan, 1968-1973, 10.8 billion dollars were to be invested, of which 5,000,000,000 were to be derived from oil revenues.

Improvement and construction since 1961 were accompanied by an "independent national policy" in foreign relations. The main principles of this foreign policy were support for the United Nations and peaceful coexistence with a positive approach in cementing friendly and mutually beneficial ties with other nations. Iran has played a major role in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and Regional Co-operation for Development (RCD) with Turkey and Pakistan. It has also embarked upon extensive trade and cultural relations with countries of the Eastern European Bloc, the Soviet Union, France, Germany, Scandinavia.

The Shah visited the Soviet Union in 1956. Since 1969, a number of technical, agricultural, and cultural agreements have been concluded with the Soviet Union, and a Permanent Committee for Irano-Soviet Economic Co-operation exists. In March 1970, the president of the Praesidium of the Soviet Union paid a state visit to Iran. In 1969 the construction of Iran's first steel mill began with Soviet engineers in charge. Relations with the United States remain close and U.S. military advisory units are in Iran.

The United States policy since World War II of strengthening key nations of the free world has enabled Iran since 1945 to tide itself over postwar fiscal dislocation and the crisis occasioned by the oil nationalization until U.S. good offices enabled the international oil consortium, which with the National Iranian Oil Company now operates Iran's oil, to come into being in 1954.

Iran presently is witnessing unparalleled rapidity of development of its resources with growing industrialization, by which it will become less dependent on foreign imports, and there is a new confidence among its people, who now enjoy international respect and freedom from foreign subjugation and exploitation. (P.W.A.)

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