The Dynamics of the Iranian Revolution

The Pahlavis' Triumph and Tragedy

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agricultural workers who had moved to cities in search of employment and now found ample reason to be dissatisfied. Jobs were there, but the take-home pay did not always give them the living standard they expected. City life was harsh, uncertain, disorienting, and lonely. Temptations were overwhelming, but hope for satisfying them not too great. Regular farmers and working people in rural areas were the least aware, or concerned, about happenings in Tehran and other major cities—and played only a peripheral role in the agitation against the regime. But, their silence and inaction deprived the government of a significant source of potential support.

THE BUREAUCRACY AND CIVIL SERVICE

The dissatisfaction, grumbling, passive resistance, and frequent circumvention of policy directives by civil servants stemmed from different origins. The very top of the bureaucratic pyramid below the crown—some 500–750 high ranking individuals including cabinet ministers, agency heads, parliament deputies, ambassadors, provincial governors, and other royal appointees—consisted of men and women who were nearly all college graduates and largely Western-educated who had gradually replaced old politicians and other notables of the Reza Shah era. They were mostly of the same age as the shah or younger, and shared his vision, ambition, and enthusiam for Iran. But they differed otherwise in social philosophy, moral values, democratic inclination, integrity, religious devotion, crowd pleasing qualities, sycophancy, and, in retrospect, unwavering loyalty.

Among this small ruling elite there were those who regarded the monarch as their idol, leader (*farmandeh*), and ultimate provider. They probably never, even in the strictest confidence to their closest friends, questioned his wisdom or found fault with his actions. The second group consisted of a very large number of professional cadres—almost all Western-educated—who were action-driven, results-oriented, energetic men and women who minded their own business and displayed a stoic reluctance to speak out about policies and programs with which they were not involved. They followed the maps which the shah put before them, but were by no means a homogenous, like-minded, cooperative, happy lot. Deep down, many of them were ideologically opposed to the shah's autocracy, disliked the monarch's disregard of their professional advice, and chafed under his one-man decisions. Among themselves, and even to trusted foreign friends, they often complained about some of the sovereign's priorities and policies. With no political base of their own, they were dependent on the shah's grace and patronage. Weary and distrustful of the monarch's inner circle, they kept a precarious and uneasy distance from the court, and continued to walk a tight rope. There was an underlying resentment of the

shah's more frequent and more serious consultations with his foreign friends and advisors than with his own domestic aides.

A somewhat more irritating issue for many in this group was the alleged sympathy of the crown for two special political and religious societies whose members the shah supposedly considered the elite of the elites. These two associations that, in fact, substituted for regular political parties in organization, discipline, patronage, and mutural self-help, were the Fraternal Order of the Freemasons—affiliated with several Western European lodges—and the religious order of the Baha'i Faith as a latter-day offshoot of Shi'ism. As a rule, or for some personal reasons, members of these organizations kept their membership and affiliation unpublicized, if not frequently secret. A large number of high government officials, including prime ministers, several cabinet ministers, armed forces generals, parliament deputies and others were rumored to be members of one or the other—and in some cases, both.[14] The shah himself was often said by his enemies to be the secret grand master of the Masons and a supporter of Baha'ism.

True or not, the prevailing sentiment among the higher echelons of civil servants and royal appointees was that the Freemasons and the Baha'is were running the country in their own interests and those of their unnamed masters. They were depicted by the religions-leaning groups as a haunting example of two small but influential (and foreign-connected) minorities of internationalists imposing their will on a faithful and nationalistic majority. Acknowledged members themselves, naturally, denied any nefarious motives, and defended their associations as purely fraternal, social, or religious aimed at mutual assistance and self-help plus the promotion of international understanding and world peace. Nevertheless, the perception and the alienation prevailed—as did jealousy and indignation among a large group of unaffiliated civil servants.

Regular civil service cadres below the privileged elite, particularly the younger generation of university educated technocrats, shared resentful feelings about the shah's increasingly high-handed rule. They often sympathized with superiors to whom the monarch presumably denied the right to offer independent professional advice and whom he relegated to the status of mere puppets. They also felt jealousy and envy toward their superiors whom they did not believe to be any better or more qualified than they themselves.

The rank-and-file civil servants—as the only organized, articulate, and powerful lobby in the country—had among them the regime's largest educated adversaries. The latter were perpetually in a state of silent revolt against the establishment. They constantly complained about their low salaries and fringe benefits, grade qualifications, pension rights, and job assignments. Although an integral part of the system themselves, and perpetrators of many of its dysfunctions, they complained about red tape, political interference in their work, the discriminatory process of recruitment and promotion, and other