

ASPECTS OF THE REIGN OF MUZAFFAR AL-DĪN SHĀH OF PERSIA
1896-1907

Thesis submitted for the Degree of PhD

by

ROBERT MICHAEL BURRELL

School of Oriental and African Studies
University of London
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ABSTRACT

This thesis is concerned with certain aspects of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh of Persia from 1896 to 1907; during the last year of which Persia ceased to be an absolute monarchy and adopted a constitution.

The thesis first of all discusses the value of various British archives for the study of this period. It goes on to consider the character of Muzaffar al-Dīn and the nature of government during his reign. Two particular organs of government are studied in detail: the army and the Customs administration, which was then undergoing reform at the hands of Belgian experts. The diffusion of cholera throughout Persia in 1904 is described, and the effects of that epidemic are discussed. The thesis then turns to a study of the political and economic circumstances which prevailed in the two important provinces of Fārs and Isfahān.

The thesis shows that there was much discontent in Persia, and it notes that few of the sources of that discontent were new. It is seen that members of the religious classes played an important part in events throughout the period. It is shown that the government of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh was weak, that it failed to exercise effective central control, and that it was incapable of meeting the demands made upon it. It is argued that Anglo-Russian rivalry had a considerable impact on domestic events, and that that rivalry increased the problems facing the country, while at the same time it revealed to many Persians the extent of the government's weakness. It is concluded that although many demands were being made of the Shāh and his government, they were not essentially incompatible with the continuation of absolute rule.

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PREFACE

The thesis would not have been possible without the assistance and support of many individuals and academic institutions. I would first like to thank my parents for their unfailing encouragement in my studies. The School of Oriental and African Studies awarded me a Governing Body Postgraduate Exhibition which enabled me to begin my study of Persian, and the School later appointed me to a lectureship in History. The years I have spent under its roof have been happy and rewarding ones. I would also like to acknowledge the administrative help which I have received from the Registrar of the School and his staff. My thanks are due to the Department of Education and Science for the award of a Hayter Studentship which enabled me to pursue research in London and to spend time travelling in Persia. The British Institute of Persian Studies in Tehran provided a warm welcome for me.

The staffs of the Library of the School, of the Senate House Library in the University of London, and of the British Library (British Museum) have given me much willing help, and the resources of those libraries have been invaluable in my work. The staff of the Public Record Office met my every request with great courtesy and equal efficiency. I am deeply in their debt. Quotations from Crown Copyright Records in the Public Record Office appear by permission of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office.

I have received much help from colleagues at the School. In particular I would like to thank Professor P.M. Holt, Professor B. Lewis (now of Princeton University), Dr. K.S. McLachlan, Dr. D.O. Morgan and Dr. M.E. Yapp for their informed interest in, and help with my research.

Dr. T.O. Gandjei and Mr. A.A. Haidari shared, with my supervisor, the trying task of teaching me Persian. I also owe much to Mr. J.R. Bracken for his encouragement, and for his attempts to improve my prose style. His lack of success will be obvious to all readers of this thesis. Miss Janet Marks of the Department of Economic and Political Studies at the School showed great skill in reading my handwriting and in typing the final copy of the thesis.

I have learned much from discussions with Dr. R.W. Ferrier, the Archivist of the British Petroleum Company, and with Mr. A.H. Morton, formerly the Assistant Director of the British Institute of Persian Studies in Tehran. Miss Elizabeth Monroe and Mr. A.H. Hourani of Oxford gave valuable help and guidance in the early stages of my research, and I am very grateful to them. I would also like to record my thanks to Dr. B. Anderson of the University of London Health Service, who worked in Calcutta during the cholera epidemic of 1971, for the time which she gave to discussing that disease with me, and for reading and commenting upon a draft version of Chapter V. Dr. M. Woods of Birkbeck College raised questions which I had ignored, and encouraged me to find some of the answers. Mr. C. Birch read much of the final version of thesis, and helped to prevent some of its errors from reaching the reader.

I would also like to acknowledge, because I cannot repay, the debt to my wife for her very great help and support - without her this thesis would never have been finished. The person to whom I owe most is my supervisor, Professor A.K.S. Lambton. She awakened my interest in Persia and has sustained it constantly. Her profound knowledge of that country and its history has been matched by her patience and

devotion as a teacher. Any merits which this thesis may possess must be attributed to her guidance; the faults which remain are entirely due to my inability to learn from her.

The transliteration system used is basically that of the Cambridge History of Islam, with the additional and variant forms for Persian which are permitted under that system. Exceptions have been made in the case of some place names where strict transliteration would have given rise to peculiar spellings, as in the case of Tih[̄]rān and Khwansā[̄]r - here rendered as Tehran and Khunsā[̄]r. Other examples of departure from the system are Ābādeh, Bushire, Enzeli, Lingeh and Sāveh. Where there are accepted English spellings - bazaar and Caliph - these have been used. In footnotes where British archives have been cited, the standard form used in those documents has been followed, thus Shiraz Diary, not Shīrāz Diary. In the case of diplomatic and consular despatches, the place of origin has been indicated only where it differs from that of the post occupied by the writer of the despatch, or where confusion may otherwise have arisen. In the bibliography I have referred only to the series of documents which have been used, quoting the numbers of the volumes where I began and ended my research: but full references are provided in the case of each foot-note.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION AND DISCUSSION OF SOURCES

"Yet let him know that undertakes to pick out the best ear amongst an acre of wheat, that he shall leave as good if not a better behind him, than that which he chooseth."

Attributed to Thomas Fuller,
in Autobiography of Joseph Scaliger
translated and edited by G.W. Robinson.
Cambridge (USA) 1927, p.8.

The events examined in this thesis happened some 100 years after the establishment of the Qājār dynasty. That century had seen the renewal of European interest in Persia, an interest which had lain largely dormant since Safavid times. But the concerns of the European powers - chiefly England and Russia - were now wider and more important than they had been in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Then the interest of the external powers in Persia had been mainly, if not exclusively, commercial. Under the Qājār Shāhs political and strategic considerations were to predominate and although trade was still a significant element it was subsidiary to, even if entangled with, those two paramount concerns.

This intensification of external interest in Persia was one of the features which attracted me to the study of Qājār history. The geographical location of Persia is such that her history has long been open to the influence of external events; but from the early nineteenth century contacts with other countries became much wider in scale, as well as changed in their nature. The factors which shaped the history of Persia under the Qājārs were, however, more complex than those which derived solely from an intensification of external interests in the country: for at the same time a reverse process was taking place and

some, albeit few, Persians were now starting to take note of European events and ideas. As the Anglo-Russian contest for influence increased - leading within 7 months of the death of Muzaffar al-Dīn to the signing of the agreement which divided Persia into spheres of influence¹ - many Persians came to regard that rivalry as one of the major causes of their country's weakness. The groups which blamed the external powers for Persia's internal decay were many and varied, and they agreed on little but the general cause of the decline. A few Persians, however, saw Europe not so much as the origin of Persia's weakness, but rather as a possible source of ideas, and of institutions, which might assist in the regeneration of their homeland. To look outside Persia, indeed outside the Islamic world, for help in diagnosing and curing their country's ills was something new in the history of Persia.

The acceptance of external assistance in the task of making Persia strong can be seen as early as the reign of Fath⁶ Alī Shāh, when that monarch sought help variously from Britain and France in the attempt to improve the condition of his military forces.² Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh later turned to Russia when he too wished to strengthen his army, and Muzaffar al-Dīn was responsible for the bringing in of Belgian experts to effect a major reform of the Customs administration. The reforms which the Qājār Shāhs tried to make - and most of their efforts were fitful - were designed to strengthen the prevailing system of absolute rule by making it more efficient.

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1. For the text of that agreement see C.U. Aitchison (compiler), A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads Relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Calcutta 1933, Vol.XIII, pp.119-21.
 2. See Report on the Persian Army by Lieutenant-Colonel H.P. Picot, in F.O. 881:7364, Secret and Confidential, pp.20-48.

But by the early years of the twentieth century a few Persians were beginning to seek something other than an increase in the efficacy of royal rule. In a tentative manner they were starting to call for a new form of government; one in which political power would be shared. It can be argued that any major reform in administrative methods will sooner or later require some corresponding readjustment in values and attitudes; in the case of political reforms, however, the relationship between the two aspects of change is much closer. For example, the use of Europeans to train the Persian army did not necessarily pose an immediate threat to the basis of the Shāh's political authority. But to try to establish a representative form of government meant to seek a limitation on the powers of the Shāh; and that was a distinct break with the political traditions of the past.

In other words, some of the reforms made with European assistance could appear to be compatible with the prevailing philosophy of absolute rule, but other changes, and specifically those concerned with the introduction of a constitution and elections required for their success the modification, if not the rejection, of traditional concepts of power. Once the door admitting European ideas and institutions was open it was very difficult to establish any effective criteria to determine what should or should not be borrowed. If some of the Shāhs saw Persia as needing a strong army and a more effective administration, other Persians, few though they may have been, saw their country as needing more profound changes if its weaknesses were to be removed.

It was no easy task in Qājār Persia to institute reforms derived from Europe. Any such attempt was likely to meet formidable opposition,

particularly from members of the religious classes; while at the same time other sections of the population sometimes demanded that the reforms should be implemented with greater vigour and determination. This division of opinion can be seen even in the case of the much-detested attempt to set up the Tobacco Régie.³ One of the beliefs which lay behind the opposition of some members of the religious classes was that the introduction of European businesses would reduce their role in legal matters and would so diminish their prestige and authority. The newspaper Akhtar, which was published in Istanbul, also condemned the concession, but it did so on the grounds of the protection of Persian national interests; saying that the profits from the trade would in future accrue to British rather than to Persian merchants, and that the proposed agreement with Talbot would not produce as much revenue for the Shāh as the Turkish one did for the Sultān.⁴ As will be seen later (Chapter III), some members of the Persian religious classes opposed the introduction of Belgian customs officials because they objected to non-Muslims carrying out tasks such as revenue collection. Some members of the merchant classes objected for different reason: in the early stages of the reform they resented having to pay heavier dues, but their opposition became even stronger when they found that little if any of the new revenue was being spent on improving conditions for trade, and that facilities at the ports and security along the roads continued to decline. While some of the religious classes protested about the

3. See A.K.S. Lambton, The Tobacco Régie: Prelude to Revolution, Studia Islamica, Vol.XXII, 1965, pp.119-57, and Vol.XXIII, pp.71-90, and N. Keddie, Religion and Rebellion in Iran: The Tobacco Protest of 1891-1892, London 1966.

4. Quoted in N. Keddie, op.cit., p.49.

increasing number of European merchants and businessmen in Persia, the Calcutta newspaper Habl al-Matīn was urging native merchants to learn from the Europeans, and to form a chamber of commerce for the protection of their interests.⁵

When reactions to the introduction of European reforms were so strong the intensification of Anglo-Russian political rivalry could serve only to exacerbate the situation. Had that rivalry not existed the pressure for reform might have been less; but at the same time the Shāh would have been able to claim, probably with greater conviction, that the reforms which he was instituting were voluntary and were not being carried out at the behest of London or St. Petersburg. Persia's first foreign loan had been raised to pay the compensation demanded for the cancellation of the Tobacco concession, and the later loans aroused opposition both because they came from foreign sources, and because they produced no tangible benefits for the country. The granting of concessions to foreign entrepreneurs was also greatly resented, for although some of these did increase government revenue, few appreciable benefits were seen by the public at large: while the fact that the holders of the concessions were usually neither Persian nor Muslim was regarded as a further sign of the inability of the Shāh to defend the Islamic community.

In order to understand better these complex reactions to the introduction of European ideas and institutions, part of this thesis has been devoted to events in the provinces; for in the secondary

5. Translated in C. Issawi (ed.), The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914, Chicago 1971, pp.67-9. The edition of the newspaper in question is that of 18 May 1906.

literature little attention seemed to have been given to what was happening outside Tehran and, to a lesser extent, Tabrīz. Obviously not all the provinces could be studied in detail, so the solution adopted was to look at the evidence concerning events in two important provinces, Isfahān and Fārs, while also investigating two other major events during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn - the reform of the Customs administration and the cholera epidemic of 1904 - on as wide a geographical basis as was possible. The examination of the Customs administration was also undertaken to evaluate the many sorts of difficulties which lay in the path of any major attempt at administrative reform.

At quite an early stage in the study of the British sources a major question arose. Those papers contain many reports which indicated the weakness of the Shāh and his government, yet it was also obvious that the people were protesting about tyranny (zulm).⁶ How could such a feeble administration seem so oppressive to so many people? In order to clarify this question evidence was collected about affairs at Court (Chapter II), and the condition of the army (Chapter III). The kind of questions posed were: What sort of ruler was Muzaffar al-Dīn? What bearing did the personality of the Shāh have on the functioning of government? What was the state of Muzaffar al-Dīn's health and how did this affect his capacity as a ruler? What was the relationship between the Shāh and his Ministers, and what were relations like between the

6. Zulm (tyranny) is the opposite of ʿadl (justice), the quality which Muslims required of good rulers. In the words of the Russian Vice-Consul in Tabrīz at the time zulm "implies that the government or the Shāh himself has ceased to be the father of his subjects and is committing acts of unlawful oppression", A.D. Kalmykow, Memoirs of a Russian Diplomat: Outposts of the Empire 1893-1917, New Haven 1971, p.50.

Ministers? All these questions were necessary to see if the system of government was working well or not, and the answers would help to clarify the matter of whether any failure was due to the fact that the established system could no longer cope with Persia's problems, or whether that system had not been kept in good order and was not being used to its full potential. Similar questions were asked of the army in order to ascertain its effectiveness and to appraise its morale.

In brief, this study of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh has two main purposes. It seeks to examine the effects of growing contacts with, and knowledge of, European ideas and institutions, and of the keen Anglo-Russian competition for influence in Persia. It also attempts to analyse the causes of the growing opposition to the Shāh and his government, and to see why conditions in Persia were regarded by many people as becoming intolerably tyrannical.

To these ends considerable use has been made of British diplomatic sources. Much of this archival work had been completed when the article by Hafez F. Farmayan was published in which, while urging the production of a multi-volume history of Qājār Persia, he warned that "Non-Persian materials in the form of diplomatic correspondence, governmental reports, personal memoirs, etc., are essential but can be used only as supplementary material. Almost never should they be used as basic material, at least not exclusively, as has been done heretofore by too many contemporary scholars".⁷ It is hoped that this thesis will indicate that useful work can be done using British sources.

7. Hafez F. Farmayan: Observations on sources for the study of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Iranian history, International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies, Vol.V, 1974, p.48. That author's plea for the creation of a national archives system in Iran and for the granting of access to government papers there to foreign scholars deserves the widest possible support.

One must, however, agree with that author that some of the work which has been carried out using foreign sources, and particularly that based on some of the British papers, is open to criticism. This is particularly true when conclusions are based on evidence derived from the Foreign Office Confidential Print Series of papers on Persia (F.O. 416). The fact that these documents have been microfilmed means that they have become widely available, but their usefulness is limited for their defects are several and serious. At the most obvious level they contain printing errors with names wrongly spelt and dates which are sometimes inaccurate. These defects are most frequent when the printer was dealing with names or calendar systems which were unfamiliar to him, and on several occasions Persian laqabs have been turned into a meaningless, and occasionally unrecognisable, jumble. The more serious objection to the use of the Confidential Print Series is that the documents contained therein have already been edited and selected. The purpose of the Confidential Print was to disseminate as quickly as possible information which was considered to be important and relevant for the conduct of current British diplomacy. Whether it succeeded in that aim is of no consequence to this investigation; what it is important to recognize is that the needs of current diplomacy are obviously very different from those of the historian who investigates events at a later date.

The defects of the Confidential Print Series can be seen clearly in the reports concerning the various attempts by Persia to raise international loans during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn. Those loans were regarded, and justifiably so, by the British and Russian governments as an important means of exercising influence over the Shāh, and the

negotiations surrounding them produced a considerable volume of diplomatic correspondence. Much of this is reprinted in the Confidential Print Series, but the documents there are concerned with the details of rival loan proposals and reports on the current state of negotiations. This was what the diplomats of the day needed to know. What was less important for their purposes was detailed knowledge of the reasons why Persia needed such loans; reasons such as deficiencies in her tax-collecting machinery which meant that funds were insufficient to meet current expenditures, including such important items as the payment of the army and the bureaucracy. This background material had been prepared by British officials in Tehran, often in consultation with knowledgeable local experts such as Naus and Rabino, whose sources of information were very good. But these papers were not regarded as relevant to the task of ensuring that the Persian government would accept a British and not a Russian loan, and therefore they were often omitted from the Confidential Print.

Such papers are, however, preserved in the General and Political Correspondence (F.O. 60), and those papers constitute a much better body of evidence for the historian. As well as the regular diplomatic correspondence, these papers often contain valuable information derived from non-diplomatic sources. For example, details about Muzaffar al-Dīn's personal health were supplied to the Legation physician, Dr. T. Odling, by two of the Shāh's personal medical advisers, Drs. H. Adcock and L. Lindley. Dr. Adcock had treated Muzaffar al-Dīn while he had been in Tabriz, and he became Consulting Physician-in-Chief to the Shāh in 1896. Dr. Lindley was appointed as assistant Court Physician in 1900, and later succeeded to Adcock's post. Information about political personalities and court intrigue too appears to have been given to the

Legation by these men. Dr. Odling had been the doctor for the Indo-European Telegraph Department for 19 years before he joined the Legation in 1891, and he too had great knowledge of many leading Tehran families.

The Imperial Bank in Tehran also provided information to the Legation, and this was used in the compilation of economic reports. The two people who gave the greatest assistance in this respect were Mr. Joseph Rabino di Borgamale and General Alexander Houtum Schindler; both of these men had long experience of Persia and they had travelled widely through the country. The provincial offices of the Imperial Bank sent regular reports on local conditions to Tehran, and some of this information too was made available to the Legation. Political information also was occasionally provided by the Imperial Bank. For example, when Hakīm al-Mulk sought secretly to open a bank account in London in 1901 the Legation was told of that Minister's fear for his future tenure of office and of his suspicions of the ambitions of his ministerial colleagues.⁸ The Legation also received occasional commercial and fiscal information from the Belgian Director of Customs, Mr. Joseph Naus, and this too can be seen in the F.O. 60 papers.

This series of papers is useful also because it has preserved, both in the original and in translation, copies of the Shabnāma (broad-sheets) which were printed and distributed clandestinely in Tehran, and which criticised the Shāh and his Ministers. These publications were ephemeral; and only a handful are to be found in the Foreign Office papers.⁹ Very few seem to have survived anywhere else.

8. See Chapter II of this thesis.

9. See Chapter II of this thesis.

A further series of Foreign Office documents which have apparently been little used by historians, but whose value is, in some respects even greater than the Foreign Office 60 series, is the Embassy and Consular Archives (F.O. 248).¹⁰ This collection consists, among other things, of the first-hand reports of Consuls and Native Agents to Tehran, together with the drafts of despatches to London from the Legation. The former provided the regular accounts of local events on which the Minister's monthly news report was based, and they often contained much more information than it was felt necessary to forward to London. Similarly the draft despatches are often longer and more detailed than the ones which were finally sent to London, and the study of these papers increases considerably the volume of evidence available.

The value of the F.O. 248 series is, however, not merely quantitative. Some of the Consuls had long experience of the areas in which they worked, and not a few had a deep and informed interest in local affairs. For example, J.R. Preece was Consul in Isfahān from the time that the post was created in 1891 until March 1906. This continuity of service and his close friendship with the Governor, Zill al-Sultān, make his reports valuable. Preece was the intermediary for the Governor's private correspondence with the British Minister in Tehran and several of these letters are preserved in the F.O. 248 series. It is from this correspondence that we learn, for example, of the Shāh's alarm at the outbreak of disturbances in Russia in 1905 and his fear that the

10. The value of the Tehran Legation archives has been noted by S. Bakhash, Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars, 1858-1896, London 1978, p.413, but his topic of research did not call for the extensive use of consular archives.

unrest would spread to, and have serious effects in, Persia; for Muzaffar al-Dīn had written to Zill al-Sultān in great secrecy about the Russian events, and the Governor showed the letter to Preece before writing to the British Minister about the matter. The Consul in Isfahān was also responsible for maintaining contact with the leaders of the Bakhtiyārī tribes, and while he was absent on these tours, news reports were sent to Tehran by the Acting Consul. This post had long been held by members of the Aganoor family, one of whom, Dr. Steven Aganoor, had received his medical training at Edinburgh University, and had a large practice in Isfahān. Among his patients were Āqā Najafī and his brothers, and Aganoor's knowledge of this group makes his reports of much value. In Tabriz, Mr. G.C. Wood had served as Consul for over 10 years, and his local knowledge was considerable. He had known Muzaffar al-Dīn during his last years as Valī'ahd in Tabriz, and he was able to provide first-hand information on his character and personality, as well as furnishing reliable details on his circle of courtiers.

The Embassy and Consular Archive papers are also useful in showing how widespread was Persian interest in events abroad: particularly those concerning the great powers, such as the Boer War, the Russo-Japanese

war and the later internal disturbances in Russia.¹¹ Knowledge of the latter was greater in northern than in southern Persia - the influx of refugees from Batum, Baku and the Caucasus was the major reason for this difference - but the consular reports show that in the southern provinces too there was considerable interest in and alarm about the situation within Russia.

Those reports also serve to indicate the extent to which the Persian newspapers published abroad circulated within the country. It would be difficult to gauge the extent of this interest in external events, or the distribution of the expatriate press, from the F.O. 60 series alone. It is true that some of the travellers' accounts indicate that the Persians were alive to the importance of external events, but such reports refer only to the places which the travellers visited and sometimes their visits were very brief. The consular reports on the other hand are often the result of continuous and close observation of one locality, and when they are put together they provide a significant body of evidence about affairs in the provinces. As well as being an

11. There had also been much interest earlier in the Boxer rebellion in China (see reference in Chapter VII of this thesis and F.O.60:637, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.163, 23 October 1901). Many consuls observed that great attention was given to the Boer War. The British Minister reported the interest which he had found in those events during the course of a three-month tour in western Persia (F.O.60:617, Durand to Salisbury, No.5, 18 January 1900). The British Consul in Tabriz also noted similar interest in that war (F.O. 60:618, Enclosure from Wood; in Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.77, 25 July 1900). Considerable attention had also been paid to events in Sudan. Durand reported that news of the British victory at Omdurman had "spread like wildfire all over the country" (F.O. 60:648, Durand to Salisbury, No.16, 12 February 1899.) Sykes had noted that news of that victory was widespread in Sīstān (F.O. 60:612, Sykes to Salisbury, No.1, 11 February 1899.) Sykes had also had a long conversation with the Governor of Qazvin in that year and he had reported that the Persian official was well informed about the Sudan campaign and about the Cape to Cairo railway project (F.O.60:612, Sykes to Salisbury, No.7, 11 May 1899.)

important source for Chapters VI and VII on Fārs and Isfahān respectively, that series has also been widely used for Chapter IV on the Customs administration and for Chapter V on the cholera epidemic.

A few other British Departments of State as well as the Foreign Office have papers of value for the study of this period. The War Office series of intelligence reports contains an interesting document on Persia dated 1905,¹² but the much more useful report made by Picot on the Persian Army in 1900 is not to be found in the War Office papers, but in the F.O. 881 series.¹³ Most of the relevant India Office papers are duplicates of those available in the F.O.60 series. Neither the Foreign Office nor the India Office archives contained a copy of the Biographical Notices of Persian Statesmen and Notables which was drawn up by G.P. Churchill in the summer of 1905, but a copy was located among the personal papers of the Fourth Earl of Minto, who became Viceroy of India in November 1905.¹⁴ The Parliamentary Accounts and Papers provide information and statistics on trade for most of the towns of southern and western Persia which imported and exported goods. Most of these figures seem to have been compiled by consular officials, but in the case of Kirmānshāh, at least, the Imperial Bank was the source for much of the data.

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12. Military Report on Persia compiled by the General Staff at the War Office, dated September 1905, in War Office 33-3333.
 13. Report on the Persian Army, Secret and Confidential, by Lieutenant-Colonel H.P. Picot. Dated January 1900, F.O. 881:7364.
 14. Biographical Notices of Persian Statesmen and Notables, Confidential, by G.P. Churchill. Dated August 1905, Calcutta, 1906. Copy in Papers of the Fourth Earl of Minto, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

Political rivalry with Russia encouraged the British and Indian governments to try to increase commerce with Persia, and two missions were sent to investigate trading conditions. The first group, under the leadership of Mr. W.H. Maclean, was sent by the Commercial Intelligence Committee of the Board of Trade, and it visited northern, western and southern Persia in 1903. Its report was published in 1904.¹⁵ The British Consul in Kirmān, P. Sykes, felt that south-eastern Persia had been ignored, and he urged the Government of India to sponsor a similar mission to investigate the opportunities for trade in that region. A small group was sent from Bombay in October 1904, and although unrest among the tribes of Persian Balūchistān prevented it from completing its planned itinerary, the report which was published in 1906, is a useful supplement to the Maclean document.¹⁶

The private papers of a few British officials were investigated, but they proved to be of little significance for this study. The exception was an apparently unprinted paper, A.T. Wilson's "Precis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Sheikhs of Arabistan", which was helpful for the investigation of the Customs administration.¹⁷ Mrs. A. Destrée has used the private papers of several of the senior Belgian officials employed in Persia, and her book was also of value.¹⁸ The Spring Rice papers contain little that is not available in the version edited by S. Gwynn.¹⁹

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15. H.W. Maclean, Report on Conditions and Prospects for British Trade in Persia, Accounts and Papers 1904, Vol.XCV, Paper No.Cd.2146.
 16. A.H. Gleadowe-Newcomen: Report on British Indian Commercial Mission to South East Persia during 1904-5, Calcutta 1906. (Copy in the India Office library.)
 17. Copy of this is available in the British Library, London.
 18. A. Destrée, Les Fonctionnaires Belges au Service de la Perse 1898-1915, Tehran-Liège, 1976.
 19. The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring Rice: A Record, edited by S. Gwynn, London 1929, 2 volumes.

Archives of commercial and business firms have not been used. The papers of the Imperial Bank would have been of interest, but they remain closed. As noted above, however, some of the Bank's economic and financial information is contained in the F.O. 60 series.

There are several travel books concerning this period, but nothing which compares in value with Curzon's encyclopaedic volumes.²⁰ Napier Malcolm's book on Yazd²¹ and Sparroy's on Isfahan²² have been used. Other contemporary travel works are cited in the footnotes and bibliography, but none merits separate discussion here. The memoirs of four diplomats - two British, one German and one Russian, who served in Persia at the time, Hardinge,²³ Wratislaw,²⁴ Rosen²⁵ and Kalmykow²⁶ have been used. The economic compilation of Lorini²⁷ is of interest, but some of its tables are aggregate ones, and they obscure important regional differences. On economic matters in general it is perhaps as well to heed Rabino's contemporary warning, "In Persia there are no statistics".²⁸

20. G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, London 1892, 2 volumes.

21. Napier Malcolm, Five Years in a Persian Town, London 1905.

22. W. Sparroy, Persian Children of the Royal Family: The Narrative of an English Tutor at the Court of H.I.H. Zillu's Sultan, London, 1902.

23. C. Hardinge, A Diplomatist in the East, London 1928.

24. A.C. Wratislaw, A Consul in the East, Edinburgh and London 1924.

25. F. Rosen, Oriental Memories of a German Diplomatist, London 1930.

26. A.D. Kalmykow, Memoirs of a Russian Diplomat: Outposts of the Empire 1893-1917, New Haven 1971.

27. E. Lorini, La Persia Economica Contemporanea e La Sua Questione Monetaria, Rome 1900..

28. J. Rabino, An Economist's Notes on Persia, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol.LXIV; 1901, p:265.

Later monographs vary in their quality and relevance. There are no studies devoted specifically to the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh known to the author. E.G. Browne's "The Persian Revolution 1905-1909"²⁹ is chiefly concerned with events after the granting of the Constitution, and although somewhat partisan in its judgments it is still of value. Mrs. Destrée's book on the Belgian Customs administration has already been noted, and other useful monographs were those by Algar³⁰ and Kazemzadeh.³¹ The periodical literature also varies considerably in quality, and is cited in the footnotes and in the bibliography at the end of this thesis.

Any conclusions based on British sources must of course remain open to modification in the light of possible future work using Persian materials. For example, if records of provincial tax revenues were to become available, then some of the conclusions offered here may prove to be incomplete. Similarly, the assessment of the importance of Āqā Najafī and his family in Isfahān would be enhanced if accurate contemporary registers of land holdings and their value were available. In brief, this thesis does not seek to show that British archives provide an exhaustive source of evidence for the history of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh - for example, there is very little in them which can be used to investigate conditions in Persia's villages - but what it is hoped will emerge from this study is that those archives form a very valuable body of information which can, with judicious use, help to advance our understanding of those times.

29. E.G. Browne, The Persian Revolution 1905-1909, Cambridge 1910.

30. H. Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period, Berkeley 1969.

31. F. Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism, New Haven 1968.

CHAPTER II

THE POSITION OF THE SHĀH AND AFFAIRS AT COURT

"Have you not heard that the greatest blessings - after religion and being Muslim - are good health and security? Now the security of the world depends on the discipline maintained by the Sultān."

Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings
(Nasīhat al-Mulūk), translated by
F.R.C. Bagley, London, 1971, p.76.

Although the history of Persia has often been interrupted by changes of dynasty, and despite the fact that the country has experienced prolonged periods when it has been either absorbed into larger empires or fragmented into smaller units, a constant and notable feature of its political tradition has been the supremacy and central position of the ruler. This was as true in Qājār times as it was earlier; for although that dynasty could not claim the hereditary religious right to rule which had been asserted by the Safavids, the Qājār Shāhs were able to establish themselves as absolute monarchs. The great importance attached to the ruler's position means that the personality, physical health and abilities of the Shāh constitute one of the most important starting points in the investigation of any reign.

Muẓaffar al-Dīn was born in March 1853, five years later he became Valī'ahd and like several other holders of that title he was made Governor-General of Āzarbāyjān. The long period of isolation which he had to endure in Tabrīz until his father's assassination in 1896 had, as will be seen later, important effects on his administration; but his residence in the north-west also meant that relatively little was known about him. Curzon notes that most of the European reports which he had read about Muẓaffar al-Dīn were little more than repetitions of second-hand or third-hand gossip. Even that writer, usually so well-informed about the affairs of Persia, had to admit that the character of the

future Shāh was open to different interpretations: "He is emphatically what would, in sporting parlance, be termed 'a dark horse'".¹

One of the few Europeans with some first-hand knowledge of the Valī'ahd was A.D. Kalmykow who joined the staff of the Russian Consulate in Tabrīz in January 1895. He described Muẓaffar al-Dīn as "a kind, open, simple man",² and as someone who was "kindhearted, without will or ambition, utterly harmless and helpless, he was despised by his father and not much feared by his retinue".³ This latter characteristic, the inability to make people stand in awe of him, was noted by several of those who came to know the Shāh well, and it was to prove a serious failing; for fear prompted obedience, and without obedience effective government was not possible. The matter is portrayed well by Kalmykow who recounts that shortly after arriving in Tabrīz he heard praise for a strong governor. On enquiring whether the governor was popular Kalmykow was met with looks of amazement and was told "he is dreaded".⁴

The ability to inspire awe and respect was certainly possessed by the previous Shāh, Nāṣir al-Dīn. Sir Mortimer Durand, who knew both rulers well, wrote that Muẓaffar al-Dīn "is more amiable than his father but he is weak and easily misled. The British Minister ascribed many of the difficulties faced by Persia to the new Shāh's inability to maintain discipline."⁶ During the bread riots of November 1906, a bookseller in Tehran is reported to have told a French diplomat that similar disturbances

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1. G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, London, 1892, I, p.415.
 2. A.D. Kalmykow, Memoirs of a Russian Diplomat: Outposts of the Empire, 1893-1917, New Haven, 1971, p.46.
 3. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.67.
 4. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.56.
 5. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.16, 12 February 1899.
 6. Ibid.

had taken place under the previous Shāh but that he had brought them to an abrupt end by visiting the breadshops and ordering one of the bakers to be thrust into his own oven. "If the Shah were only as stern as his father," he said, "we should have nothing of all this."⁷ This small incident is of considerable significance for it indicates that what many Persians were seeking was effective government and that the re-assertion of control by the Shāh might have gone a long way towards satisfying such grievances.

The serious results of Muẓaffar al-Dīn's supineness are seen in a private letter which Spring-Rice wrote in 1899. "The Shah is a most excellent kind-hearted, and well-meaning man, but the people aren't afraid of him and the rich men grind the faces of the poor without having their own ground."⁸ The implications of the Shāh's weakness were also financial, for in another letter Spring Rice wrote that "The governors who are not afraid of the central government, send in no money whatever".⁹ The inability of the Shāh to exercise effective control over the provinces was not due solely to his weak character - other factors such as the poor state of the army, and the consequent lack of coercive power at the disposal of the government, also played their part;¹⁰ but the fact that Muẓaffar al-Dīn was a timid man meant that the way was open for others to oppress his subjects.

It was Kalmykow's view that Muẓaffar al-Dīn "wanted to stay at peace with his own people and with the rest of the world".¹¹ The reasons

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7. E. De Lorey and D. Sladen, The Moon of the Fourteenth Night, London 1910, p.22.
 8. Letter to Stephen, 15 September 1899, in The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Arthur Spring Rice, edited by S. Gwynn, London, 1929, I, p.290.
 9. Letter to V. Chirol, 15 September 1899, *ibid.*, p.288.
 10. The state of the army is discussed in Chapter III.
 11. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.46.

for this probably lie in the personality of the Shāh, but they were also reinforced by the poor state of Muẓaffar al-Dīn's health. He was already ailing when he was in Tabrīz. Kalmykow noted that he was "sickly" and "prematurely aged".¹² Sir Thomas Sanderson, writing in 1898 about Persia's need for a new loan, noted the two aspects of the Shāh's weakness when he wrote that one of the most important causes the government's poverty was that the Shāh "is not disposed, and does not have the strength to practise, the cruel money-raising expedients of the previous Shah".¹³

The state of the Shāh's health was certainly a matter of great concern to the British Legation in Tehran and regular reports on it were sent to London. Much of the information was derived from a first-hand source, Dr. H. Adcock, who had become Consulting Physician-in-Chief to the Shāh in 1896, after having served earlier as personal physician to Muẓaffar al-Dīn in Tabrīz. The Shāh appears to have suffered from a number of different ailments, including gout and recurrent inflammation of the kidneys, as well as from the effects of a weak heart.¹⁴ The illnesses had cumulative results in that they each served to enfeeble the Shāh. When Adcock reached the conclusion in December 1900 that any long-term improvement in the health of the Shāh could come only from adherence to a strict regimen, he had also to admit that Muẓaffar al-Dīn probably already lacked the stamina to follow such a course of treatment.¹⁵ This proved to be an accurate assessment, for the recovery in health

12. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.67.

13. F.O. 60:601. Memorandum by Sir T. Sanderson. Not numbered.
16 July 1898.

14. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.160, 17 October 1901.

15. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.127, 12 December 1900.

which the Shāh enjoyed in the early months of 1901 was lost when Muẓaffar al-Dīn showed himself incapable of keeping to the necessary diet.¹⁶

It was gout which caused Muẓaffar al-Dīn the greatest pain and discomfort, but the weakness of his heart was the most important factor limiting physical and mental exertion.¹⁷ This cardiac weakness was so serious that Adcock warned the British Minister in December 1899 that he should be prepared to hear of the Shāh's death at any time.¹⁸ There seems to have been little that the doctors could do about this condition apart from trying to restrict the Shāh's activities.¹⁹ Such restrictions reduced still further the chances of Persia getting what it most needed - effective rule by a strong and determined monarch. At the *time when* internal and external problems were growing in number there was a man on the throne who, for medical reasons, was advised not to exert himself.

It must be added, however, that even if Muẓaffar al-Dīn had enjoyed good health, his natural inclinations do not appear to have been in the direction of his being a forceful ruler. During the period in Tabriz he had shown little interest or ability in managing the affairs of government. When he became Shāh this failing had much more serious implications; for while he had been in Tabriz his father had had recourse to the old practice of appointing a strong deputy-Governor who could ensure that revenues were collected and some degree of order was maintained.²⁰ After the assassination of Nāṣir al-Dīn there was no one who could save Muẓaffar al-Dīn from the damaging consequences of his own weaknesses.

16. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.65, 27 April 1901.

17. *Ibid.*

18. F.O. 60:610. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.99, Telegraphic, Secret, 29 December 1899.

19. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.117, 23 July 1901.

20. A.D. Kalmykow, *op.cit.*, p.48.

Evidence concerning the Shāh's lack of interest in the affairs of state comes from many sources. In January 1899 Nāṣir al-Mulk told a British diplomat that the reason for the delay in the settlement of a particular matter was that the Shāh would listen to his officials for only a few minutes before pleading illness or fatigue as the reason for terminating the audience.²¹ In a private letter in 1900 Spring Rice wrote that the Shāh was 'Mortally afraid of business talk', while noting that this was due in part to his want of experience²² - a factor to be treated later. In the autumn of 1901 the Shāh showed his lack of interest in the governing of Persia when he expressed the wish to spend a full year in Europe and to pass the winter on the Mediterranean coast.²³ In February 1902, when Hardinge had an audience with Muzaffar al-Dīn to discuss arrangements for the forthcoming royal visit to England, the Shāh made it plain that he regarded the occasion as a holiday, and that he had no wish whatsoever to engage in political talks while he was in London.²⁴

Even before he began his visits to Europe Muzaffar al-Dīn had shown that he preferred to spend his time away from the palace and administration and to live in camp and go hunting.²⁵ The only time when

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21. F.O. 60:608. Enclosure No.1 (Memorandum from Preece to Durand, 5 January 1899) in Durand to Sanderson, no number, 12 January 1899.
 22. F.O. 60:617. Spring Rice to Sanderson, private letter, no number, 2 April 1900.
 23. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.163, 23 October 1901.
 24. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.25, 15 February 1902. In a later despatch (F.O. 60:650, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.38, 4 March 1902), the British Minister reported that Muzaffar al-Dīn had insisted that his party should not be on French soil on 14 July.
 25. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.83, and Spring Rice, private letter to Henry Adams, 30 November 1899, in Letters and Papers of Sir Cecil Arthur Spring Rice, edited by S. Gwynn, London, 1929, I, p.296.

the Shāh apparently expressed resentment against the restrictions imposed by his doctors was when they wished to confine his expeditions to the lower slopes of the Alburz mountains.²⁶ In this respect at least Muzaffar al-Dīn shared something with his father - and indeed with most of the previous Qājār rulers. The circumstances surrounding these hunting trips foreshadow the controversies which were to accompany the later European journeys. The lengthy absence of the Shāh from Tehran during the summer meant that the conduct of state affairs became an even more difficult and lengthy process than it was at other times; while the need to pay for these expeditions placed additional burdens on an already almost empty treasury. In both 1898 and 1899 the Ṣadr-i Aẓam had to raise loans from his relatives, and from merchants in the bazaar, in order to meet the expenses of the journey, and of the establishment and maintenance of the camp.²⁷ The opposition to these loans was but a portent of that which would be expressed when much larger international ones were needed and were used to pay for royal visits to Europe.

Those visits undoubtedly served to reduce the prestige of the Shāh and by doing this they helped to create that climate of opinion in which some Persians, however few, would seek changes which went beyond promises of reform in the existing pattern of royal rule. The issue of these visits and of the foreign loans is complex.²⁸ It is necessary to remember

26. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.117, 23 July 1901.

27. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.91, 29 July 1898;

F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.74, 26 July 1899;

F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.79, 27 July 1899.

28. There is a useful discussion of the loans and of the diplomatic background to them in F. Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism, New Haven, 1968, particularly Chapter 5. The two major loans were both from Russia, in January 1900 (22.5 million roubles, approximately equal to £2.25 million), and in April 1902 (10 million roubles, approximately equal to £1 million). Both loans were for a period of 75 years and they carried interest at 5 per cent.

that some of the proceeds of the loans were spent for purposes other than to meet the costs of the royal journeys to Europe. In 1901 the payment of arrears of salaries to the army and the bureaucracy was necessary if serious disorders were to be prevented, and in this respect the loans did help in preventing the collapse of government;²⁹ but the use of the funds for the Shāh's foreign journeys was widely resented and opposed. The Shāh's doctors did advise him to make such visits in order to improve his health, but at the same time not a few Persians believed that the monarch was merely feigning illness in order to escape from his responsibilities in Persia.³⁰ The fact that the Shāh himself could become the direct object of public criticism shows how great had been the loss of royal standing. The external source of the loans served only to strengthen the view that Muẓaffar al-Dīn had no shame or compunction in selling Persia to the foreign powers in order to gratify his personal desires.

Direct criticism of the Shāh seems to have appeared first in the several clandestine broadsheets which were issued during the summer of 1901. These gave much attention to the granting of the Russian loan, and they accused the government, and particularly the Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam (Amīn al-Sultān) of having sold the country to the Tsar. Such was the depth of public suspicion about the role of external powers in the internal affairs of Persia that this expression of hostility to Russia was immediately seen by some Persians as proof that the broadsheets had been

29. See Chapter III. of this thesis

30. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.48, 22 March 1902.

published with help from the British authorities.³¹ Some of these broadsheets, such as Lisān al-Ḥaqq (Tongue of Truth), in addition to criticising the purposes for which the loan had been sought, went on to ask how Persia was going to be able to afford the repayment of such loans.³² A different broadsheet entitled Ghayrat (Zeal) said that Russian control of the Tehran-Rasht road was an example of how Russia was seeking to reduce Persia to subjection.³³

Some of the broadsheets repeat a criticism of Muzaffar al-Dīn which has already been noted, his weakness and incapacity as compared with his father. The second issue of Lisān al-Ḥaqq praised the fact that Nāṣir al-Dīn spent money on public works, on the improvement of Tehran and on the provision of a well-equipped army; whereas under Muzaffar al-Dīn the treasury had been recklessly depleted and money squandered on frivolous amusements. That same broadsheet said that the Russian government had been able to gain by the loan that which they had not been able to achieve earlier in the century by war - control of Persia. The authors of the broadsheet, who signed themselves "the patriots of the country", begged the Shāh "to base your rule on justice", and said that "your Majesty owns nothing but the name of a king".³⁴

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- 31. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.
 - 32. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.1 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.
 - 33. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.3 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901. This broadsheet also mentions other causes of popular unrest such as the extent of bribery, debasement of the coinage, the hoarding of grain to increase its price and the fact that some landowners were taking all the available water and not allowing any to reach the areas where the peasants grew their crops.
 - 34. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.2 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.

The impact of these publications was, according to Hardinge, sensational. They certainly caused much alarm when copies reached the camp where the Shāh was on a hunting expedition. When they were read out to him Muzaffar al-Dīn recalled the way in which his father had died and he expressed great reluctance to return to Tehran at the end of the trip.³⁵

Some of the broadsheets said that the poor state of the country was due to the fact that the Shāh was ignorant of what was happening. The second issue of Lisān al-Haqq begged the Shāh to find out for himself about the true state of affairs in his realm, for "A king who is not aware of the conditions of his country is like a shepherd who does not know the numbers of his flock".³⁶ In part the ignorance of Muzaffar al-Dīn stemmed from the long period which he had spent in Tabriz isolated from the affairs of state;³⁷ but Hardinge drew attention to another important reason for the Shāh's ignorance when, in discussing the political impact of the broadsheets, he noted that the criticisms had been all the more disturbing to the Shāh because he was "unaccustomed to hearing any language but that of flattery".³⁸ This was no new situation in Persian history; all regimes dependent on one man are open to this defect, but the character of the ruler is again shown to be of great importance. A ruler interested in government is more likely to seek information, while an experienced ruler is more likely to be able to accept criticism. Muzaffar al-Dīn was neither interested nor experienced and when he heard the views of the broadsheets his natural bewilderment and timidity were increased.

35. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.

36. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.2 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.

37. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.46.

38. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.

There are several incidents which show that Muzaffar al-Dīn was indeed ignorant about events in Persia. The British Consul in Tabriz, who met the Shāh in May 1900 as he passed through Āzarbāyjān en route to Europe, reported that Muzaffar al-Dīn was "surprised and incensed" on hearing that a number of Russian railway engineers were carrying out surveys on Persian territory.³⁹ When the Shāh returned from this journey abroad there was great discontent in Tehran because a grain ring had been operating and bread prices had risen very sharply. The Governor of the capital and the Commander-in-Chief of the army were believed to have organised the ring, and when the Shāh gave honours to both those men the discontent became even greater. Various members of the diplomatic corps discussed the advisability of informing the Shāh about what had happened in his absence, and Hardinge agreed to raise the matter with the Minister of Posts, a man who was known at that time to have the ear of the monarch. That Minister later confirmed the impression that Muzaffar al-Dīn had been ignorant about the whole affair, and Hardinge was later informed that various telegrams which had been despatched to the Shāh about those circumstances had been suppressed.⁴⁰ The need for external help to remove the Shāh's ignorance was emphasised by Mukhtār al-Saltāna in an interview with a British diplomat in February 1902. The Persian politician begged the British authorities to "put heart into the Shah for he has none. Throw a stone, wake him up, he is asleep".⁴¹

39. F.O. 60: Enclosure No.1 (Wood to Spring-Rice, Secret, no : number, 23 June 1900, in Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.77, 25 July 1900.

40. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.127, 12 December 1900. (Among those who had tried to send messages to Muzaffar al-Dīn about this matter was his brother, Zill al-Sultān.)

41. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure No.1 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.19, 4 February 1902.

The reasons for the Shāh's ignorance were many and two are to be found in the circumstances already described - Muẓaffar al-Dīn's lack of previous administrative experience, and the fact that he was not naturally inclined to concern himself with affairs of state. Another reason, which reinforced those, was referred to in one of the broad-sheets when the Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam was accused of deliberately keeping the Shāh in ignorance of the state of the country.⁴² Mukhtār al-Saltāna also indicated that few of those who surrounded the Shāh had much interest in making him aware of the country's plight; hence the need for action by the foreign powers.⁴³ This again is no new feature of Persian history; but under Muẓaffar al-Dīn when so many matters needed royal attention lack of knowledge had more serious consequences than at earlier times.

Several British diplomats certainly believed that on some matters the Shāh had been kept in ignorance by his Ministers. In April 1900 Spring Rice expressed the view that the Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam had not given certain important documents to the Shāh, and that as a result Muẓaffar al-Dīn had not been aware that the Persian government had given a pledge in 1897 (which had been repeated two years later), not to alienate the customs revenues of the southern ports.⁴⁴ Shuʿāʿ al-Saltāna told Durand earlier in 1900 that he was sure that the Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam had deceived the Shāh about the willingness of Britain to consider granting a loan to the Persian government, and the British Minister did not

42. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.3 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.

43. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure No.1 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.19,, 4 February 1902.

44. F.O. 60:617. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.28, 5 April 1900.

dissent from this view.⁴⁵ Mr. G.P. Churchill, recalling the turbulent events of 1905 in Tehran, stated that it was difficult for any diplomat to approach Muẓaffar al-Dīn because his courtiers put a wall around him and that the Shāh was to all intents and purposes run by his entourage.⁴⁶

The seriousness of the situation was increased by the fact that some of the courtiers surrounding Muẓaffar al-Dīn had reputations which were far from enviable. Kalmykow had known many of those men in Tabriz and his views about them were scathing. He described the new Shāh's courtiers as "exulting at the prospect of the coveted treasures of Tehran falling an easy prey to them" when they heard of the death of Nāṣir al-Dīn,⁴⁷ and their journey to the capital was likened to the descent of a swarm of locusts.⁴⁸ Kalmykow had little doubt as to the major cause of Persia's subsequent political decay: "It was the party of Tabrizians, reactionaries of the worst type, who ruined the monarchy after Muẓaffar al-Dīn mounted the throne".⁴⁹

There is much evidence in British sources to support the view that the Shāh's courtiers were very greedy. In July 1899 Durand devoted a despatch solely to the description of the obloquy incurred by the Shāh's entourage because of their speculation and profiteering.⁵⁰ In a private letter of September that same year Spring Rice wrote in a similar vein

45. F.O. 60:619. Durand to Salisbury, No.33, telegraphic, 5 March 1900.

46. Personal interview in London, 13 May 1969.

47. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.68.

48. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.71.

49. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.48. Kalmykow was transferred to the Russian Legation in Tehran after the accession of Muẓaffar al-Dīn because he knew the new Shāh and his entourage. (Ibid, p.71.)

50. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.76, 25 July 1899.

and described the Shāh as "surrounded by Turks from Turkey, savage, avaricious and very ignorant".⁵¹ In another private letter Spring Rice went into greater detail. "He [the Shāh] brought up to Teheran with him from Tabreez, where he lived as heir apparent, a whole tribe of hungry courtiers, who insisted, when he became king, on his giving them property: and he parted with most of the crown lands to them, so that he is absolutely indigent and has to beg money when he wants to go on a journey. The consequence is that the wheat grown on the former crown lands is garnered and stored by the courtiers, who corner it too for the rise. Now, after a fair harvest, bread is twice what it was the year before and three times what it was two years before."⁵² The organisation of such grain rings was by no means solely in the hands of the Tabrīz court party, but the existence of such corruption so close to the Shāh could not but damage royal prestige.

Muzaffar al-Dīn's first Grand Vazīr, Amīn al-Sultān, is reported to have made determined efforts to shield the reserves in the treasury from the Tabrīz courtiers;⁵³ but he fell from power within six months of the new Shāh's accession to the throne, partly as a result of the intrigues of that group.⁵⁴ His successor, Amīn al-Dawla, was a weaker man; but he too aroused the opposition of the members of the court party by his tentative schemes for financial reform. In particular that group wished to prevent the proposed creation of a Civil List for

51. Letter to V. Chirol, 15 September 1899, in S. Gwynn, *op.cit.*, p.288.

52. Letter to Henry Adams, 30 November 1899, *ibid.*, p.296.

53. A.D. Kalmykow, *op.cit.*, p.80.

54. F.O. 60:698. Memorandum by G.P. Churchill dated 25 January 1905. This memorandum is primarily concerned with the contemporary groups and factions at Court but it also provides a brief history of the earlier rivalries. See also F. Kazemzadeh, *op.cit.*, pp.302-3 for other details of the plot and for details of the immediate incident which may have precipitated the fall of Amīn al-Sultān.

the Shāh.⁵⁵ Another source of opposition to Amīn al-Dawla was his failure to secure a loan with which to finance a royal visit to Europe. He told Durand that if he did get such a loan he would probably be unable to prevent the subsequent plunder of the treasury by the Shāh's entourage. The British Minister acknowledged that this was likely to happen and he advised Lord Salisbury that if the loan were to be raised on the London market, then very strict conditions should be laid down concerning the way in which the money was to be paid to the Persian government.⁵⁶ When Amīn al-Sultān returned to power in August 1898, he too was faced with the need to secure a loan and, like his predecessor, he admitted to Durand that the court party would immediately claim part of any money which was raised.⁵⁷

As has already been noted, these loans were highly unpopular and they caused great resentment against the Shāh, but it would be wrong to say that they were caused by royal greed. Several observers note that Muzaffar al-Dīn was not a covetous person; Kalmykow pointedly contrasts his lack of avarice with the grasping nature of both his father and his son.⁵⁸ Rabino observed that Muzaffar al-Dīn had been very prompt in paying his father's debts when he arrived in Tehran, and the same observer had little doubt that the new Shāh cared very little about the value of the royal jewels.⁵⁹ It was the fact that Muzaffar al-Dīn could not assert himself and control his courtiers which allowed their

55. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.65, telegraphic, 5 June 1898.

56. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.61, 22 May 1898.

57. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.39, 5 May 1899.

58. A.D. Kalmykow, *op.cit.*, p.79.

59. Letter from Rabino to Picot, 14 May 1898. To be found in F.O. 60:601.

cupidity to go unchecked, and thereby to become the object of such great public opposition. It has been seen that in the case of the Shāh's physical health each separate illness served to weaken him and prevent him from being able to accept the rigorous treatment necessary for a sustained recovery; similarly with regard to his political position each failure to exercise authority meant that his standing was again reduced, and the chances of establishing just and effective government in Persia became ever more remote.

Even Muzaffar al-Dīn could not avoid the need to make some decisions but these were usually marked by vacillation followed by impetuosity - characteristics which provide further evidence of his lack of administrative experience and skill. Several of the Europeans who had personal dealings with the Shāh refer to the fact that the advice which he had received last was that which he was most likely to follow. The Belgian Director of Customs, Naus, the Russian Minister and Dr. Adcock all agreed with Hardinge's view that Muzaffar al-Dīn's mind was very easily changed and that it was difficult, if not impossible, to get him to make firm decisions.⁶⁰ This failing had serious effects on the efficiency of government, not least because it encouraged those tendencies to intrigue which already existed. Again it must be remembered that this is not a new feature in Persia's history; but the cumulative effects of so many failings and weaknesses were so much more damaging at a time when the country needed firm and decisive government.

The fact that the Shāh was so fickle meant that there was intense and continuous competition for his ear. Hardinge, who had had relatively

60. F.O. 60:638. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.51, Telegraphic, 9 September 1901; and F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.6A Commercial, 28 February 1901.

little success in making personal contact with the Shāh in Tehran, supported the idea of inviting Muzaffar al-Dīn to England in 1902 in the hope that it would be easier to gain access to the Shāh in London; for there the number of courtiers surrounding him would be fewer and Russian influence on him would also be reduced.⁶¹

If difficulty in obtaining access to the Shāh was disquieting for the British Minister it was a much more serious matter for Persian officials; because for them the potential consequences of loss of influence and fall from political favour were very great indeed. In an interview with Hardinge in September 1901 Amīn al-Sultān put the matter very succinctly, "After all if you were to be dismissed tomorrow from your post as British Minister in Persia, your life and your family's private property would be safe; but if I fall I stand to lose both".⁶² Amīn al-Sultān's fears were by no means exaggerated or unfounded, for when he had lost office in 1896 it had taken the combined efforts of the Russian and British Ministers to save his life.⁶³

Amīn al-Sultān's great political rival, Hakīm al-Mulk, also recognised the possibly dire consequences of loss of position. He had approached Hardinge in great confidence in June 1901 to ask how he could open a bank account in London, and whether the Persian Legation there would get to know if he did take such a step. In this particular case, however, it was not the possibility of immediate loss of influence which Hakīm al-Mulk feared so much as the dangers he would face on the possibly

61. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.11, 29 January 1902.

62. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, no number, Commercial, Secret, 2 October 1901.

63. A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., pp.82-3.

premature death of Muẓaffar al-Dīn.⁶⁴ What Hakīm al-Mulk knew was that just as he had profited from being a member of the Valī 'ahd's entourage on the death of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shah, so now there were other men waiting with the current heir apparent in Tabrīz for their opportunity to acquire the spoils of office in Tehran. (The effects of Muẓaffar al-Dīn's fragile state of health on the conduct of business by other officials, particularly provincial governors, will be discussed below.)

By September 1901 Hākīm al-Mulk was much more concerned about the possibility of an immediate loss of position at Court for Amīn al-Sultān had attempted to link his name with the seditious broadsheets which had appeared in Tehran during the summer and which had so alarmed the Shāh. Hardinge thought that these intrigues were sufficiently serious for him to ask Adcock, who was at the Shāh's hunting camp, for any information which he might have about the affair. The English doctor confirmed the fact that the Ṣadr-i A'ẓam had indeed made such an attempt to blacken the name of Hākīm al-Mulk, but that the Shāh had promised to stand by his Persian Physician.⁶⁵ Adcock was at pains on this occasion to remind Hardinge that the Shāh's fickle nature meant that such royal promises were in fact worth very little.

In this particular, and prolonged, struggle for influence Hakīm al-Mulk had the advantage that his position as one of the royal doctors required that he remain near to the Shāh. Amīn al-Sultān and other Ministers did not have such an excuse; yet it was necessary for them

64. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.107, Confidential, 6 July 1901.

65. F.O. 60:638. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.51, Telegraphic, 9 September 1901. Hakīm al-Mulk's fears of the possible consequences of having his name associated with the broadsheets were not without justification; those whose names were linked with the broadsheets suffered heavy fines and, in some cases, banishment from Tehran (F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.142, 19 September 1901).

to retain their influence with the Shāh and this meant that they were very reluctant to be absent from Muzaffar al-Dīn's presence for a prolonged period of time. As a consequence, the processes of administration were often very slow for ministers were reluctant to attend to affairs in their offices, feeling that time spent away from the Shāh was likely to be used by rivals to undermine their position. In January 1902 Amīn al-Sultān had to abandon plans to make a long-promised pilgrimage to Qumm because, in Hardinge's words, "he fears for his position and is daily at the Shah's side".⁶⁶ The effects of this wish to remain close to the throne were most noticeable, however, when the Shāh went on his summer hunting expeditions, for Ministers were then sometimes absent from their offices for weeks at a time.

The competition to secure Muzaffar al-Dīn's attention and favour became even more intense than usual when decisions were being made about the allocation of places in the parties to accompany the Shāh on his European visits. In the early months of 1900, for example, Amīn al-Sultān made great but unsuccessful efforts to prevent Nāṣir al-Mulk, a protégé of Hakīm al-Mulk, from accompanying the Shah to Europe, for the Ṣadr-i Aʿẓam did not wish Muzaffar al-Dīn to have an interpreter who was not under his, the Amīn al-Sultān's, influence.⁶⁷

Examples of such court intrigues are included in almost every monthly summary of events compiled by the British Legation in Tehran, and their effects on the conduct of government were considerable. At the most obvious level the intrigues distracted the attention of high

66. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.5, 8 January 1902.

67. F.O. 60:617. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.37, Secret, 2 July 1900.

officials from their regular duties as well as absorbing much of their time. In an interview with Spring Rice in January 1901 - the frankness of which impressed the British diplomat - Amīn al-Sultān said that the outstanding need in Persia was for financial reform, and he went on:

"But what is the good of speaking of schemes for improving the country. I have no time for anything except self-defence. I am surrounded by enemies and there is not a single soul I can trust. All the time I was in Europe it was a continual struggle; if I told the Shah he must smile at a wedding someone was sure to tell him it was his duty to cry".

Spring Rice noted on this occasion that "the Shah listens to every accusation against his chief Minister and attends to no suggestion for general reform. The whole energies of the Ministers are taken up in mutual intrigues for each other's destruction".⁶⁸ Again this was not a new situation in Persia's history; but what was needed in the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn was an improvement in the conduct of the affairs of state, not a further deterioration.

As well as absorbing the time and energies of high officials, intrigues at court had other harmful effects on the quality of government. This was not least because appointments were regarded as a means of securing and extending influence, and therefore the question of who was selected for a particular post depended less on qualifications, experience and suitability than on the outcome of some often quite remote intrigue. The fact that appointments were made on this basis - and that such intrigues were frequently prolonged, with temporary victory being achieved by rival parties - meant that tenure of office was often brief. Therefore the possibility of achieving stable administration, let alone that of implementing sustained reforms, was greatly diminished.

68. F.O. 60:636. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.7, 9 January 1901.

A further harmful consequence of appointment by intrigue was that holders of office were known to be the protégés of greater personages, and therefore any reform which required the active co-operation of a particular official for its success usually had to gain the prior approval of the superior official through whose influence the appointment had been gained. All of these circumstances militated against any improvement in the government of the country. One example of the harm which could be caused under such circumstances can be seen in an episode in the career of Ayn al-Dawla. In order to increase his influence at court Amīn al-Sultān sought in the early months of 1899 to have Ayn al-Dawla, one of Hakīm al-Mulk's strongest supporters, removed from Tehran. He was able to persuade Muẓaffar al-Dīn to appoint Ayn al-Dawla as Governor-General of Arabistān - a province that was remote and currently turbulent.⁶⁹ Hakīm al-Mulk immediately set to work to have his protégé recalled to the capital, and he succeeded in this aim in May 1900. In March of the following year Hakīm al-Mulk was able to secure for Ayn al-Dawla the post of Governor of Tehran. The serious implications of these machinations became obvious at the end of 1901 when Naus was trying to begin to reform the taxation system by introducing new and more accurate assessments of the revenues of each province. Naus told Hardinge that he had decided that the process should start in the capital because it would be easier for the Belgian experts to exercise close supervision there; but when the plan was put before Amīn al-Sultān there was much procrastination on the part of that Minister. Naus

69. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, 3 May 1899.

discovered that this was because Amīn al-Sultān did not wish in any way to antagonise Ayn al-Dawla at that time as he was trying to win him away from the Hakīm al-Mulk's group.⁷⁰ Under such circumstances the plan for tax reform was to all intents and purposes abandoned in Tehran.

The fact that officials were not infrequently known to have been appointed as a result of intrigues gave rise to resentment and criticism within Persia, and this was exacerbated by the belief that external powers, notably Russia and Britain, were also involved in the machinations. When the very highest officials in the land felt that they needed the protection, or at least the support, of a foreign government, then yet another obstacle had been placed in the way of reform; for such officials were reluctant to proceed with policies which they believed the external powers would not approve. In the second issue of Lisān al-Haqq Amīn al-Sultān was accused of cherishing the desires of Russia above those of his own country and of preparing the way for the total subjection of Persia to Russia.⁷¹ Another broadsheet also accused him of being in league with the Russian government, of plotting with the Armenian community, and of conspiring to hide large quantities of weapons in Armenian churches, as a prelude to the Russian conquest of Persia.⁷²

It is difficult to make a firm judgment about the extent to which Amīn al-Sultān was pro-Russian. His sentiments were probably more in that direction than they were pro-British; but Hardinge's view was that he was certainly not as pro-Russian as the authors of the broadsheets wanted their readers to believe.⁷³ The changing circumstances at Court

70. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, 4 February 1902.

71. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.2 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.

72. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.3 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, Confidential, 18 August 1901.

73. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.19, 4 February 1902.

were doubtless responsible in large part for the extent to which the Amīn al-Sultān showed either pro-Russian or pro-British sympathies. The most difficult issue concerned foreign loans. Newell, the Manager of the Imperial Bank in Tehran, gave an accurate summary of the situation which existed in the latter months of 1901 when the proceeds of the first Russian loan were all but exhausted. On the one hand a loan was needed to satisfy the Shāh's wish to travel, to meet the greed of some of the courtiers, and to pay some of the arrears of salaries owed to the army and the bureaucracy. On the other hand, Amīn al-Sultān was well aware that the previous loan had aroused great opposition, particularly from the religious leaders, and that that opposition had been directed at him personally. Not to raise a loan would mean loss of office, with potentially very harsh consequences; while to secure a further Russian loan would cause even greater condemnation of him by a very influential section of the population. Amīn al-Sultān also knew that Russia's terms for a new loan would be even more unpopular than the previous ones had been. The only way he could possibly hedge his bets was to seek an English loan - but this too would arouse opposition.⁷⁴ In the event, Amīn al-Sultān was compelled to accept a loan from Russia, and although the amount was less than half that of the 1900 transaction, the opposition to it was more serious. Resentment at foreign influence in the affairs of Persia did not begin during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn. It had been an important feature of the protest movement against the Tobacco Régie in 1891/92; but under Muzaffar al-Dīn the granting of more concessions, the increasing number of foreign loans, and the employment of Belgian officials greatly exacerbated this cause of discontent.

74. F.O. 60:643. Griffin to Sanderson, no number (London) 20 September 1901. This letter contains the information from Newell in Tehran.

It was not only in the matter of loans, however, that Anglo-Russian rivalry increased the political difficulties facing the government. Amīn al-Sultān knew that if he took any action which was unpopular then unscrupulous rivals had the opportunity to arouse opposition to it by saying that the Minister had done what he had done at the behest of a foreign power, or with the interests of a foreign power rather than those of Persia in mind. Suspicion of British and Russian aims and motives was sufficiently widespread to provide a ready-made basis for opposition to almost any action taken by the government; whether that action was undertaken in response to an immediate incident or in support of a long-term programme of reform.

In February 1901 a mullā incited a crowd in the Tehran bazaar to attack Jewish and Armenian property and Amīn al-Sultān ordered that troops should be used to restore law and order. The incident was a small one, but Hakīm al-Mulk was quick to take advantage of it to harm Amīn al-Sultān's relations with the Shāh by saying that the Ṣadr-i Aʿzam had ordered the deployment of soldiers in the hope of securing foreign intervention; and that the foreign power which had been given the excuse to intervene would then reward Amīn al-Sultān.⁷⁵ That such accusations could be made—and made with a realistic hope of their belief, that such suspicions could be harboured, and such deceptions practised, provides further evidence of the difficulties facing the government in the conduct of affairs of state.

The depth of suspicion about the intentions and activities of the British and Russian governments in Persia did more than just increase the difficulties in the way of firm and decisive administration; it also

75. F.O.60:638. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.51, Telegraphic, 9 September 1901. (The incident took place during Ramadān.)

served to distract attention from indigenous causes of decay. Such were the origins of a notable feature in Persia's history later in the twentieth century - a tendency to blame foreign governments, particularly the British - for many of the ills which have afflicted the country.

There are three other aspects of administrative decay under the reign of Muẓaffar al-Dīn which need to be considered. The first of these was the recourse to the selling of offices, a not unfamiliar practice in earlier times. When Muẓaffar al-Dīn came to the throne the selling of provincial governorships was stopped, but shortage of revenue caused the practice to be revived within two years.⁷⁶ It was not, however, the re-introduction of this custom which did the harm so much as the circumstances of its renewal. If the purchaser of an office could be sure of government support, particularly with regard to the provision of troops for maintaining security, and if his tenure of office was sufficiently lengthy for him to have an interest in the continuing prosperity of his province and its population; then governors who purchased their posts were no less likely to administer their areas well than those appointed in other ways.

Under Muẓaffar al-Dīn neither of these conditions prevailed. In the first place the means of maintaining security were sadly deficient and governors were reluctant to accept posts in turbulent areas. In March 1901 Nizām al-Saltāna was reported to have paid some 80,000 tūmāns (equivalent to approximately £16,000) to the Shāh and to Amīn al-Sultān not to be sent to a remote and troublesome province.⁷⁷ In the second place as less and

76. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.16, 12 February 1899.

77. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.95, Confidential, 24 June 1901. The report does not name the province - but the post of Governor-General of Arabistān was vacant at that time.

less revenue reached the central treasury the rate at which offices were sold rose sharply, and this in turn meant that governors were left with a much shorter period of time to recoup their outlay for the purchase of office and to make a profit.⁷⁸ The intensity of rivalries at Court and the use of appointments as a weapon in those struggles also tended to increase the frequency with which posts were changed. The fact that Muẓaffar al-Dīn's health was known to be fragile, and that the Valī'ahd's followers would seek a redistribution of lucrative posts on the death of the Shāh, decreased still further any sense of security of tenure. This again meant that the pressure became ever greater to amass money as rapidly as possible, and few governors gave much attention to the long-term prosperity of their provinces. To reimburse themselves for the cost of their offices, and to make a profit, the governors often sought to extract money from the rich and then left them in turn to make good their losses from weaker members of society.⁷⁹

Prospective governors not only paid for new posts, or to avoid unpopular appointments, they sometimes offered money to the Shāh to postpone loss of office or to prevent a recall to Tehran. Much depended upon the conditions prevailing in the particular province. Posts in turbulent areas were by no means as popular as those in provinces which were lucrative and relatively quiet. One such was Khurāsān and in 1901 there was intense rivalry for the Governor-Generalship. The office was held by Nayyir al-Dawla and the two men seeking the post were Aṣaf al-Dawla

78. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78, Confidential, 20 April 1901.

79. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78, Confidential, 20 April 1901. Al-Ghazālī had observed some eight centuries earlier the likely effects of weak rule: "If, God forbid, the Sultān in their midst were weak, universal ruin would befall the religion and the [whole] lower world; for a century, say, of unjust rule by Sultāns will not cause so much damage as one hour of the injustice of subjects to one another". Ghazālī's Book of Counsel for Kings (Naṣīḥat al-Mulūk), translated by F.R.C. Bagley, London, 1971, p.77.

and 'Ayn al-Mulk - followers respectively of Amīn al-Sultān and Hakīm al-Mulk. 'Ayn al-Mulk is reported to have offered 140,000 tūmāns for the post, while Āṣaf al-Dawla tried to cause disturbances in Mashhad against the incumbent governor to have him removed. Nayyir al-Dawla was aware of these plots against him, and he paid part of the arrears of revenue which were owing to the Shāh in a successful attempt to retain his job.⁸⁰

At the same time Hakīm al-Mulk and Amīn al-Sultān were both endeavouring to secure the Governorship of Sīstān and Ṭabas for one of their protégés; but the incumbent official Hashmat al-Mulk was able to retain office from 1901 to 1904 by sending regular gifts to the Shāh and to Amīn al-Sultān. In this particular case there was foreign involvement; for Hardinge provided discreet support for Hashmat al-Mulk because his was a sensitive border province where there were disputes concerning water rights between Persia and Afghanistan, and British officials were trying to reach a settlement. It was Hardinge's view that if Hashmat al-Mulk was to lose office, the post would probably pass to his brother, Shawkat al-Mulk, and there were suspicions that he might be pro-Russian in his inclinations.⁸¹

It was not only governors who provided money when changes of appointment were about to be made. In 1905 Sālār al-Dawla was appointed Governor-General of Kirmānshāh, his reputation for cruelty and oppression

80. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.49, 18 March 1902. In 1903 Nayyir al-Dawla did lose office partly as a result of disturbances in Mashhad but there is no evidence to indicate that these riots were encouraged by rivals for his appointment.

81. See Hashmat al-Mulk in Biographical Notices of Persian Statesmen and Notables August 1905, compiled by G.P. Churchill, Calcutta, Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, India, 1906, p.25.

went before him, and the leading citizens of Kirmānshāh immediately sent a cable to Muzaffar al-Dīn offering to pay 3000 tūmans if His Majesty would kindly appoint someone else.⁸² The ploy did not succeed.

A second aspect of administrative decay - a growth in the levying of extra-ordinary taxes - stems from the lack of security in the tenure of office, and from the inability of Tehran to exercise effective central control. Such taxes were generally imposed by officials seeking quickly to recoup the expenditures needed to gain appointment, and to make the expected degree of profit. If continued tenure of office was uncertain, speed was essential. When Sykes returned to Persia early in 1903 after an absence of three years, he drew attention to the decline in the standards of provincial government which had taken place in the south-east of the country. He quoted a recent example of extortion in Kirmān, where the Governor had been ordered to make a special payment of some £20 to Tehran to celebrate the fact that the Shāh had had the good fortune to shoot a leopard. The Governor had immediately ordered that the owner of a wine shop should be seized and imprisoned until he paid a fine of £20. In Sykes' telling phrase, Persia had been like a lemon being squeezed by hand, now she resembled that same fruit about to be placed in a lemon press.⁸³

In conclusion then it is fair to say that administrative decline reached serious proportions during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn. Many of the causes of this were not new, but in almost all respects matters got much worse during that period. What was happening was that the government was not fulfilling its essential task - that of providing

82. F.O. 248:866. Grant Duff to Gray, No.11, 4 January 1906.

83. F.O. 60:665. Enclosure No.1 (Sykes to Hardinge, 23 February 1903) in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.37, 12 March 1903.

conditions in which the Muslim could lead the good religious life. The reasons why these conditions were not being maintained were many and varied, but it was the failure to provide them that lay at the heart of the discontent which was so widespread in Persia.

Tradition demanded personal supervision of affairs by the Shāh as one of the essential qualities for that office. Muzaffar al-Dīn was neither physically able, nor had he either the experience or the inclination, to exercise the necessary degree of control. He was vacillating and weak at a time when resolution and strength were needed. The defects which characterised the Qājār administrative system were many - tendencies to intrigue, to rivalry, to corruption - these were not new and even a strong Shāh could face serious difficulties. A weak Shāh who, by default, allowed such tendencies to grow unchecked was in effect helping to sow the seeds of his own destruction. The protests in Persia ~~were not~~, in essence, directed against the system of government so much as against the failure of that system to maintain the necessary conditions of peace, security and justice. An effective, traditional system of rule which, under a strong Shāh, would have met those requirements, might have been able to survive; but the administration of Muzaffar al-Dīn was incapable of meeting the demands made upon it.

CHAPTER III

THE CONDITION OF THE ARMY

"Keep your troops always contented and if you wish them not to grudge their lives on your behalf do not grudge them food."

A Mirror for Princes:

The Qābūs Nāma

by Kai Kālīs Ibn Iskandar.

Translated from the Persian

by R. Levy. New York 1951, p.221.

The writings of European travellers who visited Persia during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh show great diversity, but almost all those books share three common features: complaints about the insecurity and hardships of internal travel, a sense of wonderment at the beauty of the mosques (particularly those in Isfahān), and reports of the miserable plight of soldiers and road guards throughout the country.¹ The first and third of those matters are related, and the fact that security along the roads was so bad is in great part explained by the poor state of the troops. The issues to be considered in this

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1. Although the descriptions of travellers are graphic, they were not always skilled observers of military matters. The fact that Persia was an area of political rivalry between Great Britain and Russia meant that both governments took considerable care to keep themselves informed about military affairs within Persia - and to do so by using trained expert observers. The reports of the various British Military Attachés in Tehran have been invaluable in this study, so too have some of the consular reports, for it should be remembered that the posts which were staffed from India were usually in the charge of men who had had professional military training and considerable experience of army matters. On several occasions the British Military Attaché established a good professional relationship with the Russian commanding the Cossack Brigade, and men - in particular Kossagowski and Chernozaboff - seem to have been very willing to allow the British Attaché to visit the Cossack Brigade and to discuss the state of the Persian army in general.

chapter are the size of the Persian army, its equipment and training, its morale and effectiveness; the enquiry also includes a separate examination of the state of the Cossack Brigade under Muzaffar al-Dīn.

One of the most frequent comments by European travellers concerns the small number of men who appeared to be available for the task of maintaining security. This impression was certainly an accurate one and it is substantiated by the figures given in a detailed and valuable report on the Persian army which was drawn up in January 1900 by the British Military Attaché in Tehran, Lieutenant-Colonel H.P. Picot.³ In that report there are three categories used in discussing the number of men in the Persian army. The first is the nominal strength, or the numbers which should exist according to the official government list. The second figure, somewhat misleadingly called the effective strength, concerns the number of men actually on the rolls of the various branches of the army - but the majority of them in fact were not serving. The third category refers to the actual strength under arms - men who were believed to be present with their regiments. The figures are given below, and in brackets alongside them are some broadly comparable figures given by Curzon for the state of the Persian army in 1891.⁴

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2. The Cossack Brigade is worthy of separate treatment for it was the only unit in the Persian army to have been successfully established on European lines and to be officered by foreign nationals. It was small, but its importance was much greater than its size, and it had been responsible for maintaining law and order in Tehran from the death of Nāṣir al-Dīn until the accession of Muzaffar al-Dīn.
 3. A Report on the Persian Army by Lieutenant-Colonel H.P. Picot, Secret and Confidential, January 1900. Copy in F.O. 881:7364. Enclosure in Durand to Salisbury, No.1, 18 January 1900. Afterwards cited as Picot Report.
 4. G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, London 1892 I, pp.590-91. A direct comparison is not possible in all cases.

<u>Infantry</u> ⁵	<u>Picot (1899/1900)</u>	<u>Curzon (1890/91)</u>
Nominal strength (79 regiments)	78,500	-
Effective strength (maximum)	35,000	63,700
Number actually serving	10,700	13,000*
(*this figure of Curzon's includes cavalry)		
<u>Cavalry</u> ⁶ (excluding the Cossack Brigade)		
Nominal strength	37,591	-
Effective strength (maximum)	13,600	18,800
Number actually serving	1,100	-
<u>Cossack Brigade</u> ⁷		
Nominal strength	1,500	-
Effective strength	1,411	-
Number actually serving	1,000	-
<u>Artillery</u> ⁸		
Nominal strength	11,319	-
Effective strength	5,820	4,000
Number actually serving	800	1,800

5. Picot Report, pp.105-7.

6. Ibid., pp.106-7 and 117.

7. Ibid., pp.124-5.

8. Ibid., pp.106-7 and 130-2.

In addition to the artillery units discussed above, Picot also refers to the existence of the camel corps which comprised some 40 to 50 camels and old swivel guns. The corps was "quite obsolete and useless". (Picot Report, p.138.) Curzon believed that the corps had an effective strength of 80 men, and that it had 164 guns, but he did not give a figure for the number of men in the corps who were under arms. (G.N. Curzon, op.cit., p.590.)

At first sight there does not seem to be much difference in the total numbers of men under arms in 1891 and 1899, the decline apparently being from 14,800 to 13,600. However, this simple comparison may be misleading for Curzon refers to the existence of some 2,000 militia in 1890 (though they are not included in his footnote for 1891, which seems to refer only to infantry and artillery). Picot states that the number of militiamen was insignificant in 1899 and that regular troops and members of the Cossack Brigade now undertook the guard duties which had earlier been performed by the militia.⁹ If the 2,000 men are added to Curzon's total (of 14,800) then the decline during the following 8 years amounted to some 3,200 men - or a reduction of about one fifth - in the total number of men under arms. It seems clear from the above table that regardless of what happened to the militia, the artillery forces did suffer a sharp decline in the 8 year period between the two reports.

Curzon makes it very clear that the Persian army was in a poor condition in 1891, and it seems to have got worse by 1899 when Picot drew up his report. Unfortunately there is no comprehensive survey of the whole army available again before the death of Muzaffar al-Dīn, but, as will be seen, other evidence points to even greater decline after 1900. In brief it seems fair to say that although the Persian army was in a poor condition on the accession to power of Muzaffar al-Dīn, that monarch did nothing to halt the decline which had already set in; and almost certainly the army was in an appreciably worse condition at the end, than at the beginning, of his reign.

9. Picot Report, p.138, and G.N. Curzon, op.cit^I, p.590.

The results of the very great gap between effective strength and actual strength were to be seen through the rule of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shah; and there is not a single year of it that is without British consular reports of a shortage of troops in at least one province. Over the reign as a whole every province seems to have suffered from this at one time or another. In some provinces - such as Sīstān - the shortage seems to have persisted, and indeed to have got worse, throughout the reign. In other provinces the situation changed as strong governors succeeded weak ones;¹⁰ and as temporary military forces were collected for brief campaigns which were designed either to collect revenues or, less frequently, to try to suppress disorders on the border with Turkey. The following representative reports indicate how serious the situation was in certain provinces at particular times.

In 1898 the Governor of Isfahān, Zill al-Sultān, had less than 400 men available to maintain security in the city and its immediate environs. There should have been 2 regiments of infantry (each of 1,000 men) and 500 cavalry stationed in Isfahān.¹¹ The following year there were only 200 soldiers in the city, and the Governor admitted that he could not maintain security even on the most important roads in his

10. See for example the discussion in Chapter VI on Affairs in Fārs, where it is seen that some Governors did provide better conditions for the troops and that security in the province usually improved as a result. Even Tehran was on occasion short of troops, but the Cossack Brigade was stationed there and it was able to maintain a fair measure of law and order in the capital.

11. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.8, 9 April 1898.

province - those to Tehran, to Yazd and to Shīrāz.¹² in October 1899 the Governor of Qazvīn had only 5 soldiers at his disposal, and when an anti-Armenian riot broke out all 6 men rapidly went into hiding.¹³

In that same year Sykes returned to make a tour of Sīstān after an absence of 6 years from that province, and he reported that all the garrisons which he had previously visited were now manned by far fewer troops.¹⁴ One of the regiments which he had seen there before - the Bīrjand regiment - now existed only on paper.¹⁵ Sykes pointed to one of the most important reasons for the decline in the numbers of troops actually under arms when he explained that the few cavalry who remained at Nasratābād were refusing to act as escorts for the caravans to Bam because they had not been paid.¹⁶ Other evidence shows that in 1899 there were less than 300 troops stationed in Sīstān when there should have been at least 1,600 in the province.¹⁷

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12. F.O. 248:699. Preece to Hardinge, No.1, 23 January 1898, and Preece to Hardinge, No.9, 26 February 1898. There is no evidence of any consistent improvement in the size of the forces at the disposal of Zill al-Sultān throughout the rest of Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh's reign. Picot's Report put the total number of troops in the province at 550 in 1899 - consisting of 400 infantry, 100 cavalry and 50 artillery (Report p.107). The British Consul made an extensive tour of the Bakhtiyārī country in the early summer of 1902 and he estimated that the chiefs of that tribe could put into the field a force of some 15,000 armed men of which one third could be mounted. The Īlkhānī of the tribe, Isfandiyār Khān, had attended a review of the Cossack Brigade in Tehran and he told Preece, rather boastfully, that with 500 of his own picked men he "could do what he liked with the Cossacks", F.O. 60:651, Enclosure in Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.114 Confidential, 11 August 1902.
 13. F.O. 60:609. Enclosure in Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.99, 17 October 1899.
 14. F.O. 60:648. Sykes to Salisbury, No.1, 11 January 1899.
 15. F.O. 60:612. Sykes to Salisbury, No.7, 11 May 1899.
 16. F.O. 60:612. Sykes to Salisbury, No.12, 18 December 1899.
 17. Picot Report, pp.106-7.

Sykes returned to the south-east of Persia in 1903 and he noted that there had been a further decline during his second absence, and that, for example, the caravans on the road from Kirmān to Bandar ʿAbbās, which had previously been regarded as safe, were now under constant threat from Bashākirdī tribesmen.¹⁸ Again Sykes drew attention to a very important, and not uncommon, feature of the situation when he noted (some eighteen months later) that although less than half the proper number of road guards were employed in his province, the Governor of Kirmān continued to draw sufficient money to pay the full complement of men; and that he and other officials pocketed the difference.¹⁹

In the course of a long report written in February 1899 comparing current conditions with those which had prevailed in 1895 the British Minister in Tehran noted that whole regiments in the army had simply disbanded themselves during the intervening four years because of lack of pay²⁰ — this process was to continue for the rest of Muzaḥḥar al-Dīn's Shāh's reign. In May 1904, the Commander-in-Chief of the Persian army visited Mashhad and he ordered a parade of the troops stationed in the city. As none of them had been paid most had returned home; the Governor instead gathered together a number of townsmen and quickly put them into uniform so that a parade could be held.²¹ In December 1905, the Governor of Yazd had only 40 soldiers available to maintain law and order in a town of some 60,000 people, and when demonstrations were held against the Christian school there he found it impossible to repress them.²²

18. F.O. 60:665. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.37, 12 March 1903.

19. F.O. 248:820. Sykes to Hardinge, No.62, 1 September 1904.

20. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.16, 12 February 1899.

21. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.92, 24 May 1904. The men were given 2 qirāns for the day of the parade, but the deception was discovered by the Commander-in-Chief, and the Colonel in charge of the troops was arrested. He had to pay 2,000 tūmāns for his release.

22. F.O. 248:845. Baggaley (Yazd) to Preece, No.16, 12 December 1905.

The shortage of troops, particularly in turbulent provinces, meant that newly-appointed governors were sometimes reluctant to proceed to their posts. In the summer of 1899 the new governors of Fārs and Ārabistān both took detachments of soldiers from the Cossack Brigade with them as personal guards when they left Tehran to assume office.²³ In that same year Nizām al-Saltāna offered a sum equivalent to £14,000 not to be appointed as the Vazīr of Āzarbāyjān because that province was so turbulent and there were so few troops there.²⁴ In December 1901 Ālā al-Mulk, who had recently returned from Turkey, was appointed Governor of Balūchistān and Kirman. When he was informed of conditions in that region, he refused to leave Tehran for his new post until he had received funds with which to pay the rebellious soldiers there.²⁵

The fact that so few troops were available, and that they were so infrequently paid meant that provincial governors sometimes had to resort to a number of devices in order to maintain any kind of law and order. One of these involved the temporary raising of a local irregular force to accomplish a specific task.²⁶ This technique was used by Āyn al-Dawla in 1899 to collect arrears of revenue in Luristān.²⁷ In February 1902 the Governor of Astarābād, whose troops were without rifles, raised an irregular force of some 2,000 to 3,000 armed tribesmen, including many Kurds, to inflict a defeat on Turkoman groups who had been causing trouble near Bujnūr.²⁸ The victory, however, was short-lived and raiding was again prevalent in the area within a year.²⁹ During disturbances

23. F.O. 60:610. Durand to Salisbury, Telegraphic No.50, 7 August 1899.

24. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.35, 3rd April 1899.

25. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.192, 11 December 1901.

26. This was by no means an innovation in the history of Persia.

27. Picot Report, p.106.

28. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40, 4 March 1902.

29. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78, Confidential, 26 May 1903.

against the Belgian Customs administration in Tabrīz in the summer of 1903 to Valī'ahd sought military help from Rahīm Khān, a leader of the Qaradāgh tribe, who had previously been - and who was subsequently to return to being - a notorious brigand.³⁰

Local governors usually had to borrow money to pay for such temporary forces. In November 1901 the Valī'ahd obtained a loan of some £50,000 from the Imperial Bank to meet the cost of an expedition by a temporary irregular force against tribesmen who were raiding to the north of Tabrīz.³¹ In June 1903 at the time of serious disturbances against the Bābīs in Yazd the Governor of Isfahān, Zill al-Sultān, was ordered to proceed to that town with troops to restore order. He too had to borrow money to pay the irregular force which he had to raise to accomplish the task.³² On occasion money alone succeeded in achieving the desired objective without the use of force. In September 1901 a group of Balūchīs who had seized the fort at Mināb could not be expelled as the local governor had no troops available, neither could he raise a temporary force. His solution was to pay the rebels to hand back the fort to the proper authorities.³³

30. F.O. 60:666. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.101, Secret and Confidential, 6 July 1903. Rahīm Khān had been captured by a ruse in the autumn of 1902 and had been held in prison in Tabrīz. He was released in June 1903 to take charge of an irregular force of cavalry raised by the Valī'ahd to restore order in the city. Most of the regular troops had not been paid and had disbanded themselves. (F.O. 60:666 Stevens (Tabrīz) to Hardinge, No.7, Secret and Confidential, 25 June 1903.) The British Consul in Tabrīz described how, in 1904, the local authorities lacked the troops necessary to punish the Begzadeh Kurds who had been responsible for the murder of Mr. Labaree, an American missionary working at Urumiyya. The leaders of the tribe were ultimately captured by trickery. (A.C. Wratislaw, A Consul in the East, London 1924, pp.191-203.)

31. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.192, 11 December 1901.

32. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.101, Secret and Confidential, 6 July 1903.

33. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.142, 19 September 1901.

Examples of the recognition of weakness by local officials also occurred in Arabistān in the spring of 1903, and again in the autumn of 1905. On both occasions the Governor of the province was ordered to recover arrears of taxation which were owed by the Banī Turuf tribe.³⁴ On neither occasion did the Governor have more than 850 men at his disposal for the whole of that unruly province, and because of the hostility of the local Arab population, no troops were stationed south of Band-i Qīr in 1905.³⁵ What each of the Governors did was to seek the assistance of Shaykh Khaz'al of Muḥammara for he could call upon nearly 16,000 armed followers from among various tribes.³⁶ The Shaykh was certainly willing to provide such help; for the Banī Turuf had previously refused to pay their taxes through him, and he was keen to show them the error of their ways.³⁷ By assisting in the successful recovery of taxes by the local Governor, Shaykh Khaz'al was able both to assert his influence and to gain concessions from Tehran over the way in which the Belgian customs officials were operating in Muḥammara.³⁸ On the second occasion the Belgians were ordered no longer to concern themselves in any way with the Shaykh's export trade in dates. That trade was considerable and lucrative, and Shaykh Khaz'al had tried on numerous occasions to prevent the Belgians from being involved with it.³⁹

34. F.O.60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 3 March 1903, and F.O.60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.207, 12 September 1905. In 1905 the expedition sent against the Banī Turuf comprised some 2,000 armed men and it would appear that Shaykh Khaz'al's followers made up a higher percentage of the force than they had in 1903. (F.O.371:105, India Office to Foreign Office, Document number 3074, 25 January 1906.)

35. F.O. 416:17. Enclosure in India Office to Foreign Office, 26 April 1904.

36. F.O. 60:651. Enclosure in Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.100, 18 July 1902. The number quoted was 15,725 men, and this figure excluded tribes in the areas of Shūshtar and Dizfūl.

37. F.O.248:843. Cox to Hardinge, No.74, 16 June 1905. The Banī Turuf were reluctant to pay their taxes through Shaykh Khaz'al for that would have been tantamount to recognizing his authority over them.

38. F.O.60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.65, 28 April 1903.

39. F.O.248:842. Persian Gulf Diary, 29 December 1905. The Belgians had already been instructed not to tax the export of dates, but they tried to collect statistics on the trade and Khaz'al wanted to prevent that too.

With regard to the defence of Persia's territorial integrity also, the army under Muzaffar al-Dīn was inadequate. Two examples will serve to indicate the extent of that weakness. In the summer of 1900 there were a series of incidents on the central section of the border with the Ottoman Empire around Mandalī. One of them began with a dispute about a water supply which was shared by an Ottoman and a Persian village. The quarrel resulted in a brief Turkish invasion of Persian territory.⁴⁰ When the British Military Attaché discussed the matter with the Russian Commander of the Cossack Brigade, Kossagowski, the latter said that there were insufficient Persian forces to maintain surveillance of the western border; and that the government relied on the temporary recruitment of local irregular tribal forces if it needed soldiers in a particular area. It was the Russian's view that reliance on such ad hoc forces was extremely dangerous for they were very difficult to control, and they served only to provoke the Ottoman authorities who did have regular troops at their disposal. According to Kossagowski, there could be no hope of securing Persia's frontiers until the frontier tribes were brought under control.⁴¹

In 1905 there were more incidents on the border with the Ottoman empire, this time in the area near Lāhījān, to the west of Sāwj Bulāgh. The immediate cause of the trouble on this occasion was the building of a new customs post on the orders of Belgian officials. The Ottoman authorities argued that the post was in their territory, and a small group

40. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.84, 21 August 1900.

41. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.86, 23 August 1900.

of Turkish soldiers arrived and demolished it.⁴² The local Kurdish tribesmen were, according to the British Consul in Tabriz, Sunni Muslims and they welcomed any extension in the domain of the Sultān.⁴³

Those Kurds had, earlier in the year, caused much trouble for the local Persian authorities by their raids; and the government in Tehran had endeavoured to subdue them by using an irregular force of Qara Papakh cavalry. (The Qara Papakh were Shi'is.)⁴⁴ That cavalry force had, however, been too small to deal effectively with the Kurds, and the result was that the situation in the area remained very dangerous and insecure for many months as raids and counter-raids persisted.⁴⁵ The Turkish force which had demolished the customs post remained in the area for some months, and the Persian government was not able to re-establish its authority there.⁴⁶ Such border incidents were not, of course, a new feature in the history of Persia; but Muzaffar al-Dīn's failure to defend Persian territory undoubtedly increased the sense of discontent within the country.⁴⁷

42. F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.223, 11 October 1905.

43. F.O. 60:700. Wratislaw to Grant Duff, No.46, 10 October 1905.

44. F.O. 60:700. Wratislaw to Grant Duff, No.46, 10 October 1905.

45. M. Jewett, My Life in Persia, Cedar Rapids 1909, pp.150-1.

46. F.O. 248:866. Grant Duff to Grey, No.11, 4 January 1906.

47. The inability of the Shāh to defend the frontier against the Turkish incursion of 1905 was bitterly criticised by the Persian language newspaper Habl al-Matīn, which was published in Calcutta (F.O. 371:114, India Office to Foreign Office, Document number 30314, 4 July 1906). There are several consular diaries which show that the paper had an extensive circulation in Persia, though it was officially banned. The British Consul in Mashhad noted in February 1901 that the post office authorities were under orders to confiscate any copies of Habl al-Matīn which arrived in the mail, but he also remarked that it was "more widely circulated than any other newspaper in Khorasan" (F.O. 60:642, Meshed Diary, 1 March 1901). In September 1904 Hardinge observed that Habl al-Matīn is "extensively read in this country", and that it was "virtually in free circulation" (F.O. 60:683, Hardinge to Lansdowne, Confidential No.174, 11 September 1904). For fuller details of the general nature, importance and contents of Persian language newspapers of the time, see E.G. Browne The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, Cambridge 1914.

The fact that the Persian army was under-manned was certainly known to the authorities in Tehran. Amīn al-Sultān told Hardinge in March 1903 that he was well aware that the real strength of the army was much less than half the official figure. His wish was to compel those responsible for the regiments either to maintain their forces at full strength, or to disband them once and for all. He cited a case in which he had written to summon a regiment from Āzarbāyjān to Tehran only to discover that, although full pay was still being drawn by the commanding officer, the regiment had virtually been disbanded and the troops who were still on the regimental roll were in fact working as labourers. When the summons to the capital city arrived, the commanding officer had bribed the Valī'ahd in Tabrīz to tell the Shāh that the regiment could not possibly be spared from its vital task of defending the Turkish frontier.⁴⁸ In the same despatch Hardinge reported that a similar set of circumstances had been reported from Qā'in in eastern Persia, where a commanding officer was drawing pay for some 800 men, but he was able to muster only 150.⁴⁹

In seeking the causes of the plight of the Persian army under Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh, several contemporary observers rightly draw attention to the central issues of the inadequate provision of funds, and of very poor standards of financial control which prevailed. Lack of money meant that modern equipment was not purchased; while failure to supervise the administration of such funds as were available meant that fraud could flourish, and abuses went unchecked. Both of these factors contributed to the persistent failure to pay the troops. But the second

48. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.41, Very Confidential, 30 March 1903.

49. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.41, Very Confidential, 30 March 1903.

is probably the most important, for although official levels of pay were inadequate, it was the fact that the proper amounts were not being paid promptly that gave rise to much of the prevailing sense of discontent.

In this respect the army shared the fate of the civilian bureaucracy; and its poor state reflected the general deterioration which affected nearly all branches of government. The causes were often common ones; a failure to maintain, in good order, established systems of administration, an inability to prevent corruption, and to stop the misappropriation of funds. All these elements can be seen in the matter of the non-payment of the troops. In looking at the way in which the government sought to remedy that situation, we also see one of the paradoxes of Persia's history under Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh: for the very factor which exacerbated many of the difficulties facing Persia, Anglo-Russian political rivalry, was also to make it easier to raise those loans which helped to stave off the total collapse of the state.

Several instances of the non-payment of troops have already been mentioned, and many others are to be found both in consular diaries and in reports from other informed sources. As in the matter of shortage of troops, the evidence concerning arrears of pay is to be found throughout the whole of Muzaffar al-Dīn's reign; it comes from every province of Persia, and it refers to every branch of the army. The greatest volume of evidence refers to the troops which were stationed in and around the capital. Conditions there can be studied in greater detail and over a longer period of time than those which prevailed in other parts of Persia; but the circumstances described below are far from being unique during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh.

According to Rabino, the Manager of the Imperial Bank in Tehran, non-payment of soldiers and civil servants was already a very serious matter in May 1898. The banker emphasized that the amount needed to settle those arrears of pay was relatively small; and that a loan of some £1,200,000 would enable the government both to meet those immediate commitments, and to pay off the £500,000 which had been borrowed six years earlier to pay the compensation for the cancellation of the tobacco concession.⁵⁰ The British Minister, Durand, confirmed the gravity of the situation which prevailed at that time when he reported that the soldiers in Tehran were sullen and rebellious because they had not been paid, that they were refusing to attend parades, and that the Commander-in-Chief was afraid to venture out of his home for fear of being attacked by his starving troops.⁵¹ By mid-July 1898, Rabino was sufficiently alarmed to send a telegram to his superiors at the Imperial Bank in London telling them that troops throughout Persia were refusing to perform their duties, and that the situation was becoming more dangerous each day.⁵² Soldiers had begun to sack food shops in the capital during July,⁵³ and in Tabriz the troops refused to fire on, and then quickly joined forces with, bread rioters in August.⁵⁴ During the autumn, as the harvest came in and food prices fell, the situation became a little easier, but discontent was still rife.⁵⁵

The reason why the decline in food prices reduced discontent in the ranks was that the pay of men in the infantry was divided into three parts - basic pay, ration allowance (jira); and home allowance (khāna-vāra).

50. F.O. 60:601. Rabino to Picot, 14 May 1898.

51. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.58 Telegraphic, 18 May 1898.

52. Copy of telegram, Rabino to Imperial Bank, London, 26 July 1898, in F.O. 60:601.

53. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.91, 29 July 1898.

54. F.O. 60:598. Wood (Tabriz) to Durand. No date, but written in early September 1898.

55. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.17, 16 February 1899.

When he was under arms the soldier was entitled to all three payments; the first two being received by him personally, while the home allowance was paid to his family.⁵⁶ According to Picot, when the soldier was away from his regiment his ration allowance was no longer paid, his basic pay was reduced by half, while the home allowance remained at its former level.⁵⁷ Curzon, however, had reported in 1891 that only the home allowance was paid to the soldier who was not under arms.⁵⁸

In 1899 the private (sarbaz) was supposed to receive 70 qirāns per year both in basic pay and in home allowance; while his annual ration allowance was supposed to be paid at a rate of 91.1 qirāns.⁵⁹ There were two basic sources of complaint by the troops; namely that all varieties of pay were in arrears, and that the ration allowance was too low to buy a sufficient quantity of food at prevailing prices. (Curzon had noted in 1891 that home allowance was often not paid at all.⁶⁰ Picot, on the other hand, reported in 1899 that home allowance was paid regularly, but that basic pay was often in arrears.⁶¹) The soldier was supposed to get one year's leave out of three, and Picot noted that basic pay was often not disbursed at all until the soldier was about to go on leave. Then he would usually receive a cash payment to the value of six months' service, and he would possibly also be given a draft on the Governor of his native province for the balance. "Whether such orders are duly honoured is problematical", wrote Picot.

Complaints about arrears of basic pay are widespread and persistent, and the level of that pay was also a source of discontent. Houtum

56. G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, London 1892 I, p.598.

57. Picot Report, p.109.

58. G.N. Curzon, op.cit., p.599.

59. Picot Report, p.110.

60. G.N. Curzon, op.cit., p.598.

61. Picot Report, p.109.

Schindler (who was responsible for the historical part of Picot's report) stated that rates of basic pay for both officers and men had not been increased since 1810. He estimated that the purchasing power of money had declined by some 80 per cent over that period, so all men serving in the infantry were getting only about one fifth of what they were originally intended to receive.⁶²

A sharp decline had also taken place in the value of the ration allowance and that was an immediate cause of discontent in the army. According to Picot, the ration allowance of a private in 1899 (which was paid in cash) should have enabled him to purchase half a mann, or some 3.25 pounds of wheat per day.⁶³ At the prices which prevailed in Tehran when he wrote that report the ration allowance was sufficient to purchase only one quarter of a mann of wheat, and Picot observed that in many other parts of the country too, the value of the ration allowance had failed to keep pace with the rise in the price of foodstuffs. The insufficiency of the ration allowance was in itself a source of grievance, but when it, like basic pay, began to fall seriously into arrears, the lot of the soldier became well nigh intolerable.

General Wagner, who had accompanied the second Austrian training expedition to Persia in 1879-81, and who had returned to take charge of the artillery,⁶⁵ told Durand in January 1899 that most of the troops in

62. Picot Report, p.88.

63. Picot Report, p.110. The mann referred to was almost certainly the mann-i Tabrīz, equivalent to 6.49 pounds (see Picot Report, p.9).

64. Picot Report, p.110. It would seem that soldiers in some parts of Persia received their ration allowance in kind and not in cash. According to Rabino's report on Hamadān in May 1902 (Rabino to Imperial Bank, 1 May 1902, in F.O. 60:651), a private in that town received one mann-i Tabrīz of wheat per day when under arms. In Hamadān wheat was cheap, while transport costs were high. According to a slightly later report (F.O. 60:651, Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.99, 17 July 1902), grain crops in Hamadān were sold for one third of the price which they would bring in Tehran.

65. Picot Report, p.82.

the capital had not received their basic pay for over 3 years, and that their ration allowance had not been distributed for 7 months.⁶⁶ Many of the men had already gone off to seek jobs in the bazaar, and the officer corps was contemplating taking bast en masse in the British Legation.⁶⁷ Matters came to a head when a regiment of troops mutinied and attacked their officers at a parade. The rebels then threatened to march on the Shāh's palace, and the situation was saved only by a distribution of 18,000 tūmans to the mutinous regiment on January 8th.⁶⁸ Most of the soldiers in that regiment returned to their homes in the provinces as soon as they had received their share of that money, and the number of soldiers under arms in the capital declined still further.⁶⁹ The example of that particular regiment was quickly noted by others in and around the capital, and they too threatened to rebel. On January 10th a sum of 35,000 tūmans was paid to the men in those regiments. Picot observed that in both cases only a small proportion of the total arrears of pay which were owed to the men had been disbursed, but the distribution was sufficient to remove the immediate threat of insurrection.⁷⁰

Discontent remained rife throughout the spring and summer of 1899, and the Shāh was able to hold parades only after the troops who were due to take part in them had received further installments of their pay. The government had meanwhile purchased wheat supplies from Russia, and some

66. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.2, 9 January 1899.

67. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.2, 9 January 1899. Durand expressed the fervent hope that he would not have to welcome such a large, and potentially embarrassing group of guests.

68. F.O. 60:614. Picot to War Office (Intelligence Department), 10 January 1899.

69. F.O. 60:614. Picot to War Office (Intelligence Department), 10 January 1899.

70. F.O. 60:614. Picot to War Office (Intelligence Department), 10 January 1899.

of these were sold to the troops at prices lower than those which prevailed on the open market.⁷¹ This helped to reduce the level of dissatisfaction in the summer and autumn, but the situation was again ominous when the Shāh's proposed visit to Europe was under discussion in December. Durand expressed the view that an essential pre-requisite for that journey would be further payments to the troops in the capital, for otherwise there would undoubtedly be great unrest during the Shāh's absence.⁷² When the Russian loan agreement was signed in February 1900, some of the proceeds were set on one side for the payment of the army.⁷³ In June the Commander-in-Chief received funds with which to establish a camp near Tehran while the Shāh was abroad;⁷⁴ but the main responsibility for preserving law and order in the capital lay with the Cossack Brigade; and the its Commander, Kossagowski, did not leave for a long-promised visit to Russia until the Shāh had returned safely to Persian soil in September after his European visit.⁷⁵

During the summer of 1900, the soldiers in the camp near Tehran were dissatisfied because their ration allowance was again inadequate, and each man was paid a "gratuity" equivalent to four shillings in July.⁷⁶ According to General Wagner the amount disbursed was less than 10 per cent of the sum which the Commander-in-Chief had received for the payment of the troops.⁷⁷ The discontent was exacerbated by the fact that grain

71. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.46, 3 May 1900.

72. F.O. 60:617. Durand to Salisbury, No.4, 18 January 1900.

73. F.O. 60:617. Durand to Salisbury, No.9, 5 February 1900. Some of the proceeds were also used to meet arrears of pay owing to the civilian bureaucracy.

74. F.O. 60:617. Durand to Salisbury, No.39, 2 May 1900.

75. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.103, 29 September 1900.

76. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.79 Secret, 25 July 1900. The official rate of pay for a private in 1899 was equivalent to £1.8.0. per annum (Picot Report, p.88).

77. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.111, 18 October 1900.

prices were rising because of the operation of a grain ring; and one of the prominent members of that ring was the Commander-in-Chief himself.⁷⁸ The camp which had contained some 4,500 men in early July held less than 1,500 troops in early November. Inadequate accommodation there, and the desire to gain jobs in the city bazaar, and so to earn wages, had both been responsible for this decline.⁷⁹

In January 1901 another emergency payment had to be made to the troops in the capital to prevent renewed rebellion and on this occasion too only a small proportion of the money set aside for that purpose actually reached the men for whom it was intended.⁸⁰ In early May a large number of men from the garrison in Tehran took bast in a mosque to protest about the irregularity of their pay.⁸¹ By July the situation had become sufficiently serious for Rabino to grant, on his own responsibility, and at a moment's notice, a loan equivalent to £10,000 to the government with which to pay the troops in the capital. Hardinge commended the banker's initiative, for otherwise he believed that rebellion would certainly have occurred.⁸²

When a new loan agreement was signed with Russia in April 1902, some of the funds were again set on one side to pay off part of the arrears owing to the army and the bureaucracy.⁸³ This helped to keep the situation relatively quiet throughout that year. By March 1903, when the proceeds of that second Russian loan had been exhausted, the Shāh had to use what Hardinge called "private Palace funds" to pay the troops in Tehran.⁸⁴ Later that year Muzaffar al-Dīn had to abandon plans to

78. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.127, 12 December 1900.

79. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.119 Confidential, 15 November 1900.

80. F.O. 60:636. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.7, 9 January 1901.

81. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.72, 2 May 1901.

82. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.112, 14 July 1901.

83. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.69, 16 April 1903.

84. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 3 March 1903.

make a journey to Mashhad, for the money set aside for that journey had to be used to pay the soldiers in order to prevent a new insurrection in the capital. The Shāh had to be content with a hunting trip into the Alburz mountains.⁸⁵

In the autumn of 1903 some of the soldiers in a regiment stationed near Tehran were ordered to go to Isfahān to help suppress the serious anti-Bābī riots that had broken out in that city. Most of the men refused to leave until they had received some of their arrears of pay,⁸⁶ and the man who was put in charge of the expedition, Naṣr al-Saltāna, also refused to set off for Isfahān until he had received money with which to pay the troops during the proposed operation.⁸⁷ During the summer of 1903 the Russian Minister told his British colleague that his government had secretly lent the Persian government a sum equivalent to approximately £60,000 in order to pay the army, but most of the money had disappeared before it had reached the troops.⁸⁸ It was later believed that some of the funds had been used to pay for the hunting expedition into the mountains and for the pilgrimage which Muzaḥḥar al-Dīn made, with a large entourage, to Qumm in late November.⁸⁹ The policy of making temporary payments to prevent impending insurrection was repeated throughout the rest of Muzaḥḥar al-Dīn's reign, but the number of troops in Tehran continued to decline, and by 1905 shortage of funds had begun to affect even the Cossack Brigade (see below).⁹⁰

85. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.107 Confidential, 21 July 1903.

86. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126 Confidential, 17 August 1903.

87. The force was never sent to Isfahān for the necessary money could not be raised by the government. F.O. 60:666, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126 Confidential, 17 August 1903.

88. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126 Confidential, 17 August 1903.

89. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126 Confidential, 17 August 1903.
F.O. 60:666. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.187, 23 November 1903.

90. F.O. 371:105. Grant Duff to Grey, No.276, 28 December 1905.

All attempts at reforming the army - and they were very few - failed in the face of opposition by powerful vested interests and because the Shāh was so weak. Amīn al-Sultān tried in the early months of 1903 to cut expenditure by reducing the number of people who were entitled to receive pay from the army or to draw military pensions.⁹¹ Picot had already observed in 1899 that, "the military budget is burdened by an immense list of officers who bear military rank, but otherwise have no connection with the army. On this list will be found merchants, doctors, bankers, and servants - samples, in fact, of all classes. The sale of rank and pay by successive commanders-in-chief, the grant of rank to the sons of deceased officers, the patronage afforded to various individuals by the governors of provinces, is responsible for this heavy charge."⁹²

Although many of those payments too were in arrears, they were wasteful and made no contribution to the efficacy of the army. Attempts to reduce expenditures under this heading were, of course, strongly opposed by the people who received those payments and the Shāh was easily convinced not to support such schemes. One of the men who was believed to have profited from the misappropriation of army funds was Amīr Bahādur Jang, the Minister of Court, and Chief of the Shāh's bodyguard. When plans for fiscal and administrative reform were announced in 1903, that official told Muẓaffar al-Dīn that the Imām Husayn had appeared to him in a dream and had told him that the proposed reforms would be a disaster for Persia.⁹³

91. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.41 Very Confidential, 30 March 1903.

92. Picot Report, p.111.

93. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.41 Very Confidential, 30 March 1903. Another courtier told the Shāh at this time that the Caliph 'Alī had told him in a dream that the reforms would harm Persia. At about the same time, Muẓaffar al-Dīn himself had a dream in which he was saved from drowning by his astrologer. On waking the next morning the Shāh ordered Amīn al-Sultān to pay a lump sum and a pension to the astrologer for his services. The Grand Vazīr was apparently not pleased with this further example of royal extravagance. (F.O. 60:665, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.64 Confidential, 27 April 1903).

In such a way was the Shāh discouraged from pursuing them. After the death of a particularly corrupt Commander-in-Chief in January 1905,⁹⁴ plans were announced for the reorganisation of the army into twelve new corps,⁹⁵ but there does not seem to have been any increase in the numbers of men actually under arms, and the troops were certainly not better paid after this reorganisation than they had been before it.⁹⁶

The shortage of troops has already been noted and one of the causes of this is to be found in the way in which the recruitment system was operated. According to Picot, the system had changed little throughout the nineteenth century, and had its origins in the scheme laid down by 'Abbās Mīrzā and Sir Gore Ouseley in 1811-12.⁹⁷ Each village, district or tribe was under the nominal obligation to furnish a certain number of recruits - that number being proportional to the local revenue assessment. (There were exceptions for crown land areas and for non-Muslim Persians.) The same report notes, however, that the system was only partially in operation and that it had very little effect outside those areas from which the best soldiers were recruited - Āzarbāyjān for infantry and artillery men, and Khurāsān, Fārs and Bakhtiyārī country for cavalry. In other districts, such as Yazd and

94. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.16 Confidential, 26 January 1905. Hardinge reported that the man in question was believed to have made a profit of some one million pounds sterling during his tenure of office, which had lasted some 8 years. On one tour of inspection in Khurāsān he was reported to have accepted bribes worth some £20,000 not to report the deficiencies in the army which he found to exist in that province (F.O. 60:682, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.107 Confidential, 16 June 1904).

95. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.16 Confidential, 26 January 1905.

96. See for example F.O. 248:850, Shiraz Diary, 29 September 1905, and A.C. Wratislaw, *op.cit.*, pp.216-26.

97. Picot *Report*, p.96. A similar scheme seems to have been introduced by 'Abbās Mīrzā in Āzarbāyjān in 1806 (see A.K.S. Lambton, *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, London 1969, p.138.)

Kirmān the poor quality of the inhabitants meant that recruits were not taken from those areas at all.⁹⁸

Picot maintained that the weakness of the system was that the revenue assessments were often unrealistic, and a village with 500 inhabitants would sometimes be called upon to provide the same number of recruits as a neighbouring settlement of only 50 people.⁹⁹ This was largely due to the fact that the original revenue assessments, made at the time when 'Abbās Mīrzā introduced the system, were often still in force. Little allowance had been made for subsequent changes in agricultural output, population or any other change of circumstances.¹⁰⁰ (The instructions of 1888-90 for a new land survey, and for the recruitment of one man from every 180 male Muslim villagers and payment of 150 tūmans by every 180 male non-Muslims,¹⁰¹ seemed not to have become effective.) Curzon too had drawn attention to the fact that the revenue assessments were often out of date and anomalous, leading to overtaxation of areas where prosperity had declined and undertaxation of those where it had increased.¹⁰²

Picot stated that the initial selection of recruits was often made by village notables before the army officials arrived in the area. The men chosen would be those whom the village could best spare, the poorest and weakest in physique. When the officer from the regiment arrived he would reject the obviously unfit and select healthy replacements.¹⁰³ In Picot's own words, "Great heartburning naturally follows as military service is not popular in the lower ranks, and the richer members of the

98. Picot Report, pp.96-7.

99. Picot Report, p.97.

100. Picot Report, p.97.

101. A.K.S. Lambton, op.cit., pp.168-9.

102. G.N. Curzon, op.cit., II, p.472.

103. Picot Report, p.97.

community will often pay large bribes to secure exemption. The result is almost invariably the same, the regiment being recruited with many of the village failures, who are far from qualified to represent the bone and muscle of the average countryman".¹⁰⁴ In those areas where it was impossible to raise the officialy stipulated number of recruits, the figure called for was usually reduced, and although the senior officer of the regiment was nominally held responsible for providing the full complement of men, he was rarely questioned about the means whereby he had met that obligation.¹⁰⁵ As has been noted already, those in charge of regiments were not often required to maintain their forces at full strength, and this too provided a margin for any deficiencies in recruitment.¹⁰⁶

The conclusion which can be drawn from the situation which prevailed under Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh is not that the method of recruitment was inherently incapable of meeting the needs of the Persian army, but rather that a system which was basically sound was not being used in an efficient manner. A lack of revenue assessments which reflected current prosperity, and the fact that abuses of the system were allowed to go unchecked, were the real causes of failure, not any fundamental flaw in the system itself.

As well as pointing out the weaknesses and deficiencies in current practice, Picot also observed that given time and money, those responsible for the regiments were almost invariably able to bring them up to full strength. In 1897 the Commander-in-Chief of the Persian army ordered the Ardabīl and Mishkīn regiment, which had not been under arms for 15 years,

104. Picot Report, p.97.

105. Picot Report, p.97.

106. Picot Report, p.98.

to report for service in the capital. Within six months it had done so with an almost full complement of officers and men.¹⁰⁷ With good administration and adequate funds there is no reason why the recruitment system should not have functioned well; but those essential conditions were almost entirely absent during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh.

The evidence shows that there was no lack of men in Persia who were physically fit for military service. The British Consul in Āzarbāyjān reckoned that the tribes in that province could have contributed some 30,000 armed and able-bodied men to the army.¹⁰⁸ This number included the Shāhsivan tribesmen, whom Houtum Schindler believed to form the best material for military purposes.¹⁰⁹ After an unsatisfactory attempt at indirect recruitment, the commander of the Cossack Brigade was permitted in 1901 to send one of his own officers to Saveh personally to select men from the Shāhsivan. Those men later made good members of the Brigade.¹¹⁰ The inadequacy of the recruitment system reflected a lack of efficiency in utilising the considerable potential of the Persian population, it did not arise from any fundamental shortage of resources. Had the system been kept in good order, the needs of the Persian army for men could almost certainly have been met.

The failure to recruit troops efficiently, and to pay them regularly and adequately, were major causes of weakness; but other reasons for the feeble condition of the army are to be found in its poor equipment and training. The rifle that was used most widely by the infantry was the

107. Picot Report, p.105.

108. F.O. 60:651. Enclosure in Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.99, 17 July 1902.

109. F.O. 60:651. Enclosure in Des, Graz to Lansdowne, No.99, 17 July 1902.

110. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.54 Confidential, 1 April 1902.

Austrian-made Werndell. Large quantities of these weapons had been purchased at various times during the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.¹¹¹ According to General Wagner, however, when investigations were made in 1889 it was discovered that some 50,000 of those weapons from the reserve store were missing, and it was widely believed that they had been sold at various times by those responsible for the arsenal. The selling of rifles was not confined to Tehran. The Turkoman raiders who caused difficulty at Astarābād in 1901 could not be controlled by the local soldiers for they had sold their rifles earlier that year.¹¹³ When Wagner made his investigation in 1899 it was also discovered that the actual reserves of ball cartridges were much less than the official figure of 3 million rounds, and it appeared as if ammunition, as well as rifles, had been sold.¹¹⁴

The question of the quality and number of rifles in the hands of the tribes is a complex one, and the following description is far from complete. Evidence from British military observers, however, suggests that the weapons which were in the hands of the tribes were often better than the Werndells used by the Persian army.¹¹⁵ Most of the tribesmen in the south were reported to have good rifles, and the Martini-Henry carbine was the most popular choice.¹¹⁶ In the north and north-east, many tribesmen had Berdan rifles which were the standard issue in the Russian army, and which were also used by the Cossack Brigade.¹¹⁷ The tribes of the north-west seem to have possessed quite large quantities of the Peabody-Martini, an American rifle, which was widely used by the

111. Picot Report, p.111.

112. Picot Report, pp.111-2.

113. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.142, 19 September 1901.

114. Picot Report, p.112.

115. Picot Report, p.112.

116. Picot Report, p.121.

117. Picot Report, p.121.

Ottoman army.¹¹⁸ The Persian army had some 9,000 modern rifles¹¹⁹ - 4,000 of which had been seized at Bushire in 1898 as they were being smuggled into the country.¹²⁰ But the troops do not seem to have been issued with them.

Provincial governors who were ordered to quell disturbances in their provinces usually found themselves faced by groups which were better armed, as well as being much larger, than those at their disposal. In December 1897, the Governor of Bushire admitted that he could not have defended the town against an attack by Tangistānī tribesmen for the latter were greatly superior in terms of numbers and weaponry to the soldiers in the town.¹²¹ In 1904, the Governor of Kirmānshāh was ordered to punish groups of Lurs who had been creating widespread disturbances. The Governor had less than 1,500 men at his disposal, and each man had only 8 cartridges for his rifle. A British officer who was in the area at the time, reckoned that it would have taken a force of some 15,000 well-armed men to have subdued the Lurs who were responsible for the disturbances.¹²² A lack of modern weaponry was not, however, an unsurmountable problem as the Governor of Ārabistān demonstrated in 1905. When he arrived in Shushtar he found his soldiers were without rifles, so he proceeded to buy them modern weapons from local suppliers.¹²³

As well as lacking modern rifles, the infantry had little opportunity to acquire proficiency with the weapons at its disposal. Picot reported

118. Picot Report, pp.120-1.

119. Picot Report, p.112.

120. Picot Report, p.112.

121. F.O. 60:662. Meade memorandum, no number, 13 December 1897.

122. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.29, 8 February 1905.

123. F.O. 248:843. Cox to Hardinge, No.74, 16 June 1905.

that parade manoeuvres were rehearsed, but that field manoeuvres were almost unknown.¹²⁴ Many of the recruits into the army had not previously owned a gun, and they needed a full course of training. Supplies of ball ammunition were, however, inadequate and with an average expenditure of only 5 rounds per man per year, little proficiency was achieved.¹²⁵

There were similar deficiencies in equipment and in training in the artillery. That branch of the army also suffered from a shortage of men, and those who were in the artillery regiments also suffered from irregular and inadequate pay. The nominal strength of the artillery was over 11,000 men, but the number actually under arms in 1899 was less than 800.¹²⁶ Service in the artillery was said to be more popular than that in the infantry; the period of service in both branches was for life, but rates of basic pay in the artillery were usually at least double those for equivalent ranks in the infantry.¹²⁷ Illegal sales had reduced the availability of some equipment in the artillery. For example, the annual budget allowed for the provisioning of 4,000 horses (and disbursements were based on this figure), but less than 1,000 horses could actually be accounted for in 1899.¹²⁸

The basic equipment of the artillery consisted of second-hand Echatius guns of seven, eight and nine centimetre calibre, which had been purchased in Austria during the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.¹²⁹ (The Cossack Brigade had two batteries of 8.7 centimetre guns made by

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- 124. Picot Report, p.108.
 - 125. Picot Report, p.108.
 - 126. Picot Report, p.132.
 - 127. Picot Report, p.135.
 - 128. Picot Report, p.133.
 - 129. Picot Report, p.134.

the firm of Krupp in Germany.)¹³⁰ The ammunition for most of those older weapons had deteriorated in storage, and most of it was virtually useless.¹³¹ The only artillery supplies which seem to have been purchased during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh, were some 5,000 rounds of 7 centimetre shrapnel ammunition bought in 1897.¹³² Picot believed that for both the 8 centimetre and 9 centimetre guns Persia possessed less than 3,000 rounds of ammunition.¹³³

The Echatius guns were used only for royal parades, and the men were issued with only 3 rounds of ammunition per gun per year for training purposes. All other artillery drill was carried out on antiquated muzzle-loading guns.¹³⁴ The low level of drill in the artillery was reflected in the decreasing volume of gunpowder manufactured in Persia. Evidence for this comes from a report of 1902 which indicated that much less saltpetre (a vital ingredient of gunpowder) was being mined at Saveh than had been the case in the reign of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh.¹³⁵

A further example of decline concerns the factory which had been established by Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in 1894 to produce ball cartridges for the army's Werndell rifles. This had the capacity to produce some 10,000 cartridges per day; but by 1899 no cartridges at all were being made, and instead the machinery was being used to produce metal goods which were later sold in the bazaar by the man in charge of the factory. The employees, however, were still being paid by the government.¹³⁶

130. Picot Report, pp.134-5.

131. Picot Report, p.135.

132. Picot Report, p.135.

133. Picot Report, p.135.

134. Picot Report, p.136.

135. F.O. 60:651. Enclosure in Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.99, 17 July 1902.

136. Picot Report, pp.142-3.

Against this sorry background of inefficient recruitment, insufficient and irregular pay, inadequate equipment and poor training, it is not surprising to find that the appearance and morale of the troops were also very bad. Almost all the British Consuls in Persia described the unfortunate plight of the soldiers in their area. Wratislaw, in Tabrīz, observed that the task of guarding the British Consulate there was eagerly sought after, for the men who performed that duty received a small monthly allowance direct from the Consul. That sum of money, unlike their army pay, was given to them regularly and in full.¹³⁷ When Grant Duff spoke to one of the ragged Persian sentries guarding the Legation in Tehran in January 1904, the soldier said he had no cartridges for his rifle and that he had never fired the weapon.¹³⁸

With poor morale went a lack of reliability, and there are several reports of Persian soldiers refusing to take action against crowds of demonstrators. In July 1898, at a time when food prices were very high, some of the troops in Tehran joined in the looting of food shops;¹³⁹ and the following month soldiers in Tabrīz acted in concert with bread rioters in raiding bakeries.¹⁴⁰ In March 1903, soldiers in Mashhad refused to fire on a crowd which was demanding cheaper food;¹⁴¹ and in June of that year Hardinge expressed the view that few Persian soldiers

137. A.C. Wratislaw, A Consul in the East, London 1924, p.189.

138. F.O. 60:681. Enclosure in Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.15, 26 January 1904. During the visit of Viscount Downe to Tehran in 1903, to invest Muzaffar al-Dīn Shah with ~~the~~ Order of ~~The~~ Garter, one of the Legation sentries had no rifle and substituted a chair leg when called upon to present arms. (Same despatch by Grant Duff.)

139. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.91, 29 July 1898.

140. F.O. 60:598. Wood to Durand. No date, but written early September 1898.

141. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.65, 28 April 1903.

in any part of the country would obey their officers if told not to do so by members of the religious classes.¹⁴²

During the summer of 1905, following defeat in the war with Japan, there was much unrest in Russia. In the Caucasus and in Central Asia this took the form of serious anti-Muslim rioting. One of the main centres of those disturbances was Baku where many Persians were working.¹⁴³ As the violence spread, thousands of Muslims - the majority being Persian - fled to the south. The plight of these refugees caused much anger and resentment, particularly in the northern Persian provinces of Āzarbāyjān, Gīlān and Khurāsān, where their presence was first felt.¹⁴⁴ The government in Tehran feared that the disturbances in Russia would provoke agitations of an anti-Christian and anti-Russian nature throughout Persia, and several observers thought that the army would side with the mobs under such circumstances.¹⁴⁵

In fact there is only one incident whose causes can be traced directly to events in Russia - a violent anti-Christian demonstration in Ardabil¹⁴⁶ - but news of those outrages certainly added to the general sense of unrest and turbulence which prevailed in many Persian towns and

142. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.98, 29 June 1903.

143. A.D. Kalmykow noted that many Persians had gone to work in southern Russia, particularly at Baku, in the oil industry; Memoirs of a Russian Diplomat, New Haven, 1971, pp.40 and 54. Further details of the scale of this migration can be found in M.L. Entner, Russo-Persian Commercial Relations 1828-1914, Gainesville, 1965, pp.59-61.

144. F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.207, 12 September 1905; F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.223, 11 October 1905. and F.O. 60:701. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.113 Telegraphic, 14 September 1905.

145. F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.215, 9 October 1905.

146. F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.223, 11 October 1905.

cities during the autumn and winter of 1905.¹⁴⁷ Events in Russia had another indirect effect which was indicated by Grant Duff when he reported that knowledge of the widespread unrest in Russia, and the fact that the troops there were known to be disaffected, meant that many Persians in the northern provinces now felt that there was less chance of military intervention in Persia by Russian forces. With that restraint removed, Grant Duff believed that disturbances were more likely to occur.¹⁴⁸

Following the death of Amir Khān Sardār, the Commander-in-Chief of the Persian army, in January 1905, a man whom Hardinge had regarded as one of

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147. The following examples will serve to illustrate the extent of discontent in Persia in the autumn and winter of 1905. The list is not exhaustive. In Shirāz the building of a house by a Jew set off rioting (see Chapter VII below). In Yazd an incident at the Christian school caused disturbances (F.O. 248:845. Baggaley (Yazd) to Grant Duff, 12 December 1905). In Sīstān there were rumours that Britain had diverted the waters of the Hirmand river in Afghanistan so that no water would reach Persian territory. (F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.213, 5 October 1905). The river was in fact very low that year. It was also rumoured that Britain was about to invade Sīstān (F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.223, 11 October 1905). Later in October the plan by the Russian Consul in Naṣratabad to purchase a Muslim graveyard which was adjacent to the Consulate there, and to add it to the grounds of that building, caused considerable excitement (F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.244, 11 November 1905). In Mashhad the fact that the Russian Bank had recently made a new gate in the city wall so as to gain easier access to its premises, and had put up an inscription commemorating the name of the Russian engineer responsible for the work, enraged the population (F.O.248:866. Grant Duff to Grey, No.80, 1 February 1906). In Rasht the Russian Bank was believed to have purchased the rice crop very cheaply and to be selling it abroad at a great profit (F.O. 248:846. Churchill (Rasht) to Grant Duff, No.68, 16 November 1905). Unrest in southern Russia also disrupted trade from Rasht and greatly increased the price of imported Russian sugar (F.O. 248:846. Churchill to Grant Duff, No.69, 29 December 1905).
148. F.O. 60:701. Grant Duff to Grey, No.179 Telegraphic, 22 December 1905.

the greatest single obstacles to military reform,¹⁴⁹ the government announced plans to reorganize the army.¹⁵⁰ The scheme did reassign responsibility for many of the regiments to new commanders,¹⁵¹ but the vital issues of adequate supervision of the army's budget and the creation of strong and effective central control were not faced. When the plan for reorganisation was being discussed, Naus produced a much more comprehensive scheme of his own which was based upon the realization that the official figure for the size of the army (which was now less than 136,000 men) was both totally fictitious and unrealistic given Persia's economic plight.¹⁵² Naus looked instead to the creation of a truly effective force of some 20,000 men who would be mobile and well-equipped. Regiments of some 1,000-2,000 men should then be stationed in each of the principal cities of Persia. Naus freely admitted that such a force would not be capable of offering determined resistance to any of Persia's neighbours - but neither was the existing army. The advantage of the new force, according to Naus, was that unlike the current body of men it would be capable of maintaining internal security. He put the annual cost of such a new force at some three million tumāns, less than half the amount currently being allocated to the army.¹⁵³

Naus's scheme was a sound one, but it came to nought for it met implacable opposition from all those who were profiteering from the prevailing

149. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.16 Confidential, 26 January 1905.

150. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.16 Confidential, 26 January 1905.

151. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66 Confidential, 24 March 1905. The plan aroused great resentment among people who lost control of regiments by this reorganization. One such was Zill al-Sulṭān, Governor-General of Iṣfahan (F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66 Confidential, 24 March 1905).

152. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66 Confidential, 24 March 1905.

153. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66 Confidential, 24 March 1905.

system and its many abuses.¹⁵⁴ Another unsuccessful scheme for military reform was put forward by the Russian government at the same time. This too called for a reduction in the size of the army but not on so large a scale as that envisaged by Naus. The proposal would have put the new army effectively under Russian control, and this aroused the opposition of the Shāh to the scheme.¹⁵⁵ The only positive sign of any move towards improving the condition of the army was the announcement in March 1905¹⁵⁶ that Austrian officers were to be engaged to training purposes; but the Persian government attached little urgency to the matter, and the men did not arrive until October 1906.¹⁵⁷

Although therefore, there was much talk of military reform in 1905, nothing of any substance was achieved, and in early November Grant Duff repeated Hardinge's earlier warning about the unreliability of the troops.¹⁵⁸ Events were to show that this was a realistic appraisal. On November 25th a group of soldiers in Tehran refused to intervene against a crowd in the bazaar which was demolishing, at the instigation of a mulla, a building that was being erected by the Russian Bank d'Escompte.¹⁵⁹ Mushīr al-Dawla, the Persian Foreign Minister, admitted in the aftermath of that incident that the soldiers in Tehran had received no pay for twelve months, and that the government could not rely on them.¹⁶⁰ The troops in the provinces were in no better condition; and by the end of 1905 the inability of the Persian army to defend the country's borders,

154. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66 Confidential, 24 March 1905.

155. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66 Confidential, 24 March 1905.

156. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66 Confidential, 24 March 1905.

157. F.O. 371:114. Spring Rice to Grey, Document number 33007, 1 October 1906.

158. F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.241, 6 November 1905.

159. F.O. 60:700. Enclosure in Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.252 Confidential, 2 December 1905.

160. F.O. 60:700. Enclosure in Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.252 Confidential, 2 December 1905.

and to maintain internal security, was more obvious than it had been at any time previously in the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh.

Throughout most of that reign, however, there had been one body of men which was generally regarded as being both more reliable and more effective than any other in the Persian army - the Cossack Brigade. That force had been established in 1878 following Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh's second visit to Europe.¹⁶¹ During its early years it suffered several changes of fortune, but in the summer of 1894 a new Russian officer arrived to take command, Colonel Kossagowski. He quickly set about improving the strength, organisation and training of the force.¹⁶² When Nāsir al-Dīn was assassinated on May 1st 1886, the Cossack Brigade was given responsibility for maintaining law and order in Tehran until Muzaffar al-Dīn arrived from Tabrīz on June 7th. It carried out that task with notable efficiency.¹⁶³ In the summer of 1899 the size of the Cossack Brigade was increased from 1,000 to 1,500 men,¹⁶⁴ and provincial governors, particularly those in charge of turbulent provinces, had already begun to take small groups of men from the Brigade with them as personal bodyguards.¹⁶⁵ The Cossack Brigade had also provided men for the enforcement of a quarantine system against plague entering Khurāsān from Afghanistan in 1897.¹⁶⁶

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161. On the establishment and early history of the Brigade see F. Kazemzadeh "The Origin and Early Development of the Persian Cossack Brigade", American Slavic and East European Review, Vol.15, pp.351-63. There are brief details of the Brigade in G.N. Curzon, op.cit., I, pp.594-7. The Russian government supplied the senior officers for the Brigade as well as most of its arms and munitions (Picot Report, pp.83-4).
162. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., pp.359-60.
163. Kazemzadeh, op.cit., pp.360-3. See also A.D. Kalmykow, op.cit., p.69, and Picot Report, p.129.
164. F.O. 60:610. Durand to Salisbury, Telegraphic No.50, 7 August 1899.
165. F.O. 60:610. Durand to Salisbury, Telegraphic No.50, 7 August 1899.
166. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.57 Confidential, 12 April 1901.

When Picot composed his military report at the end of 1899, he estimated that the Cossack Brigade had approximately 1,400 members of whom 133 were Persian officers. 132 men served in the 2 artillery batteries, 666 men were in the cavalry, and 480 in the infantry section. In addition 10 officers of the Russian army were at that time serving with the Brigade.¹⁶⁷ The bulk of the men were stationed in Tehran while others were serving at Shūshtar, Astarābād, Shīrāz, Sāveh, Gulpāyagān and Mashhad. The total annual budget of the Brigade was then 219,000 tumāns¹⁶⁸ (equivalent to about £42,200). It was Picot's view that:

"The Persian Government possesses in the Cossack Brigade a well-equipped and a disciplined force, somewhat deficient in military training when judged from a European standpoint, but which has already attained a remarkable degree of efficiency and is incomparably superior to anything Persia can present at the present day".¹⁶⁹

One very important reason for the high standing and good morale of the Cossack Brigade was that the men were paid regularly and in full, and no money was wasted on "fictitious" pensioners.¹⁷⁰ Kossagowski had reached a crucial agreement in May 1895 with the Shāh that the funds for the Brigade would be paid to him directly by the Sadr-i Aẓam, and that neither the Minister of War nor any other Persian official would be allowed in any way to involve himself with either the financing, or the running,

167. Picot Report, pp.124-5.

168. Ibid., p.128.

169. Ibid., p.128.

170. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.103, 29 September 1900. The basic pay for a man of the lowest rank in the Cossack Brigade in 1902 was 180 qirāns per year, and ration allowance was the same amount. A private in the infantry was supposed to receive 70 qirāns in basic pay and 91.1 qirāns in ration allowance. The lowest ranking soldier in the artillery was supposed to receive basic pay of 120 qirāns and ration allowance of 91.1 qirāns annually. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.22, 5 February 1902, and Picot Report, pp.110 and 135. As has already been noted, pay in branches of the army other than the Cossack Brigade was often badly in arrears.

of the Brigade.¹⁷¹ Kossagowski appears to have established quite good relations with Amīn al-Sultān while he was Sadr-i Aẓam during both his first period of office (which ended in November 1896) and again when he returned to the post in August 1898.¹⁷²

During 1900 men from the Cossack Brigade were sent to Isfahān to provide an escort for the Governor-General, Zill al-Sultān.¹⁷³ Although the detachments sent to the provinces were only very rarely accompanied by Russian officers, the population often regarded the arrival of a Cossack detachment as a further indication of Russian domination over Persia.¹⁷⁴ Nevertheless, the Cossack Brigade performed a vital task in helping to maintain law and order, particularly in Tehran during the Shāh's two visits to Europe in 1900 and 1902.¹⁷⁵

Picot had observed in September 1900 that the number of Persian officers in the Brigade was sufficient to allow a rapid and four-fold increase in its ranks.¹⁷⁶ At one point it was believed that the Brigade would indeed be expanded to some 5,000 men; but shortage of money and intense opposition by those concerned with other elements of the Persian army prevented this.¹⁷⁷ In 1900 an attempt was made to recruit men for

171. Kazemzadeh, *op.cit.*, pp.359-60.

172. Amīn al-Sultān fell from power again in September 1903, but by then Kossagowski had left the Cossack Brigade (see below).

173. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.119 Confidential, 15 November 1900.

174. F.O. 248 723. Aganoort to Spring Rice, No.15, 3 November 1900.

175. On both occasions Kossagowski was requested to postpone leave which was owing to him and not to depart for Russia while Muẓaffar al-Dīn was out of the country. (F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.103, 29 September 1900, and F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Confidential No.54, 1 April 1902.)

176. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.103, 29 September 1900.

177. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.109, 19 October 1900.

the Brigade from the Baghdādī branch of the Shāhsivan tribe. This first experiment was not very successful; for out of the 300 men chosen a tenth quickly deserted, and others returned home later.¹⁷⁸

Kossagowski wished to pursue and punish the deserters, but Amīn al-Sultān feared that this would provoke the tribe and that disturbances would result, so he forbade any such action.¹⁷⁹ This decision angered Kossagowski, but the following year he obtained permission to send a Russian officer to the tribe personally to choose new recruits, and better men were thus selected.¹⁸⁰ Those members of the tribe who joined on this second occasion later became useful members of the Brigade.¹⁸¹

Kossagowski's task in commanding the Brigade was by no means an easy one. Although he had to deal only with the Sadr-i Azam in the matter of money, payments were not always made promptly. Kossagowski was a man of some private means, and when the money did not arrive from the government he used funds of his own to pay the men.¹⁸² He told the British Military Attaché, Napier, in February 1902, that he had on occasions encouraged the Sadr-i Azam to reimburse him by refusing to order his men into action when disturbances occurred until the arrears of pay had been met. This was effective as the government had very few other reliable troops at its disposal.¹⁸³

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- 178. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.149, 29 September 1901. This operation, and the desertions, took place while Kossagowski was on leave in Russia.
 - 179. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.190, 10 December 1901.
 - 180. F.O. 60:651. Enclosure in Des Graz to Lansdowne. No.99 Confidential, 17 July 1902.
 - 181. F.O. 60:666. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134, Confidential, 3 September 1903.
 - 182. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.22, 5 February 1902.
 - 183. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.22, 5 February 1902.

In February 1902 most members of the Brigade moved into new barracks which had been designed by a Russian military architect, and on which some Russian builders had also been engaged.¹⁸⁴ Accommodation was provided for some 1,000 men, and Napier reported at this time that the total strength of the Brigade consisted of 1,800 officers and men, of whom 1,400 were serving in the capital.¹⁸⁵ (The largest provincial contingent at this time was stationed at Astarābād where there had recently been tribal disturbances.)¹⁸⁶ Of the 1,400 men in Tehran some 400 were infantry, but Napier stated that they should really be regarded as dismounted cavalry, for as soon as horses of adequate quality could be acquired Kossagowski intended to turn them into mounted men.¹⁸⁷ Out of the 1,600 men in the ranks some 1,300 were volunteers, the remaining 300 pressed men had been drawn from the Shāhsivan. Kossagowski expressed the wish at this time to increase the proportion of pressed men to half the total strength of the Brigade so that he would not be as dependent on volunteers. The British Military Attaché noted that the infantry had fired some sixty rounds of ammunition per man in 1901¹⁸⁸ for training purposes, and that the drill with the artillery batteries looked workman-like. Napier emphasised that pay was given regularly, that the discipline and morale in the Brigade remained very good, and that the men had great

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184. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.22, 5 February 1902. The new barracks were adjacent to the former ones. Accommodation for officers was provided separately.
185. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.22, 5 February 1902.
186. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40, 4 March 1902.
187. The men in the cavalry provided their own horses. Those used for the artillery batteries were provided by the government. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.22, 5 February 1902.
188. In 1899 the other infantry regiments in the Persian army had used on average only five rounds per man for training. (Picot Report, p.108.)

personal respect for Kossagowski.¹⁸⁹ This was an important aspect of his control over the Brigade, as was the fact that he had served in Persia since 1894. When in 1903 he left Persia, and Colonel Chernozaboff arrived to take charge of the Brigade, Hardinge noted that the new Commander was only 30 years old, and that he had no previous experience of soldiering in Asia.¹⁹⁰

The condition of the Brigade was still good in August 1903, when Major Douglas, the British Military Attaché, made a visit to the force before writing a detailed report on it. According to that report the size of the force was somewhat smaller than it had been in the past, with a current total membership of about 1,500 officers and men. The infantry was now regarded as a permanent and regular branch of the Brigade and no longer as temporarily dismounted cavalry. In Tehran there were currently stationed some 520 cavalry, 300 infantry and 250 artillery of all ranks; while in the provinces another 400 members of the Brigade were serving as guards. There were also 9 Russian army officers with the Brigade.¹⁹¹

The Military Attaché noted that the Shāhsivan were continuing to make a useful contribution to the force, and that members of the Bakhtiyārī tribe, about 100 in number, had recently been recruited for the first time.¹⁹² The men were still being paid regularly and in full, and the Commander retained total control of the Brigade's finances as

189. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.22, 5 February 1902.

190. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.45, 1 April 1903.

191. F.O. 60:666. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134 Confidential, 3 September 1903.

192. F.O. 60:666. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134 Confidential, 3 September 1903.

well as of its management.¹⁹³ Douglas also praised the quality of the food which was provided for the soldiers, and he said that discipline was good. Once more the report noted that the number of Persian officers with the force - representing about one sixth of the total membership - was such that the Brigade was capable of being expanded quite rapidly if more troops were to be recruited. Douglas noted, however, that the funds provided for the Brigade were no longer sufficient to keep it at full strength all the year round; and that in the winter months economies were made by allowing men to return home on leave, for then they received only half pay.¹⁹⁴

In the autumn of 1903 various changes occurred which were to have quite serious effects on the Brigade. Amīn al-Sultān fell from power in September, and the new Sadr-i Āzam, Āyn al-Dawla lost little time in placing the Brigade under the control of his brother Amir Khān Sardār, who was the Commander-in-Chief and Minister of War.¹⁹⁵ Kossagowski had consistently refused to let the Commander-in-Chief to have any dealing at all with the Brigade; and Hardinge regarded it as an ominous sign that the previous arrangements, whereby the Commander was directly responsible to, and received funds from the Sadr-i Āzam had been changed.¹⁹⁶ The Brigade was still used at this time for guard duties and other tasks in the provinces. In the autumn of 1903 members of the Brigade were sent to

193. F.O. 60:666. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134, Confidential, 3 September 1903.

194. F.O. 60:666. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134, Confidential, 3 September 1903.

195. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.161, 8 October 1903. Hardinge's views on Amir Khān Sardār were scathing. In 1905 he reported that that official had an "auri sacra fames" above all other Persians whom he had met. (F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.16, Confidential, 26 November 1905.)

196. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.161, 8 October 1903.

Khurāsān as part of a force which had the task of trying to prevent the export of grain.¹⁹⁷

During the cholera epidemic of 1904 some of the soldiers from the Brigade who were stationed Tehran, deserted and no attempt seems to have been made to discipline them.¹⁹⁸ During 1904 Ayn al-Dawla tried to reduce the budget of the Brigade, and to tax the salaries of its officers, but these attempts were not wholly successful.¹⁹⁹ The Brigade did begin to suffer financial difficulties during 1905, and by December of that year Chernozaboff was complaining bitterly to Douglas of shortage of money. The Brigade's budget was nominally 300,000 tumāns (equivalent to about £50,000), but a fifth of this amount was now taken out to pay "pensions", and the Russian Commander expressed doubts about the genuineness of some of them.²⁰⁰ The Brigade too was suffering from the fact that payments were now badly in arrears. Chernozaboff said that he was owed some 80,000 tumāns in December 1905, and that he had had to use personal securities to borrow 10,000 tumāns from the Russian and English banks with which to pay the men. As money was so short he had had to send many more men away on leave for the winter; and in Tehran the Brigade then had only 400 men under arms, of whom about half were infantry and the rest cavalry and artillery. The Commander doubted

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197. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.145, 16 September 1903. When grain was in short supply and prices were high, the Persian government tried to prevent its export from both Khurāsān and from Arabistān where it was widely grown. During Muzaffar āl-Dīn Shāh's reign this policy was put into effect several times, but smuggling usually accompanied such an embargo.
198. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134, 20 July 1904. There had also been desertions during the 1891/2 cholera epidemic. Kazemzadeh op.cit., p.357.
199. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.107 Confidential, 16 June 1904.
200. F.O. 371:105. Enclosure in Grant Duff to Grey, No.276, 28 December 1905.

whether he could under any circumstances muster more than 600 men at the maximum.²⁰¹ Chernozaboff also told Douglas that he was now doubtful about the loyalty of his men, and that any appeal to them by members of the religious classes would probably carry more weight than orders from his officers.²⁰²

During 1906 there is relatively little sign of consistent activity by the Cossack Brigade against the various successive disturbances which took place in Tehran. In September the Command of the Brigade changed hands, and Colonel Liakhoff took charge. He told the British Military Attaché that the condition of the Brigade was very much worse than it had been in the past.²⁰³

It is clear then that by the end of 1905 the Cossack Brigade, the pride of the Persian army, was sharing in the general and serious decline which afflicted those forces. Its condition may not have been as bad as that of some other regiments, but it was short of men and money, and its troops could no longer be regarded as reliable. In view of the very poor state of Persia's forces, it is not surprising that, when members of the religious classes who were in bast at the Mosque of Shāh 'Abd al-Azīm near Tehran, sent a petition to the Shāh in January 1906, one of their demands should have been for reform of the army.²⁰⁴

201. F.O. 371:105. Enclosure in Grant Duff to Grey, No.276, 28 December 1905.

202. F.O. 371:105. Enclosure in Grant Duff to Grey, No.276, 28 December 1905.

203. F.O. 371:105. Spring Rice to Grey, Document number 36245, 11 October 1905. Liakhoff had according to this report visited the Brigade in 1902. (The later very active role of Liakhoff and the Cossack Brigade in the Constitutional Revolution is beyond the scope of this thesis. It is interesting to remember that at this time one of the members of the Cossack Brigade was the future founder of the dynasty which succeeded the Qājārs.)

204. F.O. 248:866. Enclosure in Grant Duff to Grey, No.66, 31 January 1906. That enclosure provides a full translation of the preamble and the list of demands contained in that petition.

The last word might perhaps be left with the Persian who discussed the state of the army with the British Minister in June 1904. During that conversation the Persian had told a story concerning one of his fellow-countrymen who wished to have a large and fierce lion tattooed on his arm. The man winced when the tattooist began work, and asked what part of the lion was being drawn that it caused so much pain. He was told that it was the tail; whereupon he replied that if that was so he would prefer to have a lion without a tail. Similar conversations took place when the tattooist, in turn, began to draw the eyes, teeth, ears and claws of the beast. In the end all that existed was a very pale and vague outline of a lion that lacked all the requirements for action. That, said Hardinge's informant, was like the state of the Persian army - it too lacked everything that it needed to make it effective.

CHAPTER IV

THE REFORM OF THE CUSTOMS ADMINISTRATION

"One must enquire constantly into the affairs of the tax-collector."
The Book of Government or Rules for Kings:
The Siyāsat-nāma or Siyar al-Mulūk of Nizām al-Mulk,
 translated from the Persian by H. Darke,
 London 1960, p.23.

The changes which were made in the Customs administration after 1898 constitute the most important series of administrative reforms which took place during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh. It is the purpose of this chapter to trace the course of those reforms and to see why they gave rise to such widespread discontent in Persia.

The need for changes in the Customs administration was forced upon Persia by the burden of her foreign indebtedness. The payment of the interest on the first loan of April 27th 1892 was guaranteed by the customs receipts of the Persian gulf ports.¹ This was because those receipts constituted "the sole reliable and convenient security for repayment of foreign loans which the Persian Government had to offer".² One of the major problems facing the Persian government under Muzaffar al-Dīn was how to increase the funds at its disposal; for, as has been noted in Chapter II, although taxes were being collected in the provinces

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1. The first loan had been raised to pay the compensation for the cancellation of the tobacco concession. See A.K.S. Lambton, The Tobacco Régie: Prelude to Revolution (II) *Studia Islamica*, 23 (1965), pp.71-90.
 2. J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Oman, and Central Arabia, Calcutta 1915 (I), p.2115.

very little money was reaching Tehran.³ The idea for improvement of the Customs administration as a preliminary step towards wider reforms, was part of Amīn al-Dawla's scheme for the reorganization of government which was put forward in April 1897.⁴ The first Belgian experts arrived to undertake this task in March 1898.⁵

Before the Belgians began their work, however, control over the Customs at Kirmānshāh and Bushire had passed briefly to agents of the Imperial Bank of Persia. The circumstances surrounding this affair are interesting and they help to illuminate some of the factors which were to influence events later under the Belgians. In November 1897 the Persian government had failed to raise funds on the French market, and it turned instead to the British-owned Imperial Bank of Persia for a loan of £400,000. The Persian authorities requested an interest rate of 5 per cent, and the suggested repayment period was 15 years. Security

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3. In the course of a long despatch on Persia's finances in September 1900 Spring Rice noted that there were, in theory, three sources of income for the government: customs revenue, payments from concessions, and taxes on land. The first then produced about £350,000 per year. The second source should have provided about £110,000 annually, but the returns were much lower because some concessions - such as the forestry concession in Mazandarān - had earlier been sold for a lump sum. The latter category of taxes should have produced at least £900,000 per year, but much common land had been sold by Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh and his father, and very little of the revenue raised from taxes on land was being remitted to Tehran by provincial governors. Spring Rice doubted whether the government "received any appreciable benefit" from what should have constituted its major source of income. F.O.60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.90 Confidential, 18 September 1900.
 4. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.141, 24 October, and Lorimer, *op.cit.*, p.2111.
 5. A. Destrée, Les Fonctionnaires Belges au Service de la Perse 1898-1915, Tehran-Liège 1976, pp.33-41. Naus was given full charge of the Customs administration on 21 March 1899. Destrée, *op.cit.*, p.44.

for the loan was to be a second charge on the customs receipts of the Gulf ports, and in addition the receipts of Muḥammara and Kirmānshāh were also pledged.⁶ The Persian government was prepared, reported Hardinge, to allow the customs dues at Bushire and Kirmānshāh to be collected by European agents of the Bank. The annual amount paid to the Persian government by the men who farmed the Customs at those two places came to over £88,000, said Hardinge, and he urged the British government to encourage the Imperial Bank to make a loan on the suggested terms.⁷

The British Minister stressed that the money was sorely needed by the Persian government, and that a loan would probably be offered by Russia if the negotiations with the British bank were not successful.⁸ Lord Salisbury, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, consulted the directors of the Bank in London, and he then informed Hardinge that inspection of the accounts of the Customs would be an essential precondition; but that if this was to be agreed it might prove possible to raise a loan on the London market for the Persian government.⁹

Negotiations continued slowly in London and in Tehran. In early March 1898 Hardinge once more stressed the serious and urgent need of the Shāh's government for money as salary payments to the army and the bureaucracy were badly in arrears, and that much unrest had been caused because of this.¹⁰ The British Minister again emphasized the adequate nature of the security

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6. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.85, Telegraphic Secret, 17 December 1897.
 7. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.85, Telegraphic Secret, 17 December 1897.
 8. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.85, Telegraphic Secret, 17 December 1897.
 9. F.O. 60:601. Salisbury to Hardinge, No.80, Telegraphic Confidential, 23 December 1897.
 10. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.35, Telegraphic, 2 March 1898.

which was being offered. The only customs collection points of importance outside northern Persia were, he said, Bushire and Kirmānshāh. The offer to include the Muhammara receipts could be dismissed, as the Customs there was "at present without organization".¹¹

On 11 March 1898, the Chairman of the Imperial Bank wrote to Salisbury stating that the loan negotiations had failed because of the persistent hostility of a small but influential group of members of the London Stock Exchange who had not forgotten the Lottery failure of 1889.¹² The Chairman did, however, confirm Hardinge's view that the security offered was amply sufficient, and he went on to ask the British government to act as guarantors of a loan to Persia.¹³ The Chancellor of the Exchequer refused this request, and a week later the Bank's Chairman wrote again to the Foreign Office saying that in view of the Persian government's urgent need for money, an advance of £50,000 had been arranged by the Imperial Bank in Tehran. In return the Bank was to receive the customs dues of Kirmānshāh and Bushire until the end of August.¹⁴ Hardinge welcomed this news and expressed the hope that the collection arrangement might become a permanent one in the expectation that bribery and other abuses could then be eradicated from the Customs administration. As long as the charges were levied fairly, and

11. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.37 Telegraphic, 7 March 1898.

12. Letter from Keswick to Salisbury, 11 March 1898; copy in F.O.60:601. On the details of the Lottery concession, see F. Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia 1864-1914: A Study in Imperialism, New Haven 1968, pp.241-47, and H. Algar, Mirza Malkum Khan: A Study in the History of Iranian Modernism, Berkeley 1973, pp.168-184.

13. Letter from Keswick to Salisbury, 11 March 1898. Copy on F.O.60:601.

14. Letter from Keswick to Salisbury, 18 March 1898. Copy on F.O.60:601.

injustices were not committed, Hardinge believed that the Persians would not object to the involvement of British officials in the collection of the dues.¹⁵

The Bank's agents began work at both places in April 1898.¹⁶ There was an initial expression of hostility in Bushire when the rumour went around the town that native merchants would have to pay the same tariff as European merchants (i.e. 5 per cent ad valorem) on their goods.¹⁷ But this commotion quickly subsided when it became known that the new officials would not be introducing any changes in the level of payment. In Kirmānshāh too, the collection of the dues by the Bank's agents went ahead smoothly. The key factor again was the continuity in the levels of dues collected, with no attempt being made to increase them in any way.¹⁸ When the Belgian officials took charges of the Customs later, however, they received orders to unify the system of dues and to charge

15. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.48, 22 March 1898.

16. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.67, 29 April 1898.

17. Under the terms of the Treaty of Turkomānchāy of 1828, taxes on imports into and exports from Persia were effectively limited to 5 per cent ad valorem. European merchants were usually charged the full amount, and they were then supposed to be exempted from taxes on trade imposed within Persia. (This provision was not always effective.) Persian merchants usually paid dues of less than 5 per cent, but they also had to pay various internal taxes which, in total, could amount to more than a 5 per cent ad valorem rate. See F.O. 60:611, Durand to Salisbury, No.2 Commercial, 11 February 1899, and F.O. 60:620, Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.25 Commercial, 22 August 1900. The text of the Treaty of Turkomānchāy is reproduced in C.U. Aitchison (compiler), A Collection of Treaties, Engagements and Sanads relating to India and Neighbouring Countries, Calcutta 1933, Volume XIII, Appendix No.VII/, pp.XXII-XLI.

18. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.67, 29 April 1898.

native as well as foreign merchants a uniform rate of 5 per cent ad valorem. As will be seen, this imposition of heavier dues was to be the first major source of discontent.

The approbrium for such a measure might, however, have been laid at British instead of Belgian feet; for in May 1898, the Persian government sought a new loan of over £1,000,000 from the Imperial Bank. The Manager of the Bank in Tehran, H.L. Rabino, expressed the view that if it were to provide such a sum the Imperial Bank would have to take charge of the whole Customs administration outside of northern Persia, and it would also have to raise the dues paid by Persian merchants to 5 per cent ad valorem, with exemptions only for the importation of rice and wheat at times of scarcity.¹⁹ The question of providing such a loan was taken seriously in London, and the Admiralty was consulted about the ease with which British gunboats could enter harbours such as Bandar 'Abbās, Bushire, Lingeh and Muhammara if British collectors were to be appointed and then needed support. An affirmative reply was given.²⁰ The Russian government soon began to hear of these new loan discussions, and Durand reported its objection to the prospect of British control of so many customs houses in Persia.²¹

The political situation in Tehran had been altered by the fall of Amīn-al Dawla as Šadr-i A'zam on June 5th 1898.²² The new administration led by Mušhīr al-Dawla, was unable to meet the Shāh's need for money; and in the summer Amīn al-Sultān returned to power.²³ The new Šadr-i

19. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.61 Telegraphic, 22 May 1898.

20. Letter from Admiralty to Foreign Office, 23 June 1898. Copy in F.O. 60:601.

21. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.84 Telegraphic, 18 July 1898.

22. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.65 Telegraphic, 5 June 1898.

23. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.85 Telegraphic, 21 July 1898.

A'zam was strongly opposed to any foreign control over the Customs; for he had, reported Durand, previously farmed part of that service and was believed to have received an annual income of over £70,000 from the venture. He was therefore keen to re-establish personal control as quickly as possible.²⁴ Amīn al-Sultān also knew that Muzaffar al-Dīn regretted that the employment of agents of the Imperial Bank had been permitted; for the Shāh was fearful that the Russian government would soon demand a similar - or even greater - concession. Amīn al-Sultān therefore joined in the criticism of Amīn al-Dawla for allowing foreign interference with the Customs administration. The new Sadr-i A'zam hoped that this would put him in good favour with the Shāh, as well as preparing the way for his own eventual resumption of control of the Customs.²⁵ This policy did not, however, meet the immediate and pressing need for money. The expedient of squeezing provincial governors was tried, but little revenue was raised this way.²⁶

As the terminal date for the withdrawal of the Imperial Bank's collecting agents from Bushire and Kirmānshāh approached, there was some discussion in British circles - both in Tehran and in London - that even if the March loan was repaid in full and promptly by the Persian government, those agents should remain at work.²⁷ Durand suggested that in the case of Bushire the argument of assisting with control of arms smuggling could be used.²⁸ Rabino, however, was opposed to this, and

24. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.91, 29 July 1898.

25. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.84 Telegraphic, 18 July 1898, and F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.85 Telegraphic, 21 July 1898.

26. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.91, 29 July 1898.

27. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.91 Telegraphic, 15 August 1898.

28. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.99 Telegraphic, 3 September 1898.

said that Russian counter-claims would certainly be made if Britain insisted on the continued employment of the Bank's collecting agents. The very least Russia would demand, said Rabino, would be control of the Customs at Rasht and Tabriz, and this would greatly alarm the already very nervous Shāh.²⁹ Amīn al-Sultān was meanwhile trying to raise a loan from the Russian Bank with which to pay off the outstanding British one, and in August 1898, he succeeded.³⁰ The amount borrowed on this occasion was £150,000, and after the Imperial Bank's loan had been repaid its collecting agents were withdrawn from Bushire and Kirmānshāh in mid-September.³¹ The centre of attention, with regard to Customs administration and reform, was now to be Naus, and his group of Belgian assistants.

When Naus arrived in March 1898, he admitted to Hardinge that a period of at least six months would be needed before his labours could produce any tangible results.³² The first provinces chosen for reform were Āzarbāyjān and Kirmānshāh and Belgian officials were sent there in the spring of 1899.³³ It was Naus's declared aim to increase as soon as possible the dues paid by native merchants to the 5 per cent ad valorem which foreign merchants had to pay under the provisions of the 1828 Treaty of Turkomānchāy. In Tabriz, however, the attempt to implement this

29. F.O. 60:601. Durand to Salisbury, No.99 Telegraphic, 3 September 1898.

30. Letter from Keswick to Sanderson (Foreign Office), 26 September 1898. Copy on F.O. 60:601.

31. Letter from Keswick to Sanderson (Foreign Office), 26 September 1898. Copy on F.O. 60:601.

32. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.46, 27 March 1898.

33. Destrée, op.cit., pp.44 and 50.

policy soon produced serious opposition. The closure of the bazaars was threatened, and in August 1899 sporadic rioting occurred in that city.³⁴ Durand reported how a combination of religious and mercantile pressure forced the government in Tehran to abandon Naus's policy and to reduce the rate of dues paid by native merchants to their previous levels.³⁵ Despite these setbacks, however, Naus was soon able to report a marked improvement in revenues. Receipts for the first nine months of 1899 were £80,000 greater than those for the whole of the previous year, and Naus ascribed this improvement solely to the prevention of "leakage", for none of the higher dues which he wanted to levy had yet been imposed.³⁶

By now Amīn al-Sultān had begun to realize the seriousness of Persia's economic position and he renounced, at least temporarily, his earlier hopes of again farming the Customs. In an interview with Durand in late April 1899, he admitted that his only hope of retaining his position, when faced with the intrigues of the group of courtiers led by Hakīm al-Mulk, lay in increasing the revenues at the disposal of the government. For the Shāh was insisting on making a visit to Europe, and the pay of the army and the bureaucracy was again very seriously in arrears. Unless he raised money to satisfy these demands he would be dismissed; therefore he had decided to give all possible support to Naus.³⁷

Support in Tehran did not guarantee success in the provinces. A long despatch from Wood gives some idea of the difficulties faced by

34. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.87, 24 August 1899.

35. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.87, 24 August 1899.

36. F.O. 60:609. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.113, 14 November 1899.

37. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.43, 2 May 1899.

M. Theunis, who had been appointed Inspector of Customs for Āzarbāyjān in March 1899.³⁸ Wood knew the problems of the province well (he had been Consul-General in Tabrīz since June 1892) and drew attention to two major weaknesses with the prevailing system; the farmer of the Customs was at the mercy of the next highest bidder for the post (because the terms of the farming contract had become less and less secure). At the same time, the low rates of pay of the lesser officials in the administration had encouraged them to supplement their incomes by imposing extraordinary charges. Even foreign merchants, who had the recourse of appeal to their Legations in Tehran about such charges, preferred to compound with the local officials rather than to follow the slow and cumbrous procedures involved in any such appeal. For the Persian merchant, however, the problem was even worse. He might pay a lower rate of ad valorem dues, but he was also liable for other charges such as road tax (rahdari) and octroi dues in each town through which his goods had to pass. The latter dues were not calculated on an ad valorem basis, but were levied on the number of loads, cases or bales of merchandise. Wood noted the recent introduction of a new levy - "the salamatlik" - which was collected for the safe arrival or despatch of goods. Such irregular impositions in the province of Āzarbāyjān had, reported Wood, been responsible for the diversion from Tabrīz to Bushire of the export trade in tobacco with Turkey.³⁹

Theunis's first task, said Wood, was to institute an orderly system of administration and to stop the levying of extraordinary dues. The

38. F.O. 60:612. Wood to Durand, No.1 Commercial, 1 June 1899.

39. F.O. 60:612. Wood to Durand, No.1 Commercial, 1 June 1899.

Belgian was handicapped by his lack of knowledge of Persian and by what Wood described as "the peculiar turn of the Eastern way of thought, which admits of these people's bearing with the utmost complacency, and during long years, abuses and exactions surreptitiously introduced, whilst their susceptibilities are aroused and alarmed by openly made innovations tending to their advantage".⁴⁰ The idea of paying a flat 5 per cent ad valorem, and then being free from the other dues, did not appeal to the Persian merchants who were doubtless suspicious - and understandably so - of promises that payments previously imposed would no longer be collected. Their mistrust was all the greater because Persia's central government was known to be so very weak and to have so little power to implement its decisions in the provinces.

Theunis's attempts to reform the Tabrīz Customs administration also met with Russian-inspired opposition. According to Wood some Russian Muslims joined with a group of Persian merchants in making an offer of 62,000 tumāns for the privilege of farming the Customs at Āstārā and Ardabil. The object of the move was, having obtained possession of the Customs in those places, to force the payment there of all entry and export dues; leaving little or nothing to be collected at Tabrīz. (The current arrangement was for merchandise entering or leaving Persia to pay only road taxes at these points and to pay the major ad valorem dues on arrival at, or on departure from, Tabrīz.) Theunis, however, reacted promptly and firmly to this attempt. He pointed out to the authorities in Tehran that the revenues they received would be greatly reduced if such an offer was to be accepted, and by this argument he ensured rejection of the bid.⁴¹

40. F.O. 60:613. Wood to Durand, No.1 Commercial, 1 June 1899.

41. F.O. 60:613. Wood to Durand, No.1 Commercial, 1 June 1899.

Naus had decided in 1899 that his first task was to secure control of trade at Persia's borders before he could proceed with the two long-term aims of abolishing internal dues on trade, and of revising the tariff schedule so that the rates of duty payable could vary from commodity to commodity.⁴² It was in pursuit of that first objective that Naus decided, in the light of his initial - though partial - success in Āzarbāyjān and Kirmānshāh to extend Belgian control of the Customs administration to the southern points of entry to Persia, in other words, to ports along the shores of the Persian Gulf and in Ārabistān. His initial proposal was to concentrate the payment of dues at Bushire and to close all other collecting points along the Gulf.⁴³ Durand believed that that was not a practical proposition, for there were many points of entry for goods along the southern shore of Persia and on the Kārūn river, and that to funnel all international trade through Bushire would seriously harm the prosperity of the other ports.⁴⁴ Naus soon abandoned his initial scheme and when Simais was sent to the south in March 1900, he was instructed to make Bushire his headquarters, but to establish agents at other ports too.⁴⁵

This was to be no easy task, for the nature of these ports varied and the situation along the Gulf coast and in Ārabistān reflected the great diversity of economic and political circumstances prevailing in Persia. The Belgian officials made their first and greatest efforts at Bushire, for that was Persia's major port on the Gulf. As in the case of Tabriz,

42. F.O. 60:609. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.113, 14 November 1899, and Destrée, *op.cit.*, p.55.

43. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.117, 14 December 1899.

44. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.117, 14 December 1899.

45. F.O. 60:617. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.16, 27 March 1900.

both native and foreign firms were engaged in trading activities there. The European companies had been very pleased to see the arrival of collecting agents from the Imperial Bank in April 1898, and they were dismayed at their withdrawal the following September. After Persian control had been re-established in the autumn of 1898, the representatives of six European trading companies operating in Bushire sent a letter to Major M.J. Meade, the British Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, outlining their complaints.⁴⁶ These were concerned largely with the unsatisfactory arrangements which existed for the lightering, landing, storage, clearance and delivery of cargoes. The letter also contained a series of suggestions for improvements. The most important of these were that the Governor-General of Bushire and the Gulf Ports should no longer be allowed to farm the Customs,⁴⁷ and that the Hammāl Bāshī should not be allowed to hold simultaneously the post of Kalāntar.⁴⁸ Meade investigated the matter and agreed that

46. F.O. 60:611. Meade to Durand, No.2, 7 January 1899.

47. The reason for this was that any appeals from decisions made by the head of the Customs administration were referred to the Governor-General, and when the same man held both posts it was unlikely that such appeals would succeed. The administration of the Customs was very corrupt according to the representatives of the European companies.

48. The post of Hammāl Bāshī at Bushire had apparently been created in the middle of the nineteenth century. That official was responsible for the lightering of goods to and from ocean-going vessels, and for their landing and loading on the shore (see letter from Anglo-Arabian and Persian Steamship Company to Sir Thomas Sanderson (Foreign Office) 12 March 1902, copy in F.O. 60:658). That official was answerable to the Kalāntar of Bushire. The duties of the Kalāntar, a municipal official, in late Qājār Persia varied from town to town. (See A.K.S. Lambton, *Kalāntar in Encyclopaedia of Islam* (second edition), Leiden (proceeding) IV, pp.474-6, and W.M. Floor, *The Office of Kalāntar in Qājār Persia in Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 14 (1971) pp.253-68. The merchants complained that the Hammāl Bāshī was corrupt and that as the same man also held the post of Kalāntar they had no redress against him. For details of the complaints against the activities of the Hammāl Bāshī, see various letters from Sassoon and Company (who traded in Bushire) to the Foreign Office in 1898/99, in F.O. 60:600.

the complaints were justified and that the proposed reforms would be beneficial. Meade also informed Durand, in Tehran, that the European firms would be prepared to pay additional levies, as long as these were not too large, if they could be sure that the proceeds would be used for improvements in the go-down.⁴⁹ Durand proceeded to urge the Persian government to act upon these complaints; but he was told that as the Belgians would soon be taking charge in Bushire, matters would be left for them to deal with; and the British Minister saw this as a reasonable reply.⁵⁰

When the Belgians did arrive in Bushire they were met with considerable opposition from the Governor-General, the Hammāl Bāshī and by many local merchants. The latter were dismayed to learn that the Belgians intended to levy uniform rates of duty of 5 per cent ad valorem, while the two Persian officials were concerned about loss of income. The house occupied by Simais in Bushire was attacked by a mob in August, and discontent was seen at other ports along the Gulf.⁵¹ The agitation spread inland to Shīrāz and to Isfahān, where members of the religious classes supported the protests. The Persian traders in Bushire refused to land goods, or to despatch those which had arrived, to their destinations inland. The embargo was initially very effective, and co-operation by local muleteers and porters prevented the European firms too

49. F.O. 60:611. Meade to Durand, No.2, 7 January 1899.

50. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.43, 2 May 1899.

51. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.81, 25 July 1900, and F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.87, 23 August 1900. In July 1901 Naus succeeded in persuading the central government to dismiss the Governor of Bushire and the Gulf Ports, F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.115, 17 July 1901.

from conducting business normally.⁵² Simais, who had visited Shīrāz to see the effects of the boycott there, agreed not to levy dues at the full rate of 5 per cent immediately; but to increase the level of dues gradually. As a result of this decision trade began to revive after about three months.⁵³ Even though Simais was not able in 1900 to increase very greatly the level of dues paid by local merchants, the amount of revenue collected and transmitted to Tehran by the Customs administration showed an improvement similar to that already observed in the case of Āzarbāyjān.⁵⁴

The Belgians had many and diverse problems to face in southern Persia, and these often arose from the lack of control exercised by the central government. Despite the fact that the power of that government was weak in the north, the idea of control from Tehran was better established in Tabrīz, for example, than it was in many areas of the south.⁵⁵ Along the

52. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.81, 25 July 1900.

53. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.97, 20 September 1900.

54. Lorimer, *op.cit.*, I, p.2596.

Total net customs receipts for all Persia

Year	Amount (tūmāns)	% change on previous year
1899-1900	1,406,444	
1900-1901	1,700,630	+20.9
1901-1902	2,008,568	+18.1
1902-1903	2,079,075	+3.5
1903-1904	3,037,894	+46.1
1904-1905	2,607,000	-14.2
1905-1906	2,550,000	-2.2

From Lorimer, *op.cit.*, I, p.2609. The reasons for the fluctuations from 1903 onwards will be discussed below.

55. That is not to say that the tribal areas in the northwest were not often unruly and turbulent.

Gulf the administration of the Customs had become more a matter for tribal shaykhs and local notables than it had in the northern provinces. The outstanding example of this was Arabistān, and although a full discussion of affairs in that province is beyond the scope of this thesis, some of the salient features of the situation there are worthy of attention. It has been seen that in Hardinge's view the Customs administration at Muhammara was entirely without organization.⁵⁶ This statement is not quite accurate. A more precise description would have said that administration of the Customs was in the hands of Shaykh Khaz'al, not in those of the central government.

Khaz'al was the head of the powerful Muhasayn tribe, and many other Arab tribal groups also acknowledged his paramountcy.⁵⁷ It was essential for Khaz'al, if he wished to retain such a position, that his authority, and not that of the Persian government, should be seen as the effective one in Arabistān. He made great efforts to that end. Khaz'al saw the proposal to introduce Belgian customs officials into the province as a device on the part of the central government to limit his powers, and this was the fundamental reason for his opposition to the scheme.⁵⁸ Khaz'al knew that the tribesmen of Arabistān would undoubtedly

56. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.37 Telegraphic, 7 March 1898.

57. For further details on Khaz'al, see A.T. Wilson, A Précis of the Relations of the British Government with the Tribes and Sheikhs of Arabistān. Typescript Bushire 1911 (copy in British Library) afterwards cited as Wilson Précis, and R.M. Burrell, Khaz'al in Encyclopaedia of Islam, second edition, Leiden (Proceeding) IV pp.1171-2.

58. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.57 Confidential, 12 April 1901. There had been an unsuccessful attempt by Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh to establish control of the Customs in Arabistan in 1884 when the Shaykh of the Muhasayn was Miz'al, an elder brother of Khaz'al. (Lorimer, op.cit., I p.1748). In July 1898 Khaz'al prevented the establishment of an office of the Persian Customs administration at Muhammara (Wilson Précis p.48 footnote 1). Naus first mentioned to Spring Rice his desire to take charge of the Customs there in November 1899 (F.O. 60:609. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.113, 14 November 1899).

resist any attempt by the Persian government to exercise greater authority in that province; and that if he was not successful in defending their interests, it was likely that he would be overthrown, and possibly killed.⁵⁹

The matter was not exclusively political, for Khaz'al knew that if the Belgians were to be put in charge of the Customs, certain vital foodstuffs that had previously not been taxed at all would then be subject to duties, and that this would also cause great resentment and would lead to turbulence.⁶⁰ The Belgians were also seeking to control, if not to eliminate, the trade in arms and Khaz'al knew that the tribesmen of 'Arabistān would object to such a policy.⁶¹ Wilson referred to both elements in Khaz'al's objections when he wrote that the proposal to introduce Belgians "was more than a mere administrative

59. Khaz'al's apprehensions about the designs of the central government had been strengthened by the institution of quarantine arrangements against plague at Muḥammara in 1896. Those arrangements were for all practical purposes under British control (see Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2547). When Khaz'al first learnt of the proposed sending of Belgian experts to 'Arabistān in 1900, he discussed the matter with the British Consul in Muḥammara, McDouall, and he drew an analogy between his position and that of the Caliph al-Amīn b. Hārūn al-Rashīd some twelve centuries earlier. When al-Amīn's brother, al-Ma'mūn was advancing with an army against him, the Caliph is reported to have said "what is left is enough" said Khaz'al. Al-Amīn went on repeating these words until only Baghdād remained in his possession. Al-Amīn then said "Baghdād is enough" reported Khaz'al - but Ma'mūn went on to capture the city and to kill his brother. Khaz'al had no wish to share al-Amīn's fate. (This incident is reported in Wilson Precis, p.50.)

60. Wilson Precis, p.48.

61. F.O. 60:642. Kemball to Hardinge, No.50 Confidential, 9 March 1901, and F.O. 60:662. Kemball to Hardinge, No.152, 2 November 1901.

reform, it was a revolution involving a sudden and serious increase in the cost of the necessities of life".⁶²

Shaykh Khaz'al's fears that the Persian government might endeavour to use the Customs reform as a pretext for exercising greater authority over him were not without foundation. Naus had told Spring Rice in March 1900 that the authorities in Tehran recognized that effective control of trade in 'Arabistān would require the use of an armed vessel on the Kārūn river and in the Shatt al-ʿArab. The government knew that the introduction of such a vessel would certainly be seen by the indigenous population of 'Arabistān as a sign of the declining authority of Khaz'al, and of the increasing power of the central government.⁶³

The issue of Belgian control of the Customs administration in 'Arabistān had involved the British from the early stages, for Khaz'al asked the Consul in Muhammara, McDouall, whom he knew and respected, for help in resolving the matter.⁶⁴ Hardinge, in Tehran, recognized that the problem was a difficult one.⁶⁵ On the one hand the Persian government desperately needed more revenue; but on the other hand, any attempt by it to exercise effective control in 'Arabistān would certainly lead to great turmoil for the tribesmen there were numerous and well-armed.⁶⁶ There were lengthy and complex discussions on this issue

62. Wilson Precis, p.48.

63. F.O. 60:619. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.38 Secret, 17 March 1900.

64. F.O. 60:617. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.35 Telegraphic, 10 March 1900.

65. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.57 Confidential, 12 April 1901, and F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.117, 23 July 1901.

66. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.116, 15 November 1900. In August 1901 Kemball estimated that the Shaykh could call on at least 10,000 armed followers to join him in resisting the entry of Belgian officials. (F.O.60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.128, 21 August 1901.) McDouall made a more detailed estimate in 1902, and he concluded that Khaz'al's supporters probably amounted to some 16,000 armed men. (F.O.60:651. Enclosure in Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.100, 18 July 1902.)

involving Naus, the Persian government, Hardinge and emissaries of Khaz'al. Not a few problems were caused, in Hardinge's view, by the inability of some of the Belgian officials to appreciate the delicacy of Khaz'al's position - and the strength of his following.⁶⁷ At the same time, the British Minister recognized that the Belgians had a difficult task to perform, and he later admitted that some British officials in the Gulf were not well-disposed towards the Belgians, and that some of them might have been more co-operative on certain occasions.⁶⁸

Khaz'al made several offers to increase the amount of money which he paid to the central government from the customs dues which he did collect, as long as their collection was left in his hands.⁶⁹ Finally a compromise was reached during 1902 in which Khaz'al was given the title of Director-General of Customs in 'Arabistān, while it was also agreed that the Belgians would be allowed to send one of their men to Muhammara. That official was under instructions to accept Khaz'al's advice about how regulations which had been drawn up in Tehran would be put into effect in 'Arabistān. The result was that the Belgian officials dealt with the trading activities of European firms - Khaz'al showed little reluctance at being relieved of the responsibility for having to deal

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67. Naus and the Persian government contemplated on at least two occasions having recourse to the traditional policy of using one tribe to subdue another: in this case making use of the Bakhtiyārīs against Khaz'al and his followers. (F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.128, 21 August 1901, and F.O. 60:654. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.71 Confidential, 17 April 1902.) Naus also proposed a blockade of the port of Muhammara, without, apparently, thinking either how this could be achieved or how much opposition it would arouse among the tribes of 'Arabistān who imported and exported much food through that port (F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.128, 21 August 1901.
68. F.O. 60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.67 Confidential, 15 April 1904 and F.O. 60:682. Private letter from Hardinge to Sanderson, 4 June 1904. See also Destree, *op.cit.*, pp.62-65 for a discussion of relations between British and Belgian officials in south and south-eastern Persia.
69. F.O. 60:642. Kemball to Hardinge, No.50 Confidential, 9 March 1901.

with such troublesome people - while matters involving the native population were left in the hands of the Shaykh. Khaz'al also obtained guarantees that certain popular foodstuffs such as tea and coffee, could continue to be imported free of duty, and that no taxes would be imposed on exports of dates and fruit, for they too had not previously been taxed.⁷⁰ These latter conditions were to prove very advantageous, for they were maintained when other parts of Persia had to suffer higher prices after the introduction of new import tariffs in 1903 (see below).⁷¹

No agreement could guarantee that relations between Khaz'al and the Belgian officials would always be harmonious. In December 1903 the Shaykh complained that the Belgians had introduced more than one of their officials into 'Arabistan, and Britain supported Khaz'al's successful plea in Tehran that only one Belgian should be permitted to operate in the province.⁷² In the autumn of 1904 officials of the Customs administration began to search locally-owned boats which plied on the Shatt al-'Arab. Khaz'al had previously given an undertaking that his men would police that waterway, and he objected most strongly to this usurpation of his authority. In this matter too the Shaykh received British support, and the matter was resolved in his favour.⁷³ Later that same year the Belgian customs official in Muhammara tried to impose

70. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.82 Confidential, 11 May 1902. Khaz'al remained deeply suspicious of the motives of the Persian government throughout the negotiations, and at one stage he had demanded that any agreement reached should be guaranteed by the King of Belgium. (F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.128, 21 August 1901.)

71. Wilson Precise, p.53.

72. Lorimer, *op.cit.*, I, p.1751-2.

73. F.O. 60:683. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.198, 8 November 1904.

a kind of stamp duty on documents accompanying shipments of dates which left that port. Once more Khaz'al sought British support, and again he received satisfaction in Tehran.⁷⁴ In each of these cases Khaz'al showed great energy in defending his position and the rights of his followers against any encroachment by the central government. The fact that he received British support on each occasion did not help to improve relations between British and Belgian officials in the area.

Before leaving the question of Khaz'al's relations with Belgian officials, one further aspect of his attitude is worthy of note; that is his view that the proposed reform of the Customs administration in 'Arabistan was not only an attempt by the central government to expand its authority there, but that those changes also masked efforts by the Russian government to extend its influence throughout Persia.⁷⁵ This was not an isolated response. A traveller who visited the minor port of 'Asalū in 1902 described the reaction of the Shaykh there to the new system: "In the establishment of Belgian officials over the customs of the country he saw clearly the finger of Russia".⁷⁶ Sykes had previously noted similar reactions to the opening of new Russian consulates in the south, and the signature of the loan agreements of 1900 and 1902 greatly increased the suspicions of Russia that existed along the Persian shores of the Gulf.⁷⁷ The association of the Belgians with the Russian government

74. Wilson Precise, p.53.

75. F.O. 60:637. Enclosure No.2 in Kemball to Hardinge, No.57, 2 July 1901.

76. H.J. Whigham, The Persian Problem, London 1903, p.45.

77. F.O. 60:641. Sykes to Lansdowne, no number, 12 January 1901. See also Chapter VI of this thesis.

was made easier by the fact that when they were operating in remote areas, the Belgian officials were often accompanied by small detachments of the Cossack Brigade.⁷⁸

Not all issues in the Gulf were as complex or as sensitive as those which existed in Arabistān, but even when matters were simpler, to reach a solution often required that the Belgian official involved should be knowledgeable about local conditions, and flexible in his approach. This was not always so. A particular case occurred at Lingeh over the proposal to impose the 5 per cent ad valorem rate of duty on imports and exports. Although the introduction of that new rate at the Gulf ports was postponed in 1900, Simais was able to introduce it gradually during 1901. That regulation had disastrous implications for Lingeh as almost all the commercial activity in that port consisted of entrepôt trade. The Political Resident in the Persian Gulf, Colonel C.A. Kemball, noted in 1901 that "Lingeh's prosperity depends on its existence as a distribution centre for the Arab coast and in the past the Persian customs administration levied dues at a special rate on goods re-exported from Lingeh".⁷⁹ Simais had promised that he would take note of Lingeh's special circumstances and that he would not insist on the full 5 per cent rate being levied at that port.⁸⁰ But Simais died while on leave from

78. For example, Belgian officials who were trying to prevent the export of grain from Khurāsān to Russia in the summer of 1903 were accompanied by a detachment of troops from the Cossack Brigade. (F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.145, -6 September 1903.)

79. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.42, 7th March 1902.

80. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.140, 18 September 1901.

Persia in the summer of 1901, and his replacement C. Dambrain adopted a different policy (see below). Many local merchants distrusted Simais's promise and began to make alternative arrangements to send goods direct to their destinations on the Arab coast without first trans-shipping them at Lingeh. Other merchants considered using the nearby harbour at Basīdū as a new entrepôt, for at that time there was no Belgian official at that port.⁸¹ In 1901 Lingeh had been exempted from the gradual introduction of the 5 per cent ad valorem dues on imports and exports, and there was little apparent discontent there. In the early months of 1902, however, Dambrain imposed a new trans-shipment duty of one eighth of a qirān per package on every package landed and re-exported within twenty days. Most goods which were moved after having been in the port for more than twenty days had to pay the full dues of 5 per cent on export, having already paid that amount on import. Some goods that were re-exported had to pay even higher dues, that on rice and clarified butter was levied at a rate of 10 per cent, while some cargoes of wheat were taxed at 15 per cent.⁸² The bulk of those commodities which were trans-shipped through Lingeh came from India and by March 1902, when forwarding of goods to the Arab ports had virtually ceased, there were no less than 15,000 bags and packages of Indian origin destined for customers across the Gulf lying uncleared in the go-down. The export of these packages was eventually allowed free of duty; but the confidence of the merchants had been badly shaken and, as steamers switched their routes to ply directly between India and ports on the Arabian coast, the trade of Lingeh declined sharply.⁸³

81. H.J. Whigham, op.cit., pp.51-52.

82. J.G. Lorimer, op.cit., p.2611.

83. J.G. Lorimer, op.cit., p.2611-2. On later difficulties at Lingeh see Destrée, op.cit., pp.94-5.

Despite the difficulties in Arabistān, at Lingeh, and at several other minor ports such as Rīg and Qishm,⁸⁴ the new Customs administration was working quite well by the end of 1902. From the government's point of view the success of the reform was evident in the greatly increased revenues which were being collected.⁸⁵ This increase was due to several factors in addition to the gradual increase in the level of dues paid by native merchants. There was less corruption, and the general level of administration was much better. A further important element was the insistence of Belgian officials that all dues should be paid in specie. In the past over half the dues had been paid by means of Persian government bills, and these could be cashed in the bazaars only at a discount, which varied between 30 and 50 per cent.⁸⁶

There were, however, many complaints from the merchants, both native and European that none of the money which was being collected was being used to improve either services and facilities in the ports, or to maintain better security along the roads inland.⁸⁷ Such complaints were made even more frequently after the new, and usually higher, import tariffs were imposed in 1903 (see below).⁸⁸ There was little that Naus

84. J.G. Lorimer, op.cit., p.2597.

85. See table in footnote 54 of this chapter. Whigham reported that receipts at Bushire rose by over 60 per cent in 1900-1901, despite the fact that Simais had not been able to increase the dues paid by native merchants at 5 per cent ad valorem. H.J. Whigham, op.cit., p.159.

86. Lorimer, op.cit., p.2608. When the Anglo-Persian Trade Declaration was signed in February 1903, it was agreed that British merchants could pay their dues in sterling as long as the Bank of England continued to back that currency with gold. Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2600.

87. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.42, 7 March 1902. Kemball said that the merchants in Bandar Abbās wanted better pier facilities and more covered storage for their goods.

88. F.O. 60:682. Private letter, Hardinge to Sanderson, 4 June 1904.

could do about this for all the revenues that were being collected were absorbed in Tehran, either in payments to the army and bureaucracy, or to help pay for the extravagances of the Court. In general, however, Naus was widely praised by European observers for his efforts in trying to reform the Customs, and for increasing the revenues at the disposal of the central government.⁸⁹ In March 1901 he was awarded the Order of the Lion and the Sun by the Shāh, and this was said to be "in every respect a well-merited honour".⁹⁰ Not all the Persian merchants continued to be opposed to the Belgian administration of the Customs when they found that the system operated fairly and impartially. Other Persian voices, however, particularly those of members of the religious classes, were raised against the idea of Christians collecting taxes from Muslims.⁹² This was to be an increasingly important factor in the opposition later shown towards Naus and his colleagues.

While his agents were establishing control of Persia's trade on the borders, Naus was proceeding with the other aspects of his reform: abolition of internal dues on trade, and revision of the tariff schedules to permit the levying of specific dues on different commodities. In the

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89. See J. Rabino, An Economist's Notes on Persia, in Journal of the Royal Statistical Society, Vol.LXIV (1901), pp.267-8, and L. Griffin, The Present Condition of Persia, in Journal of the East India Association, 31 (1900), p.18.
90. Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2596. In November 1901 Naus was promoted to the rank of Vazīr, and Hardinge reported that this honour was justified in view of the Belgian's many labours to reform the Customs and to reach a commercial agreement with Russia. (F.O.60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.183, 29 November 1901.)
91. F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.6A Commercial, 28 February 1901. F.O. 60:642. Meshed Diary, No.9, 1 March 1901. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 3 March 1903. This report indicates that telegrams had been exchanged between leading members of the religious classes in Mashhad, Tehran and Karbalā' about whether it was permissible for Muslims to pay taxes to Christians.
92. H.W. Maclean, Report on the Conditions and Prospects of British Trade in Persia, Accounts and Papers, Vol.XCV (1904), paper number Cd.2146, p.18.

former aim Naus was greatly handicapped by the lack of authority of the central government in the provinces, and there is evidence throughout the latter years of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn of illegal dues being imposed on trade. For example, Maclean reported in 1904 that illegal charges were being levied on caravans by the Governor of Kirmānshāh;⁹² while Gleadowe Newcomen made many references to the continued collection of illegal taxes from caravans carrying goods to and from Bandar 'Abbās in the autumn and winter of 1904-5.⁹³

In pursuit of his second objective, of introducing specific dues on different commodities, Naus had opened negotiations with the Russian government in 1900, and in October 1901 a Russo-Persian Trade Declaration was signed. That document was ratified in December 1902, and it was agreed that it would be put into effect on 14 February 1903.⁹⁴ The negotiations were conducted in secret, and when news of them reached the British Minister in Tehran great consternation arose. Hardinge knew that the Russian government would be seeking to gain the most favourable terms for its exports, while Naus's objective would be to increase the revenue accruing to the Persian government. The danger which Hardinge, and the British government, saw was that the new tariff might impose high dues on Persian imports of British origin, and that this would reduce British trade with that country.⁹⁵ Hardinge opened negotiations with Naus in 1901, and agreement was reached on the terms of the new tariff

93. A.H. Gleadowe Newcomen, Report on the British Indian Commercial Mission to South East Persia during 1904-5, Calcutta 1906, pp.23-27 and 38-39. See also Chapter VI of this thesis.

94. For a resume of these negotiations see Lorimer op.cit., I, pp.2597-2602.

95. F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.6A Commercial, 28 February 1901, and detailed correspondence in F.O. 60:644.

The details were similar to those of the Russo-Persian Declaration and it was arranged that the new rates of duty on British goods would also be introduced on 14 February 1903.⁹⁶

The details of the new schedule were very complex, but some imports from Russia were subject to lower dues than they had previously been. Petroleum and kerosene, for example, were now taxed at a rate equivalent to 4 per cent ad valorem, and the dues on sugar of Russian origin were also reduced. Cotton piece goods were subject to a series of different rates, but the ad valorem equivalents were lower for the lighter varieties of cotton and most of these were of Russian origin.⁹⁷ The major change, however, concerned the rate of duty to be levied on imports of tea. According to the proposed new tariff the rate of duty payable on white tea was to be eighteen qirāns per mann, and on black tea the rate was twelve qirāns per mann.⁹⁸ Hardinge objected very strongly to these proposed rates on the grounds that tea was widely drunk in Persia and that the burden would fall most heavily on the poorer classes. He calculated that the new rates would cause such an increase in the price of tea that the additional cost per year for the average family would be equivalent to the monthly earnings of a labourer in

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96. A copy of the Anglo-Persian Commercial Convention signed on February 9th 1903 is to be found in E. Hertslet, A Complete Collection of the Treaties and Conventions and Reciprocal Regulations at Present Existing between Great Britain and Foreign Powers, Volume 23, London 1905, pp.1213-1239. The accompanying code of regulations, dated August 29th 1904 can be found in the same work, Volume 24, London 1907, pp.819-925.
97. For a discussion of the effects of the new tariff on Russian trade with Persia see M.L. Entner, Russo-Persian Commercial Relations 1828-1914, Gainesville 1965, pp.53-59.
98. F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Commercial No.20, 26 June 1901.

Tehran.⁹⁹ Naus admitted that tea was very popular, and that the new level of dues would increase the price; but he reckoned that the increase would be less severe than Hardinge had estimated.¹⁰⁰ There were lengthy negotiations about the rates of duty to be levied on tea, and the Persian government finally agreed that when the new tariff rates were introduced dues would be levied on that commodity at less than the maximum levels permitted under the new schedule. The rate to be charged was ten qirāns per mann on white tea, and six qirāns per mann for the black variety. At a later date a rate of seven qirāns per mann for mixed teas was introduced.¹⁰¹

Hopes that these lower levels might reduce opposition to the new tariff were quickly shown to be false. Estimates of the extent of the increase in dues varied; but it was generally reckoned that whereas the tea had previously paid the general rate of 5 per cent ad valorem import duty, the new level of tax was equivalent to an ad valorem impost of some 75 per cent.¹⁰² The effect on the price of tea was considerable. In Tabrīz the increase was some 30 per cent,¹⁰³ and in Hamadān it appears to have been even greater.¹⁰⁴ There was much dismay and discontent at these new higher prices and demonstrations occurred in many Persian towns.¹⁰⁵

99. F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Commercial No.36, 4 October 1901.

100. F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Commercial No.36, 4 October 1901.

101. Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2602.

102. H.W. Maclean, op.cit., pp.30-31.

103. Report for the Years 1902-04 on the Trade of Azerbaijan, Accounts and Papers, 1905, Volume CXI, Paper Cd.2236-52, p.6.

104. H.W. Maclean, op.cit., p.32.

105. In one single despatch Hardinge reported disquiet or disturbances about the new tariff in the following places: Isfahān, Shīrāz, Astarābād, Bushire, Tehran, Tabrīz and Mashhad. F.O.60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.43, 31 March 1903.

Some of the most violent protests took place in Tabriz, where the Belgian Director of Customs for Āzarbāyjān, J. Priem, was compelled to leave the city for almost a month in early June 1903. The incident which began the rioting was an attack by religious students on an Armenian-owned wine shop, but the demonstrations quickly grew and turned into a protest against the new tariffs, and the presence of Belgian officials in Persia.¹⁰⁶ Telegrams were exchanged between the religious leaders of Tabriz and their colleagues in Tehran, Najaf and Karbalā'. These messages reflected the general nature of the discontent, for as well as condemning the new tariffs, they criticised both the increasing influence of Europeans in Persia and the country's growing indebtedness to Russia.¹⁰⁷

The Valī'ahd, Muhammad Ali, was not very active in suppressing the disturbances in Tabriz. In part this was due to a lack of troops. The British Consul also pointed out, however, that the Valī'ahd had reasons of his own for wishing to see Priem removed from Tabriz, for the Belgian had refused to lend Muhammad Ali money from the customs receipts. Priem had also seized a quantity of rifles which were being imported illegally from Turkey. The Valī'ahd was believed to have accepted a bribe to allow their entry, but Priem had discovered the weapons and had impounded them.¹⁰⁸ Another cause of the Tabriz riots was the desire by some Persians, who had previously worked for the Customs administration, to secure the dismissal of the Belgian officials

106. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Very Confidential No.85, 10 June 1903.

107. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Confidential No.94, 23 June 1903.

108. F.O. 60:665. Stevens (Tabriz) to Hardinge, No.7 Very Secret, 25 June 1903.

and so to regain their former lucrative posts.¹⁰⁹ The violence in Tabriz was considerable, and the Valī'ahd finally had to pay a local brigand, Rahīm Khān, and his followers to help restore order.¹¹⁰

Although the new levels of duty were introduced less than a week after the Anglo-Persian agreement was signed in February 1903, the mercantile community in Persia had been aware that the negotiations were proceeding; and many merchants had taken the precaution of importing greater quantities of goods than was usual before the new tariffs were introduced. By this means they tried to avoid, at least temporarily, paying the new higher rates of import tax. As a result of this action, there were considerable stocks of certain commodities in the country, and the introduction of the new tariff did not lead to an immediate shortage of goods. It should also be noted that although some import dues were reduced, the merchants do not appear to have lowered their prices correspondingly for those commodities, so from the consumer's point of view there was no advantage at all to be seen in the new arrangements.¹¹¹

As a result of the introduction of the new tariffs, legitimate commercial activity along the Persian Gulf declined. The Political Resident pointed to one of the consequences of the new tariffs when he wrote, "In the Persian Gulf heavy duties are synonymous with heavy smuggling".¹¹² Although the amount of tea imports declared to the

109. F.O. 60:665. Stevens (Tabriz) to Hardinge, No.7 Very Secret, 25 June 1903.

110. F.O. 60:665. Stevens (Tabriz) to Hardinge, No.7 Very Secret, 25 June 1903.

111. F.O. 60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 10 February 1904.

112. Report for the Year 1904-05 on the Trade and Commerce of Bushire, Accounts and Papers 1906, Volume CXXVI, Paper No.Cd.2682-106, p.7.

Customs administration declined greatly, there does not seem to have been a prolonged and corresponding shortage of that commodity on the market. Much smuggling did take place, some of it occurring along the Tangistānī coast; where it was reported that smuggled tea was on sale at a price 40 per cent, less than that which was charged in nearby Bushire for tea which had been imported legally.¹¹³

The Customs administration had few means of suppressing such illicit trade. The Persian government bought a Belgian steam yacht, the Selika and, after she had been equipped with two small guns and renamed Muzaffar, she began anti-smuggling patrols in the spring of 1903.¹¹⁴ One vessel, however, was not sufficient for the task of patrolling the whole of Persia's southern shores, and in 1905 the government ordered five armed sea-going launches from the Royal Indian Marine Dockyard in Bombay. The first two of these vessels were delivered at the end of 1906, just before Muzaffar al-Dīn died.¹¹⁵

The introduction of the 1903 Tariff Agreement certainly increased the price of many foodstuffs and other essential commodities throughout Persia. It is difficult to reach any conclusion about the precise degree of that increase because the evidence is fragmentary; moreover, the high costs of transport in Persia meant that the price of goods often varied considerably from one region of the country to another making comparison difficult. In the case of Isfahān it seems clear that

113. Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2610.

114. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 3 March 1903.

115. Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2604-5.

prices were rising before 1903.¹¹⁶ The reasons for these earlier price rises were many and varied; but as far as the population was concerned the introduction of the new tariff was an immediate and obvious cause of higher prices. The fact that the Belgians were in charge of the Customs administration gave a distinctly anti-European and anti-Christian flavour to the protests. There seems little doubt that the introduction in 1903 of new levels of import dues caused considerable opposition among the population at large, it was condemned by members of the religious classes, including leading mujtahids in Najaf and Karbalā'; and it reawakened the hostility of Persian merchants to the Belgian officials which had gradually subsided since the disturbances of 1900.

The immediate response of many of the merchants to the imposition of the new tariff was to reduce imports. The impact of this was not initially serious because, as has already been noted, stocks of many commodities had earlier been increased and smuggling also took place on a considerable scale. The reduction in legitimate trade during 1903-4 was not reflected in the customs receipts, however, for the higher level of dues more than compensated for the reduced volume

116. See Chapter VII of this thesis. From other provinces too there is evidence of rising prices and of the hardships suffered by the poorer classes. "There seems little doubt that the population is becoming more and more impoverished." Report for the Year 1904-5 on the Trade of Azerbaijan, Accounts and Papers 1906, Volume CXXVII, Paper number Cd.2682-32, p.4. "It is a matter of common knowledge that the wages which would formerly support a family now hardly suffice to support a single member of it." Report for the Year 1905-6 on the Trade of Khorassan, Accounts and Papers 1906, Volume CXXVII, Paper No.Cd.2682-249, p.18.

of trade in that year;¹¹⁷ but the commercial recession was to continue for much longer than Naus had expected. This was because of external factors.

There were some signs of a revival in trade at the Persian Gulf ports by the late months of 1903, and one of the reasons for this was that the tariff schedule was very complex and it had not proved easy to operate. Some of the Belgian officials in the Gulf ports were reported to be putting it on one side as far as certain commodities were concerned and levying instead a straight ad valorem duty of around 8 per cent.¹¹⁸ This certainly helped the partial revival of trading activity in the Gulf. In 1904, however, there was a serious reduction in commerce because of the cholera epidemic.¹¹⁹ Trade was further damaged by the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese in February 1904 and by the later disturbances within Russia. That war had differential effects on the trade of Persia. Russian demand for some commodities, such as wheat increased, while demand for cotton declined. The overall result was a notable reduction in the volume of trade, and with it a decline in the level of Persian customs receipts.¹²⁰

117. See aggregate table under footnote 54.

118. Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2611. It is not evident from this source which specific commodities were being so treated, but difficulties were greatest on some of the commodities taxed by weight for there were disputes about the actual weight of the goods being imported as opposed to the total weight of the goods plus their packaging. See Report for the Year 1903-4 on the Trade and Commerce of the Persian Gulf, Accounts and Papers 1904, Volume C, Paper No.Cd.1766-116, p.3.

119. See Chapter V of this thesis.

120. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge by Lansdowne, No.118 Confidential, 21 June 1904.

The Russo-Japanese war had a greater impact on Persia's trade across her northern borders than it had on trade in the Gulf; but a change of circumstances there also resulted in a decline in Persia's maritime trade in 1905 and 1906. This was because of the arrival in May 1905 of a new Belgian Director of Customs at Bushire, J.B. Heynssens. That official refused to continue the ad hoc arrangement of levying dues on many commodities at the rate of 8 per cent ad valorem, and he insisted instead on applying the full tariff regulations of 1903.¹²¹ There was much opposition to this, particularly to the levying of a 50 per cent rate of duty on imported dates - an important local foodstuff. Members of the religious classes led protests in Bushire against this new policy, and trade at that port came to a halt for more than two months in the summer of 1905.¹²²

In brief, then, the new tariff agreement of 1903 caused considerable and persistent discontent. It drew attention to the position of the Belgians in Persia, and it made them the focus of much opposition. Because of external factors, the new agreement did not increase the income at the disposal of the central government to the extent which had been hoped, and it did little to help alleviate the many economic difficulties faced by Persia.

The early successes achieved by Naus had led to his taking charge of other branches of the bureaucracy in addition to the Customs administration. Hardinge had described the Belgian in 1901 as being

121. Report for the Year 1905 on the Trade and Commerce of Bushire, Accounts and Papers 1906, Volume CXXVII, Paper Cd.2682-106, p.6.

122. Lorimer, op.cit., I, p.2615. .

virtually the finance minister of Persia.¹²³ In October 1903, Naus was made Minister of Posts and Telegraphs.¹²⁴ In a land as large as Persia, where the geographical barriers to communication are considerable, the maintenance of an efficient and secure governmental messenger system had long been regarded as essential for effective administration. The introduction of the telegraph had not yet replaced that need during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh. When Naus took over responsibility for the Post that service was in a very poor condition. The Persian official who had previously been responsible for it, Vazīr-i Humāyūn, had accompanied Muzaffar al-Dīn on his visit to Europe in 1900 and had spent much money there. On his return he had proceeded to restore his personal finances by selling many of the horses belonging to the Post. In several parts of Persia only donkeys were available for use by the couriers at the end of 1900.¹²⁵

Naus put forward many schemes for financial reform but few were implemented. Attempts to reduce the expenses of Muzaffar al-Dīn's Court met with little success.¹²⁶ Several plans for reform of the taxes on land had to be abandoned in the face of great and persistent opposition from landowners, some of whom were also influential members of the religious classes.¹²⁷ Proposals for the payment of stamp duties on

123. F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.56 Commercial Secret, 7 July 1901.

124. Destrée, *op.cit.*, p.344, and F.O.60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.72, 17 April 1902.

125. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.134, 13 December 1900.

126. F.O. 60:640. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.20 Commercial, 26 June 1901; F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.41 Very Confidential, 30 March 1903, and F.O.60:681. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.15, 26 January 1904.

127. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.18, 4 February 1902; F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 3 March 1903; F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.41 Very Confidential, 30 March 1903; F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.141 Secret, 14 September 1903; F.O. 60:681. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.15, 26 January 1904.

certain documents also met strong resistance by religious leaders who resented what they saw as interference with their responsibility for the conduct of legal matters; and that scheme too had to be abandoned.¹²⁸ Naus also proposed to increase the rate at which certain taxes in kind were commuted for cash payments. This too aroused much opposition by those whose tax payments would have been increased.¹²⁹ The failure of these schemes reflected the weakness of the Persian government; but the very fact that Naus had proposed them greatly increased the degree and extent of hostility to him.

During 1904 Belgian officials did take partial charge of the payment of salaries and pensions in some provinces. This led to considerable resentment by those who had previously profited from carrying out that task.¹³⁰ Naus's early success in increasing the amount of customs revenues collected aroused feelings of covetousness among some Persian officials who tried to get the Belgian dismissed so that they could take control of that potentially lucrative service.¹³¹ As part of the criticism against him, he and other members of his staff were accused of peculation, but there is no evidence in the British

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128. F.O. 60:683. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.240 Confidential, 31 December 1904, and F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.10 Confidential, 6 January 1905.
129. Some landowners who paid taxes in wheat were apparently compounding their payments on the basis of one kharvar of wheat being worth the equivalent of five shillings. In fact, one kharvār of wheat, in the particular area quoted by Naus to Hardinge (which is not named in the despatch), had a market value equivalent to £1.4.0. Naus wished to increase the cash payments of those landowners by a corresponding amount. (F.O. 60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40, 20 February 1904.)
130. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.150, 16 August 1904, and F.O. 60:683. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.173, 11 September 1904.
131. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40 Confidential, 28 February 1905.

archives which would support such a charge.¹³² Naus was also accused of employing Armenian Christians rather than Muslims; and when anti-Armenian feeling rose sharply throughout Persia during the massacres of Muslims in southern Russia in 1905, this charge was levelled against him with greater frequency.¹³³

The fact that the Belgians were undertaking often difficult tasks meant that they were exposed to considerable criticism. This was particularly true in the case of officials who tried to enforce quarantine procedures on Persia's western frontier in 1904 against the entry of cholera.¹³⁴ Later moves to limit the spread and effects of that disease were also misunderstood and resented. There were several other incidents too in the Customs administration and in other areas which aroused popular opposition to the Belgians; sometimes because of the lack of sensitivity on the part of these officials to local custom and practice.¹³⁵

In Khurāsān, for example, Belgian officials endeavoured on several occasions to impose a tax on sheep entering Persia from Russia.¹³⁶ The

132. In 1903 Naus and his compatriots had been accused of increasing import tariffs so as to raise the money with which to purchase the Crown Jewels of Iran. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.128, 18 August 1903. On accusations against the Belgians, see also Destrée, *op.cit.*, pp. 121 and 130.

133. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40 Confidential, 28 February 1905.

134. See Chapter V of this thesis, and Destrée, *op.cit.*, pp.117-119.

135. Naus had recognized that it was very difficult to recruit officials who were willing to serve in Persia and who possessed the desirable characteristics for work in that country. F.O.60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.57, 7 July 1901. See also Chapter VII of this thesis for problems arising from the actions of a Belgian official in Isfahān in 1905.

136. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.120, 22 June 1904.

flocks in question were not being imported in the usual sense of that word, for they were owned by Persians and were sent to Russia to graze for part of the year. Such movements of animals across the border were well established. Some of the flocks in question were quite large - on one occasion the Belgians tried to impose a tax of 1 qirān per head on a flock of some 130,000 sheep.¹³⁷ The activities of the Belgian officials in endeavouring to introduce such new taxes were bitterly resented by the herdsmen and owners of the flocks. Attempts to collect such levies at Quchan in 1904 led to violent protests and the destruction of the customs post there.¹³⁸ The fact that agriculture in this region was suffering at that time from attacks by locusts made the imposition of new taxes even less acceptable.¹³⁹

Earlier attempts to impose new taxes on flocks had been made in south-eastern Persia. The proposals there also involved the levying of a tax on the estimated amount of wool removed from the fleece of each sheep while it was grazing outside Persian territory.¹⁴⁰ Such proposals aroused much resentment on the part of the Balūchī herdsmen. Attempts such as these to introduce new imposts were regarded by the local population as repressive, and as unwarranted acts of interference; in the absence of sufficient troops such schemes were also unworkable. Another source of discontent was the Belgian attempt to introduce pass-

137. F.O. 60:688. Meshed Diary, 14 May 1904.

138. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.120, 22 June 1904.

139. F.O. 60:688. Meshed Diary, 18 June 1904.

140. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.42, 12 March 1902; and F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.66, 12 April 1902.

ports for people living on the borders of Sīstān.¹⁴¹ Many of the people in that area were accustomed to moving freely into and out of Afghan territory, and they could see little reason why foreign officials should be allowed to impose restrictions upon them.

Belgian officials were also responsible for the introduction, in 1901, of new cupro-nickel coins of low denomination. The poorer classes of Persia had been much afflicted in earlier years by a shortage of copper coinage, and by its poor quality. The latter factor meant that coins of low denomination were often exchangeable only at a considerable loss against the higher value silver coins.¹⁴² There had been great

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141. Naus had taken charge of the Passport Department in 1903. On the problems caused in Sīstān, see F.O. 60:666. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.182, 11 November 1903; and F.O. 60:688. Seistan Diary, 16 July 1904. On relations between the Belgians in south-east Persia and the British officials there see Destrée, *op.cit.*, pp.108-111.
142. There are several reports from British Ministers in Tehran and from consular officials in the provinces about the hardships suffered by the poorer classes during the reign of Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh because of the depreciation in the value of copper coins. The problem was a recurrent one in the nineteenth century (see Report on the Trade of Persia, Accounts and Papers 1884, Volume LXXIX, Paper No.C.3868, p.79). The issue turned on the fact that the qirān was a silver coin but the shāhī was a copper one. Theoretically 20 shāhīs were equal to one qirān, but much of the copper coinage was debased and the rate of exchange of the shāhī against the qirān varied according to the quality of the copper coin. Muẓaffar al-Dīn's government had tried in the early months of his reign to buy in much of the debased coinage and to mint and issue new shāhīs of a weight and fineness that would guarantee their value at 20 shāhīs equal to 1 qirān. This policy did not operate for very long, and debased copper coins were again issued. The post of Master of the Mint was a much coveted office because of the profits which could be made by issuing debased currency (F.O. 60:608. Des Graz to Salisbury, No.58, 31 May 1899). At Isfahān in December 1898 the rate of exchange was about 44 shāhīs per qirān, with an agio of an additional shāhī per qirān being taken by the sarrafs (money changers) on all exchanges. (F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.50, 8 December 1898.) In May 1899 the rate of exchange in Tehran was 75 shāhīs per qirān. In the late months of 1900 the government began to issue new cupro-nickel shāhī coins. These had been struck under Belgian supervision. Many Persians viewed them with great suspicion, believing that they too, like the earlier copper coins, would fluctuate in value. (F.O. 248:742. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.2, 1 February 1901.) On the general background to this issue, see E. Lorini, La Persia Economica Contemporanea e la sua Questione Monetaria, Rome 1900, pp.308-13, and H.W. Maclean, *op.cit.*, p.95.

distress caused to the poorer classes by these fluctuations, and they were understandably suspicious of the new coins. The fact that the Belgians were responsible for their introduction rendered those officials the object of much mistrust and criticism. Sometimes the actions of Belgian officials were seen as a direct attack on Islam. An example of this occurred in 1903 when the Customs administration in Bushire impounded a large quantity of anti-Bābī tracts which had been published in Bombay and which had been sent for distribution in Persia.¹⁴³ The Belgian officials acted on this occasion in order to prevent further violence against that sect. But many members of the population of Bushire saw the impounding of the books as an act of intolerable interference on the part of the Belgians. Demonstrations resulted and the books were released.¹⁴⁴ In February 1905 there occurred the well-publicised incident in which Naus appeared at a party dressed as a mullā. This caused very great anger and resentment.¹⁴⁵

Evidence of anti-Belgian feelings comes, therefore, from many quarters, but it was perhaps expressed most succinctly in an anonymous and clandestine Persian broadsheet distributed in Tehran in late February 1905. In translation it reads, "O Moslems, Islam is dead and infidelity is up. The Sovereign is Naus, the Vizir is Lavers and the Statesmen Christians. It is the end".¹⁴⁶ At a time when such opposition

143. F.O. 248:788. Kemball to Hardinge, No.17, 17 August 1903.

144. F.O. 248:788. Kemball to Hardinge, No.107, 3 October 1903.

145. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40 Confidential, 28 February 1902.

146. F.O. 60:698. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40 Confidential, 28 February 1902. Lavers was one of Naus's chief assistants whose particular responsibility at that time was for the postal service.

had been generated, and when emotions were running so high, it is not difficult to see why the dismissal of Naus and his Belgian colleagues was one of the first demands made in the newly-created Majlis in January 1907.

CHAPTER V

THE CHOLERA EPIDEMIC OF 1904

"Among so many premature deaths, a large number were due to the great epidemics which descended frequently upon a humanity ill-equipped to combat them; among the poor another cause was famine. Added to the constant acts of violence these disasters gave life a quality of perpetual insecurity."

Marc Bloch, Feudal Society,
translated by L.A. Manyon,
London 1961, p.73.

The pattern of diffusion and the effects of epidemics remain one of the many neglected areas of Islamic social history. The affliction which probably had the greatest impact on the Middle East is plague and in the nineteenth century one of Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh's chief physicians, Dr. J.D. Tholozan, wrote a series of studies on that disease.¹ More recently M.W. Dols has produced an authoritative monograph on the epidemic of plague which devastated the Middle East in the fourteenth century before advancing on Europe where it was known as the "Black Death".² The very great impact of that pandemic, and the fact that the symptoms of

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1. J.D. Tholozan:
Une Épidémie de Peste en Mésopotamie en 1867, Paris 1869:
Histoire de la peste bubonique en Perse ou détermination de son origine, de sa marche, du cycle de ces apparitions et de la cause de son extinction spontanée, Paris 1874:
Histoire de la peste bubonique en Mésopotamie ou détermination de son origine, de sa marche, du cycle de ces apparitions et de la cause de son extinction spontanée, Paris 1874:
Histoire de la peste bubonique au Caucase, en Arménie et en Anatolie dans le première moitié du dix-neuvième siècle, Paris 1876:
La Peste en Turquie dans les temps modernes, Paris 1880:
An interesting account of an epidemic in one town is provided by P. Russell: A Treatise on the Plague: Containing an historical journal and medical account of the Plague at Aleppo in the years 1760, 1761, 1762, London 1792.
 2. M.W. Dols, The Black Death in the Middle East, Princeton 1977.

plague are distinctive, have given it a special place in medical history. Other diseases have, however, been very serious in the effects, but the lack of precise terminology often makes it difficult to decide which particular illness was afflicting the population.³ The specific vibrio which is responsible for cholera was not isolated by R. Koch until 1883, but even before that date the European powers had begun to recognize that the Indian sub-continent was a major source of intestinal diseases, and that the annual congregation of Muslim pilgrims in the Hijāz was a major cause of their dissemination.⁴

Serious outbreaks of the infection now recognized as cholera began in India in 1817 and in 1826. The latter wave of infection took six years to reach Scotland and the United States of America. Further outbreaks occurred in the sub-continent in 1840 and 1849, and in 1863/64 the disease was carried to the Hijāz by Indian pilgrims. There some 15,000 out of 90,000 pilgrims died, in Egypt the death toll rose to 60,000 while the disease later killed some 200,000 people in the major cities of Europe and in New York. Cholera reappeared in India on a major scale in 1879, 1891, and 1902. European fears of the disease, and greater knowledge of its etiology, had stimulated international discussions aimed at controlling its spread and in 1892 an International Sanitary Convention was signed in Venice. This agreement was concerned with shipping between Asia and Europe,

3. M.W. Dols, The Black Death in the Middle East, pp.35 and 316.

4. There are several works which discuss the role of the pilgrimage in the spread of diseases. One of the most useful is F. Duguet: Le Pèlerinage de la Mecque au point du vue religieux social et sanitaire, Paris 1932.

and in particular on the movement of Muslim pilgrims to and from the Hijāz. As a result of this increased international awareness there is an appreciable body of evidence available concerning the international diffusion of cholera in the second half of the nineteenth century. The work of R. Koch in Egypt, and later in India, led to effective counter-measures being adopted in Europe, and the 1902 outbreak in India was the last occasion on which the disease reached pandemic proportions.⁵

The history of cholera within the Middle East is, however, a subject to which relatively little research has been devoted. The European sources tend to concentrate on the sea-borne transmission of the disease and on its diffusion during the pilgrimage season. The spread of cholera to Persia by the land route - by Indian pilgrims going to Mecca or by other pilgrims returning therefrom - is largely ignored, as is its transmission by vessels plying between the sub-continent and the ports of the Persian Gulf.

Although the outbreak of cholera in Persia may have been of little interest to the European powers the result for the inhabitants of that country were often serious. The 1817 Indian outbreak took four years to reach Persia with Shīrāz suffering the worst effects.⁶ In 1845 the disease again entered Persia from India via Afghanistan, some 12,000 people were reported to have died in Tehran but the infection did not spread westward of Qazvīn.⁷ The attack of 1851/53 seems to have come from the West - the immediate source of infection was Baghdād - and from the

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5. Background information drawn from "Cholera", Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago 1970, Vol.5, pp.674-5.
 6. A general discussion of outbreaks of cholera in Persia during the nineteenth century can be found in Dr. J.G. Baker, "Remarks on the Most Prevalent Diseases and the Climate of Northern Persia", in Accounts and Papers (1886), Volume LXVII, Appendix to Paper C.4781, p.325.
 7. C. Elgood, A Medical History of Persia, Cambridge 1951, pp.496-7.

capital the disease spread as far as Kirman and Bushire.⁸ Ten years later cholera reappeared in Tehran and in Mashhad - pilgrims were reported to have spread it from the latter city.⁹ In 1869-70 it existed at Isfahan, and Shiraz where some 2,000 people are said to have died,¹⁰ but the next major attack did not take place until 1892. It was this outbreak and its spread from Mashhad which Gertrude Bell described so graphically.¹¹ Panic among the population led to flight from Tehran, the example being set by the Shāh, and thus the disease was disseminated over a still wider area. As fear grew, so did religious fervour with some members of the religious classes explaining the visitation of the sickness as divine retribution for the presence of so many Europeans in Persia. These considerations, together with a neglect of simple rules of hygiene led Gertrude Bell to conclude that she was living "in a land where Ignorance is for ever preparing a smooth highway for the feet of Death".¹²

The outbreak of cholera which began in 1904 was therefore no novel experience for Persia or its people; but to study this epidemic in some detail is to gain an insight into the values and attitudes of contemporary Persian society.

The variety of the disease which affected Persia was "classical" cholera. It is an acute diarrhoeal disease of short duration, but untreated it is often fatal. The illness is exclusively one which attacks man, and the susceptibility of the individual depends upon complex

8. C. Elgood, *op.cit.*, pp.506-7.

9. *Ibid.*, p.515.

10. *Ibid.*, pp.515-16.

11. G. Bell, *Persian Pictures*, London 1928, pp.59-68.

12. *Ibid.*, p.68.

circumstances concerned with levels of gastric acidity, but some people appear to have a natural resistance to the disease. The cholera vibrio is active in the small intestine and after an incubation period which can vary between a few hours and five days, the patient begins to experience severe diarrhoea and vomiting. The body becomes subject to dehydration and death may occur because of failure of the circulatory or renal systems.

The dissemination of the disease depends on a connection being made between the faeces of an infected person and the mouth of the victim-to-be. The vehicle is usually water, but it can also be via flies to raw food such as fruit or leafy vegetables. Because the mode of transmission is often by the infection of a water supply system, and because the incubation period is so short, the number of cases often rises very quickly and the speed with which mortality occurs also gives the disease a very dramatic impact. Fortunately, however, the infecting vibrio is a relatively fragile organism; without moisture and an oxygen supply it soon dies, but it can be spread by indirect contact via food, water and flies. For classical cholera there is no true "carrier" status, but because the attack can lack symptoms a person may unknowingly pass infective vibrios to others for up to a week after his or her initial infection. Defecation in fields near inhabited areas, or near water supplies, and the use of fresh night soil on vegetable plots are well-known methods by which the vibrio is transmitted.¹³

13. I would like to repeat my thanks to Dr. B. Anderson of the University of London Health Service, who worked in Calcutta during the 1971 cholera epidemic, for her great assistance with the medical aspects of this chapter.

The immediate source of the Persian epidemic of 1904 would appear to have been the religious city of Karbalā³, where cholera was reported in December 1903.¹⁴ From there the infection reached Persia by two routes - the first wave entered via Kirmānshāh and proceeded via Hamadān to Tehran, Mashhad and on to Central Asia. This route was also responsible for the disease reaching Tabrīz, and spreading via Qumm to Isfahān. A second, later, path of infection from Karbalā³ lay via Basra to the ports of the Gulf and thence inland to Shīrāz. The two infections "met" at the village in Qumisheh, some 45 miles south of Isfahān in the late autumn of 1904. For the northerly progress of the disease it is possible to offer an explanation of how the infection was spread and this too adds to the interest and value of the study.

Soon after the disease was reported in December 1903, the Persian authorities began to impose quarantine restrictions on travellers entering the country at Qasr-i Shīrīn. The task of maintaining this single quarantine post quickly passed to the Belgian officials who were already in charge of the collection of customs dues there.¹⁵ It is not clear whether the Belgians sought to perform this task or whether it was given to them because of pressure by European diplomats in Tehran who were already apprehensive about the possible effects if the disease did enter Persia. What quickly became obvious, however, was that the local population, as well as those travellers whose movements were restricted, were very resentful about this extension in the powers of European officials.¹⁶ This was to become a common and important factor in the Persian population's attitude to the progress of the disease. The British Minister

14. H.L. Rabino Report on the Trade of Kermanshah 1903-1904, in Accounts and Papers (1904), Volume C, Paper Cd.1766, -123 pp 37-8

15. F.O.60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.17 Confidential, 27 January 1904.

16. Ibid.

in Tehran, Sir Arthur Hardinge, returned to his post from Baghdād in January 1904 and reported that the employee of the Belgians who was in charge at Qasr-i Shīrīn, Monsieur Cesari, was a "tough and very combative Corsican".¹⁷

Indian Muslims returning from Najaf and Karbalā² seem to have accepted the restrictions imposed by the European authorities with patience - possibly because they were more familiar with European control in their homeland. Persian pilgrims, however, soon became resentful. There were reports that some un-named religious authorities in Najaf had said that to kill Cesari would be a meritorious deed as his actions were preventing Muslims from pursuing pious practices - i.e. pilgrimage.¹⁸ Cesari received little assistance from the local Persian authorities, an understandable reaction in view of the growing anger of the religious classes against him, and in February he requested that 100 cavalry and 300 infantry be sent from Tehran to assist in enforcing the quarantine.¹⁹ No such help was forthcoming and at the end of February 1904 a group of pilgrims broke through the quarantine cordon and entered Persia.²⁰ The results were to be very serious for the country - but opportunely the leader of the group of pilgrims involved was so eminent that his progress was followed with much attention - and because of that it is now possible to trace, at least partially, the way in which the disease was spread across northern Persia.

The man in question was Aqā Hasan Mamaghānī, an important² alim from Najaf, and he was on his way to Mashhad with, in Hardinge's words "hundreds of beggars, dervishes and other diseased and dirty folk".²¹ The man's

17. Ibid.

18. Ibid.

19. F.O. 60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.42, 2 March 1904.

20. Ibid.

21. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne No.86, 19 May 1904. Mamaghānī's group comprised some 800 people when he entered Persia (F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.119, 21 June 1904).

importance was such that he had attracted a large group of followers, and even without the existence of cholera his movements would have been followed with much attention - the presence of cholera among them adds a doleful and macabre note to their pilgrimage. That Mamaghānī's company were responsible for the entry and early spread of the disease was recognized at the time. Naus told Hardinge in July that he had proposed offering Mamaghānī a sum equivalent to £20,000 not to enter Persia, but that 'Ayn al-Dawla had not acted on this suggestion.²²

It is necessary here to note the size of pilgrim traffic between Persia and the holy cities of Iraq. H.L. Rabino, who knew Persia well, and who had lived for three years in Kirmānshāh - the town nearest to the major border post - believed that in 1902-3 some 25,000 people crossed into Iraq by mule, donkey or horse. Pilgrims who used such transport required passports so their number could be known with some accuracy, those who went on foot did not require such documents and Rabino estimated their number at some 75,000 per year.²³ (A British report of 1875 quoted a similar total of 100,000 pilgrims.)²⁴ Rabino also noted that approximately 3,500 corpses per year entered Iraq via the Kirmānshāh route. A tax was levied on each corpse and because of evasion of that payment the figure quoted may not be entirely accurate.²⁵

The first reports of cholera in Kirmānshāh began in late March 1904,²⁶ and the disease was to persist in that town until July. In April Hardinge sent Dr. H. Scott, one of the Legation physicians, to the area and on

22. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126, 17 July 1904.

23. H.L. Rabino, Report of the Trade of Kermanshah 1902-3, in Accounts and Papers (1903), Volume LXXVIII, Paper Cd 1386-120, p.8.

24. F.O. 60:373. Thomson to Derby, 30 September 1875, cited in C. Issawi (editor) The Economic History of Iran 1800-1914, Chicago 1971, p.129.

25. H.L. Rabino, Report on the Trade of Kermanshah, op.cit.

26. F.O. 60:685. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Telegraphic Commercial No.2A, 6 April 1904.

April 21st he reported that the Belgian authorities had been able to establish effective quarantine services at Bīsītūn; but that at Kangavār the situation was very bad, for cholera was known to exist there and that the best remedy was to isolate that place. At the same time all traffic to and from Iraq should be forbidden, said Scott.²⁷ Mamaghānī, who was still in the area, had been very vocal in his criticism of the impious restrictions being imposed on pilgrims by the Europeans, and on April 25th, he defied the orders of a Turkish doctor who was assisting with the quarantine services, Dr. Vaume, and led his followers on a visit to Kangavār to make sure that all restrictions on pilgrims there were lifted. During that visit Dr. Vaume was attacked and groups of travellers who had been detained at that spot were freed to continue their journeys.²⁸ By this time the daily death rate in Kirmānshāh had risen to ~~20~~ and riots were followed by the exodus from the town of more than a third of the population - some of whom took the disease with them to the surrounding villages where they sought refuge.²⁹ This frightened exodus from a centre of infection was to be a repeated phenomenon throughout the progress of the epidemic.

The importance of water in the diffusion of cholera has already been noted and in Kirmānshāh conditions of hygiene were far from ideal. Even before the disease arrived Rabino had commented upon the dangers inherent in a situation where the spent water from one house constituted the water supply of its neighbour at a lower altitude.³⁰ (In the 1892 epidemic the

27. F.O. 60:682. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.86, 19 May 1904.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid.

30. F.O. 60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.17, Confidential, 27 January 1904.

German Chargé d'Affaires in Tehran had described how in Qulhak water which had been used for washing corpses became the drinking water supply of people who lived lower down the hill;³¹ in Qumm there was a similar situation during the 1904 epidemic.³² Rabino also commented on the problem caused by the long delay in changing the water in the rooms of some popular public bath houses. In some instances he said this change took place only on an annual or bi-annual basis.³³ Hardinge was to write at a later date that schemes for the European inspection of such bath houses would be deeply resented by Muslims, and that any plans for the regulation of those establishments by non-Muslims would be regarded as a very serious interference with the practice of Islam, and the maintainance of proper standards of religiously-prescribed ablutions.³⁴

The Belgian customs officials in Kirmānshāh joined forces with the various European and European-trained doctors who had been sent to the town by foreign legations, and by the central government, to try to make the Governor, Farmān Farmā, introduce elementary hygiene precautions. He refused, and according to Dr. Scott this was because he knew that any expenditure involved would have to come from his own pocket and that he could expect neither financial aid nor support from Tehran. The Governor was also aware of the influence and popularity of Mamaghānī and did not wish to antagonize him and his band of followers by appearing to act as an agent of the Europeans.³⁵ As the death rate

31. F. Rosen, Oriental Memories of a German Diplomatist, London, 1930, p.171. See also G. Bell, op.cit., p.67.

32. F.O. 60:682. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.119, 21 June 1904.

33. F.O. 60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.17, Confidential, 27 January 1904.

34. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.7, 5 January 1905.

35. F.O. 60:682. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.86, 19 May 1904.

continued to grow rumours became wilder and they circulated more widely, (a phenomenon on which Gertrude Bell had remarked in 1892).³⁶ In particular it was said that European medicines were made to kill Muslims not to cure them.³⁷ Although the general reaction to the outbreak of cholera on the part of most Persians was a compound of fear and resignation, an important additional element was a sharpened sense of resentment against the presence of Europeans; particularly since the Europeans took steps which were designed to lessen the impact of the epidemic. Actions which appeared to the Europeans as precautionary and preventative could easily be described to, and viewed by, pious Muslims as attempts at subverting and suppressing Islam; particularly when important members of the religious classes took a hostile attitude to those activities.

Before describing the manner in which cholera spread across Persia it is useful to look in some detail at the effects of the cholera on one town. Kirmānshāh was the first urban centre to be infected, and the exodus of population which resulted has already been noted. There were probably some 40,000 to 50,000 people living in Kirmānshāh before the disease struck,³⁸ and Rabino's estimate would mean that some 13,000 to 17,000 people deserted their homes. The death rate in the middle of May 1904 was over 20 per day, and on the worst day in the month some 100 people died.³⁹ These figures are provided by reliable observers such as Rabino and Scott, but they should probably be regarded as minima

36. G. Bell, op.cit., p.65.

37. F.O. 60:682. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.86, 19 May 1904.

38. See E. Lorini, La Persia Economica Contemporanea, Rome 1900, p.383.

39. F.O. 60:682. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.119, 21 June 1904.

for although these men had good knowledge of events within the town and its immediate environs, they had little opportunity at the height of the epidemic to visit the outlying villages to which many inhabitants of Kirmānshāh had fled. Unfortunately neither Rabino nor Scott seem to have estimated the total number of deaths in the town, but the mortality rate was still in excess of 40 per week in July,⁴⁰ and it is probable on the basis of a maximum death rate of 110 per day, and a duration of the disease of 8 to 10 weeks, that between 2,000 and 3,000 people lost their lives in the town as a result of the epidemic.

The economic effects of the disease were considerable, and they were compounded by famine in the region. The imposition of quarantine measures had an immediate impact on trade with Baghdād, but it should be remembered that this trade route had been in decline before the epidemic occurred. The reason for this was that the Turkish authorities were at the time conducting military operations against rebellious tribes under 'Abd al-Āzīz in the vicinity of 'Anayza and Burayda, and for these punitive operations they had commandeered large numbers of camels throughout the vilayet of Baghdād.⁴¹ Camels were used on the Baghdād-Kirmānshāh route in the spring, summer and autumn (snow and the resultant mud made their use impossible in the winter) and mules in the winter.⁴² The commandeering of camels in southern Iraq meant that there was a general shortage of pack animals throughout the region, and trade declined on almost all routes leading to and from Baghdād, as transport costs rose

40. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134, 20 July 1904.

41. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.86, 19 May 1904.

42. See H.W. Maclean, Report on Conditions and Prospects for British Trade in Persia, Accounts and Papers (1904), Volume XCV, Paper Cd.2146, p.15.

in response to this scarcity. (This situation prevailed until the end of 1905.)⁴³ The full effects of the cholera did not become noticeable until late March 1904, but even before that date the price of transport between Kirmānshāh and Baghdād had already begun to rise sharply. By mid-April the epidemic had brought trade to a complete halt.⁴⁴ Some recovery did take place later but customs receipts for Kirmānshāh declined by some 10 per cent in the year 1904-5 compared with the previous year.⁴⁵ The situation was in fact worse than this single figure would indicate for the trend had been for customs dues to rise annually since the introduction of Belgian control in 1899-1900, and between 1902-3 and 1903-4 the increase had been over 40 per cent. The decline in trade and in customs revenue for 1904-5 was a source of considerable dismay for Naus⁴⁶ and was regarded by the directors of the Imperial Bank as sufficiently serious to deserve a special mention in their annual report to shareholders.⁴⁷

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43. Report on the Trade of Kermanshah 1905-6, Accounts and Papers (1906) Volume CXXVII, Paper Cd.2682-208, p.1.
 44. F.O. 60:682. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.119, 21 June 1904.
 45. KIRMĀNSHĀH CUSTOMS RECEIPTS (Qirāns)

1901-2	3,041,851	
1902-3	3,265,366	
1903-4	4,610,640	(estimated by Rabino on basis of known volume of imports and exports)
1904-5	4,210,640	

Source: various Reports on Trade of Kermanshah in Accounts and Papers (1903) Volume LXXVIII Paper Cd. 1386-120, (1905) Volume XCI Paper Cd. 2236-164, (1906) Volume CXXVII, Paper Cd. 2682-208

46. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126, 17 July 1904.
 47. See statement by Sir L. Griffin (Chairman of the Imperial Bank of Persia) in the Annual Report of the Imperial Bank of Persia for 1904-5. (Copy to in F.O. 60:685).

The decline in trade was not, however, the only hardship to affect Kirmānshāh. As was true on earlier occasions - in particular in 1869-70 and in 1892 - cholera was accompanied by famine,⁴⁸ thus adding even further to the prevailing sense of insecurity. The cause again pre-dated the epidemic, for a serious drought had begun in 1903. That year's wheat crop was down by a quarter on that of 1902 as a result of the drought, attack by locusts, and tribal unrest which had led to the destruction of some crops. This shortage was soon reflected in price. Newly-harvested wheat was sold for 10-12 qirāns per kharvār in 1902;⁴⁹ in 1903 the same type of wheat was first sold for 15 qirāns per kharvār and that price soon doubled.⁵⁰ Barley showed a similar rise from 15 qirāns per kharvār in 1902⁵¹ to 38 qirāns per kharvār in the summer of 1903.⁵² This rise in prices encouraged many merchants to take a quick profit and reserve stocks were put on the market so that stores were at a very low level when the 1904 crop was sown. That harvest was nothing short of disastrous, the drought continued and the harvesting force was reduced by the exodus of population and by deaths resulting from cholera. Wheat harvested in the late summer of 1904 opened at 40 qirāns per kharvār but the price rose by December to 100 qirāns per kharvār. These were urban prices. In some of the outlying villages of the province wheat was bringing up to 250 qirāns per kharvār. Barley prices moved in sympathy and that crop brought 96 qirāns per kharvār in the town and up to

48. See C. Elgood, *op.cit.*, pp.515-7.

49. H.L. Rabino, Report on the Trade of Kermanshah 1902-3, *Accounts and Papers* (1903), Volume ~~LXXVIII~~, Paper Cd. 1386-120, p.6.

50. H.L. Rabino, Report on the Trade of Kermanshah 1903-4, *Accounts and Papers* (1904), Volume C Paper Cd.1766. ~~123~~ p 32.

51. H.L. Rabino, Report on the Trade of Kermanshah 1902-3, *op.cit.*, p.6.

52. H.L. Rabino, Report on the Trade of Kermanshah 1903-4, *op.cit.*, p.32.

200 in the province.⁵³ Such fluctuations in the price of basic food-stuffs may not have been directly caused by the outbreak of cholera but they certainly did nothing to alleviate the hardships caused by the disease.

After cholera had passed Kirmānshāh and Kangāvar the authorities tried to prevent its further spread by establishing inland quarantine camps. According to the British Legation doctor, T. Odling, these efforts were useless, for with so many tracks linking villages and hamlets the quarantine barriers were easily evaded. Even worse was the fact that the camps which were established were very poorly managed, with travellers who arrived on different days being allowed to mix freely and so transmit the disease among themselves. Water supplies to the camps were often suspect and sometimes the camps were set up in the wake of the disease rather than in advance of it, thereby gathering people together in an already infected area.⁵⁴ Such were the criticisms of a European doctor; to the local merchants the measures were objectionable rather as a barrier to trade; while for the local population as a whole they represented yet another item of government expenditure and therefore an additional tax burden.⁵⁵

Dr. Odling had had long experience of Persia. He had arrived in 1872 as a physician to the Indo-European Telegraph Department and moved to serve in the Legation nineteen years later. He had seen the epidemic of 1892 and was soon convinced that Mamaghānī and his group of followers - now swollen to some 800-1,000 people - were the source of the spread of the disease.⁵⁶ From Kirmānshāh the infection reached Malāir and from

53. H.L. Rabino, Report on the Trade of Kermanshah 1904-5, Accounts and Papers (1905), Volume XCI, Paper Cd.2236 - 164 p.6.

54. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.119, 21 June 1904.

55. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.86, 19 May 1904.

56. F.O. 60:682. Enclosure in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.119, 21 June 1904.

there it passed to Sultānābād by June 7th.⁵⁷ A week later it was in Qumm, where it persisted until August,⁵⁸ and by the end of the third week in June cases had been observed in Tehran.⁵⁹

Mamaghānī had arrived on the outskirts of the capital in mid-May and such was his importance that the Shāh felt it advisable to meet him at the mosque of Shāh 'Abd al-ʿAzīm on May 13th.⁶⁰ The Shāh did not meet Mamaghānī for political reasons, indeed the mujtahid made few comments on such matters. When Āqā Najafī, the leading religious figure in Isfahān, appealed to Mamaghānī for support in his disputes with the Governor (Zill al-Sultān), Mamaghānī told Najafī that if he sold all his property and gave the proceeds to the poor then he would have little further trouble with the authorities.⁶¹ This attitude to personal possessions, and the contempt in which he held earthly dignities were, in Hardinge's view, the source of much of Mamaghānī's prestige.⁶² That prestige was obviously considerable for when Muzaffar al-Dīn spoke to Mamaghānī about his ill-health the mujtahid washed his hands and a grateful Shāh proceeded to drink the water in which they had been washed.⁶³

From Tehran cholera spread to the Caspian coast via Qazvīn, Lāhījān and Āmul,⁶⁴ in this case Mamaghānī and his followers cannot be blamed for they continued on their way to Mashhad. The group, now numbering some

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57. F.O. 60:685. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Telegraphic No.65, 7 June 1904.
 58. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.150, 16 August 1904.
 59. F.O. 60:685. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Telegraphic No.72, 26 June 1904.
 60. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.86, 19 May 1904.
 61. Ibid.
 62. Ibid.
 63. Ibid.
 64. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126, 17 July 1904.

1,200 people,⁶⁵ arrived at Sabzavār on June 10th, where the religious leader is reported to have instigated a riot against Armenian sellers of wine and 'araq.⁶⁶ Four days later the first members of the group arrived on the outskirts of Mashhad and within three weeks cholera had broken out in the city.⁶⁷ The daily death rate reached a maximum of some 300 to 400 by mid-August,⁶⁸ and deaths were still occurring in mid-September.⁶⁹ A total of some 8,000 people were reported to have died in Mashhad and its immediate environs.⁷⁰ The usual pattern of a large exodus from the city repeated itself and the disease was thereby diffused on an even wider scale.⁷¹ The Russian government endeavoured to enforce strict

65. F.O. 60:688. Meshed Diary, 18 June 1904.

66. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.124, 4 July 1904.

67. F.O. 60:685. **MINCHIN** to Hardinge, No.81, 30 July 1904.

68. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.146, 15 August 1904.

69. F.O. 60:685. Meshed Diary, 24 September 1904.

70. Mortality figures are given in Report on Khurasan, 1904-5, Accounts and Papers (1906), Volume CXXVII Paper Cd.2682-249, p.6. The population of the city itself had been estimated in 1899 at 80,000 (G. Lorini, op.cit., p.383) and at 70,000 in 1903 (War Office Report WO.33 333), see also footnote 119 below).

71. F.O. 60:683. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.173, 11 September 1904. The exodus of population did, however, bring a period of relative calm to a city which had previously been very turbulent. The causes of discontent were several. The outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war had inflicted severe economic hardship on many Persian merchants, for trade with Russia had come to a virtual standstill even before the anti-cholera quarantine had been imposed. The population was also affected because both paraffin and sugar - which had previously been imported from Russia - had become very scarce and expensive (F.O. 60:688 Meshed Diary, 18 June 1904). Locusts had done much damage to the grain harvest and hail had ruined the fruit crop (F.O. 60:688 Meshed Diary, 14 May 1904). Within the city a series of rowdy and drunken parties at a newly-opened Russian club had caused great scandal and resentment. Notices protesting about these events had appeared in the shrine of the Imām Riḏā (F.O. 60:688, Meshed Diary, 11 June 1904). The Russian Bank had recently opened an office in a building belonging to the shrine which had previously been used to house poor pilgrims, and this action was condemned by Mamaghānī; so too was the establishment of a Russian cemetery on land adjacent to a Muslim one. (F.O. 60:688, Meshed Diary, 18 June 1904). Some of the religious leaders had also protested against the introduction of electric lighting at the shrine and this innovation had led to violence by groups of students. (F.O. 60:688, Meshed Diary, 9 July.) There had also been a riot against the Jadīds (Jewish converts to Islam) in early July. (F.O. 60:688, Meshed Diary, 9 July 1904).

quarantine on the Khurāsān border, thereby causing further resentment among the Persians.⁷² The attempt availed little and cholera reached Merv and then spread to Tashkent and Samarqand during the late autumn and winter of 1904.⁷³

During the summer the population of Kirmān feared that the infection would reach their city both from Kāshān via Yazd, and from Mashhad.⁷⁴ It was in fact a group of travellers from the latter city who brought the disease into the province. This happened in mid-September when cholera broke out at Rāvar, some six stages north of Kirmān among a group of pilgrims returning from Khurāsān. The bedding of one of the deceased was washed in a water course from which drinking water was later extracted and the infection spread rapidly.⁷⁵ Fear of the epidemic had caused the Governor of Kirmān, Rukn al-Dawla, and most of his entourage to flee to the village of Husaynābād in the south in August;⁷⁶ but the disease was not confirmed in the city until late October.⁷⁷ The British Consul endeavoured to halt the sale of fruit and to get the streets cleaned, but as nearly all the officials had fled it was impossible to get any orders issued.⁷⁸

The disease affected Kirmān during Ramadān and the distribution of refreshments among those who attended the nightly rouza khwānīs aided the

72. F.O. 60:685. Meshed Diary, 20 August 1904.

73. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.7, 5 January 1905.

74. F.O. 248:820. Kerman Diary, 21 July 1904.

75. *Ibid.*, 2 September 1904.

76. *Ibid.*, 2 September 1904.

77. *Ibid.*, 30 October 1904.

78. *Ibid.*, 30 October and 1st November 1904.

spread of infection.⁷⁹ Sykes reported that cases of the disease were still occurring in early December and he estimated the total death toll for the city as being about 500.⁸⁰ He believed that had it not been for great efforts on the part of the staff of the Church Missionary Society (who had begun their activities in Kirmān three years previously) the number would have been much higher. As in other provinces there is no evidence which indicates the incidence of the disease or the level of mortality in the villages, but as in Kirmānshāh and Bushire the epidemic interrupted trade severely and there was little movement of goods in either direction on the Kirmān-Sīrjān-Bandar 'Abbās route from August until mid-December.⁸²

Meanwhile, Mamaghānī had completed his pilgrimage in Mashhad and had begun to retrace his steps. The Shāh did not meet him on his return to the capital (for reasons which will be described below), but while Mamaghānī was in Tehran his wife died of cholera.⁸³ By the time the group reached Kirmānshāh the earlier phase of the epidemic had passed and there had been no deaths reported for at least six weeks. In the wake of Mamaghānī's second passage, however, cholera returned to the city and the period September 16-26 nearly 40 deaths were recorded, but this second wave was much less virulent than had been the first.⁸⁴

Before turning to the effects of the epidemic, the description of its diffusion can be completed. The last major northern city to be affected was Tabrīz. Deaths began there in late September and reached a

79. Ibid., 4 November 1904.

80. Ibid., 15 December 1904.

81. Report on Kerman 1904-5, Accounts and Papers (1905), Volume XCI, Paper Cd.2236 - 118 p.7.

82. F.O. 248:842, Persian Gulf Diary, 14 January 1905.

83. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.146, 15 August 1904.

84. F.O. 60:683. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.189, 12 October 1904.

maximum of 300 per day by mid-October.⁸⁵ Thereafter the disease seems to have declined rapidly in intensity, but evidence from rural sources is practically non-existent and it is therefore impossible to offer any reliable guide to total mortality in Āzarbāyjān.

A similar judgment must be made about the effects of the epidemic in the Isfahān region. The disease entered that province from Qumm, via Kāshān, where it arrived during the third week in June.⁸⁶ Deaths in Isfahān itself were few compared with other urban centres which had been affected. About 500 inhabitants of the city were believed to have died during the short outbreak (out of a total population estimated at 80,000 to 100,000) and the British Consul believed that this relatively low level of mortality was because Isfahān drew the bulk of its drinking water from wells rather than from streams and rivers.⁸⁷ The efforts of Church Missionary Society personnel, and the fact that the Armenian community in Julfā paid great attention to keeping the streets there clean, also helped to reduce the seriousness of the disease. It was Preece's view, however, that mortality in the surrounding area had been much higher than in the city itself.⁸⁸ Again there is little specific information about the villages, but Preece reported that cholera had certainly caused deaths during August in the district of Burkhwār to the north and at Najafābād in the west.⁸⁹ The Bakhtiyārī country was still infected at the end of October,⁹⁰ and cholera was causing deaths in villages along the Isfahān-Yazd road as late as November.⁹¹

85. *Ibid.*, No.201, 9 November 1904.

86. F.O. 248:820. Preece to Hardinge, No.30, 12 July 1904

87. *Ibid.*, No.38, 24 August 1904 (population estimated based on E. Lerini, *La Persia Economica Contemporanea*, Rome 1900, p.383.

88. *Ibid.*, No.38, 24 August 1904.

89. *Ibid.*, No.41, 7 September 1904.

90. *Ibid.*, Isfahan Diary, 2 November 1904.

91. *Ibid.*, Isfahan Diary, 3 December 1904.

Isfahān and its environs were one of the last areas reached by the wave of infection which entered Persia via Kirmānshāh. For areas to the south cholera came by a different route and this is less easy to trace than the former. The immediate source of the infection was the same - 'Karbala' - and after the disease had moved to the north-east in December 1903 and January 1904 it began to travel south. After reaching the port of Basra⁹² (it was confirmed there in April) maritime trade quickly disseminated cholera throughout the Persian Gulf. Bahrayn was affected in early May and from there the disease spread among the pearling fleets. By mid-June cases had occurred in Masqat and at other ports on the 'Umānī coast.⁹⁴

Cholera was confirmed at Bushire in late May⁹⁵ and trade at that port was greatly reduced for over five months.⁹⁶ The disease spread northwards following the road to Shīrāz. It reached Burāzjān on June 8th and it was reported in Dālakī on June 17th. In Kāzirūn it had caused some 100 deaths by June 27th.⁹⁷ A quarantine post had been set up at Tang-i Turkhān (some 20 miles to the north of Kāzirūn) on June 18th, but it suffered from the defects of the camps which had been established elsewhere. The basic problem was that the disease had already passed through the area by the time the camp was in operation and it served therefore as a reservoir of further infection.⁹⁸

In order to try to protect Shīrāz a further quarantine post was set up on June 30th at Dasht-i Arjān, some 40 miles southwest of the city.

92. F.O. 248:818. Cox to Hardinge, No.73, 27 May 1904.

93. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.95, 25 May 1904.

94. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 18 June, 23 June and 27 July 1904.

95. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.95, 25 May 1904.

96. F.O. 248:819. Persian Gulf Diary, 24 September 1904.

97. F.O. 60:686. Grahame to Lansdowne, No.11, 19 July 1904.

98. Ibid.

This again failed to check the spread of the disease and on July 10th cases of cholera were reported on the outskirts of Shīrāz.⁹⁹ The beglarbegī of Fārs, Sālār al-Sultān, had tried to prevent people from washing themselves and their clothes in water courses to the south and west of the town, for much of that water later flowed into Shīrāz and was there drunk by the inhabitants. He wished to confine all washing to the area northeast of the city, for there the water flowed only on to fields and was not used for drinking.¹⁰⁰ These attempts, and those of the British Vice-Consul who urged that the city's streets should be cleaned, failed; and on July 12th the presence of the disease in Shīrāz was confirmed.¹⁰¹ The maximum daily death rate was in excess of 700.¹⁰²

As in other cases, the approach of the epidemic prompted an exodus by many of the inhabitants and this again helped to spread the disease to the surrounding villages. When some of those who had left Shīrāz returned to the city in August they brought the infection back with them and there was a smaller second outbreak of the disease during that month.¹⁰³ The official figure for death in Shīrāz was 3,300, but the British Consul, who got his information from the people responsible for washing the corpses before burial, reckoned that the true number of deaths exceeded 5,000.¹⁰⁴ (The population of the city had been estimated to be between 38,000 and 50,000 before the disease struck.)¹⁰⁵ From

99. Ibid.

100. F.O. 248:818. Shiraz Diary, 29 June 1904.

101. F.O. 60:686. Grahame to Lansdowne, No.11, 19 July 1904.

102. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.146, 15 August 1904.

103. F.O. 248:818. Shiraz Diary, 31 August 1904.

104. Ibid.

105. Ibid. Lower figure is from E. Lorini, op.cit., p.383, and refers to 1899, the higher one is Grahame's estimate.

Shīrāz cholera spread northwards and it was around the village of Qumisheh that the two waves of infection "met" in October 1904, but by then both had lost much of their former virulence.¹⁰⁶

The southwest of Persia was also badly affected but cholera was not reported along the Kārūn river until late June.¹⁰⁷ This is quite a long time after Basra had been infected and it is difficult to say by which route the disease was spread to this area. Shaykh Khaz'al had issued orders during the early summer that no boats from Muhammara were to visit Basra, but by then cholera was known in many other ports and there was no shortage of possible sources of infection.¹⁰⁸ The first fatal cases were reported at Muhammara on June 27th,¹⁰⁹ the following day there were deaths at Dizfūl,¹¹⁰ and on June 29th several inhabitants of Shūshtar succumbed to the disease.¹¹¹ Absence of troops and a shortage of funds prevented the Governor of the latter town from instituting any sort of quarantine measures.¹¹² By early August cholera was causing deaths in Ahwāz¹¹³ and from there it travelled along the Lynch-Bakhtiyārī road into the mountains.¹¹⁴ Malāmīr was also affected¹¹⁵ and deaths began to occur in Nāsirī by August 14th.¹¹⁶ There was a general exodus from that town and all trading activity soon ceased.¹¹⁷

106. F.O. 248:820. Preece to Hardinge, No.47, 5 October 1904.

107. F.O. 60:685. Ahwaz Diary, 9 July 1904.

108. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 17 June 1904.

109. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 27 June 1904.

110. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 28 June 1904.

111. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 29 June 1904.

112. F.O. 60:685. Ahwaz Diary, 9 July 1904.

113. F.O. 60:685. Ahwaz Diary, 15 August 1904.

114. Ibid. The Lynch-Bakhtiyārī road, which was named after the British company which constructed it and the tribal area through which it passed, was opened for traffic in December 1899. It ran from Nāsirī to Isfahān (see J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Omān and Central Arabia. Calcutta 1915, II, p.142.

115. F.O. 60:685. Ahwaz Diary, 15th August 1904.

116. F.O. 60:688. Ahwaz Diary, 30th August 1904.

117. Ibid.

The death toll again varied greatly from town to town. In Muhammara, it was put at 200 by July 22nd¹¹⁸ (out of an estimated population of 4,500-6,000).¹¹⁹ The British Consul also reported that the epidemic killed some 3,400 people in Dizfūl, but unlike his colleague in Shīrāz he does not say how these figures were derived.¹²⁰ The latter one seems quite high, but it is impossible to categorize for estimates of the population of Dizfūl vary between 16,000 and 28,000.¹²¹ In Shūshtar there seem to have been relatively fewer deaths,¹²² but the disease occurred during the summer and because of the heat at that season many of the inhabitants would probably not have been living in the town. As in almost all the other regions the Consul reported that the death rate in the villages and among the Banī Turuf tribe was believed to be high, but again it is impossible to make any estimate of total rural mortality.¹²³ The disease ceased to effect the population of Muhammara towards the end of July,¹²⁴ but it returned briefly and less severely in early November.¹²⁵ Cases were still being reported at Shūshtar and Nāsirī in mid-September.¹²⁶

118. F.O. 60:683. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.173, 11 September 1904.

119. Lower estimate is from E. Lorini, *op.cit.*, p.383 and refers to 1899. The higher figure is from a British War Office report, which was published in 1905, but which stated that the population figures are estimates made in 1903. See W.O.33.3333, Military Report on Persia compiled by the General Staff at the War Office, 1905.

120. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 30 July 1904.

121. The low figure is on this occasion that from the War Office report of 1905 (see Footnote No.119 above), the higher figure is from E. Lorini, *op.cit.*, p.383 and refers to an estimate made in 1899.

122. F.O. 60:686. McDouall to Hardinge, No.6, Commercial, 4 August 1904.

123. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 30 July 1904.

124. F.O. 248:818. Persian Gulf Diary, 6 August 1904.

125. F.O. 248:819. Persian Gulf Diary, 19 November 1904.

126. F.O. 248:819. Arabistan Diary, 22 November 1904.

It was in the capital itself that the effects of the epidemic can be most clearly seen. Deaths began in late June and one of the first people to suffer was Dr. Vaume the Turkish representative on the Tehran Sanitary Council, who had earlier tried to halt the spread of the disease at Kangāvar.¹²⁷ The daily mortality rate quickly reached 200-300,¹²⁸ and the American missionaries, who were in almost constant contact with many of those afflicted by the disease, reckoned that some 13,000 to 14,000 people died in the city during the epidemic.¹²⁹ (Contemporary estimates for the population of Tehran varied between 230,000 and 280,000.)¹³⁰

What were the reactions of the Persians to this epidemic? No single answer can be given to this question but one common, indeed almost instinctive, reaction was that of fear. Panic and flight followed. In the absence of proved methods of prevention, or of recognized and effective means of limiting the spread of the disease, such responses are understandable; but at the same time they show the degree to which self-interest rather than a sense of responsibility was the overriding concern of the governing classes. The example was set by the Shāh himself. When cholera was first observed in Tehran Court officials endeavoured to keep the news from Muzaffar al-Dīn, but his medical attendants insisted that the Shāh's diet should be changed and royal suspicion was aroused by the fact that only bland foods were being served to him. He learned that the disease was present in the vicinity and insisted on leaving the Niarvaran Palace immediately. This decision placed his European doctors in a dilemma - to go to the mountains could be dangerous as the Shāh had a

127. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126, 17 July 1904.

128. *Ibid.*

129. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.18, 31 January 1905.

130. The lower figure is from E. Lorini, *op.cit.*, p.383. The higher figure is from the War Office Report in W.O. 33.3333 (see Footnote 119 above).

weak heart, but to go down to the plains would mean going to the very area where cholera was rampant. The Qur'ān was consulted and the decision was made to go to Tāliqān in the mountains north of Tehran by way of Karaj.¹³¹

The Shāh set out accompanied by some 2,000 servants and retainers. The conditions in the first night's camp were insanitary and the existence of cholera within the caravan of followers was confirmed by one of the royal physicians, Dr. Schneider, before dawn. Schneider consulted his colleague Dr. Lindley and they both told the Grand Vazīr that they could not accept responsibility for the Shāh's health unless he left the camp immediately. The Minister had little desire to alarm the Shāh by telling him this news, but the unpleasant task never had to be performed as Muzaffar al-Dīn had learned of the disease from another but unknown source. His reaction was to panic. He sent for Schneider and Lindley and told them at a private audience that he had decided to abandon the camp and that he wished his doctors to accompany him on a rapid journey by motor car to the port of Enzeli and from there to Europe. This lack of responsibility appalled the two doctors and they told the Shāh that if he was to leave in such a sudden way then alarming rumours would quickly spread across the country and his return to Persia as ruler could not be guaranteed. After much argument the Shāh was prevailed upon to abandon this idea, and to return instead, with a much smaller following, to the Niarvaran Palace.¹³² There he remained in virtual seclusion for nearly two months - a situation which resulted in almost all government

131. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126, 17 July 1904. Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh had likewise sought refuge in the hills during the 1892 epidemic, see G. Bell, *op.cit.*, p.65.

132. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126, 17 July 1904.

business coming to a complete standstill.¹³³ The enforced rest did, however, help Muzaffar al-Dīn's general state of health to recover a little.¹³⁴

Meanwhile, the flight of officials from Tehran had made the implementation of effective preventative measures even more difficult. Most of the European-trained Persian doctors joined the exodus from the city. The one who did not was not to survive for very long as he mistook carbolic acid for brandy, with fatal results.¹³⁵ In the absence of Persian doctors trained in western methods, the burden of health care fell upon the Europeans. They certainly acted with the best of intentions but their actions were to arouse much suspicion and resentment. In particular Naus took powers over the supervision of burials and the provision of water supplies, actions which caused considerable offence to pious Muslims.¹³⁶ This was one of the most important results of the epidemic -- a heightened awareness among many Persians of the extent to which the Christian Europeans had gained an unwelcome position of authority.

This effect was certainly not confined to Tehran, in the southern ports too it was very noticeable. There measures to limit the effects of cholera followed earlier actions designed to prevent the spread of plague.¹³⁷

133. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.150, 16 August 1904.

134. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.162, 1 October 1904.

135. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126, 17 July 1904.

136. Ibid.

137. On the question of plague prevention in the Persian Gulf and the political complications surrounding that issue, see C. Elgood, *op.cit.*, Chapter XVIII, and J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, Oman and Central Arabia, Calcutta 1915, I, Appendix M, Epidemics and Sanitary Organisation in the Persian Gulf Region.

The latest epidemic of that disease had begun in the early summer of 1899. The imposition of quarantine at Bushire was again the first, and most important, source of resentment. Blame was laid on those who were administering the restrictions - British officials. Complaints were many and they involved charges that Christian Europeans were not held in quarantine while pious Muslims were being prevented from making pilgrimages. This was seen as an attempt by the Christians to suppress Islam.¹³⁸ Similar emotions gave credulity to rumours which said that a machine installed to disinfect the clothes and baggage of passengers landing at Bushire had, as its real purpose, the boiling alive of Muslim children.¹³⁹

Against this background of fresh suspicion the activities of British officials in trying to impose measures of hygiene in the spring and summer of 1904, could not but re-awaken resentment. In other towns too there is evidence that it was easy to lay the blame for the epidemic at the door of the Europeans. In Isfahān the influential religious leader, Āqā Najafī, said on several occasions that the cholera had come as a punishment from God because some Muslims had sent their children to the schools run by Christian missionaries.¹⁴⁰ In Mashhad it was said

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138. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.66, 23 June 1899. The fact that a British gunboat had arrived at Bushire to enforce the quarantine arrangements (F.O. 60:609, Durand to Salisbury, No.87, 24 August 1899) and that three of the religious leaders who had led the agitation against the imposition of these regulations were later deported (F.O. 60:609, Durand to Salisbury, No.125, 20 December 1899) had greatly increased the intensity of anti-European feeling in Bushire in 1899.
139. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.91, 16 September 1899. On the prevalence of rumours and the strength of anti-European feeling during the 1892 epidemic, see G. Bell, *op.cit.*, p.65.
140. F.O. 248:820. Preece to Hardinge, No.41, 7 September 1904. See Chapter VII of this thesis.

that the outbreak of the disease was divine retribution on the Muslims for allowing Europeans to take charge of the customs and postal systems.¹⁴¹ So although the 1904 epidemic may not have caused anger against and discontent with the bureaucracy and the rule of the Shāh, it certainly sharpened the sense of resentment and suspicion about the position occupied by Europeans in Persia.

The cholera epidemic, also had other important indirect effects, one of the most noticeable being a further decline in internal security. The exodus of officials - something which happened in almost every town - included the military, and even in the formerly reliable Cossack Brigade discipline began to fail and troops deserted.¹⁴² Robberies increased in number, both within towns and along the roads. This in turn led to a further reduction in trade and commerce; the result was a decline in customs revenue. One incident occurred in Burāzjān. Some men pretended to have caught cholera and this caused a great flight of people from their houses. Once the population had left, they proceeded to steal grain from the stores - and grain was a very valuable commodity in that part of southern Persia after a drought which had persisted for some three years.¹⁴³ As well as leading to greater insecurity, the desertion of troops also meant that it was much more difficult to take effective action to impose measures which might have limited the spreading of the disease.

141. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.120, 22 June 1904.
In April 1904 members of the religious classes in Mashhad had said that a recent and very damaging hail storm was a sign of Divine anger at the presence of so many foreigners in the city. (F.O. 60:688. Meshed Diary, 21 April 1904.)

142. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.134, 20 July 1904.

143. F.O. 60:683. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.173, 11 September 1904.

Another source of resentment followed in the aftermath of the epidemic. The large number of sudden deaths meant that there were many instances in which property had to be divided and its ownership transferred. This could only be done through the religious classes and Hardinge reported several complaints of extortion by those officials.¹⁴⁴ In this respect the cholera epidemic gave further grounds for complaint against injustice.

In conclusion therefore, it can be seen that the epidemic of cholera in Persia in 1904 had several important effects. Many of these were indirect in that the disease was met with fear and resignation rather than with anger and desperation. The epidemic did not cause people to blame the Shāh, nor to seek his overthrow, but it did halt trade, reduce customs revenue, and lead to greater insecurity in both towns and along trading routes. The economic effects of the epidemic often exacerbated an already bad situation - drought had already produced famine - conditions in the west and in parts of southern Persia; the cholera made things worse.

In the north the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war had already begun to reduce trade between Persia and her northern neighbour. The imposition of quarantine restrictions by the St. Petersburg government served to hasten this decline. Adverse weather conditions added to the sequence of causes by ruining the silk and rice crops in the Caspian provinces during the same year.¹⁴⁵ In these respects, therefore, cholera had a cumulative and supplementary effect on the economic hardships already being suffered in many parts of Persia.

144. F.O. 60:682. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.150, 16 August 1904.

145. Ibid.

In political terms too the effects were indirect but nevertheless important, for in endeavouring to combat the disease the Europeans took actions which called attention to their growing predominance. Though they acted with the best of intentions, and doubtless reduced the mortality of the disease, they endeavoured to introduce restrictions over the free movement of Muslims which were seen by the pious as an attempt to suppress Islam. Similarly efforts to supervise water supplies and to change the place and manner in which corpses were washed and buried, aroused deep suspicion among the devout about the motives of those seeking to impose such measures. There was little understanding of what the Belgians in Tehran and Kirmānshāh, the British in the south, and the Russians in the north were trying to achieve. In such conditions of ignorance seemingly grotesque rumours could circulate and the assumption was quickly - and easily - made that the motives of the Europeans centred upon the destruction of Islam.

The cholera epidemic caused the Europeans to take a more active role in Persia - and to do so in areas of human activity which were very sensitive - because of this the outbreak of disease did affect the attitude of some of the population to the government. For if Europeans could achieve such positions, and could endeavour to alter usages which the pious believed to be important in the practice of right religion, then the rulers were failing in their essential task of protecting Islam and its adherents. It was Hardinge's opinion, expressed in the aftermath of the epidemic, that cholera had been the only factor which

had prevented the outbreak of active unrest in Persia in 1904.¹⁴⁶

While agreeing with this view, it is necessary to add that when the unrest did occur the epidemic had contributed, albeit indirectly, to the causes of resentment and disquiet.

146. F.O. 60:683. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.173, 11 September 1904. The British Consul in Isfahān also indicated that the cholera epidemic had restricted the activities of various small groups which had been formed "to educate people" in Isfahān, Tehran, Shīrāz and Yazd; but he thought that these committees would become active again if the disease did not return to Persia in 1905. (F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, Confidential No.16, 15 March 1905.)

CHAPTER VI
AFFAIRS IN FĀRS

"The miseries which the inhabitants of Sheeraz have individually suffered, render them callous to the afflictions of their neighbours. The only principle of their life is to avoid giving offence, and to afford even a handle for persecution."

E. Scott Waring, A Tour to Sheeraz
by the Route of Kazroon and Feerozabad,
London 1807, p.35.

One of the most striking features in the history of the province of Fārs during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn is the lack of continuity in its government; between 1896 and the end of 1906 there were no less than ten changes in the post of Governor-General.¹ The previous twenty year period (from August 1876) had seen only five transfers of office and one of those had been for less than twelve months.² During those two decades the province had been ruled for nearly five years by Muṣṭamid al-Dawla (from the autumn of 1876 to the spring of 1881), and for the following six years it was under the control of Zill al-Sultān. At that time Zill al-Sultān held sway over much of southern Persia, exercising authority from Isfahān. When he gained control of Fārs he appointed one of his sons, Jalāl al-Dawla, as his representative in Shīrāz; but as he was a minor, effective power was in the hands of the

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1. This was far from setting a record even for Muzaffar al-Dīn's reign. The post of Governor of the Gulf Ports was held by nine different men between March 1897 and September 1898. See J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Omān and Central Arabia, Calcutta 1915, I Part 2, p.2130.
 2. J.G. Lorimer, op.cit., I Part 2, pp.2055-57.

experienced official Fath 'Alī Khān (also known as Sāhib Dīvān), who was sent to accompany the young boy. During the tenure of both Muṭamid al-Dawla and Zill al-Sultān the province was firmly controlled and security was good.⁴ This continued to be the case under the governor-

3. Any study of affairs in Fārs during the Qājār period must pay close attention to the members of the wealthy and very influential Hāshimiyya family of which Fath 'Alī Khān was a member. The immediate origins of the family's influence stemmed from the fact that one of the members was Hājji Ibrāhīm Khān, the Kalāntar of Shīrāz appointed by Luṭf 'Alī Khān Zand who changed sides and who handed the city over to Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār. (See History of Persia under Qājār Rule: translated from the Persian of Hasan-e Fasā'i's Fārsnāma-ye Nāseri by H. Busse, New York 1972, pp.40-42.) Hājji Ibrāhīm later became beglarbegī of Fārs and finally chief minister to Āqā Muḥammad Khān Qājār. He also held this post under the second Qājār ruler Fath 'Alī Shāh. Hājji Ibrāhīm's rapid rise to power and his nepotism aroused much jealousy and royal suspicions of him resulted in his blinding and death in 1801. Many of his relatives were seized at the same time, and few escaped imprisonment, mutilation or death. One who did survive was Hājji Ibrāhīm's fourth son, Hājji Mīrzā 'Alī Akbar Khān, who was born in 1789. The family's fortunes gradually revived and Hājji Mīrzā 'Alī Akbar Khān became Kalāntar of Shīrāz in 1811. In 1829 he received the title of Qavām al-Mulk. He had several sons, one of whom was Fath 'Alī Khān, the official who accompanied Jalāl al-Dawla to Fārs in 1881. One of Hājji Mīrzā 'Alī Akbar Khān's other sons, 'Alī Muḥammad Khān, received the title Qavām al-Mulk on his father's death in 1865. In turn his only son, Muḥammad Riżā Khān received the title in 1885. He is the Qavām al-Mulk who will be referred to in the rest of this chapter. There was considerable rivalry between Fath 'Alī Khān and his brother 'Alī Muḥammad Khān. (For further genealogical details see Biographical Notices of Persian Statesmen and Notables, August 1905, by G.P. Churchill, Calcutta 1906; entry number 113 Hāshimīa family of Shīrāz, pp.22-24. Some of the information on which Churchill based this compilation is to be found in F.O. 60:595.)
4. For contrasting accounts of the popularity of Muṭamid al-Dawla's period as Governor, see H. Busse, op.cit., pp.386-415, and E.G. Browne, A Year Amongst the Persians, London 1959, pp.117.18.

ship of Ihtishām al-Dawla, the son of Mutamid al-Dawla, who was in office from 1887 to 1892.⁵ Some decline then seems to have occurred for Rukn al-Dawla, who was appointed Governor-General in February 1892, came into dispute with Qavām al-Mulk; and after a few months had to retire from the city.⁶ The next Governor, Nizām al-Saltāna held office until 1894; when Rukn al-Dawla was re-appointed to the post. He was confirmed in office again in March 1896.⁷

When Muzaffar al-Dīn came to the throne in May 1896 many posts changed hands and the Governor-Generalship of Fārs passed to Nāzīm al-Dawla who arrived in Shīrāz in October 1896. Rukn al-Dawla had left his post in July and during the summer there was no Governor in residence. Nāzīm al-Dawla was unable to maintain security and within six months there was great disorder throughout the province.⁸

In the first months of his reign Muzaffar al-Dīn had stopped the practice of selling offices, but by early 1897 his need of money was such that the custom was revived.⁹ The change which took place in the Governor-Generalship of Fārs, however, was due to intrigues at the Court rather than to the payment of money. The new Governor-General was Farman Farmā, who had played a leading part in the intrigues which had lain behind the overthrow of Amīn al-Sultān in November 1896.¹⁰ Farman Farmā had subsequently gained the post which he coveted, that of Minister of War.¹¹ It was not long, however, before he had antagonised

5. J.G. Lorimer, *op.cit.*, I part 2, p.2057.

6. J.G. Lorimer, *op.cit.*, I part 2, p.2057.

7. J.G. Lorimer, *op.cit.*, I part 2, p.2128.

8. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.141, 24 October 1897.

9. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.141, 24 October 1897.

10. G.P. Churchill, *op.cit.*, pp.19-20.

11. F.O. 60:593. Durand to Salisbury, No.81, 25 November 1896.

the Russian government by reducing the effective strength of the Cossack Brigade in Tehran.¹² After further intrigues and reports of massive bribery and a failure to pay the army, Farman Farmā was forced to resign in September 1897.¹³ He was offered the Governorship of Māzandarān, but because he wished to remain near the Shāh he refused this post. In October, however, for reasons which are not clear, he accepted the Governor-Generalship of Fārs.¹⁴ By this time Nāẓim al-Dawla had been recalled and had already left Shīrāz. The province was once more without a Governor and the result was an increase in lawlessness and insecurity on the roads.¹⁵

Farman Farmā remained in office for some fifteen months. According to Durand his rule was firm and resolute and the province was relatively quiet. One of the reasons for this was that he established good relations with Qavām al-Mulk and the latter used his great local influence to support the Governor-General.¹⁶ As will be seen later, the nature of relations between this influential local magnate and the Governor-General was to be a factor of considerable importance in the politics of the province. Durand also noted that both Nāẓim al-Dawla and Farman Farmā - in common with the Governors of Āzarbāyjān, Khurāsān, Kirmān and Arabistān - had failed to send much revenue to the capital; though taxes were still being levied in those provinces.¹⁷

12. For Russian evidence of this see F. Kazemzadeh, Russia and Britain in Persia, 1864-1914: a Study in Imperialism, New Haven 1968, p.304.

13. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.121, 12 September 1897.

14. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.141, 24 October 1897.

15. F.O. 60:601. Hardinge to Salisbury, No.141, 24 October 1897.

16. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.17, 16 February 1899.

17. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.31, 9 March 1899. This failure to remit revenues was a very serious matter for these provinces were among the most important in Persia. In 1891 they had had the following rank on the list of revenue payments from all provinces: Āzarbāyjān 1st, Fārs 2nd, Khurāsān 3rd, Kirmān 7th and Arabistān 9th. See G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, London 1892, II, p.480.

Farman Farmā fell from office in February 1899 and he was ordered to go abroad. His replacement was Nizām al-Mulk who had previously been Governor of Tehran.¹⁸ He was somewhat apprehensive about accepting this new posting and he took with him a personal escort of men from the Cossack Brigade.¹⁹ His term of office lasted approximately twelve months and security in the province and in Shīrāz seems to have been quite good. The only major disturbance occurred in the late autumn of 1899 when Christian missionaries in Shīrāz aroused considerable resentment by distributing religious tracts.²⁰

The next Governor, Mu'ayyid al-Dawla was appointed in March 1900.²¹ He soon had to face opposition by local merchants to the introduction of new customs regulations which called for the imposition of a uniform five per cent tariff on imports; and which were due to come into effect in July. The opposition was not merely because the new dues were higher than the previous ones paid by Persian merchants; but also because they were to be collected by foreign officials: for control of the Customs administration at Bushire had been handed to Belgian agents in March.²² The first Director-General of Customs for the Gulf Ports was H. Simais, and he quickly aroused resentment by refusing to give to Persian merchants more favourable treatment than that which he gave to foreign ones.²³ The Shīrāz merchants gained some support from the religious classes in the city, who sent telegrams to their colleagues in Isfahān asking for assistance in the struggle against the new

18. F.O. 60:608. Durand to Salisbury, No.17, 16 February 1899.

19. F.O. 60:610. Durand to Salisbury, Telegraphic No.50, 7 August 1899.

20. F.O. 60:617. Durand to Salisbury, No.4, 18 January 1900.

21. F.O. 60:617. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.21, 4 April 1900.

22. See A. Destrée, Les Fonctionnaires Belges au Service de la Perse, 1898-1915, Tehran-Liège 1976, p.57.

23. F.O. 60:617. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.16, 27 March 1900.

regulations.²⁴ Qayām al-Mulk took the opportunity to support the protest in the hope that he would thereby secure the recall of the Governor-General, with whom his relations were very poor.²⁵

At this time, however, not all groups in Shīrāz were inclined to give their support to any movement which had the backing of Qayām al-Mulk; for one of his relatives had apparently been responsible for instigating the murder of a sayyid during Muḥarram (May 1900). A group of twenty-eight sayyids had so little confidence in the Governor-General that they sent a personal message to Queen Victoria in July, asking her to bring their complaints to the notice of Muzaḥḥar al-Dīn so that justice might be done.²⁶

The first protest against the new customs regulations was not as widespread as Durand had at first feared, and the reason given for this was that the population was relatively content; for harvests had been good and bread was cheap and plentiful.²⁷ The merchants, however, continued their agitation and trade between Bushire and Shīrāz was brought to a virtual halt for most of July and August. Simais visited Shīrāz during August 1900 and was able to make a temporary arrangement whereby the rate of duty would be reduced, and the level of rāhdārī (road tax) was fixed at a lower level than had previously been levied.²⁸

Although the religious classes in Shīrāz had played relatively little part in the protests against the new customs regulations, they were active in two other agitations which disturbed the city in the

24. F.O. 60:618. Spring-Rice to Salisbury, No.83, 26 July 1900. The ‘ulamā’ in Isfahān in turn sent telegrams to their colleagues in Mashhad.

25. F.O. 60:618. Spring-Rice to Salisbury, No.87, 23 August 1900.

26. The original petition together with other documents concerning this case can be found in F.O. 60:623. The petitioners appear to have believed that the Shāh's tour to Europe would include a visit to London.

27. F.O. 60:618. Spring-Rice to Salisbury, No.87, 23 August 1900.

28. F.O. 60:618. Spring-Rice to Salisbury, No.112, 18 October 1900.

latter half of 1900. These were protests against Amīn al-Sultān for signing the loan agreement with Russia and the wastage of its proceeds;²⁹ and a more general objection to growing Russian influence in Persia.³⁰ It was reported that the religious classes in Isfahān and Shīrāz had agreed that they would support a public subscription to pay off the Russian loan; but that they would do so only if Amīn al-Sultān was dismissed from office.³¹ Sykes, who was making a tour through Fārs at this time, noted that many Persians believed that it was Russia who had really been put in control of the Customs, and that the Belgians acted only as their agents. He also observed that many people saw the appointment of more Russian consular officials as a further sign of Persia's subservience to her northern neighbour.³²

By the end of the year the difficulties facing the Governor-General were increasing; for as well as having to deal with the protests; mentioned above there was another local, but troublesome, issue - an acute shortage of small copper coinage. This was causing considerable hardship to the poorer classes.³³ Disturbances and robberies were growing in number, but good harvests helped to keep the price of bread low.³⁴

29. F.O. 60:168. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.102, 28 September 1900.

30. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.107, 17 October 1900.

31. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.102, 28 September 1900.

32. F.O. 60:641. Sykes to Lansdowne, no number, 12 January 1901.

A Russian Consulate-General had been established at Isfahān in 1897 and in February 1900 a Vice-Consulate was opened in Sīstān. There were discussions during 1900 for the opening of other Russian Consulates in the south of Persia. A Consulate-General was established in Bushire in 1901 and Consular Agencies were opened at Ahvāz in December 1902 and Bandar Abbās in January 1904. See J.G. Lorimer, *op.cit.*, pp.2121-2, 2124, and 2690-2.

33. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.131, 13 December 1900.

34. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.131, 13 December 1900.

During the early months of 1901 there was continued insecurity along the roads and the Bahārlū tribe was raiding its neighbours.³⁵ In January there was a serious incident on the Bushire-Shīrāz road, near Dālakī, in which several people were killed. This interrupted trade for some time.³⁶ The collection of rāhdārī was proving unpopular, for apparently amounts in excess of those agreed in the summer of 1900 were being collected. The Governor-General blamed Qavām al-Mulk for this on the grounds that the tax was being collected outside the city and the men who were levying it were under Qavām al-Mulk's influence.³⁷ In March 1901 a law was introduced which abolished several internal taxes on trade, the level of revenue, however, was to be maintained by imposing the full five per cent import duty which was supposed to have come into operation in July 1900.³⁸ (The efficacy of this new law and of other later changes will be discussed at another point in this chapter.)

A new Governor-General, Shūʿāʿ al-Saltāna the Shāh's second son, was appointed in March 1901.³⁹ He was a great favourite of his father and this fact was to have serious repercussions later. He had acted as regent while Muzaffar al-Dīn was in Europe in 1900;⁴⁰ but Hardinge thought that his poor state of health and his youth (he was then 20 years old), would mean that he was unlikely to be an effective governor of this important southern province.⁴¹

35. F.O. 60:636. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.11, 9 January 1901.

36. F.O. 60:636. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.23, 7 February 1901.

37. F.O. 60:636. Spring Rice to Lansdowne, No.11, 9 January 1901.

38. There is a copy of the law in F.O. 60:641.

39. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.31 Confidential, 27 February 1901.

40. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.79 Secret, 25 July 1900.

41. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.31 Confidential, 27 February 1901.

When Shu'ā'al-Saltana passed through Isfahān en route to his new appointment he was reported to have been accompanied by an entourage of some 6,000 people.⁴² On his arrival in Fārs the new Governor-General rapidly came into conflict with Qavām al-Mulk. Details are provided in a memorandum of complaint sent later to Amīn al-Sultān from some of the inhabitants of Shīrāz who supported Qavām al-Mulk.⁴³ According to that report one of Qavām al-Mulk's sons, Intizām al-Mamālik met the new Governor-General some six stages north of Shīrāz and there offered him presents of cash, horses, and other goods to the value of over thirteen thousand tūmāns. Shu'ā'al-Saltana was apparently most displeased with this, and according to the memorandum he said, "This is not a present worthy of me. I have written the Kawam's name in my book for a hundred thousand tumans. Go back and prepare this sum for the day of my arrival at Shīrāz". The new Governor-General also demanded that Qavām al-Mulk should take the responsibility of expelling some of the leading religious figures from Shīrāz before he arrived, and that other presents of silver maces should also be prepared. The report goes on to say that when the nobles, notables and members of the 'ulamā' of Shīrāz heard this news they swore an oath on the Qur'ān to support Qavām al-Mulk and to place themselves under British protection if Shu'ā'al-Saltana proved to be oppressive.

When the new Governor-General arrived in Shīrāz Qavām al-Mulk sent different presents to him, but these too were not regarded as sufficient. At the first audience between the two men Shu'ā'al-Saltana threatened to have Qavām al-Mulk seized and imprisoned. The latter, however, had

42. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, no number, 30 March 1901.

43. F.O. 60:636. Enclosure No.1 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78
Confidential, 20 May 1901.

taken the precaution of bringing some fifteen hundred of his armed followers into the city; and they caused a great commotion outside the Governor's house. During this uproar Qavām al-Mulk was able to make his escape and seek refuge in the Shāh Chirāgh Mosque. The town was soon in chaos and the bazaars were quickly closed. Some of Shu'ā' al-Saltana's men were beaten and abused by the population and the tumult lasted for several days. Shīrāz became peaceful again only when Qavām al-Mulk obeyed a summons from the Shāh to proceed to Tehran - but he was careful to take a large armed escort with him⁴⁴

Hardinge viewed the above report with some caution, as it came from supporters of Qavām al-Mulk; but he acknowledged that there had been very serious unrest in Shīrāz. The situation was also exacerbated by the belief that was being attached to widespread rumours that the British government would demand the recall of Shu'ā' al-Saltana; and would support Qavām al-Mulk, by sending a naval force to Bushire if necessary. Hardinge tried to counter the effects of these rumours by asking the British Political Resident in Bushire, who was about to go to Shīrāz for the summer, to take particular pains to establish good relations with the new Governor-General; and to assure him that Britain regarded him as the legitimate representative of the Shāh's authority in Fārs.⁴⁵ Hardinge believed that Qavām al-Mulk would get little support from his former ally, Amīn al-Sultān, in Tehran even though the latter knew that Shu'ā' al-Saltana was both rapacious and reckless.⁴⁶ The British Minister also reported that the new Governor-General was being very hard on the merchants and on the wealthy; for he, like other officials in the

44. F.O. 60:636. Enclosure No.1 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78 Confidential, 20 May 1901.

45. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78 Confidential, 20 May 1901.

46. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78 Confidential, 20 May 1901.

provinces, was aware that Muzaffar al-Dīn's health was precarious, and that appointments were therefore even less secure than usual.⁴⁷

Hardinge's earlier fears that Shu'ā'al-Saltāna's somewhat delicate health might inhibit vigorous action were proved to be false. The new Governor-General soon set about collecting taxes, sometimes at twice the levels which had previously been imposed, and he sent armed men to recover arrears of taxation from Dashistān.⁴⁸ In May 1901 he took firm measures against three religious leaders who were advocating the non-payment of taxes.⁴⁹ Followers of Qavām al-Mulk were made to pay heavy fines,⁵⁰ and so too were other wealthy individuals.⁵¹ During the summer the deaths occurred of two important religious figures in Shīrāz, and this temporarily weakened the opposition to Shu'ā'al-Saltāna.⁵² Some reforms were introduced concerning the cleaning and lighting of the streets; but the Governor-General's violent and impulsive style of administration was widely resented.⁵³ Storms in August and September did much damage to local crops, and prices of grain and bread began to rise.⁵⁴ By late October there was much agitation because of the shortage of grain, and the Governor-General began to force those who held stocks to sell them to him so that he could corner the market.⁵⁵ During December Shu'ā'al-Saltāna was reported to have purchased some

47. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78 Confidential, 20 May 1901.

48. F.O. 60:651. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.5, 8 January 1902.

49. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.90 Confidential, 11 June 1901.

50. F.O. 60:636. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.102, 27 June 1901.

51. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.117, 23 July 1901.

52. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.142, 19 September 1901, and No.610, 17 October 1901. One of those who died was Sayyid 'Alī Akbar, see also footnote 175 to this chapter.

53. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.142, 19 September 1901.

54. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.160, 17 October 1901.

55. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.177, 14 November 1901.

twenty thousand kharvārs of grain at seven tūmāns each; later he sold them at fourteen tūmāns per kharvār.⁵⁶ In the late autumn and during the winter, clandestine notices began to appear condemning the administration of Shu'ā'al-Saltāna and threatening a general uprising.⁵⁷ Telegrams of complaint were sent from religious leaders in Shīrāz to the Shāh and to the British Legation in Tehran in December 1901.

Meanwhile in Tehran Qavām al-Mulk had been offered, and had refused, the lucrative but distant post of Mutavallī of the Shrine at Mashhad. He engaged in intrigues with Amīn al-Sultān and Sipahsālār to try to get Shu'ā'al-Saltāna recalled.⁵⁹ Qavām al-Mulk told Hardinge that he was most distrustful of the Shāh's son, and that he would be reluctant to return to Fārs while he remained in office. It was Qavām al-Mulk's hope that Shu'ā'al-Saltāna would be transferred to another appointment, and the way would then be free for him to return to Shīrāz.⁶⁰

In January 1902 there were rumours that Shu'ā'al-Saltāna would be called to Tehran again to act as regent during the Shāh's proposed European tour, and although no such decision was made Qavām al-Mulk decided to return to Shīrāz in February.⁶¹ Shortly after his return, Qavām al-Mulk was able to rally his followers against the Governor-General, and support was also received from the merchants and from some members of the religious classes. Shu'ā'al-Saltāna in turn endeavoured to win support in Shīrāz by releasing some of the flour which he had been hoarding.⁶²

56. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.5, 8 January 1902.

57. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.21, 5 February 1902.

58. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.21, 5 February 1902.

59. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.105 Confidential, 4 July 1901.

60. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.105 Confidential, 4 July 1901.

61. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40, 4 March 1902.

62. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.58, 2 April 1902.

It would be wrong, however, to regard events in Fārs as the only source of discontent. Members of the religious classes certainly paid attention to wider events, and in particular to the negotiations which were taking place in Tehran in the early months of 1902 for a new loan from Russia. The idea of an internal loan was again revived, and it received much support from the religious classes provided that they would be permitted to exercise control over the way in which the money was spent.⁶³ Some of the ‘ulama in Shīrāz were in contact with their colleagues in Isfahān and in Tehran about this matter. The aspect of the loan which caused greatest concern in the south was the belief that the customs revenue of the Gulf ports might be used as security for the loan.⁶⁴

The rivalry between Shu‘ā‘al-Saltāna and Qavām al-Mulk led to demonstrations in early March; for nearly a week Shīrāz was in turmoil as rival mobs terrorised the city. Shu‘ā‘al-Saltāna remained within his palace while Qavām al-Mulk and his chief supporters directed their followers from the safety of various mosques. The Governor-General's mob was apparently the stronger of the two and it wrecked the Persian government's telegraph office. The Indo-European telegraph office was also threatened and the Manager of that establishment urged Hardinge to seek support in Tehran for Shu‘ā‘al-Saltāna. The British Minister agreed that this was the best policy; for he feared that if the Governor-General was driven out then other men would be reluctant to accept the post, and the chances of establishing firm government and good order in Fārs would become even more remote. Shu‘ā‘al-Saltāna tried

63. F.O. 60:650. Enclosure No.1 in Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.23 Secret, 14 February 1902.

64. F.O. 60:637. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.105 Confidential, 4 July 1901.

to restore law and order by using troops to patrol the streets; but the city became quiet only when both he and Qavām al-Mulk obeyed the Shāh's urgent summons to go to Tehran.⁶⁵

When news of the riots reached the capital there were rumours that Farmān Farmā would be pardoned by the Shāh and allowed to return to Persia, so that he could resume office in Fārs.⁶⁶ Some of the reported intrigues at this time were indeed complex. After his exile in the spring of 1899 Farmān Farmā had visited Karbalā' and he had then gone to Egypt. His sister, who was a wife of the Shāh, had tried to get him pardoned; but it was not until 1903 that she succeeded in this.⁶⁷ In the spring of 1902, however, it was widely believed that Amīn al-Sultān also was favouring a pardon because he feared that Farmān Farmā would otherwise return to Karbalā' and there incite even more opposition to the loans from Russia. At the same time it was believed by some Persians that Amīn al-Sultān had plotted with Qavām al-Mulk to have riots break out in Shīrāz, and that he provided money for this purpose. His aim was supposed to be that of getting the Shāh to recall Shu'ā'al-Saltāna so that 'Ayn al-Dawla, a great rival of Amīn al-Sultān, would be appointed to that distant and troublesome post. Support was also given to this interpretation by those who agreed that 'Ayn al-Dawla feared being sent to Shīrāz, and therefore he too had supported the Shāh's wife in her pleas for her brother to be allowed to return to Persia; for then he, 'Ayn al-Dawla, would have an alternative

65. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.45, 19 March 1902.

66. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.49, 28 March 1902.

67. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.13, 22 January 1903.

candidate to suggest to the Shāh for the post in Fārs.⁶⁸ Such webs of rumour were by no means uncommon in Tehran; and even though they may not all have been true, they certainly indicate how deep were the suspicions between officials, and how much time they felt they had to devote to the preservation of their personal interests, and to the prevention of their being sent to remote and turbulent areas.

The new Governor-General of Fārs, however, was neither Farmān Farmā, nor Ayn al-Dawla, but Āsaf al-Dawla, who, according to Hardinge, was a very rapacious official.⁶⁹ The British Minister was in Isfahān when Āsaf al-Dawla passed through that city en route to Shīrāz in late April 1903. While the new Governor-General was in Isfahān he was approached by Qavām al-Mulk (who was still proceeding to Tehran under the orders of the Shāh). A large bribe was offered to Āsaf al-Dawla by Qavām al-Mulk for the new Governor-General to take him back to Shīrāz. Āsaf al-Dawla said he would be willing to meet Qavām al-Mulk's wishes as long as he had first received permission to do so from Amīn al-Sultān. When a request for such permission was made it was refused, and Qavām al-Mulk was told that he was likely to be ordered to go to Karbalā'. Hardinge met Qavām al-Mulk while he was in Isfahān, and told him that the British government had supported the decision to call him to Tehran in the interests of establishing peace and order in Fārs. Qavām al-Mulk expressed the view that the cause of the riots in Shīrāz had been misgovernment by Shu'ā' al-Saltana and he begged the British Minister to intercede for him in Tehran, so that he might be allowed to return to the south where he would again give proof of his friendly

68. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.49, 28 March 1902.

69. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.62, 9 April 1902.

intentions towards Britain. Hardinge, however, knew that Qavām al-Mulk had also been seeking similar assurances from the Russian Consul-General during his stay in Isfahān.⁷⁰

Āsaf al-Dawla entered Shīrāz on May 23rd 1902, without notice, in the hope of preventing disturbances. He soon found that lawlessness had again become rife during the period when there was no Governor in the province. Tribal groups migrating to their summer quarters had attacked villages and destroyed crops in the areas of Fasā and Dārāb. There was much unrest in Shīrāz itself; robberies were frequent and shops had been plundered.⁷¹ The poor were suffering considerable hardship because the price of bread was high, and in early May a baker had been killed during a riot.⁷² A group of fifty people had come into Shīrāz from Ardakān, some fifty miles to the northwest, to protest against the injustice of their local governor, Nāsir al-Dawla, a son of Qavām al-Mulk. This group remained in bast (sanctuary) in the Persian government telegraph office for over a month.⁷³

The new Governor-General made a quite good initial impression. He returned land to Qavām al-Mulk's sons which had been seized by Shu'ā'al-Saltāna; but for this he was later criticised by the Shāh.⁷⁴ The prospect of good crops helped the price of wheat, barley and bread to fall considerably.⁷⁵ Āsaf al-Dawla's popularity began to decline, however, as he appointed his sons to important posts. When bread prices started to increase Āsaf al-Dawla took harsh measures against the bakers, and some of them sought sanctuary in the mosques. During

70. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78, 6 May 1902, and Enclosure No.1 with that same document.

71. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.73, 29 April 1902.

72. F.O. 60:650. Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.46, 27 May 1902.

73. F.O. 60:651. Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.81, 24 June 1902.

74. F.O. 60:651. Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.110 Confidential, 22 July 1902.

75. F.O. 60:651. Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.110 Confidential, 22 July 1902.

the summer there was a serious outbreak of smallpox in the city, but a report of four thousand deaths would seem to be somewhat exaggerated.⁷⁶ Agitation arose over an incident in which a Christian missionary was accused of having tried to give lessons to Muslim children.⁷⁷ Outside the city there was considerable tribal turmoil throughout the summer and autumn of 1902, particularly among the Qashqā'ī, and the Post to Bushire was robbed on several occasions.⁷⁸

During August Qavām al-Mulk was allowed to return to Shīrāz because his wife had died, and he remained in the city until mid-September when he left for Bushire; taking the corpse with him for burial in Karbalā'.⁷⁹ It would appear that Qavām al-Mulk used the opportunity to strengthen his relations with Āsaf al-Dawla; for Qavām al-Mulk's sons sent a telegram to the Shāh immediately on his return to Persia in early October from his visit to Europe, informing him that all had been quiet in Fārs during his absence, and that no one had any complaints against the government of Āsaf al-Dawla.⁸⁰ Hardinge held a different view, and he wrote in December 1902 that, "Asaph al Dawla has neither the character nor the means to repress the growing lawlessness and disorder".⁸¹ The extent of the Governor-General's failure to preserve security was shown by the fact that in January 1903, his own house was burgled and valuable carpets were stolen.⁸²

76. F.O. 60:651. Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.110 Confidential, 22 July 1902.

77. F.O. 60:651. Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.123, 19 August 1902.

78. F.O. 60:651. Des Graz to Lansdowne, No.134, 16 September 1902, and F.O. 60:651. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.170, 7 December 1902.

79. F.O. 60:651. Erskine to Lansdowne, No.147, 14 October 1902.

80. F.O. 60:651. Erskine to Lansdowne, No.157, 11 November 1902.

81. F.O. 60:651. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.170, 7 December 1902.

82. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.20, 3 February 1903.

During 1903 further steps were taken in the reform of the Customs administration, and these had important repercussions in Fārs. In October 1901 the Russian and Persian governments had signed a Declaration concerning their future trade. Under this the previous ad valorem duties, most of which had been levied at the maximum permitted rate of five per cent since the first reform of 1900, were to be replaced in 1903 by fixed duties. These new duties varied according to the type of goods imported into Persia from Russia. Exports from Persia were mostly free of duty; the exceptions consisting chiefly of certain foodstuffs, live animals, opium, tobacco, raw silk, and precious stones. This Russo-Persian Declaration had relatively little effect in the south for there was almost no trade with Russia from the Gulf ports.

The negotiations between Persia and Russia had been conducted in secrecy, and the signature of the Declaration caused considerable consternation to the British government. The progress and complexity of the negotiations which then took place between Britain and Persia for a similar Declaration to govern Anglo-Persian trade are of little relevance to this particular study. The result of those negotiations was a Declaration, similar to that of October 1901, which was signed and which came into effect in February 1903. This Declaration too replaced the previous ad valorem dues with specific imposts. The Declaration also stated that import duties would be paid at the port of entry and that no further dues would then be levied inland.⁸³ (As will be seen, this provision was not always carried out.)

83. An accurate summary of the negotiations and details of the agreement can be found in J.G. Lorimer, op.cit., I part 2, pp.2597-2602.

The new regulations caused an agitation in the south of the country, and the grounds for this were twofold. On the one hand the new dues raised the price of certain popular commodities very sharply - the outstanding example being that of tea.⁸⁴ The second objection arose from the fact that the new dues had been introduced at the behest of Britain, and were being enforced by Belgian officials.⁸⁵ To many Persians this was further evidence that their country was being handed over to foreign powers. There was another important local source of grievance. In late February 1903 an agent of the Customs administration had had a merchant who had taken bast in a mosque at Bushire removed by force. (The merchant had imported aniline dyes which were then forbidden in Persia.) The man responsible for the removal of the merchant from the sanctuary was a Persian; but that did not prevent the Belgians from being blamed for this serious violation of a respected Persian custom.⁸⁶ There was much agitation in Shīrāz about this whole matter, but no violence occurred.⁸⁷

In early March 1903 there were reports that Shu'ā'al-Saltāna was seeking to return as Governor-General of Fārs, but the appointment went to 'Alā'al-Dawla. He had had experience of turbulent events before when he was Governor of 'Arabistān in 1896-7, and he had then gained a reputation for firm government.⁸⁸ He arrived in Shīrāz in early April 1903. By May there was already a distinct improvement in the security of the province; stolen goods were being recovered and the roads were

84. See Chapter IV The Reform of the Customs Administration.

85. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.28, 3 March 1903.

86. F.O. 248:817. Kemball to Hardinge, No.41, 22 March 1903.

87. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 3 March 1903.

88. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.26, 3 March 1903. See also G.P. Churchill, op.cit., p.3.

becoming much safer.⁸⁹ When there was a temporary reduction in the level of dues imposed on tea the agitation against the new tariff system subsided somewhat, and trade between Bushire and Shīrāz began to revive. The Governor of Kāzīrūn was bastinadoed for failing to prevent robberies; and in Shīrāz a notorious criminal was blown from a gun. The new Governor-General took pains to see personally those people who had grievances and this was greatly appreciated.⁹⁰ The pay of the road guards was increased and distributed regularly; but they were then held responsible for any robberies on the section under their control.⁹¹ 'Alā' al-Dawla established good relations with Qavām al-Mulk (who had returned to Tehran from Karbalā' in January 1903, and had then been permitted to go back to Fārs), and with his sons. In return Qavām al-Mulk used his considerable authority to secure less unruly behaviour by some of the tribes. In Shīrāz the barracks were repaired and the soldiers appear to have received regular pay. Sālār al-Sultān, Qavām al-Mulk's second son, was placed in charge of the troops, and he was apparently respected by them. 'Alā' al-Dawla banned the playing of music at prayer times in the city and this was welcomed by the religious classes.⁹² Good order prevailed throughout most of the province, and the Governor-General's firmness won much approval.

The Governorship of 'Alā' al-Dawla forms an interesting and illuminating episode in the history of Fārs under Muzaffar al-Dīn, for it indicates that in one province at least, traditional government, if

89. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.78 Confidential, 26 May 1903.

90. F.O. 248:800. Shīrāz Agent to Kemball. No number. Shiraz Diary, 22 April 1903.

91. F.O. 248:800. Shīrāz Agent to Kemball. No number. Shiraz Diary, 12 May 1903.

92. F.O. 248:800. Shīrāz Agent to Kemball. No number. Shiraz Diary, 28 September 1903.

effective, could go a long way towards meeting the needs of the people. This is not to say that all agitation died out and that every road throughout the province was always secure. There were still disturbances around Fasā and Jahrum during the summer, and trade in this area was at a standstill for a few weeks, but compared with other provinces Fārs at this time was a model of good government.⁹³

One of the dangers in concentrating on one province is that one tends to lose sight of events elsewhere in Persia. During 1903 there were many centres of agitation in the country. Riots occurred in Mashhad in April, chiefly because of misgovernment; and there were violent agitations in Tabrīz during June against the tariff reforms. Nearer to Shīrāz the Bābīs of Isfahān suffered violent attacks during May, and these persecutions spread to Yazd in June.⁹⁴ Members of the Isfahān 'ulamā' tried to incite similar agitations in Shīrāz, but the town remained peaceful throughout the summer of 1903.⁹⁵ Even the news of the fall of Amīn al-Sultān in mid-September caused less of a stir in Fārs than it did in other provinces.⁹⁶

During the winter months there were more robberies on the roads and the British Residency courier was attacked near Kāzirūn in December.⁹⁷ The Governor-General earned high praise, however, from the Director of the Indo-European Telegraph Company as being the only provincial Governor in Persia who, in his experience, investigated commercial claims quickly and settled them honestly.⁹⁸ In January 1904

93. F.O. 248:800. Shīrāz Agent to Kemball. No number. Shiraz Diary, 27 July 1903.

94. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.102 Confidential, 9 July 1903.

95. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.102 Confidential, 9 July 1903.

96. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.3 (Persian Gulf) Confidential, 21 November 1903.

97. F.O. 60:681. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.6, 6 January 1904.

98. F.O. 248:803. Director of the Persian Section of the Indo-European Telegraph Company (Tehran) to Grant Duff, 23 November 1903.

the British Consul in Shīrāz also said that 'Alā' al-Dawla was a good Governor and that he was eminently preferable to either of his predecessors. He described Shu'ā' al-Saltāna as "a self-willed Prince" with "a rapacious following", while Asaf al-Dawla had been "notoriously incapable".⁹⁹

In January 1904 'Alā' al-Dawla gave further proof of his concern for those under his administration when he took action to prevent a bank in Shīrāz from imposing a twelve-and-a-half per cent discount on copper coins because they were cracked and chipped.¹⁰⁰ (There had been much discontent in Bushire earlier in the month when a bank there had said that it would accept such coins only after discounting their value by ten per cent.)¹⁰¹ The Governor-General also showed considerable courage during the same month when he welcomed a member of the Alliance Israélite Universelle who came to Shīrāz as a teacher for the Jewish community there. 'Alā' al-Dawla told the British Consul that there was a great need for such a man as the Jewish community of some 6,000 people was poor and depressed. Grahame noted that among other occupations the Jews had previously made wine and distilled spirits, but that they had been forbidden to do so since 'Alā' al-Dawla had been Governor. Grahame also noted in that same despatch that the Jewish quarter of Shīrāz was very overcrowded but that members of the community were obviously reluctant to move elsewhere because they feared they would not be as well-protected if they did so. The British Consul made an unwitting, but grim, prophecy when he noted that such overcrowding could be very

99. F.O. 248:817. Grahame to Hardinge, No.4, 11 January 1904.

100. F.O. 248:817. Grahame Monthly Summary No.1, 25 January 1904.

101. F.O. 248:817. Kemball to Hardinge, No.6, 12 January 1904.

harmful if an epidemic were to occur in Shīrāz (see Chapter V, The Cholera Epidemic of 1904).¹⁰²

In February 1904 'Alā' al-Dawla was called to Tehran for a meeting of provincial governors which was to discuss proposals for reform of the tax system. Before he left Shīrāz he swore an oath before the Imām Jum'a that he would not accept any measures which would weigh heavily on the people. There was, however, much doubt about whether or not 'Alā' al-Dawla would return to Fārs, and Grahame said it was just possible that the Governor-General might go as far as to instigate a local disturbance so as to prevent, or at least to postpone, his journey. But this did not happen.¹⁰³ Qavām al-Mulk was now apprehensive lest Shu'ā' al-Saltana should be reappointed to his former office; and although Qavām al-Mulk had nominally been reconciled with the Shāh's son there was still much trepidation among Qavām al-Mulk's followers about his possible return as Governor-General. This feeling prompted Qavām al-Mulk to ask the British Consul for a promise of protection if Shu'ā' al-Saltana should return, but Grahame gave no such commitment. In the British Consul's view what Qavām al-Mulk and his followers most desired was a weak Governor-General like Āsaf al-Dawla.¹⁰⁴

During February 1904 there was considerable rejoicing in Shīrāz about the naval defeat which the Japanese had recently inflicted on

102. F.O. 248:817. Grahame to Hardinge, No.7, 21 January 1904. Further details of the Jewish community in Shīrāz can be found in D. Loeb, Outcaste: Jewish Life in Southern Iran, New York 1977. That author, using Alliance Israélite Universelle archives, states that the Jewish population of the city in 1903 was approximately 5,000 (op.cit., p.300). The same book has details of the occupations followed by Jews in 1903 (op.cit., p.82).

103. F.O. 248:817. Grahame, Shīrāz News, 10 February 1904.

104. F.O. 248:817. Grahame to Hardinge, No.11, 19 February 1904.

the Russian fleet.¹⁰⁵ This is an interesting indication of how knowledge of outside events contributed to strengthening the desire of the many sections of the population that the Persian government should also assert itself against Russia.

Security in Shīrāz remained good during the early weeks of 'Alā' al-Dawla's absence and the regular night patrols of soldiers were continued.¹⁰⁶ On March 25th 1904, rumours circulated that the Shāh had died; there was much panic buying of food and the price of bread rose sharply from thirteen shāhīs per mann to one qirān. The acting Governor-General, Sahām al-Dawla, denied the rumours and punished some of the bakers. By the following day the city was quiet again and prices returned to their former levels.¹⁰⁷ Trade on the road to Bushire was interrupted while the rumours continued to circulate.¹⁰⁸

When the news was announced in mid-April that Shu'ā' al-Saltāna was indeed to return as Governor-General there was much consternation in Shīrāz, particularly among the followers of Qavām al-Mulk. Two of the latter's sons sent an immediate present to the new Governor-General in Tehran.¹⁰⁹ The fact that Amīn al-Sultān no longer held the office of ~~Ṣadr al-Mazālim~~ deepened the degree of disquiet, for it was known that Shu'ā' al-Saltāna had feared him. According to one of Qavām al-Mulk's sons the only people that the new Governor-General now feared were his half-brother, the Valī-ahd and his mother; for his father, the Shāh, Shu'ā' al-Saltāna had little respect.¹¹⁰ According to Grahame there was

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105. F.O. 248:817. Grahame to Hardinge, No.11, 19 February 1904.
 106. F.O. 248:817. Grahame, Shiraz News, 7 March 1904.
 107. F.O. 248:817. Grahame, Shiraz News, 28 March 1904.
 108. F.O. 248:817. Grahame, Shiraz News, 13 April 1904.
 109. F.O. 248:817. Grahame to Hardinge, No.20, 21 April 1904.
 110. F.O. 248:817. Grahame to Hardinge, No.21, 25 April 1904.

considerable anxiety among many sections of the population in Shīrāz, including the religious classes, about the exactions which the new Governor-General and his entourage might impose on their arrival.¹¹¹

In late April and early May 1904 grain and bread prices rose, partly as a result of hoarding prior to the arrival of Shu'ā'al-Saltāna, and partly because of a failure in the crop after attack by pests. The acting Governor-General again punished some of those responsible and prices were soon back to normal levels.¹¹² There were very heavy rains on May 9th-11th, and these did much damage to the opium crop in the southern parts of the province where the incisions had already been made in the poppy heads. This damage was to cause hardship in those areas later in the year. Around Shīrāz the opening of the poppy heads had not been done and there the crop was saved.¹¹³ In May and late June there was growing apprehension about the approach of cholera, and trade began to decline sharply on the road to Bushire.¹¹⁴ Grahame noted that if the disease were to reach the city its effects would be serious because of the insanitary condition of many of the streets.¹¹⁵ In June there was an outbreak of measles and diphtheria, and over twenty deaths per day were occurring by the middle of the month.¹¹⁶

The greatest cause of apprehension in Shīrāz, however, was the gradual approach of the new Governor-General. Grahame had told Qavām al-Mulk's sons that Shu'ā'al-Saltāna had promised the British Minister in Tehran that what had happened in the past would be forgotten, but

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- 111. F.O. 248:817. Grahame, Shiraz News, 27 April 1904.
 - 112. F.O. 248:817. Grahame, Shiraz News, 12 May 1904.
 - 113. F.O. 248:817. Grahame, Shiraz News, 12 May 1904.
 - 114. F.O. 248:818. Grahame to Hardinge, No.29, 25 June 1904.
 - 115. F.O. 248:818. Grahame, Shiraz News, 8 June 1904.
 - 116. F.O. 248:818. Grahame, Shiraz News, 29 June 1904.

this did little to calm their fears.¹¹⁷ When Grahame met the new Governor-General outside the city on June 28th, Shu^āal-Saltana immediately asked about the approach of cholera, and he was told that it had reached Kāzirūn on June 26th. Grahame recommended that the streets of Shīrāz should be cleaned and that rubbish should be incinerated. According to the British Consul's report the new Governor-General replied that what needed to be burnt were "les turbans du clergé".¹¹⁸ Such statements did not bode well for future tranquility in Fārs.

As the cholera got nearer to Shīrāz more and more people left for the villages. Shu^āal-Saltana remained in the city long enough to distribute posts among his followers, and to reach an accommodation with Qayām al-Mulk, before he too left. Qayām al-Mulk and his sons had been right to be apprehensive about Shu^āal-Saltana's return to Fārs for, according to Grahame, the presents which they had to offer the new Governor-General to achieve a reconciliation cost some thirty thousand tūmāns more than those which had proved acceptable in April 1901.¹¹⁹ By mid-July there were few officials left in Shīrāz; law and order declined and the price of bread rose to over one qirān per mann.¹²⁰ It was not until the very end of August that the Governor-General and his suite returned to Shīrāz.¹²¹ When they did so intrigues soon began and Qayām al-Mulk was angered when one of his former supporters, Mu^tamid al-Dawla, went over to Shu^āal-Saltana's party and was rewarded with the post of Vazīr-i Daftar.¹²²

117. F.O. 248:818. Grahame to Hardinge, No.28, 8 June 1904.

118. F.O. 248:818. Grahame to Hardinge, No.30, 29 June 1904.

119. F.O. 248:818. Grahame, Shirāz News, 31 July 1904.

120. F.O. 248:818. Grahame, Shirāz News, 31 July 1904.

121. F.O. 248:818. Grahame, Shirāz News, 31 August 1904.

122. F.O. 248:818. Grahame to Hardinge, No.38, 7 September 1904.

During the autumn there were many reports of the new Governor-General's rudeness and impulsive behaviour. In September a criminal was found guilty for a second time of theft and, as he had already had the fingers of his right hand cut off during Shu'ā'al-Saltāna's first period as Governor-General, he was sentenced to have one of his feet amputated. When the sentence was announced to the criminal in the presence of Shu'ā'al-Saltāna he made a remark which was regarded as offensive by the Governor-General; the latter immediately flew into a rage and ordered that the unfortunate man should forthwith be blown from a gun.¹²³

During the winter of 1904-5, as trade began to revive following the end of the cholera epidemic, there were many complaints that rāhdārī was still being levied despite its nominal abolition in 1903. Most of the complaints about this concerned the Shīrāz to Bushire road.¹²⁴ In January 1905 the rates which were being levied, in each direction, were one qirān ten shāhīs per camel or mule load, and one qirān per donkey load.¹²⁵ These dues were sometimes levied repeatedly at several stages along the road, and on occasion they were collected at the very outskirts of Shīrāz.¹²⁶ When Shu'ā'al-Saltāna was questioned about these taxes near Shīrāz he denied that they were rāhdārī, and insisted that they were instead a form of poll tax on the animals in the caravan. According to Grahame, however, no local muleteers could remember ever before having had to pay such a poll tax.¹²⁷ Additional dues were also apparently levied on caravans which brought charcoal into Shīrāz, and these dues were imposed by agents of Sardār-i Akram, the Vazīr of Fārs.¹²⁸

123. F.O. 60:683. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.189, 12 October 1904.

124. F.O. 248:842. Cox to Hardinge, No.13, 12 February 1905.

125. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 2 January 1905.

126. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 2 January 1905.

127. F.O. 248:849. Grahame to Hardinge, No.12, 8 February 1905.

128. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 13 September 1905.

Among other illegal taxes which were being collected was one called bār which was being imposed on trade from Bushire passing through Shīrāz.¹²⁹ Fees were also being levied in January 1905 by the road guards at Shīf, and at Khushāb, Dālakī, Kunar Takhti, Kumarij and at Kāzirūn.¹³⁰ These fees were nominally levied for the protection of the caravans, but robberies were still frequent.¹³¹ The average rate in January was five qirāns per twenty mules at each stage, but this rate varied from place to place, and it increased later in the year.¹³² Many of these dues were being imposed directly by Shu^cāl-Saltana's men, and the amount of money which the Governor-General was collecting was believed to be considerable.¹³³

A further complaint concerning the road from Shīrāz to Bushire was that local villagers had been forbidden to sell their produce and that merchants and other travellers now had to buy grain and other commodities from the official corn chandlers (allāfdān), and these officials were charging extortionate prices. For example, the allāfdān were charging one qirān ten shāhīs per mann for barley when the normal market price was only five shāhīs per mann, and they charged eight shāhīs per mann for straw when it could be bought for half a shāhī per mann locally. Some of the muleteers told Grahame in October 1905 that if road guard fees and the compulsory purchase of produce from the allāfdān were ended then transport charges on the Bushire-Shīrāz road would fall by fifty per cent.¹³⁴

Merchants who sent goods to Bandar ^cAbbās also had to pay illegal dues. A brokerage tax (dallālī) was being levied on consignments which

129. F.O. 248:849. Grahame to Hardinge, No.12, 8 February 1905.

130. F.O. 248:842. Trevor (acting for Cox) to Hardinge, No.20, 3 March 1905.

131. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 2 January 1905.

132. F.O. 248:842. Trevor (acting for Cox) to Hardinge, No.20, 3 March 1905.

133. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 9 July 1905.

134. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.98, 7 October 1905.

were sent to that port by inland merchants when the goods were handed over to the exporting merchants, the rate varying between two-and-a-half and ten per cent ad valorem. Some goods which were traded through Bandar 'Abbās also had to pay a weighing tax (qappāndārī). Imports which left Bandar 'Abbās for the north had to pay exit fees (maydānī).¹³⁵ Shu'ā al-Saltāna was not responsible for those levies, but he did nothing to provide redress for the merchants whose trade was being damaged by their imposition. (The levying of such dues at Bandar 'Abbās appears to have diverted much trade to Mīnāb during the spring and summer of 1905, for only the authorized dues were collected there.)¹³⁶

In May Shu'ā al-Saltāna had some road guards arrested for extortion; but it was believed that their real crime had been that of not handing over a sufficient proportion of what they had collected to the agent of the Governor-General.¹³⁷ In September the Governor-General proposed to increase security along the roads by reducing the number of road guards, but enhancing the pay of those who remained on duty.¹³⁸ This seems to have been an ineffective promise; for robberies continued during October and nine payments to road guards were being exacted from caravans travelling between Shīf and Dālakī, and eleven more payments were demanded between Dālakī and Shīrāz.¹³⁹ In November some of the road guards complained that they had received no pay since March,¹⁴⁰ and those between Kāzīrūn and Burāzjān were exacting heavier and heavier payments from caravans.¹⁴¹ Road guards at other places were seizing

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135. F.O. 248:842. Trevor (acting for Cox) to Hardinge, No.20, 3 March 1905.
 136. F.O. 248:842. Cox to Hardinge, No.68, 13 June 1905.
 137. F.O. 248:843. Persian Gulf Diary, 25 June 1905.
 138. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shīrāz News, 29 September 1905.
 139. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.98, 7 October 1905.
 140. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shīrāz News, 18 October 1905.
 141. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.108, 28 October 1905.

sheep from caravans which passed during November and they were demanding a ransom for the return of the animals.¹⁴²

Within Shīrāz itself there was much misgovernment. A serious complaint was that Shu'ā'al-Saltana was again purchasing and hoarding grain and forage so as to charge more for it later.¹⁴³ Taxes were being levied for street cleaning, but that task was never performed.¹⁴⁴ Shopkeepers in Shīrāz's most important bazaar -- the Vakīl bazaar -- had their rents arbitrarily raised during the autumn.¹⁴⁵ The discipline and morale of the soldiers in the city declined for many of them received little or no pay during 1905. In September over 150 of them took sanctuary at the Russian Consulate to protest about this.¹⁴⁶ The temper of the inhabitants of Shīrāz was not improved when they saw, in July, much of the money that had been extorted from them being spent on lavish celebrations for Shu'ā'al-Saltana's marriage.¹⁴⁷ During these celebrations the price of bread rose sharply and this too caused discontent.

In January there had been some protests about the activities of Christian missionaries,¹⁴⁸ but these were not as great as the disturbances against the Jews during the summer, autumn and early winter. The Jewish distillers and makers of wine were subject to great oppression; for while 'Alā' al-Dawla had forbidden them to practice those occupations he had also abolished the licence fee for that profession

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142. F.O. 248:844. Cox, Persian Gulf Diary, 5 November 1905. Much of the information about conditions prevailing along the Bushire-Shīrāz road was obtained from the clerks in the Indo-European Telegraph Company's stations along the road. See F.O.248:850, Grahame to Grant Duff, No.133, 26 December 1905.
143. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 2 January 1905.
144. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 2 January 1905.
145. F.O. 248:844. Persian Gulf Diary, 15 October 1905.
146. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shīrāz News, 29 September 1905.
147. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shīrāz News, 9 July 1905.
148. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shīrāz News, 21 January 1905.

which they had formerly paid. Shu'ā'al-Saltāna continued to ban such activities, but at the same time he insisted on collecting the licence fee of some 4,000 tūmāns.¹⁴⁹ On June 2nd 1905 there was a riot against the Jews because they were allegedly not wearing the tall hats which had been decreed for them in the past.¹⁵⁰ More violence followed and on June 22nd a Jew was killed.¹⁵¹ Intermittent demonstrations continued during the summer and autumn and these culminated in serious disturbances in December (see below).

Two things appear to have prevented more serious demonstrations from occurring in Shīrāz during the summer of 1905. One was that the harvest was quite good and bread prices began to fall;¹⁵² and as Grahame noted, some of the peasantry had remembered the shortage and dearth of bread during the latter part of 1904 and they had sown crops of millet and maize for their own use.¹⁵³ Also in late July an important religious figure, Hājjī Shaykh Āqā died. He had been the successor designate of the Imām Jūmā and his demise temporarily weakened the opposition to the rule of Shu'ā'al-Saltāna.¹⁵⁴ The religious classes did, however, express growing concern about the misgovernment of the province. They were in regular contact by telegraph with their colleagues in Isfahān and Tehran throughout most of the year,¹⁵⁵ and in November and December when protests were at their highest they were also in touch with their colleagues in Karbalā'.¹⁵⁶

149. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shirāz News, 18 February 1905.

150. F.O. 248:843. Persian Gulf Diary, 25 June 1905.

151. F.O. 248:843. Persian Gulf Diary, 16 July 1905.

152. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shirāz News, 6 August 1905.

153. F.O. 248:843. Persian Gulf Diary, 20 August 1905.

154. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shirāz News, 19 August 1905.

155. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.97, 1 October 1905.

156. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.126 Secret, 6 December 1905.

It was not only Shu'ā' al-Saltāna who was practising extortion, nor was it just the inhabitants of Shīrāz who were suffering. In August Grahame noted that the Governor-General and his entourage were endeavouring everywhere to make money as quickly as possible and there is ample evidence to support this view.¹⁵⁷ In January some 500 of the inhabitants of Fasā had come to Shīrāz and there they took refuge in the Shāh Chirāgh Mosque to protest about the high level of taxes being sought from them by their local governor - Iẓām al-Mulk. They alleged that he was demanding 30,000 tūmāns more than they had previously paid, and they threatened to abandon the town entirely unless this was reduced. Another report supports the view that taxes in Fasā had certainly been increased greatly, but by somewhat less than the 30,000 tūmāns alleged. According to that report, which Grahame said was from a trustworthy source, taxes from Fasā had amounted to some 20,000 tūmāns in 1900. During his first administration Shu'ā' al-Saltāna had raised them to 32,000 tūmāns, while in 1905 he was demanding about 45,000 tūmāns from the unfortunate inhabitants.¹⁵⁹

In Jahrum too the oppression was so great that many of the people were leaving their houses and moving to Bandar 'Abbās to escape from the clutches of their local governor Mudabbir al-Saltāna.¹⁶⁰ During August 1905 some 3,000 people in Abādeh took refuge in the telegraph office there to protest against the extortion practised by their local governor Muntasir al-Dawla.¹⁶¹ All three of these officials were members

157. F.O. 248:849. Grahame to Hardinge, No.69, 15 August 1905.

158. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 21 January 1905, and Shiraz News, 18 February 1905.

159. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Hardinge, No.135, 29 December 1905.

160. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 18 February 1905.

161. F.O. 248:849. Grahame to Hardinge, No.69, 15 August 1905.

of Shu'ā'al-Saltāna's entourage when he arrived in Fārs in July 1904.¹⁶²

In the late autumn there were many complaints from Kāzirūn that much higher taxes than usual were being imposed on the opium crop.¹⁶³

Although much more money was being collected in Fārs very little of it was being remitted to Tehran.¹⁶⁴

The rivalry between Shu'ā'al-Saltāna and Qavām al-Mulk had become even more intense during 1905. Several of Qavām al-Mulk's followers were imprisoned by the Governor-General and they gained their release only after paying considerable sums of money.¹⁶⁵ One of Qavām al-Mulk's agents, who was in charge of an appeal to Tehran about the usurpation of some of Qavām al-Mulk's lands, was seized by some of Shu'ā'al-Saltāna's men in early September; and a ransom of twenty-five thousand qirāns was demanded for his release.¹⁶⁶ On another occasion some of Qavām al-Mulk's followers came to Shīrāz to protest about a raid on their village in which four peasants had been killed and most of the crops destroyed. The head of the deputation was beaten on the orders of the Governor-General, and the other petitioners suffered the insult of having their beards cut off before they were sent back without redress.¹⁶⁷

At the end of September Shu'ā'al-Saltāna left to visit Europe for medical reasons, but there was little improvement in the government of the province.¹⁶⁸ He left his Vazīr, Sardār-i Akram in charge and there were soon many complaints about his administration. In early October 1905 Grahame sent to the Vazīr some muleteers who had been in charge of

162. F.O. 248:818. Grahame, Shiraz News, 31 July 1904.

163. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.219 Secret, 23 December 1905.

164. F.O. 248:844. Persian Gulf Diary, 29 October 1905.

165. F.O. 248:844. Persian Gulf Diary, 17 September 1905.

166. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 6 September 1905.

167. F.O. 248:849. Grahame, Shiraz News, 6 September 1905.

168. F.O. 248:844. Persian Gulf Diary, 15 October 1905.

a caravan which had been carrying goods belonging to an Indian merchant which had later been stolen. Sardār-i Akram refused to pursue the robbers and had the muleteers beaten for troubling him.¹⁶⁹ Later the same month some goods belonging to the British company Zeiglers were stolen on the Bushire-Shīrāz road. The Vazīr had the muleteers from the caravan seized and imprisoned until they paid the cash value of the stolen goods. Again no attempt was made to pursue the robbers or to improve security along the road.¹⁷⁰

In a lengthy and uncharacteristically bitter despatch in November 1905, the British Chargé d'Affairs in Tehran, Grant Duff, described both the Governor-General and his Minister. "The Shoa es Sultaneh has all the failings of the Kajar family, being vicious, cruel, tyrannical, and incompetent. He affects to be very European and enlightened but except for an outside varnish acquired in the music-halls of Paris and Berlin His Imperial Highness is merely a savage and the fact that he suffers both from epilepsy, syphilis, maniacal pride and a variety of other ailments, renders him not only undesirable but even dangerous as a ruler." Grant Duff's description of Sardār-i Akram was briefer, "He is corrupt, incompetent and insolent".¹⁷¹ Grant Duff was already pressing the Persian authorities in October 1905 to have Shūā'āl-Saltāna and his entourage removed from Fārs; but he admitted that this would be no easy task to accomplish for Shūā'āl-Saltāna was Muzaffar al-Dīn's favourite son and the Monarch believed him to be perfect. The Shāh also regarded Sardār-i Akram as a valuable servant and a competent official.¹⁷²

169. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.101, 7 October 1905.

170. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.106, 25 October 1905.

171. F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.237, 1 November 1905.

172. F.O. 60:700. Grant Duff to Lansdowne, No.254, 3 December 1905.

When in December 1905 the Persian government announced that it was sending a special minister (Vazīr-i Makhsūs) to investigate conditions in Fārs, there was considerable intrigue over the appointment. Shū'ā'al-Saltāna was in Paris at the time and from there he offered five thousand tūmāns to the Šadr-i A'zam to choose someone who was not hostile to his interests.¹⁷³ Grahame reported from Shīrāz that few people there believed that any official would have the courage to give a truly independent report on the conduct of government by the Shāh's favourite son.¹⁷⁴

What had finally prompted action by the central government was the outbreak of serious anti-Jewish rioting which began on November 15th 1905 (this was during Ramadān). The immediate cause of violence was the building of a house by a Jew. The house had been designed to be of such a size that it kept within the restriction of being no larger than those in its neighbourhood; but while it was being constructed the building operations had caused the partial obstruction of a thoroughfare. As soon as the house was completed various members of the religious classes began an agitation about it. A certain Sayyid Muhammad first of all commanded the owner to demolish the house, and when this was not done he ordered some of his followers to pull it down. The Jewish owners appealed to the Vazīr who promptly and publicly abused Sayyid Muhammad. Sardār-i Akram, however, had little desire to face a riot because he had few troops at his disposal, and he asked the Imām Jum'ā to intervene and

173. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.129 Secret, 23 December 1905. (Grahame had apparently been able to make arrangements to be shown telegrams which were sent from Shū'ā'al-Saltāna via the Indo-European Telegraph Company to Shīrāz. See F.O.248:850, Grahame to Grant Duff, No.121 Secret, 1 December 1905.)

174. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shīrāz News, 14 December 1905.

to help calm the situation. That religious leader said he was willing to assist, but he feared that the discontent in the city was so deep that it would be impossible for him to prevent a tumult.¹⁷⁵ This proved to be an accurate assessment and there seems to be little doubt that although the riots were sparked off during a period of religious fervour by this anti-Jewish emotion, the movement was really an expression of bitter resentment against the misgovernment of Shu'ā al-Saltāna and his Vazīr.

On November 14th the Imām Jum'ā left Shīrāz. Within two days the agitation had grown considerably and the bazaars were closed. According to Grahame large crowds gathered at the houses of the mujtahids and demanded redress for injustices.¹⁷⁶ A similar crowd gathered outside the British Consulate and called for the removal from office of Sardār-i Akram. Members of that crowd told Grahame that they would no longer accept any promises from the Vazīr unless they were given through the British Consul.¹⁷⁷ There was considerable looting of the Jewish quarter and some violence. By November 18th three people had been killed and more than 10 had been injured.¹⁷⁸ The agitations gradually subsided after the end of Ramadān but there were sporadic outbursts of firing until early December, and some of those who had taken refuge in the Shāh Chirāgh Mosque were still in bast in mid-December.¹⁷⁹

175. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shiraz News, 18 November 1905. Sayyid Muhammad was the son of the late Sayyid 'Alī Akbar who had fomented the discontent against the Tobacco Régie in May 1891. See A.K.S. Lambton, *The Tobacco Régie: Prelude to Revolution* (1) *Studia Islamica*, Vol.22, 1965, pp.127-8.

176. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shiraz News, 18 November 1905.

177. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shiraz News, 18 November 1905.

178. F.O. 248:850. Grahame, Shiraz News, 18 November 1905.

179. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.129 Secret, 23 December 1905.

While all this public agitation was occurring many of the religious leaders had sent telegrams to their colleagues in Isfahān, Tehran and Karbalā'. Others were addressed to the Sadr-i A'zam, to the Shāh, and to the British Legation in Tehran.¹⁸⁰ In early December Grahame was asked for his assistance in trying to ensure that telegrams of complaint would reach Muẓaffar al-Dīn, for there was widespread belief in Shīrāz that Shu'ā'al-Saltana's friends at Court would try to suppress them.¹⁸¹ Later that same month a member of the religious classes enquired from the British Consul how a telegram could be sent to the English King, for the enquirer said that there was little hope of receiving any satisfaction from Tehran.¹⁸²

Some of the merchants too were sending telegrams. A number of these were concerned only with business affairs, such as those despatched to colleagues in Isfahān advising against the forwarding of goods to Shīrāz while the agitation continued.¹⁸³ Other telegrams sent by the merchants, however, reflect the deep sense of injustice which many of the inhabitants of Fārs were experiencing. The most detailed telegram of this nature preserved in the sources used for this study was sent to the Sadr-i A'zam on December 1st 1905, and it is over 1,200 words in length. There were five major sources of complaint listed in that document.¹⁸⁴ The first concerned the increase in taxes. One example was mentioned in which the amount previously levied had been three thousand tūmāns, now the sum of twenty thousand tūmāns was being demanded.¹⁸⁵ It was also said that whereas previously taxes in kind had been taken in mann-i Tabrīz, now a heavier mann was being used,

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180. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.126 Secret, 6 December 1905.
 181. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.126 Secret, 6 December 1905.
 182. F.O. 248:850. Grahame to Grant Duff, No.129 Secret, 23 December 1905.
 183. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Grant Duff, No.77, 30 December 1905.
 184. F.O. 248:850. Enclosure in Grahame to Grant Duff, No.122, Secret, 2 December 1905.

but the same number of mann of produce were collected.¹⁸⁶ It was also reported that when, in a certain area, it had proved impossible to provide the necessary amount of produce being demanded, the people had been allowed to make a cash payment instead.¹⁸⁷ Where injustice had occurred was that the produce was entered on the official accounts at a value of ten tūmāns per kharvār when in fact the population had had to commute the tax at the rate of twenty tūmāns per kharvār. Other grievances under this heading concerned the fact that certain taxes had previously been payable in some cases in seven instalments, now they were being demanded all at once and in advance. Another complaint was that a tax which had previously been collected at the rate of two shāhīs per tūmān was now being collected at the rate of five shāhīs per tūmān.¹⁸⁸ It was also alleged that certain officials had had their salaries and pensions increased from a total of 4,000 tūmāns to 12,000 tūmāns under the orders of Shuā'al-Saltāna. A second major area of complaint was about the greediness and the size of the entourage of the current Governor-General compared with his predecessors. It was also alleged that many of his followers received no salary but that they lived off the province by extorting money.

A third complaint was that in outlying areas - particularly in Fasā and Iṣṭahbānāt, extra-ordinary taxes were being levied. A fourth

185. Neither the name of the specific tax, nor place where it was collected are given in the telegram.

186. In the translation of the telegram the mann is called mann-i galbawī, but I have been unable to find any reference to this which would show how much heavier it was than the mann-i Tabrīz.

187. The name of the place in question is not given in the telegram, such commutation of taxes was not unusual.

188. The tax in question was not named.

grievance was that orders from Tehran were not obeyed by officials in Fārs, and that therefore it was impossible to gain any redress from the authorities in the capital. The continuation of rāhdārī and the imposition of the extra-ordinary taxes at Fasā were cited as specific examples of this inability to obtain justice. A final point covered the illegal sequestration of property by the Governor-General and members of his entourage. Shops had been seized in Shīrāz and land had been taken from its rightful owners at Fasā in 1904, and at Abādeh and Bihbahān in 1905. The telegram ended with a general protest at the injustices which were being perpetrated and the fact that complaints were no longer investigated. In brief no man's life, property or honour could be regarded as safe.

That paraphrased final sentence of the telegram could stand as a fitting summary of this description of affairs in Fārs, and the last year of Muzaffar al-Dīn's reign can be treated quite briefly. During that year the situation was certainly calmer for Shu'ā' al-Saltāna did not return to the province; and Sālār-i As'ad, who arrived in Shīrāz on January 26th 1906, became the virtual Governor-General for most of that year. He was both energetic and popular; under him the province became less turbulent and security along the Shīrāz-Bushire road appears to have shown considerable improvement. When he was removed in November some 2,000 inhabitants of Shīrāz took bast in the telegraph offices in protest.¹⁸⁹ The final transfer of appointment under Muzaffar al-Dīn occurred in that month when Niẓām al-Saltāna became Governor-General. That appointment again came about as a result of court intrigues and it reflected the great desire of officials in

189. F.O. 371:114. Spring Rice to Grey. Telegraphic, Document Number 38224, 13 November 1906.

Tehran to gain lucrative posts before the Shāh died, for by then Muzaffar al-Dīn's health was even weaker than it had been previously.¹⁹⁰

The change which is most noticeable during 1906 is that the grievances of the population of Fārs became less local in their nature and there seems to have been a greater awareness of the fact that Persia was facing a crisis at a national level. In part this was due to the removal of the immediate cause of discontent - rule by Shu'ā' al-Saltana - and to the improvement in local security. But there were other factors also at work. One was the greater knowledge of events elsewhere. News of the serious disturbances in Russia which followed that country's war with Japan, and of the subsequent ill-treatment of Persian and other Muslims in southern Russia, turned the attention of the people of Shīrāz away from their local grievances and gave them the opportunity, in late January 1906, for a more general protest.¹⁹¹

Many inhabitants of Fārs also began to realise that the burden of misgovernment and oppression was shared by people in many other parts of the country; and that it was in Tehran that solutions were being sought. The important political events of 1906 took place in and around the capital: the repeated basts during the first nine months of the year at various mosques and at the British Legation, and the great exodus in late June of members of the religious classes and of merchants, tradesmen and artisans to Qumm. It was these events which

190. F.O. 371:114. Spring Rice to Grey. Telegraphic, Document Number 39273, 22 November 1906.

191. F.O. 248:866. Grant Duff to Grey, No.80, 1 February 1906. News of the plight of the Muslims in southern Russia and the Caucasus started to emerge in the late autumn of 1905. By early January 1906 many refugees fleeing from the persecution had crossed the border into Āzarbāyjān where they added to the general turbulence of that province. Their presence was particularly important at Tabrīz. (See F.O. 248:866. Grant Duff to Grey, Telegraphic Number 58, 30 January 1906.)

led to the Shāh's promise in January of an Adālat-Khāna (House of Justice), to his pledge in August to create an Assembly, to the publication of the Electoral Law in September, and finally to the promulgation, on the last day of the year, of the Qānūn-i Asāsī (the Fundamental Law). Eight days later Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh was dead.

The people of Fārs - like those in other provinces of Persia - followed the events in Tehran with great interest.¹⁹² Indeed it would be true to say that they saw them as the culminating expression of their own grievances. It had, after all, been a poet from Shīrāz who had most elegantly defined the duties of kings some six-and-a-half centuries earlier, and it was essentially because Muzaffar al-Dīn did not live up to those ideals, that better government was so vociferously demanded.

"Kings are but guardians, who the poor should keep;
Though this world's goods wait on their diadem.
Not for the shepherd's welfare are the sheep;
The shepherd rather is for pasturing them."

Sa'dī. The Gulistān,
translated by E.B. Eastwick,
Hertford, 1852, p. 85.

192. F.O. 371:114. Grant Duff to Grey. Document number 33000,
1 October 1906.

CHAPTER VII

AFFAIRS IN THE PROVINCE OF ISFAHĀN

"Isfahān is a paradise full of luxuries;
 There ought (however) to be no Isfahānis in it."
 Translation of an anonymous Persian
 poem by E.G. Browne in
A Year Amongst the Persians
 Cambridge 1950 (3rd Edition), p.214.

The previous chapter showed how frequent changes of rule could have serious and harmful consequences for the administration of a province. To look at events in Isfahān provides the greatest possible contrast; for while its southern neighbour was experiencing ten changes of governorship Isfahān remained in the continuous charge of the man whose period of office had begun in the middle of the nineteenth century, and whose fall from power did not occur until after the death of Muẓaffar al-Dīn in 1907. The person in question, Zill al-Sultān, was a remarkable individual. He was the eldest surviving son of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, but he did not inherit the throne because his mother, 'Iffat al-Saltāna, was not a Qājār, but a member of the Afshār tribe.¹ The governorship of Isfahān was given to him in his early childhood, but

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1. It was not an invariable rule that the Valīāhd had to have a royal mother. Nāṣir al-Dīn's eldest son, Muḥīn al-Dīn (who was born in 1849 and died in 1856) had a Qājār mother and was the first Valīāhd of that Shāh. On the death of the boy Nāṣir al-Dīn's second son, Muḥammad Qāsim Khān, who had been born of a non-royal mother, was declared Valīāhd. When he died in 1858 Nāṣir al-Dīn reverted to the usual practice and passed over Zill al-Sultān in favour of his fourth son, Muẓaffar al-Dīn. (See G.N. Curzon, Persia and the Persian Question, I, op.cit., pp.390 and 412-3, and A.K.S. Lambton, Kājār in Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden (in progress), IV, p.392.

he did not wield power personally until he was over twenty years of age. Other provinces were added to his charge and by 1886, at the age of thirty-six, he controlled over one third of Persia and possessed a force of some 21,000 men under arms.² Such power bred suspicion at court, and in February 1888 he was stripped of all his governorships except that of Isfahān, and his army was disbanded.

Many reports speak of Zill al-Sultān's severity as a governor, but there is little doubt that he had been an effective one. C.J. Wilson, who worked in Isfahān as the doctor to the Indo-European Telegraph Department from 1871-1881, knew him well and hoped he would become the Shāh, for he was "clever, tolerant and a good governor".⁴ According to C.E. Stewart, an Indian Army officer who travelled through Persia in 1880, Zill al-Sultān "had put down thieving and highway robbery in a wonderful way in his dominions, and the roads were safe".⁵ That same writer added that "on the whole his government was that of an enlightened ruler", and he drew particular attention to the fact that he would not tolerate persecution of the Jewish or Christian communities

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2. At the height of his powers the following provinces and districts were in his charge: Gulpāyagān and Khunsār, Jushaqān, Irāq, Isfahān, Fars, Yazd, Arabistān, Luristān, Kurdistan, Kangavar, Nihāvand, Kamareh, Burūjird, Kirmānshāh, Asadābad and Kazzāz (G.N. Curzon, *op.cit.*, I, p.416 footnote).
 3. E.G. Browne was in Persia at the time and he records some of the reactions to the relegation of Zill a-Sultān in A Year Amongst the Persians, London 1950 (third edition) particularly pp.114-5 and 219-20.
 4. C.J. Wills, In The Land of the Lion and Sun, London 1891, p.366.
 5. C.E. Stewart, Through Persia in Disguise, London 1911, p.258.

in Isfahān.⁶ Curzon, who met the Prince after his relegation, wrote that "The Zil-es Sultan was undoubtedly a ruler of vigour and determination. He held the reins in his own hand and with a tight grip. Hating and despising the Mussulman clergy, he treated them with refreshing contempt".⁷ (As will be seen, Zill al-Sultān was to retain those views, but he became less able to take action based upon them.)

A further feature mentioned by Curzon is Zill al-Sultān's lively and informed interest in European political affairs. The Prince told his visitor that he employed a translator to prepare summaries for him of the British, French, German and Russian newspapers.⁸ W. Sparroy, who was tutor to Zill al-Sultān's sons in Isfahān in 1897 and 1898, also reports that his employer paid close attention to the European press; and that he sometimes asked his sons to prepare translations into Persian for him of items of interest.⁹ Zill al-Sultān's attitude to the religious classes, and his interest in European affairs, were together demonstrated in 1905 when he met a group of French travellers and told them that "we need a Monsieur Combes here to bring our mullahs to reason".¹⁰

Much of the above evidence indicates that Zill al-Sultān had a very different character than his half-brother Muzaffar al-Dīn, and that the former's personality was better suited to the tasks of government.

6. *Ibid.*

7. G.N. Curzon, *op.cit.*, I, p.417.

8. G.N. Curzon, *op.cit.*, I, p.419. Zill al-Sultān knew French and used that language for his private letters to Hardinge which will be cited later in this chapter.

9. W. Sparroy, *Persian Children of the Royal Family*, London 1902, pp.151-2.

10. C. Anet, *Through Persia in a Motor Car*, London 1907, p.197. (Combes was the Prime Minister of France from 1902-5, and leader of the Délégation des Gauches. The changes in the law of associations which he introduced were designed to restrict the activities of Roman Catholic religious orders in France.)

The contrast between the two men was noted by several visitors to Persia. Dr. Wills drew a very unfavourable portrait of the Valī'ahd compared with Zill al-Sultān.¹¹ G. Jequier, a French archaeologist who worked in Persia for a number of years, noted after a meeting with Zill al-Sultān, that the Prince was "le seul être intelligent, paraît-il, de la famille royale, et en tous cas un homme à poigne".¹²

It is worth pausing to note that Zill al-Sultān had little regard for the abilities of his half-brother. At a meeting with Aganoor in January 1898 he complained of the weakness of Muzaffar al-Dīn, and said, "My father was undoubtedly more fond of money and much more stingy than the present Shāh. But he was admittedly also more able and better informed as to the state of the country, having been reigning for so many years".¹³ When Zill al-Sultān met Durand in October of the same year he expressed the view that one of the reasons why Persia was facing so many problems was that the Shāh was "a nobody".¹⁴ He expressed similar views to Preece in April 1901, adding that the Valī'ahd Muhammad 'Alī was equally unfitted to rule Persia.¹⁵

Sparroy had also pointed to the contrast between Zill al-Sultān and his half-brother. The same author went on to express the view that the former's character bore a close resemblance to that of his father; for both were men of action, and were shrewd, inquisitive and brusque.¹⁶

11. C.J. Wills, *op.cit.*, pp.119 and 366.

12. G. Jequier, *En Perse 1897-1902* (edited by M. Jequier), Neuchatel 1968, p.98. The diary entry is dated 21.8.98.

13. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.4, 5 January 1898.

14. F.O. 60:617. Durand to Salisbury, No.5, 18 January 1900.

15. F.O. 248:242. Preece to Hardinge, No.13, 20 April 1901.

16. W. Sparroy, *op.cit.*, p.313.

When Durand visited Isfahan in the autumn of 1898 he too was struck by the great similarity between the character of Zill al-Sultān and that of his father.¹⁷

The events of 1888 had certainly reduced the power of Zill al-Sultān, and some sources suggest that his character too was weakened by them. Sparroy links the two circumstances in a very direct way.

"The breaking up of his troops, all things considered, was a blunder it would be impossible to exaggerate. It broke the back of the Zill's sturdy patriotism and tore the heart out of the Persian army. The Zill, from being the most generous and public-spirited Prince in Persia, lives nowadays with no more inspiring an ambition than to amass money; and the army, free from his guiding hand, has sunk to the condition of a rabble of spiritless ragamuffins, sans head, sans hearts, sans arms, sans discipline - the finest material in the world running to rust from the want of a directing mind and a liberal-fisted patron".¹⁸

G. Crawshay Williams, an officer from the Indian Army, visited Persia in 1903 and observed that:

"His army [the Zill al-Sultān's] was deprived of regiment after regiment, until all but a mere fraction of its former glory had gone. His power was fettered, his strength crippled, and he was left a harmless ruler instead of a mighty potentate".

The same writer adds that:

"I do not think any human spectacle during my travels impressed me more than the sad sight of this strong, able man, with so great a past and so great a potentiality, sitting there, fretting and brooding as he must, over the things that had been and the things that could never be".¹⁹

There are two aspects of this matter and they are worth separate consideration. On the one hand there is little evidence that Zill al-Sultān regarded himself as being broken in spirit as a result of his

17. F.O. 60:617. Durand to Salisbury, No.5, 18 January 1900.

18. W. Sparroy, *op.cit.*, p.305.

19. E. Crawshay Williams, *Across Persia*, London 1907, pp.283-4.

relegation; but on the other hand, he admitted, and regretted, that he had lost much of his power. It would seem that his wish to act firmly and decisively was little diminished by his relegation. But he recognized that he was no longer able to take effective and determined action. In many of his conversations with British officials he deplored the loss of his army and his current shortage of troops.

In early January 1898 Zill al-Sultān told Aganoor that he no longer had enough men to maintain law and order, and that the current Sadr-i A'zam Amīn al-Dawla, unlike his predecessor, Amīn al-Sultān, did not recognize how fanatical and turbulent was the town of Isfahān.²⁰ There was obviously some truth in this view, for there were several serious disorders in the city that year. One of the most violent occurred in late March, outside the British consulate, and the cause was a rumour that Russian forces had occupied Mashhad and that Britain had seized the port of Bushire in retaliation. Sarim al-Dawla, who commanded the troops in Isfahān, was able, but only with great difficulty, to arrest the two sayyids who had led the riots.²¹ They were later expelled from the city.²²

At this time the nominal strength of the army in Isfahān was two battalions of infantry (each with 1,000 men), a regiment of cavalry

20. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.4, 5 January 1898.

21. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.6, 2 April 1898. By this date there was no Russian Consulate in Isfahān. One was being built, and its construction had given rise to protests. (F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.2, 1 January 1898.)

22. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.7, 4 April 1898.

(about 1,000 men), and a battalion of artillery (approximately 500 : men).²³ In fact all the regiments were, like the rest of the Persian army, woefully under strength and Zill al-Sultān told Aganoor that he could call upon only about 300 men to deal with any disturbances.²⁴ The British Vice-Consul agreed with the Governor's estimate that 2,000 infantry and 500 cavalry were needed to be sure of maintaining law and order in Isfahān and its immediate environs.²⁵

In the absence of that number of troops, reported Aganoor, the Governor had to rely on clever management; and to hope that no demonstration would attract great support.²⁶ The latter was a somewhat vain hope, for in Isfahān there were several influential religious leaders who were far from friendly towards Zill al-Sultān; and one of them in particular, Āqā Najafī, was to raise several large demonstrations in the city during the course of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh.

Najafī was a wealthy man whose family owned much land around Isfahān, and his influence was of long-standing. He had taken a leading part in the protests against the Tobacco Régie in 1891-2,²⁷ and he had also shared in the responsibility for the riots which had led to the death of several Bābīs in 1889.²⁸ It will be seen that persecution of the latter group was to be a recurrent feature in the history of Isfahān during this period.

23. F.O. 60:629. Enclosure in Durand to Salisbury, No.1, 18 January 1900.

24. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.8, 9 April 1898.

25. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.8, 9 April 1898.

26. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.8, 9 April 1898.

27. A.K.S. Lambton, *The Tobacco Régie: Prelude to Revolution I*, Studia Islamica 22 (1965), pp.141 and 144.

28. G.P. Churchill, Biographical Notices of Persian Statesmen and Notables, August 1905, Calcutta 1906, pp.52-3.

It was, however, the Jewish community which was the target of the first disturbances led by Najafī during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn; and this happened in the early months of 1898. Najafī issued a fatwā which forbade Muslims to purchase goods from Jewish traders and shopkeepers. It banned Jews from entering the bazaars in Isfahān, and it also prohibited Muslims from selling food to Jews. At this time there were about 1,000 Jewish shopkeepers and itinerant pedlars living in the city and their livelihood was seriously threatened.²⁹ The Governor was alarmed by the extent of the demonstrations against the Jews and by the accusations that were made at this time that members of that community were also guilty of witchcraft and immorality.³⁰ Zill al-Sultān told Aganoor that the only effective solution was for the government in Tehran to ensure the removal of Najafī and his two brothers, Shaykh Muhammad ^ʿAlī and Shaykh Nur ^ʿAllah from the city. They should be sent, said the Governor, either to Mashhad, or preferably out of the country.³¹ Zill al-Sultān regretted that he no longer had the power to carry out such an expulsion from Isfahān himself; and Aganoor confirmed that the religious leaders would not have dared to act as they were doing when the Governor had been at the height of his powers.³²

Zill al-Sultān appealed to the Ṣadr-i A^ʿẓam for additional troops to be sent from Tehran, but none were forthcoming. The Governor knew that he had insufficient men at his disposal to take decisive action, so he endeavoured instead to cause a division within the ranks of the religious classes by trying to increase the influence of the Imām Jum^ʿa

29. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.3, 31 January 1898.

30. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.3, 31 January 1898.

31. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.4, 5 February 1898.

32. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.4, 5 February 1898.

at the expense of Najafī and his brothers.³³ In May the Imām Jum'ā was to attempt to lift the restrictions on Jewish traders; but Najafī's followers continued to act in conformity with the original fatwa.³⁴

In April Zill al-Sultān went to Tehran and there sought the help of the Ṣadr-i A'zam.³⁵ By now another cause of discontent had arisen; namely that control of the customs posts at Kirmānshāh and Bushire had passed to agents of the Imperial Bank.³⁶ The Ṣadr-i A'zam sent a telegram to the religious leaders in Isfahān telling them that they should not concern themselves with matters relating to the Customs administration; but nothing was said about the discrimination against the Jews.³⁷ That activity continued in Isfahān, and it also spread to Tehran where a fatwa was issued forbidding Muslims to allow Jewish pedlars to enter their homes.³⁸ Durand said that a general recession in internal Persian commercial activity was the reason why these restrictions were being imposed on Jewish traders at that time.³⁹

In June 1898 Amīn al-Dawla fell from office and this event caused jubilation among many of the religious leaders and students in the madrasas of Isfahān.⁴⁰ When Zill al-Sultān returned from the capital in July he told Aganoor that he had been greatly dismayed by the weakness of the government in Tehran; and that he now knew that it was unlikely

33. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.10, 26 April 1898. Zill al-Sultān's particular aim was to try to increase the influence of the Imām Jum'ā over the students in the madrasas for that group took a very active part in almost all the demonstrations which involved the religious classes.

34. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.16, 26 May 1898.

35. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.13, 30 April 1898.

36. See Chapter IV of this thesis.

37. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.17, 26 May 1898.

38. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.74, 26 July 1899.

39. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.79, 27 July 1899.

40. F.O. 248:678. Aganoor to Durand, No.19, 11 June 1898.

that he would receive any support, or any soldiers, from there.⁴¹ By early September the situation in Isfahān had become somewhat calmer, for the agents of the Imperial Bank were no longer in charge of customs collection at Bushire and Kirmānshāh. The active persecution of the Jews too had begun to decline, but those Muslims who were beginning to trade with Jewish shopkeepers and pedlars were doing so secretly for fear of the wrath of Najafī.⁴²

The ban on Jewish traders was not the only example of ill-treatment of that community during 1898. A second case involved the Jews who collected Isfahān's night soil and made it into manure by mixing it with earth. On the land which was hired for this purpose a tax had been levied; but this was paid in kind by means of 4,000 donkey-loads of manure. That manure was sent to the village of Sīn, which was nominally khālisa (crown land), but which appears to have been owned by one of Zill al-Sultān's wives. The price of manure had apparently risen sharply from five shāhīs per load to about 30 shāhīs per load, since the tax had first been imposed. The bailiff of the village, however, was still insisting on receiving the full amount of manure though this was now worth more than six times the original cash value of the tax. The Jews appealed to the Shah who ordered Zill al-Sultān to carry out an investigation. When this had been completed it was discovered that orders had been given at an earlier date for the tax to be abolished, and that its continued collection was in fact illegal. Zill al-Sultān ordered that the tax should be reinstated, but that payment should in future be made by the annual delivery of 1,000 loads of manure.⁴³

41. F.O. 248:678. Aganoor to Durand, No.26, 4 July 1898.

42. F.O. 248:678. Aganoor to Durand, No.41, 3 September 1898.

43. F.O. 248:678. Aganoor to Durand, No.41, 3 September 1898.

(The importance of agriculture in the province of Isfahān and some of the difficulties which beset that activity will be considered later in this chapter.)

The third incident in 1898 involving the Jewish community occurred during September, and it serves as a reminder of the truth of Zill al-Sultān's view that there were fanatical groups among the population of Isfahān. The immediate cause of the disturbance was the discovery that a tract, justifying the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity, was circulating in the Jewish quarter. The tract was printed in the Persian language, but in Hebrew characters.⁴⁴ On September 6th the building belonging to the Society for the Promotion of Christianity among the Jews was set on fire,⁴⁵ and Durand⁴⁶ reported that the responsibility for this lay with a Muslim mob.

Five months later there was further unrest following an incident in which an English missionary, J.R. Garland, who taught at a school for Jewish boys, struck a young Muslim who had insulted him. Garland was quickly seized by an irate mob of Muslims who took him before Shaykh Muhammad 'Alī. The latter fined the missionary for hitting the boy. Zill al-Sultān was not in Isfahān at this time and the acting Governor, Rukn al-Mulk, was not a very firm official. There were further outbreaks of unrest, and on hearing of them the British Consul sent a telegram to Durand in Tehran asking that the Shāh should be requested to order Zill al-Sultān to return immediately to the city. This was done, and after the Governor's return the disturbances subsided.⁴⁸

44. F.O. 248:678. Aganoor to Durand, No.43, 28 September 1898.

45. F.O. 248:678. Aganoor to Durand, No.43, 28 September 1898.

46. F.O. 60:617. Durand to Salisbury, No.4, 18 January 1900.

47. F.O. 248:699. Preece to Durand, No.7, 25 February 1899.

48. F.O. 248:699. Preece to Durand, No.8, 26 February 1899. There is a report of this incident in W. Sparroy, *op.cit.*, pp.337-8, but the author gives the date of the incident as February 1898, when the affair in fact occurred in February 1899.

Shortly after the Garland incident Zill al-Sultān again expressed regret about the lack of troops at his disposal. He said that the situation was now worse than it had been the previous year; for he had been forced to use some of the men who were previously stationed in Isfahān as road-guards in the province. As a result he now had only 200 men with which to maintain the security of the city and its immediate neighbourhood. The Governor stated that the mullās for their part could quickly turn out a crowd of some 20,000 of their followers.⁴⁹ At another meeting with Preece a short time later, when preaching against Europeans was still taking place, Zill al-Sultān used one of the strongest terms of abuse available in Persian against Āqā Najafī and Shaykh Muhammad 'Alī. He said that they should both be sent to Karbalā: "For if you have a toothache you get the tooth taken out".⁵⁰

The most sustained campaign of persecution in Isfahān during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn, however, was directed not against the Jews or the Christians, but against the Bābīs. As has been noted, Najafī had played a leading part in the persecution of that group in 1889-1890, and his name was to figure prominently in many of the later incidents. During 1898 there was no violence against the Bābīs, but there was much preaching against them, particularly by Shaykh Murtadā Riżā, whom Aganoor described as the "mouthpiece of Najafī".⁵¹

49. F.O. 248:699. Preece to Durand, No.9, 26 February 1899.

50. F.O. 248:699. Preece to Durand, No.13, 9 March 1899. According to Preece, the Governor called the two religious leaders "pedarsukhtes", which implies that their father was such an evil man that he had gone to Hell after his death.

51. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.5, 1 March 1898.

In April 1899 anti-Bābī riots broke out at several places in the province, and many members of the Bābī community in Najafābād came into Isfahān and sent telegrams to Muzaffar al-Dīn requesting protection.⁵² In June there was further violence against the Bābīs and Zill al-Sultān imprisoned one of the leaders of that disturbance.⁵³ After this the city and its environs became quieter.

In the early months of 1900 the religious leaders in Isfahān paid less attention to the Bābīs for they were involved in protests against two other events which were causing discontent across the entire country. The first of these was the signature of the loan agreement with Russia in January. From this grew the feeling that was expressed in many mosques that the whole of Persia was being sold to Russia.⁵⁴ When a party of Russians passed through Isfahān during the summer, many of the population believed that their task was to inspect the property which the Tsar was rumoured to have purchased.⁵⁵ It is interesting to note, however, that some of Isfahān's merchants expressed a different view. While they regretted the "sale" of Persia to Russia, they believed that the Russians would be stern masters, indeed they would be preferable to the existing Persian government; for the Russians would be able to maintain law, order and security, and trade could then revive and flourish.⁵⁶

It was not long, however, before the merchants and the religious classes were united in protest. This time the source of the discontent was the introduction of new customs regulations and the wider employment

52. F.O. 248:699. Aganoor to Durand, No.24, 18 April 1898.

53. F.O. 248:699. Aganoor to Durand, No.32, 21 June 1898.

54. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Durand, No.2, 31 March 1900.

55. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.9, 18 June 1900.

56. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.9, 18 June 1900.

of Belgian officials in that branch of the bureaucracy. Leaders of both groups in Isfahān sent telegrams of protest to Tehran, and there was much agitation about this matter.⁵⁷ In July one of Najafī's brothers approached the British Vice-Consul and asked him, in great secrecy, if the population of a whole town or province could become British subjects: for, said the questioner, many of the religious leaders in Isfahān knew that Islam was respected in India under the British, while in the Caucasus the Russian government sought to oppress that religion and its adherents.⁵⁸

Such expressions of pro-British sentiment were very short-lived, and in August Āqā Najafī returned to a general condemnation of Europeans and their ways.⁵⁹ During the same month he referred, in a sermon, to recent events in China - the Boxer rebellion - in which Europeans had been killed, and he indicated that it might be necessary for Persia to follow such an example.⁶⁰ The arrival of a group of Persian Cossacks in Isfahān in early October caused considerable discussion. The men had been sent to act as bodyguards for Zill al-Sultān, but many rumours soon surrounded their arrival.⁶¹ Some members of the religious classes said that the troops were only the advance guard of a full Russian occupation force.⁶² Other rumours which gained credence at this time were that the Cossacks had arrived to arrest Zill al-Sultān and to take him to Tehran. A variation on this theme said that it was Āqā Najafī and his brothers who

57. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.10, 18 July 1900.

58. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.11 Confidential, 23 July 1900. The name of Najafī's brother is not given.

59. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.12, 25 July 1900.

60. F.O. 60:618. Spring Rice to Salisbury, No.87, 23 August 1900.

61. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.15, 3 November 1900.

62. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.15, 3 November 1900.

were to be arrested and expelled. A third rumour said that the troops had come to Isfahān to establish royal control over khālīṣa land which had been sold during the latter years of the reign of Nāsir al-Dīn Shāh.⁶³

The Bābīs did not escape attention in 1900, however, for when news of bread riots in Tehran during June and July reached Isfahān, Āqā Najafī said that the Bābīs were responsible for them and that their purpose was to foment unrest in Persia while Muzaffar al-Dīn was out of the country on his European visit.⁶⁴ In late November Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī died as a result of an accidental poisoning. Two European doctors, including Aganoor, were called to treat him, but he was unconscious when they arrived and nothing could be done for him. Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Alī's death occurred while the two European doctors were still with him, and rumours immediately circulated that it was they who had been responsible for his dying. The resulting tumult, however, was very brief and the period of mourning, together with the approach of Ramadān, brought a temporary calm to the city.⁶⁵ Shaykh Nūr ‘Allah did, however, approach Aganoor in December to ask if the rumours were true that Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh (who had recently returned from his visit to Europe) was about to introduce in Persia forms of government which he had observed during that journey. If this was so, said Shaykh Nūr ‘Allah, violent protests would certainly result unless the religious classes were first consulted and approved of the proposed changes.⁶⁶

63. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.15, 3 November 1900.

64. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.12, 25 July 1900.

65. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.16, 5 December 1900. The incident is also reported by the wife of the other doctor present, M.E. Hume-Griffith, Behind the Veil in Persia and Turkish Arabia, London 1909, pp.147-8. The poisoning had resulted from the accidental substitution of oil of bitter almonds for oil of sweet almonds. The latter was harmless, the former was fatal.

66. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.17, 6 December 1900.

Apart from the incidents mentioned above law and order in the city seem to have been quite good during 1899 and 1900, and security along the roads was not a major source of complaint. The only occasion on which robberies were reported in Isfahān was during October 1900 when Zill al-Sultān was out of the city on a shooting expedition.⁶⁷

The year 1901 began quietly largely because of the continued period of mourning for Shaykh Muhammad 'Alī. In the early months of the year several other leading members of the religious classes also died, and this too contributed to keeping the situation calm.⁶⁸ When news was received that the Russian government was to open a consulate in Bushire this was seen as further confirmation that Persia had indeed been sold to the Tsar.⁶⁹

In late March 1901, Zill al-Sultān wrote one of a series of personal letters in French to Hardinge, and in it indicated that he was aware that the power of the religious classes was very strong, and that he was still determined to prevent unfortunate events: "L'influence cléricale ici est fort redoutable cependant votre Excellence peut s'assurer que je ferais tous les efforts possibles pour éviter des complications malencontreuses."⁷⁰ In early April Shu'ā al-Saltāna passed through Isfahān on the way to take up his post as Governor of Fārs. The approach of his entourage of some 6,000 people quickly drove up the price of foodstuffs;

67. F.O. 248:723. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.15, 3 November 1900. Aganoor had noted in 1898 that the absence of Zill al-Sultān from the city usually resulted in a general reduction in the efficiency and vigour of local administration (F.O. 248:678, Aganoor to Durand, No.21, 25 June 1898).

68. F.O. 248:742. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.1, 5 January 1901.

69. F.O. 248:742. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.1, 5 January 1901.

70. F.O. 248:742. Enclosure in Preece to Hardinge, No.7, 28 March 1901.

but they declined again after that group had departed for the south.⁷¹
 (The matter of fluctuations in food prices will be considered later in this chapter.)

During 1901 there were several complaints from the merchants. Most of these arose from the fact that despite the introduction of the new customs administration under Belgian officials, the previous internal customs dues (which were supposed to have been abolished) were still being levied on trade in opium, tobacco, fruit, charcoal and sheep.⁷² The roads remained relatively secure throughout the year, but when the first caravan of the year used the Bakhtiyārī road after the snows melted, it was robbed.⁷³ Zill al-Sultān's troops were, however, able to recover most of the goods and all of the money which had been stolen.⁷⁴ In Isfahān itself, the Governor could not always enforce his will. On 8th July there was a disturbance in the main square when Zill al-Sultān sent a group of his servants to collect a debt owed by a sayyid. The students of Āqā Najafī came out of the nearby Masjid-i Shāh (Royal Mosque) where that mujtahid prayed and taught, and proceeded to defend the debtor. Zill al-Sultān's men had to withdraw without collecting the money, and Preece saw this as an ill omen for the future maintenance of law and order in the city.⁷⁵

During the summer there was a recrudescence of anti-Bābī activity, and in May 1901, two members of that sect were killed at Abarqūh.⁷⁶ In

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71. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge. No number, 30 March 1901, and No.16, 25 April 1901.
 72. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge. No number, 30 March 1901, and No.16, 25 April 1901.
 73. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 21 May 1901.
 74. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.24, 16 June 1901.
 75. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.26, 16 July 1901.
 76. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 21 May 1901.

June a Bābī was put to death in Najafābād and other members of the sect from that village sent a telegram to the British Minister in Tehran asking him to inform Muzaffar al-Dīn of their plight; for they thought that Hardinge was one of the few men who could make sure that their plea would actually reach the Shah.⁷⁷ By the end of the year security along the roads had begun to decline markedly.⁷⁸ (Crop failures and other agricultural matters were a major source of discontent in 1901 and 1902, and these will be treated later in this chapter.) At the end of the year Preece said that Zill al-Sultān was expressing much gloom about the prospects for Persia, and that he was urging the British Consul to recommend to Hardinge that the British government should take action to help save the country from collapse and dismemberment. Speaking of his own position with regard to the British authorities, Zill al-Sultān said, "I have often been smothered in their smoke but never warmed by their fire".⁷⁹ When Hardinge visited Isfahān in April 1901, Zill al-Sultān took the opportunity to tell the British Minister personally of his considerable doubts about both the future of Persia and his own continuation in office. Hardinge endeavoured to reassure him on the second matter, and he expressed the view that Zill al-Sultān was highly regarded by the Persian government for his great efforts in maintaining law and order in Isfahān, and for his firm handling of the religious classes there. Zill al-Sultān replied that it was precisely because he was a capable governor that he would be dismissed; adding that his local popularity and his wealth would also count against him.⁸⁰

77. F.O. 248:742. Hardinge to Preece, No.10, 7 August 1901.

78. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.50, 3 December 1901.

79. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.57 Confidential, 31 December 1901.

80. F.O. 60:650. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Confidential, No.74, 30 April 1901.

As well as having to cope with opposition by some of the most influential religious leaders in Isfahān, Zill al-Sultān was also faced, from 1902, with serious disputes within his own family. The intrigues which resulted involved the Russian Consul too, and they show how the internal problems of Persia became entangled with Anglo-Russian rivalry.

The most serious disputes were between Zill al-Sultān on the one hand, and his sister Bānū-yi Uzma and her sons on the other. One of those sons, Badī^c al-Mulk, held various posts in Zill al-Sultān's administration, and in the summer of 1902 he was involved in an obscure but rancorous dispute concerned with the sale of some grain. At an early stage of the affair one of Badī^c al-Mulk's servants was injured in a fight. Badī^c al-Mulk then sent a group of his men to seize those responsible for that attack. In a fracas those responsible for the initial incident were worsted, and they fled and took refuge in the Masjid-i Shāh, thereby involving Āqā Najafī in the matter. Badī^c al-Mulk's mother then sent some of her retainers to seize the grain which was the cause of the dispute, and which was stored in a village on the outskirts of Isfahān. The men sent to seize the grain were driven off by the villagers, who then appealed to prominent members of the religious classes in Isfahān for their support. There was a considerable ferment in the city and the bazaars were closed for several days on the orders of the religious leaders. Zill al-Sultān had no wish to increase the existing hostility of many members of the religious classes towards him, or to widen the extent of that antipathy, so he told his sister not to involve herself any further in the matter. He also gave orders that

no further attempts were to be made to recover the grain.⁸¹ Zill al-Sultān had also refused earlier in the year to involve himself when Bānū-yi Uzmā was in dispute with some sayyids over the ownership of a village called Sālārābād.⁸² These events caused much ill-feeling among Zill al-Sultān's family, and the consequences became quite serious during the two following years.

In the early months of 1903, Zill al-Sultān was not distracted by this matter for Badī^c al-Mulk and his mother were absent from Isfahān making a pilgrimage to Karbalā'. When they returned in late March they discovered that Zill al-Sultān had, during their absence, dismissed Badī^c al-Mulk from all the posts which he held. This caused great anger to Bānū-yi Uzmā,⁸³ and when Sārim al-Dawla, Badī^c al-Mulk's elder brother, was dismissed from command of one of the infantry regiments in Isfahān in June, the dispute became even more bitter.⁸⁴ As a result, Bānū-yi Uzmā began to enter into intrigues with the Russian Consul in the latter months of 1903 in order to try to get her brother dismissed from his governorship. When Zill al-Sultān was called to Tehran in January 1904, for a meeting of provincial governors to discuss plans for tax reform, Bānū-yi Uzmā and the Russian Consul took the opportunity to spread rumours that the province would soon have a new Governor, and that Zill al-Sultān would not be permitted to return from the capital.⁸⁵ In March Badī^c al-Mulk left for Tehran in a carriage provided by the Russian Consul, and it was widely believed that he was going to the capital to try to

81. F.O. 248:763. Preece to Hardinge, No.31, 16 July 1902.

82. F.O. 248:763. Preece to Hardinge, No.31, 16 July 1902.

83. F.O. 248:788. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.7, 25 March 1903.

84. F.O. 248:788. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.24, 13 June 1903.

85. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.8, 25 February 1904.

secure Zill al-Sultān's removal from office.⁸⁶ According to Aganoor both the Russian Consul and Sarīm al-Dawla tried to encourage people to make complaints to the Shāh against the administration of Zill al-Sultān; but the population of Isfahān was apparently reluctant to take any action until it was certain that a new Governor would be appointed.⁸⁷

The intrigues did not end with the return of Zill al-Sultān to Isfahān. In the autumn of 1904 he wrote to Hardinge telling the British Minister that his sister was continuing to keep in close touch with the Russian Consul.⁸⁸ Zill al-Sultān made various attempts at reconciliation with her during the latter months of 1904, but these were fruitless.⁸⁹ In January of the following year Bānū-yi Uzma announced that she would move to Tehran with her family. This caused personal distress to Zill al-Sultān for three of his daughters were married to three of his sister's sons, and he very much regretted their departure for the capital.⁹⁰ Zill al-Sultān was also alarmed by the likelihood of Bānū-yi Uzma continuing her intrigues against him at the court of Muzaffar al-Dīn, and he told Preece that he was sure that renewed machinations there would lead to his loss of office.⁹¹ The widespread belief that the Russians were involved in those intrigues was strengthened when it became known that Bānū-yi Uzma left her property in the charge of the Russian bank in Isfahan before she and her family departed for Tehran in February 1905.⁹² It would appear that this family dispute, and the intrigues which flowed

86. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.14, 21 March 1904.

87. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.17, 18 April 1904.

88. F.O. 248:787. Enclosure in Aganoor to Hardinge, No.54, 10 September 1904.

89. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.8, 28 January 1905.

90. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.8, 28 January 1905.

91. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.8, 28 January 1905.

92. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.8, 28 January 1905.

from it, did cause affliction to, and in some ways weaken the resolution of, Zill al-Sultān. It is at this time that he began to tell Preece of his wish to leave Isfahān and to visit Europe, and of a decline in his health.⁹³

These intrigues against Zill al-Sultān also involved the Bābīs, for the Russian Consul in Isfahān had sought complaints from them during 1904 about the administration of the Governor.⁹⁴ Members of that sect had begun to suffer renewed persecution in 1903. Serious unrest began on 23rd May that year when students of Āqā Najafī seized a man who was alleged to be a Bābī, and who was also accused of drunkenness. While the students were taking him to Āqā Najafī he escaped and made his way to the Russian Consulate.⁹⁵ (It was alleged at the time that the Russian Consul had been encouraging Bābīs to take refuge in that building.)⁹⁶ News of the incident spread rapidly, and 200 other Bābīs quickly made their way to the Russian Consulate; in which building they were soon besieged by an angry crowd of Najafī's followers. The Russian Consul, who had been out on a visit, was unable to enter the building on his return, and he went to complain to Zill al-Sultān. The Governor sent for Najafī and told him to disperse the crowds. This was done; but not before a Bābī had been killed and several others badly injured.⁹⁷ On 3rd June two wealthy merchants were seized and brought before another religious leader, Abū'l Qāsim Zanjānī, where they were accused of being Bābīs. The pair were handed over to the mob and dragged through the streets before being brutally killed. Aganoor reported that the fact that the religious leader in

93. F.O. 248:845. Enclosure in Aganoor to Hardinge, No.12, 22 February 1905.

94. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.21, 20 May 1904.

95. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.20, 6 June 1903.

96. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.20, 6 June 1903.

97. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.20, 6 June 1903.

question owed the two merchants some 1,300 tumāns was believed to have been the real reason for their seizure.⁹⁸

It was Aganoor's view that the fact that some of the Bābīs had identified themselves so openly with the Russian Consul had made the situation much worse for that sect, because the anti-Bābī movement could now draw on the strong anti-Russian sentiment which was prevalent in Isfahān.⁹⁹ Some of the religious leaders were reported to believe that because of the greater strength of the anti-Bābī movement, Zill al-Sultān would now be very reluctant to take effective measures to prevent further disturbances.¹⁰⁰ The Governor admitted to the British Vice-Consul that the only way to establish order would be to expel some of the most prominent leaders of the agitation, including Najafī and Zanjānī, but such a move would require strong support from Tehran, and Zill al-Sultān thought it unlikely that this would be forthcoming.¹⁰¹

By mid-July, active persecution of Bābīs had ceased in Isfahān,¹⁰² but disturbances of a similar nature soon began in Yazd where Jalāl al-Dawla, the eldest son of Zill al-Sultān, was the Governor. Najafī welcomed news of the disturbances in Yazd, and said that they were the result of

98. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.20, 6 June 1903.

99. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.26, 13 June 1903. Anti-Russian

100. feeling in the city had increased considerably as a result of the second loan agreement with Russia in 1902, F.O. 248, Preece to Hardinge, No.14, 26 March 1902. There had also been rumours circulating in Isfahān in January 1903 that the Persian government had leased Astarābād to Russia for a period of one hundred years, and these had caused much disquiet, F.O. 248:788, Aganoor to Hardinge, No.6, 27 January 1903.

100. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.26, 13 June 1903.

101. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.26, 13 June 1903.

102. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.30, 10 July 1903.

the people of Isfahān giving an effective lead.¹⁰³ The disturbances in Yazd and the surrounding district were more serious than those in Isfahān. It was believed that some 40 Bābīs were killed in the city. A similar number were also reported to have been murdered in the surrounding villages, with particularly serious outrages occurring at Taft.¹⁰⁴ Zill al-Sultān was able to raise a temporary force of infantry in Isfahān, and he sent it to Yazd.¹⁰⁵ Jalāl al-Dawla soon showed that he shared his father's ability to act firmly. At the end of July the Governor ordered the Imam Jum'ā of Yazd to make a pilgrimage to Karbalā for his part in the disturbances. In August Jalāl al-Dawla used some of the troops sent from Isfahān and led a military expedition against a number of the villages where Bābīs had been killed. One of the leaders of the movement in Taft was executed, and the houses of other participants in the violence there were razed to the ground. In other villages heavy fines were imposed on the inhabitants.¹⁰⁶

The severity of these outbreaks of violence had caused considerable alarm in Tehran, and several of the heads of foreign missions there, including Hardinge, had made strong representations to the Persian government about the outrages.¹⁰⁷ It was announced that a force of some five to ten thousand armed men, under the command of Nasr al-Saltana,

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103. According to Hardinge, Najafī had also sent emissaries in unsuccessful attempts to initiate anti-Bābī disturbances in Sultānābād, Qazvīn, Shīrāz and Tehran. (F.O. 60:666, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.102, Confidential, 9 July 1903.)
104. F.O. 248:802. Eldred (Yazd) to Hardinge. No number, 3 July 1903.
105. Zill al-Sultān had to borrow money from merchants in Isfahān to pay the men who joined this temporary force. (F.O. 60:666, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.101, Secret and Confidential, 6 July 1903.)
106. F.O. 248:802. Eldred (Yazd) to Hardinge. No number, 29 August 1903.
107. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne. Confidential No.102, 9 July 1903.

would be formed at a camp near Tehran, and that some of the men would then be sent to Isfahān and Yazd to maintain order.¹⁰⁸ This announcement caused much consternation to Najafī and his supporters;¹⁰⁹ showing perhaps that had Zill al-Sultān had a sufficient number of reliable troops at his disposal many of the disturbances in Isfahān might have been prevented. Aganoor reported that Najafī and his followers were making urgent enquiries as to what kind of man was Nasr al-Sultāna.¹¹⁰ The news that he had been a forceful Governor of Gilān was not well received. The Russian Consul in Isfahān again sought to undermine Zill al-Sultān's authority by stating that the purpose of the new force was to depose and arrest the Governor.¹¹¹ Other rumours, however, said that it was Najafī who was to be expelled from Isfahān. Aganoor wrote that the latter action would be welcomed by many members of the population; for Najafī and his family were known to have seized much land illegally and by force. It was the Vice-Consul's view that Najafī was feared rather than respected by many Muslims.¹¹²

On August 13th 1903, Amīn al-Sultān told Hardinge that the plan to send a force of men to Isfahān and Yazd had been abandoned; but he also said that the threat of sending troops had been sufficient to prompt Najafī to promise to come to Tehran to explain personally why the violence had occurred.¹¹³ Najafī had earlier told Amīn al-Sultān that to send

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108. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne. Confidential No.102, 9 July 1903. The force was to be formed to help restore law and order in two areas: in Isfahān and Yazd following the anti-Bābī riots, and in Āzarbāyjān after there had been violent demonstrations against the Belgian officials who were in charge of the Customs administration there. (For details of the situation in Āzarbāyjān see F.O. 60:666, Stevens (Tabriz) to Hardinge, No.7 Secret and Confidential, 25 June 1903.)
109. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.35 Confidential, 26 July 1903.
110. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.42, Confidential, 10 August 1903.
111. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.38, Confidential, 7 August 1903.
112. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.35, Confidential, 26 July 1903.
113. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126 Confidential, 17 August 1903.

troops to Isfahān on the scale that was being envisaged would greatly increase the price of foodstuffs' in the province; and that that would promote even greater discontent.¹¹⁴ In Isfahān, however, news of the cancellation of the despatch of the army had apparently not yet been received;¹¹⁵ but it was known that Najafī had agreed to go to the capital. He and his followers said that this promise had been made so that the mujtahid would be able personally to urge the authorities in the capital to take action against the Bābīs and against the growth of European influence in Persia.¹¹⁶ It is interesting to note that when news did reach Isfahān that the soldiers would not be coming to the city, Najafī immediately abandoned his plans to go to Tehran.¹¹⁷

At the end of August, Zill al-Sultān wrote privately to Hardinge asking him to approach Amīn al-Sultān as a matter of urgency, and to recommend that Najafī should be called to Tehran, and then sent on to either Mashhad or Karbalā.¹¹⁸ When it became known that Najafī had withdrawn his offer of going to Tehran, Aganoor reported that there was widespread disappointment, and some trepidation about the likely course of events in Isfahān. Aganoor too expressed the view that Hardinge should see Amīn al-Sultān; for the British Vice-Consul believed that Najafī did fear the central government, but that Amīn al-Sultān probably did not realise that this was so. In Aganoor's view, it was necessary to act while Najafī still held the government in some awe.¹¹⁹ In September, Zill al-Sultān

114. F.O. 60:666. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.126 Confidential, 17 August 1903.

115. At this time the Shah was away from the capital on a hunting expedition at Fashand, north of Tehran, and Hardinge had heard the news of the cancellation of the plan when he had visited the camp.

116. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.44 Confidential, 14 August 1903.

117. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.47, 27 August 1903.

118. F.O. 248:787. Enclosure in Aganoor to Hardinge, No.49, 30 August 1903.

119. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.53, 9 September 1903.

wrote to Hardinge again recommending that Najafī should be called to Tehran as quickly as possible.¹²⁰ Aganoor pointed out at the end of the year that recent deaths among the religious classes, particularly that of the Imām Jum'a of Isfahān meant that the influence of Najafī and his brothers was now even greater than it had previously been.¹²¹

As has been seen above, the issue of Najafī's removal from Isfahān involved the great powers. These wider aspects of the matter were known to the population of Isfahān, for the Russian Consul was spreading rumours that Zill al-Sultān would be removed as Governor, and that Britain would not be able to protect him.¹²² In Tehran too, the wider implications of the issue were also obvious. It was rumoured in the capital that Zill al-Sultān had been responsible for instigating the unrest in July in order both to embarrass Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh, and to provide an excuse for Britain to land troops in southern Persia, and to send them north to Isfahān.¹²³

After orders had been sent from the government in Tehran, Najafī finally left for the capital on 12 October, but rumours soon began to circulate that his absence would be brief.¹²⁴ Zill al-Sultān had earlier expressed the fear that if he was not sent on from Tehran to a suitable holy city, then his prestige would be increased.¹²⁵ Aganoor reported that the rumours of Najafī's speedy return had been put about by his relatives; for as soon as it was known that he really had departed for

120. F.O. 248:787. Enclosure in Aganoor to Hardinge, No.54, 10 September 1903.

121. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.77, 29 December 1903.

122. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.38 Confidential, 7 August 1903.

123. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.42 Confidential, 10 August 1903.

124. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.74, 3 December 1903.

125. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.49, 30 August 1903.

Tehran, many villagers had set about trying to reclaim the land which had been taken from them.¹²⁶ Other rumours circulated to the effect that Najafī would soon return because he would cause great trouble in Tehran; and that the central government would then want to get him out of the capital as quickly as possible, the easiest course of action would be to let him return to Isfahān.

In January 1904, both Zill al-Sultān and Jalāl al-Dawla were called to Tehran, along with all other provincial governors, to take part in discussions on plans to reform the taxation system. When that news was known in Isfahān rumours immediately began to circulate that the two men would be going to the capital in disgrace, and that they would not return to their posts.¹²⁸ When Najafī did not return to Isfahān in the early months of the year there were renewed rumours that he was indeed to be sent to Mashhad, and Aganoor reported that they were widely welcomed by many members of the religious classes who did not belong to his family.¹²⁹

At this time the Church Missionary Society's hospital was under construction, and in March one of Najafī's sons, Āqā Kamāl, spoke out against it and against schools run by Europeans.¹³⁰ The latter was to be a recurrent theme in the agitations of 1904. When Zill al-Sultān heard in Tehran of the activities of Āqā Kamāl, he sent strongly worded telegrams to him ordering him to desist from such activities, and some of Zill al-Sultān's troops expelled from the city a sayyid who had been praising Najafī.¹³¹ In early May, the news circulated that Najafī would

126. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.78, 29 December 1903.

127. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.78, 29 December 1903.

128. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.8, 25 February 1904.

129. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.9, 26 February 1904.

130. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.14, 21 March 1904.

131. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.17, 18 April 1904.

certainly be returning to the city, and Aganoor reported that his relatives and followers thereafter became much bolder in condemning the activities of Europeans in Persia.¹³² Later that month it became known that Zill al-Sultān would be returning as Governor, and that the intrigues of the Russian Consul and Bānū-yī Uzmā, mentioned above, had failed. When this news was known, Āqā Kamāl said that the Governor's return was due to his father's intervening on behalf of Zill al-Sultān with the Šadr-i A'zam.¹³³ Najafī returned to Isfahān on May 30th, and Zill al-Sultān arrived three days later.¹³⁴

The next few months were relatively quiet, and this was largely due to the approach of cholera; initially from the north, and later from the south.¹³⁵ When the disease broke out in the city, Najafī said that it was a divine punishment inflicted because some Muslims had been sending their children to Christian schools.¹³⁶ He returned to this theme in February 1905, when he said that cholera would return to the province if those schools were allowed to remain open, and that the first victims of the disease would then be the parents who had permitted their children to attend those schools.¹³⁷

Missionary schools were far from being the only object of criticism by Najafī in 1904 and 1905.¹³⁸ In those years he and several other members of the religious classes in Isfahān, returned to the issue of growing Belgian involvement in the government of Persia. As has already

132. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.20, 18 May 1904.

133. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.20, 18 May 1904.

134. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.23, 13 June 1904.

135. See Chapter V of this thesis.

136. F.O. 248:820. Preece to Hardinge, No.41, 7 September 1904.

137. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.13, 25 February 1904.

138. The agitation against missionary schools was not confined to Isfahān. There were serious protests against the CMS school in Yazd in December 1905. (See, F.O. 248:845, Baggaley (Yazd) to Preece, No.16, 12 December 1905.)

been noted many merchants had raised objections in 1901 to the continued imposition of internal taxes on trade after these were supposed to have been abolished.¹³⁹ There were renewed protests about the existence of such imposts in the province in 1905.¹⁴⁰ In 1903 there had been vociferous opposition in Isfahān, as in many other Persian towns and cities, to the suggestions that the land-tax should be re-assessed; and that its collection should thereafter be placed in Belgian hands.¹⁴¹ In January 1905, Najafī claimed that it was his opposition which had prevented the implementation of a proposal by Naus that stamp duty should be paid to the government when certain types of document were signed.¹⁴²

It was, however, over an aspect of the Belgian presence in Persia that Zill al-Sultān and Najafī found themselves, for once, in agreement. The issue concerned the attitude and behaviour of the Belgian who was in charge of the postal service in Isfahān, L. Lavachery.¹⁴³ The reasons for the opposition to that man were different in each case. Najafī and certain other members of the religious classes objected to European control of the postal service as such, and they went on to accuse Lavachery of employing Bābis.¹⁴⁴ As opposition to him grew, Lavachery had notices

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139. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.16, 25 April 1901.
 140. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.32, 15 July 1905, and F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Grant Duff, No.56, 21 October 1905.
 141. F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.5, 24 February 1903, and see also F.O. 60:665, Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.41, Very Confidential, 30 March 1903. Aganoor explained that one of the reasons why many members of the religious classes objected to the proposal was that they owned much land and did not want to have to pay higher taxes.
 142. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.7, 26 January 1901.
 143. The postal service had been given into the charge of Naus in 1903 (see A. Destrée, Les Fonctionnaires Belges au Service de la Perse 1898-1915, Tehran-Liege 1976, p.79).
 144. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.11, 15 January 1905.

posted around the city warning its inhabitants not to interfere with the postal service, or with its employees. The Belgian official had not consulted Zill al-Sultān before those notices appeared, and the Governor objected most strongly to what had been done, and to the way in which his position had been ignored.¹⁴⁵ Zill al-Sultān had earlier aroused Lavachery's resentment when he had imprisoned a Persian who worked for the Post after that man had been found guilty of being drunk.¹⁴⁶

Preece believed that Lavachery's behaviour was, at the very least, insensitive; but he did not accept the view, which was apparently widely held in Isfahān, that the man was mentally unhinged. In March the British Consul reminded Hardinge that anti-European feeling in Isfahān was already very high, and he feared that a tactless act by Lavachery would have serious consequences.¹⁴⁷ This was an accurate prediction; for in May, when men employed by Lavachery raided some shops and seized and destroyed aniline dyes which were on sale, there was a considerable commotion.¹⁴⁸ The religious classes, under Najafī's leadership, sent telegrams to their colleagues in Tehran and Shīrāz asking for support in the protest about Lavachery's action. Many of the merchants asked their agents in Bushire and Shīrāz not to forward goods to Isfahān while he remained in the city. Zill al-Sultān sent frequent, and increasingly urgent, messages to Tehran asking the authorities there

145. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.11, 15 February 1905.

146. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.11, 15 February 1905.

147. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.14, 5 March 1905.

148. The importation of aniline dyes was prohibited at this time, and Lavachery, as well as being in charge of postal services, also acted as an agent of the customs administration in Isfahān. See J.G. Lorimer, Gazetteer of the Persian Gulf, 'Omān and Central Arabia, Calcutta 1915, I, p.2603.

to recall the Belgian official.¹⁴⁹ This was finally done in June,¹⁵⁰ but the agitation had by then become much wider in its scope, and one or two of the more fanatical religious leaders had begun to call for violent protests against all Europeans who were living in Persia.¹⁵¹

The recall of Lavachery brought a temporary period of relative calm; but fears of violence against Europeans persisted throughout most of 1905. One of the major reasons for this was the news of the massacres of Muslims which were taking place in southern Russia. Isfahān was a particularly sensitive city in this respect because it had a large Armenian population; and Armenians were believed to have been responsible for many of the attacks on Muslims in the Caucasus.¹⁵² The Shāh and his ministers were very alarmed about the possibility of violent protests in Persia; and both Muzaffar al-Dīn and Mushīr al-Dawla (the Persian Foreign Minister) wrote personally to Zill al-Sultān telling him of the need to take special precautions to maintain order in the city.¹⁵³

This was no easy task, for Zill al-Sultān continued to lack troops, and two of the most turbulent leaders of the anti-Bābī riots of 1902 and 1903 returned from exile to Isfahān in November 1904, and January 1905 respectively.¹⁵⁴ On neither occasion was Zill al-Sultān informed of their

149. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.26, 20 May 1905.

150. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.36, 17 July 1905.

151. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.26, 20 May 1905.

152. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.35, 16 July 1905.

153. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, Confidential, No.41, 10 August 1905.

154. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.53, 2 December 1904, and F.O. 248:845. Precece to Hardinge, No.11, 15 February 1905. The second man to return was Abul Qāsim Zanjanī. The first man's name is illegible in the despatch. When he returned to Isfahān some friends are reported to have told him that he looked older, and that his beard was greyer, than when he had been made to leave Isfahān in 1903. He replied that he hoped it would not be long before his beard was dyed with the blood of Bābīs (F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.53, 2 December 1904.)

impending return and he told Preece that had he had sufficient troops at his disposal he would have expelled both men from the city.¹⁵⁵

Violence against the Bābīs began again in late March 1905, when a member of that sect was shot and killed in Najafābād. The first group of troops sent there by Zill al-Sultān was unable to carry out its task of arresting the man responsible, and it was only when members of the Cossack Brigade were sent to Najafābād that that object was achieved.¹⁵⁶ The arrest of the alleged culprit caused an agitation in Isfahān and Najafī said he should be released because it was no crime to kill a Bābī.¹⁵⁷

Preece reported at this time that Najafī and his followers now felt free to act almost without restraint, for nearly all the other leading members of the religious classes in Isfahān had died, and he had become without any doubt the most influential figure.¹⁵⁸ A further factor which apparently increased his sense of freedom of action was that he was no longer afraid of being summoned to the capital. It was widely believe, reported Preece, that Najafī had paid a large bribe to 'Ayn al-Dawla while he had been in Tehran in the early months of 1904; and that by this means he had secured a promise of immunity from further action by the central government.¹⁵⁹

155. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.11, 15 February 1905.

156. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.19, 2 April 1905. The members of the Cossack Brigade used on this occasion were those who usually formed the Governor's personal bodyguard.

157. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.19, 2 April 1905.

158. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 20 April 1905.

159. F.O. 248 845. Preece to Hardinge, No.7, 26 January 1905.

The British Consul's and Vice-Consul's reports during 1905, however, provide evidence of some opposition within Isfahān to Najafī and his activities. Preece noted a growing number of complaints against the manner by which he and some members of his family were continuing to acquire land.¹⁶⁰ Opposition by some of the religious classes was also to be seen in January 1905 when the mujtahid sent some of his students to take possession of a mosque which had previously been regarded as in the charge of the Imām Jum'ā.¹⁶¹ This incident caused considerable unrest during which Najafī endeavoured to have the bazaars closed. Preece reported that the heads of various guilds refused to co-operate with him over this and that trade was conducted normally and without interruption.¹⁶² Meanwhile, Zill al-Sultān continued to urge that Najafī and his brothers should be sent to some distant holy city.¹⁶³

While Najafī's power and influence appeared to grow, that of Zill al-Sultān seems to have declined. He did not receive any additional troops, and the roads throughout the province were not as safe in 1904 and 1905, as they had been earlier.¹⁶⁴ Zill al-Sultān's fears that his sister Banū-yi Uzma, would enter into intrigues against him in Tehran soon proved to be correct.¹⁶⁵ Those intrigues became so serious that Zill al-Sultān feared that he would not retain office in March when provincial

160. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 20 April 1905.

161. The previous Imām Jum'ā had died in late November 1903, and the post had then passed to his son who was aged only 12. (F.O. 248:787. Aganoor to Grant Duff, No.77, 29 December 1903.)

162. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.7, 26 January 1905.

163. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.7, 26 January, 1905, and F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.33, Confidential, 15 July 1905.

164. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.36, 17 July 1905.

165. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.12, 22 February 1905.

governorships were reviewed. He therefore sent one of his sons, together with a trusted servant (his Munshī-Bāshī) to the capital, there to defend his interests.¹⁶⁶ Zill al-Sultān did manage to retain his post,¹⁶⁷ but from later reports it is clear that his sense of insecurity was growing in 1905, and that he was less vigorous as a Governor than he had been in the past.¹⁶⁸ During the summer of 1905, his health began to deteriorate, and in late October he left for a long visit to Europe with two of his favourite sons.¹⁶⁹

While Zill al-Sultān was away, the Munshī-Bāshī acted as Governor, but he was not a resolute administrator.¹⁷⁰ News of the disturbances in Fārs in November and December 1905, caused unrest in the city, and in 1906 there was renewed agitation against the activities of the Church Missionary Society.¹⁷¹ By the time Zill al-Sultān returned to Isfahān the influence of Najafī and his brother Shaykh Nūr 'Allāh had become even greater.¹⁷² Events in Tehran leading up to the granting of the Constitution were followed with great interest, and contributed to a general sense of excitement and restlessness. After a prolonged period of renewed turbulence, Zill al-Sultān was finally dismissed as Governor of Isfahān on March 7th, 1907.

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166. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.19, 2 April 1905. (Appointments were generally reviewed or changed at the beginning of the year, and this was in March - 20th, 21st or 22nd.)
167. F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.22, 24 April 1905.
168. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.36, 17 July 1905, and F.O. 248:845. Preece to Grant Duff, No.55, 4 October 1905.
169. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Grant Duff, No.58, 4 November 1905.
170. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Grant Duff, No.58, 4 November 1905, and F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Grant Duff, No.77, 12 December 1905.
171. F.O. 248:866. Grant Duff to Grey, No.11, 4 January 1906.
172. F.O. 248:866. Grant Duff to Grey, No.60, 30 January 1906, and F.O. 248:866. Grant Duff to Grey, No.80, 10 February 1906.

One other important source of discontent in Isfahān which calls for attention is the rising price of basic foodstuffs. The frequency and quite detailed nature of consular reports during this period make it possible to recognize two distinct, but related aspects of that issue: short-term, and sometimes very sharp, fluctuations; and a longer-term trend of rising prices which is discernable throughout the whole of Muzaffar al-Dīn's reign. For example, in 1897/98, the lowest price quoted in the consular reports for wheat is 60 qirāns per kharvār, and for bread, 27 shāhīs per mann.¹⁷³ The highest prices for that year were 100 qirāns per kharvār for wheat, and 40 shāhīs per mann for bread.¹⁷⁴ By 1905/6, the lowest recorded price for wheat was 100 qirāns per kharvār, and for bread 40 shāhīs per mann.¹⁷⁵ The highest figures were 122 qirāns per kharvār for wheat, and 46 shāhīs per mann for bread.¹⁷⁶

The causes of these two sets of changes are usually different, but they are sometimes linked. The short-term fluctuations were often seasonal; grain was usually in short supply, and more expensive, at the period just before the harvest, even if there had been no hoarding. Other factors giving rise to short-term fluctuations were natural circumstances, such as climatic variations (a great proportion of a crop might fail in a particular year); or attack by pests. If such circumstances prevailed for more than one growing season, they were likely to have an impact on the long-term price, as well as giving rise to short-term fluctuations.

173. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.24, 2 June 1898.

174. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.50, 8 December 1898.

175. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Durand, No.26, 20 May 1905.

176. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Durand, No.77, 30 December 1905.

There is a third category of causes of such fluctuations, and these can best be described as deriving from an unusually high demand for, or a shortage in the supply of, food. Either of these factors could be actual or potential. The arrival in Isfahān of Shuʿāʿal-Saltāna and his large entourage in April 1901 has already been noted as having just such an effect. The possibility of a large number of troops being sent to the province in the late autumn of 1903 had similar consequences. In the first case prices rose rapidly, and they declined with equal speed after Shuʿāʿal-Saltāna and his men had left the city for the south.¹⁷⁷ In the second case the rise in prices was less sharp;¹⁷⁸ but the decline too was slower, and prices did not approach their previous levels until it was absolutely certain that troops would not be sent to the province.¹⁷⁹ During periods of unrest and violence, prices could often go up steeply and suddenly. This was usually a result of high demand arising from panic buying; or of difficulties in procuring grain supplies, either because of the closure of the bazaars, or because of an unwillingness on the part of those who held grain to release their stocks. The highest recorded prices which are to be found in the British consular reports from Isfahān during this period occur during the time of the anti-Bābī riots in July and August 1903. Under normal circumstances, grain and bread were at their cheapest at that time of the year, for the harvest was in; but in 1903, although crops had been quite good, wheat still cost 155 qirāns per kharvār, and bread was 60 shāhīs per mann, at the height of the disturbances.¹⁸⁰ On occasion, even the rumour of potential

177. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.16, 25 April 1901.

178. F.O. 248:742. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.42, Confidential, 10 August 1903.

179. F.O. 248:742. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.65, 8 October 1903.

180. F.O. 248:763. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.43, 13 August 1903.

shortages was sufficient to cause a temporary increase in prices.¹⁸¹

The importance of agriculture in Isfahan was very great. The province enjoys considerable natural advantages for this activity as it lies in a well-watered and fertile basin between the eastern slopes of the Zagros mountains and the central desert. The climate is regarded as one of the best in Persia, but, as will be seen, it can also be capricious. There is no reason to believe that the climate during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn was greatly different than at other times, or that pests were any less or any more active; and similar patterns of crop damage and failure to those described below have almost certainly existed throughout much of the history of Persia.

The early years of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn seem to have been relatively free from any such climatic vagaries or from serious attack by pests. Snow and rainfall were at a relatively low level during the winter of 1899/1900, and precipitation was even more deficient the following winter. During the autumn and winter of 1900/1901 weevils caused considerable losses to grain which was in store.¹⁸² The opium crop of 1901 suffered from the shortage of water,¹⁸³ and in the same year late frosts did much harm to fruit trees.¹⁸⁴ That year was also a bad one for the tobacco harvest, as high winds and rain in the autumn did much damage to the plants.¹⁸⁵ In the same year the sunn pest greatly reduced

181. F.O. 248:699. Preece to Durand, No.14, 9 March 1899.

182. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.16, 25 April 1901.

183. F.O. 248:742. Aganoor to Spring Rice, No.5, 27 February 1901.

184. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.30, 13 August 1901.

185. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.42, 16 October 1901.

the wheat harvest.¹⁸⁶ In 1902 sunn continued to affect that crop, but not as badly as in 1901, and most of the damage was confined to the area around Linjān.¹⁸⁷ In 1903, the tobacco crop again suffered great damage as a result of high winds and rain in the autumn.¹⁸⁸ The winter of 1904/5 was both long and cold, and this did great harm to the opium and barley crops, as well as to vines and almond trees.¹⁸⁹

The most significant of the factors mentioned above appears to have been the partial drought following low winter precipitation from 1899 to 1901. The impact of this is noticeable, not only on harvest levels, but also on the later processing of food; for mills relied on water power, and when the Zāyanda Rūd was low, then output of flour was considerably reduced.¹⁹⁰

One of the reasons most frequently mentioned in reports of short-term price fluctuations was the hoarding of stocks. The object of those who held grain was usually to obtain the maximum possible price, and some tried to achieve this by restricting supplies which went to market. In this matter Najafī and his family were the object of much

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186. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 21 May 1901. The pest in question is referred to in various British sources as sin, senn and sunn. The latter variant is that given by B.A. Keen, The Agricultural Development of the Middle East, London 1946, p.70., who also provides the insect's Latin name: Eurygaster Entegriceps. The insect sucks the sap of the plant and attacks many cereals, particularly wheat.
187. F.O. 248:763. Preece to Des Graz, No.31, 16 July 1902.
188. F.O. 248:788. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.65, 8 October 1903.
189. F.O. 248:845. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.36, 17 July 1905, and F.O. 248:845. Preece to Hardinge, No.19, 2 April 1905.
190. F.O. 248:699. Schneider to Durand, No.37, 26 August 1899, and F.O. 248:763. Preece to Des Graz, No.31, 16 July 1902.

criticism. For example, in August 1898 a large crowd of women assembled outside Najafī's house, which was near the Masjid-i Shāh, and accused him of responsibility for keeping grain prices high. In order to placate them he ordered that some of his grain should be sold at a price of 50 qirāns per kharvār (the current price in the bazaar was about 80 qirāns per kharvār); but Aganoor said that the mujtahid had sold only a very small amount at this price, though his stores of grain were known to be the largest in the province.¹⁹¹ Earlier that year Najafī had been involved in an attempt to drive up the price of meat. He is reported to have delivered a judgment that certain mutton had not been slaughtered in the correct manner, and that therefore Muslims could not eat it. The butchers declared a strike against this judgment and meat was, for a short time, very scarce and very expensive. Aganoor noted that many members of the population had observed that Najafī, who owned large herds of sheep, had not had any of his own animals slaughtered to help reduce the price.¹⁹² In December 1898, anonymous placards appeared around the city which condemned Najafī for his part in grain hoarding.¹⁹³ When the mujtahid left Isfahān for Tehran in the autumn of 1903, one of the reasons for relief among the population was a hope that there would then be less grain hoarding, and that prices would therefore fall.¹⁹⁴

There were, however, other causes apart from hoarding which were responsible for the high price of grain and bread in Isfahān. The prices for grain which prevailed in neighbouring provinces - particularly

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191. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.40, 27 August 1898.
 192. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.5, 1 March 1898.
 193. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.50, 8 December 1898.
 194. F.O. 248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.17, 18 April 1904.

in Fārs and Yazd - were often even higher than in Isfahān, and this encouraged an export trade. There were many complaints in Isfahan in the early summer of 1898 that, despite very good harvest prospects, wheat was still expensive and there were minor riots over this in late June.¹⁹⁶ In August Aganoor confirmed that the harvest had indeed been a good one, but he reported that those who held grain were looking for the most profitable market. Najafī had sent much grain to Yazd the previous year, and he was waiting to see whether prices would be high there again in 1898.¹⁹⁷ Zill al-Sultān was alarmed by the high prices, and took several steps to try to reduce them. He sent telegrams to Tehran requesting permission to forbid the export of grain from the province in the hope that this would force hoarders to sell their stocks in the city.¹⁹⁸ This request was refused, and Aganoor believed that this was because the holders of grain had exercised influence in the capital to be allowed to export it if they so wished.¹⁹⁹ In the autumn, some 4,000 kharvārs of wheat were sent from Isfahān to Yazd.²⁰⁰ Other agricultural products too were exported at this time to markets where prices were higher, and there are reports of clarified butter being sent to Tehran from Isfahān.²⁰¹ A further complication was caused by the fact that growers of wheat in outlying areas - such as Sultānābād, Gulpāyagān, Chahār Mahāll, Burūjird and Khumayn - who had previously sent most of their harvest to Isfahān, had now realized that they could get better prices by sending their produce direct to Fārs and Yazd, and

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195. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.38, 24 August 1898.
 196. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.22, 26 June 1898.
 197. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.38, 24 August 1898.
 198. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.39, 25 August 1898.
 199. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.39, 25 August 1898.
 200. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.48, 3 November 1898.
 201. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.50, 8 December 1898.

this too reduced the level of supplies available in the city.²⁰² It was Zill al-Sultān's view, with which Aganoor agreed, that there was no absolute shortage of grain after the 1898 harvest; and that it was hoarding and exports that were responsible for the high prices which prevailed. The Governor gave orders in late October 1898 that the maximum price of wheat should be 80 qirāns per kharvār, and that bread should be sold at 30 shāhīs per mann. But the order was not effective, and only very poor quality wheat, often adulterated with earth, was to be had at 80 qirāns per kharvār. The best wheat cost 110 qirāns per kharvār, and average quality wheat was priced at 100 qirāns per kharvār. This represented an increase of some 80 per cent since the spring, and much hardship resulted.²⁰³

In considering the apparent long-term increase in prices several causes can be recognized. One of these was a change in the pattern of cultivation with a move away from wheat and barley to more remunerative crops, particularly opium and tobacco.²⁰⁴ This was not an innovation in the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh for the change was under way during the latter years of his father's rule. One traveller noted in 1890 that Zill al-Sultān had given orders that anyone growing opium had to devote one part of his land to cereals for every four which were given over to poppies in order to maintain grain supplies.²⁰⁵ The change in crop patterns did not have serious consequences when harvests were good; but when yields of grain were poor, then shortages did result from such a

202. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.38, 24 August 1898. In later years there seems to have been less trade in grain with Fars and Yazd. It is possible that this was because of the increasing insecurity on the roads, but this is speculation.

203. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.50, 8 December 1898.

204. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.38, 24 August 1898.

205. I.L. Bird, Journeys in Persia and Kurdistan, I, London 1891, p.267.

shift in cultivation; and this too helped to increase prices in 1904.²⁰⁶ Preece cited heavy speculation in opium as one of the reasons for higher food prices, and for a consequent reduction in the purchasing power of the bulk of the population.²⁰⁷

One other long-term factor was also important, and that was a change in the pattern of land ownership. Again these changes did not begin in the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn, but were a well-established feature of Nasir al-Dīn's rule.²⁰⁸ Put at its simplest, what had happened was that some of the land which had previously been khālisa (crown land), had become virtually the property of the peasants who worked on it. They had to sell part of their harvest regularly in order to pay their annual taxes. Much of that land had later been bought by members of the religious classes, and by members of Zill al-Sultān's family. These people had less difficulty in avoiding, or at least postponing, the payment of their taxes. This meant that the new owners did not have to sell the harvest to meet immediate financial needs, and they could therefore afford to keep the grain in store until its price increased.²⁰⁹ Indeed in some cases the new owners also purchased part of the peasantry's share of the harvest, and this too increased their stocks and potential influence over the market.²¹⁰

206. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.38, 24 August 1898.

207. Preece Report for the Years 1901-1903 on the Trade of Ispahan and District, Cd.2236-49, in Parliamentary Sessional Papers: Accounts and Papers 1905, Volume LXXXI, p.3.

208. On this issue see A.K.S. Lambton, Landlord and Peasant in Persia, London 1969, pp.153-4, and same author, Khālisa in Encyclopaedia of Islam, Leiden (in progress) IV, p.979.

209. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.38, 24 August 1898.

210. F.O. 248:676. Aganoor to Durand, No.38, 24 August 1898.

One final matter concerning agriculture which should be noted, for it caused much discontent and resentment against Zill al-Sultān, was the diversion of waters from the Zāyanda Rūd during 1901. As has been noted, winter precipitation in 1899-1900 was low, and similar circumstances prevailed the following year. Complaints began to be heard in May 1901 that canals near Isfahān were drying up, and that all the water from the river was being diverted in the district of Linjān to the west.²¹¹ The regulation of waters of that river is a complex matter,²¹² but from consular reports it is clear that at this period in the history of Persia, water was expected to flow from Linjān into Isfahān until at least the end of the first week in June. In 1901 very little water indeed was reaching Isfahān from the end of the first week in May.²¹³ The man responsible for this diversion of water was the Mullā Bāshī who rented many of the villages in the Linjān area, and who had control of the river's waters.²¹⁴ No water at all was reaching crops east of Isfahān from early May, and considerable hardship was caused to cultivators in that area. The Mullā Bāshī was prepared to sell water; but the price was very high, and many of the crops grown to the east of Isfahān were ruined.²¹⁵

The reason given by the Mullā Bāshī for the diversion of water was that almost all of the wheat crop in the Linjān district had been

211. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 21 May 1901.

212. See A.K.S. Lambton, *The Regulation of the Waters of the Zāyande Rūd*, *Bulletin of the School of Oriental (and African) Studies*, 9, (1939), pp.663-673.

213. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 21 May 1901.

214. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 21 May 1901.

215. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.24, 16 June 1901.

destroyed by sunn pest; and that the rice crop was now even more important for the inhabitants of the district. The water level in the river was very low because of insufficient precipitation during the two previous winters, and all the water in the river was needed to save the rice, according to the Mullā Bāshī.²¹⁶ Zill al-Sultān seems to have done very little about this matter, and complaints against him were widespread. These came not only from the cultivators whose crops had been ruined; but also from the population of Isfahān, as water for domestic purposes had to be brought into the city from outlying villages.²¹⁷ The effects of this diversion continued to be felt for the rest of the year, for very little water reached districts to the east of the city before late November, and although the land there had been ploughed in preparation, the water arrived too late for many grain crops to be sown.²¹⁸ In 1902 the river flowed normally, for there was quite good precipitation in the winter of 1901/2, but many cultivators in the areas to the east of Isfahān lost most of their crops for 2 years as a result of the Mullā Bāshī's action.²¹⁹

In conclusion then, it can be seen that the people of Isfahān, be they living in villages or in the city, had to face many hardships during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn. It appears that Zill al-Sultān did, on the whole, try to maintain law and order and to govern with vigour. He suffered from a lack of troops, and he received little support from the central authorities. Indeed, intrigues against him in Tehran, and

216. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.21, 21 May 1901.

217. F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.26, 16 July 1901, and F.O. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.30, 13 August 1901. It is possible that the reason for Zill al-Sultān's apparent inactivity over this issue is related to the fact that the Mullā Bāshī rented much land from the Governor; but whether Zill al-Sultān owned land at Linjān is not clear from the sources used (see F.O.248:820. Aganoor to Hardinge, No.6, 1 February 1904).

218. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.44, 8 November 1901.

219. 248:742. Preece to Hardinge, No.50, 3 December 1901.

divisions within his own family, were responsible for deflecting a considerable part of his energies from the tasks of government.

Isfahān was also the home of another vigorous man - the influential religious leader Āqā Najafī; and there were many targets against which he could turn fanatical elements in the population. Anglo-Russian rivalry, the increasing employment of Belgian officials in Persia, news of circumstances abroad, and the credulity attached to rumours - all of these played a part in the unfolding pattern of events. In many ways the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn forms almost the final chapter in the history of the decline of Zill al-Sultān. That process had begun in 1888, but the Prince continued to show a capacity to rule firmly. It is clear, however, that he was losing authority in the latter years of his governorship, and that it was this lack of power rather than defects of personality which prevented him from ruling as he would have liked. It is not difficult to imagine Zill al-Sultān agreeing, at the end of his period in office, with the sentiments of the poet whose lines were quoted at the opening of this chapter.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

"Justice requires power, intelligence and will."

Leonardo da Vinci.

Notebooks of Leonardo da Vinci, arranged,
rendered into English and introduced by
E. MacCurdy, London 1945, I, p.97.

The reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn Shāh was neither long nor distinguished, yet it is an important turning point in the political history of Persia; for when that Shāh died the country was, nominally at least, governed by a constitutional and no longer by an absolute monarch. The outward forms of representative parliamentary government had been adopted with great speed in the last year of Muzaffar al-Dīn's rule.

The first bast of December 1905 began by demanding little more than the dismissal of the Sadr-i Aẓam, Āyn al-Dawla, but it did not end until after the Shāh had pledged, in February 1906, both to dismiss that Minister and establish a House of Justice (Ādālat-Khāna). When neither of these promises was fulfilled many members of the religious classes, accompanied by merchants and members of various guilds, left Tehran for Qumm, and at the same time a second bast took place in the capital. The demands, though, remained vague. Some of the bastīs would apparently have still been satisfied with the dismissal of the Sadr-i Aẓam, but others now wished for a more fundamental reform; and on August 5th the Shāh issued a farṃān promising to establish a National Consultative Assembly (Majlis-i Shawrā-yi Millī). Within five weeks the law governing elections to this body had been published, and the Assembly began its debates on October 7th. The first draft of the document known as the Fundamental Law, (Qānūn-i Asāsī) was ready by the end of that month, and the final version was signed by Muzaffar al-

Dīn on December 30th - just eight days before his death. On October 7th 1907 the Supplementary Fundamental Law (Mutamim-i Qānūn-i Asāsī) was ratified by his successor Muhammad 'Alī Shāh. Article 26 of that Law indicates how great was the change that had taken place, for it declared that "the powers of the realm are all derived from the people; and the Fundamental Law regulates the employment of those powers".¹ Article 35 affirmed the same belief in a different way, "the sovereignty is a trust confided (as a Divine gift) by the people to the person of the King".² It is true that Muhammad 'Alī Shāh was later to dissolve the Assembly by force and the granting of the Constitution was then seen to be a fragile victory; yet the fact that it had been formulated, and that that process had happened so quickly, gives a special importance to the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn.

Even the most cursory glance at earlier Qājār history will show that many of the complaints against Muzaffar al-Dīn were far from being unique. Sir John Malcolm, writing in 1815, had called attention to the tyranny and injustice which prevailed in Persia under Fath 'Alī Shāh, and which had also existed at earlier periods.³ Court intrigues, corruption, arrears of pay to the army and the bureaucracy, tribal unrest and insecurity along the roads - these were not new features of Persia's history; but what has been seen in the course of this thesis is that the burdens on the population were becoming unbearable, and that this was happening because problems were now occurring together, and with an intensity that appears not to have been known before.

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1. Translation by E.G. Browne in The Persian Revolution, Cambridge 1910, p.375.
 2. Ibid., p.377.
 3. J. Malcolm, The History of Persia from the Most Early Period to the Present Time, London 1815, II, Chapter XXIII.

As well as being faced with many serious internal issues, Muzaffar al-Dīn was also fated to rule at a time when the external pressures upon Persia were becoming stronger than they had ever previously been. The involvement of the great powers was certainly no novel feature of Qājār history - Fath 'Alī Shāh had come up against the conflicting interests of France, England and Russia - but by the end of the nineteenth century Russia was in a much stronger position to exercise pressure on Persia, and it could do so from Central Asia as well as in the Caucasus. More important, however, was the fact that awareness of the ways of Europe, in particular knowledge of different methods of government and administration, had begun to spread among educated elements in Persian society. This was largely due to increasing travel and the publication of Persian newspapers abroad.⁴ At the same time there was increasing resentment at the presence of Europeans in Persia, deeper suspicion about their actions, and greater apprehension about their motives among more numerous sections of society. On the one hand, therefore, there was new knowledge, albeit limited in depth and restricted in its diffusion; while on the other hand, there was a great and growing lack of confidence in the ability of the government to carry out its traditional and essential task of maintaining conditions in which the good Islamic life could be lived.

When Muzaffar al-Dīn was proclaimed Shāh in May 1896, he inherited an absolute throne; but that statement can convey a rather false impression, unless it is also remembered that his authority was in fact very weak. The Persian army was feeble and ineffective, and the finances

4. On the origins and development of the Persian press, see E.G. Browne, The Press and Poetry of Modern Persia, Cambridge 1914; and H.L. Rabino, La Presse Persane depuis ses origines jusqu'à nos jours, Revue du Monde Musulman, Vol. XXII, 1913, pp. 287-313.

of his government were chaotic, with very little of the revenue that was raised in the provinces actually reaching the central treasury. Muzaffar al-Din was nominally absolute and he was certainly irresponsible; but he was also virtually without power, and from that inconsistency arose many of the difficulties which faced Persia.

It has been seen that the causes of discontent were not new; the demands being made of the Shāh were similarly traditional. They involved a plea for justice, for more honest administration, for the elimination of corruption, for an end to the hoarding of grain, for greater security for trade, for the preservation of public order in the towns and along the roads, and for the defence of the frontiers. In brief, what was required was the reassertion of Islamic values and restoration of the prestige of Persia. It is suggested here that those demands were not fundamentally incompatible with absolute rule, provided that the ruler was diligent, honest, patriotic and pious. It is certainly possible that the many maladies which afflicted Persia could have been cured more effectively by an active and determined Shāh, rather than by seeking to establish a new form a government.

The new system was an imported one; it had little if any relationship with the accepted system of beliefs and values. Although there were major differences between the situation in Persia in 1906, and that which prevailed in 1925, it would appear that the strong hand of Rīzā Shāh, in the very early years of his reign, did more to meet the needs of Persia at that time than did the Constitution established during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn. This study has indicated that the Constitution came to be granted not in response to a powerful and coherent challenge, but rather because Muzaffar al-Dīn was incapable of

re-invigorating the traditional system of government. Not merely was he unable to re-invigorate it, he presided over its further decline. The result was that in the end the change in the system of government came rapidly, and apparently profoundly.

Appearances, however, were deceptive; those who had demanded a constitution were few in number, and those who understood the implications of such a change were in an even smaller minority. The achievement of the constitutionalists might be described as a frustrated victory, but in accomplishing it they had succeeded in showing how hollow was the position of the monarchy under Muzaffar al-Dīn.

The aspects of his reign which have been investigated have indicated that many of Persia's problems had deep roots. None of the Qājār rulers had persisted in programmes to reform either the army or the bureaucracy.⁵ There had been several attempts to put the army on a European footing and to change its composition from a largely irregular to a regular, or semi-regular, body of disciplined men equipped with modern weapons; but all these efforts had proved abortive. This was largely because the attempts at reform were not sustained and because the necessary accompanying measures of financial reorganisation were not introduced. Some improvements were made - the most notable being the establishment of the Cossack Brigade - but even here it has been seen that decline set in during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn. The system for the payment of troops was very poor and open to abuse, morale was understandably very low, and, with the exception of the Cossack Brigade, equipment and training were woefully inadequate.

5. On attempts to reform under Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh, see S. Bakhsh, Iran: Monarchy Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars, 1858-1896, London 1978.

The pattern of neglect was repeated in the bureaucracy. Nāsir al-Dīn's early reforms had not been maintained, and although new departments of state had been created, ministers continued to be demoted or dismissed solely at the will of the Shāh. When tenure of office was so insecure few bureaucrats would either accept responsibility, or take the initiative, in their work; and tendency to amass wealth as the only possible source of protection against the effects of loss of office became well-nigh irresistible. In this respect too, Muzaffar al-Dīn's reign saw not only the persistence, but also the aggravation, of earlier causes of discontent. The selling of offices is a symptom rather than a cause of financial collapse; and to point to the farming of taxes is not in itself sufficient to account for the resentment felt by those who paid the taxes. What was wrong was not the practice of farming, but rather the failure to maintain essential safeguards against its abuse adequate inspection and a degree of security, or at the very least of continued expectancy of tenure of office, for the farmer.⁶ That the administrative system of Qājār Persia should be characterised by insecurity and venality, permeated with intrigue, and receptive to rumour is not surprising; but there was no insuperable obstacle to a strong and determined Shāh setting limits to those failings.

In Muzaffar al-Dīn strength and determination were certainly lacking. Many Shāhs, from dynasties other than the Qājārs too, have had to face the danger that the sycophancy of courtiers would warp their judgment, and that news of military, administrative or economic failure would be sedulously kept from royal ears. Muzaffar al-Dīn's long period of

6. F.O. 60:681. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Confidential No.69, 22 April 1904.

relative isolation in Tabrīz, his lack of administrative experience, his shy, mild, melancholic and vacillating personality, and poor physical health did not equip him well to re-invigorate the already seriously weakened throne of Persia. His personal behaviour during the cholera epidemic shows a lack of care and a selfishness that was all too common among members of the ruling classes.

It was also Muzaffar al-Dīn's misfortune to have been subject to considerable Russian influence during his period of residence in Tabrīz; and he may well have felt unwilling to seek British support against his northern neighbour. Any such reluctance was certainly strengthened by the refusal of King Edward VII to grant to Muzaffar al-Dīn, during his visit to England in 1902, the honour which had been bestowed upon his father - the Order of the Garter. Another factor which reduced the possibility of Muzaffar al-Dīn becoming a strong Shāh was the fact that the long sojourn in Tabrīz had postponed the opportunity for his followers to gain access to the royal treasury; and greed delayed meant greed increased. At the very time when Persia needed to reduce expenditures and to prevent the waste of money, the Shāh in power was both weak and surrounded by covetous courtiers. Neither could Muzaffar al-Dīn rely on family solidarity among the Qājār princes for help in governing the country.

Earlier chapters have indicated that in the provinces too the personality of the local governor was of great importance, and that insecurity and venality were not confined to Tehran. In the provinces almost the only hope that the population had for better treatment lay in the appointment of a more merciful governor, and they were few and far

between. Isfahān under Zill al-Sultān certainly seems to have fared better than Fārs under its succession of governors. In this matter too, the activities of Russia and Great Britain in seeking to win influence with leading officials in Tehran, and in the important provincial cities, did nothing to reduce Persia's problems.

Rivalry between Britain and Russia lay just below the surface of many events during the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn. It is arguable that the most important consequence of the presence of those two great powers lay in revealing to many Persians the true extent of the weakness of their government. Had the interests of Russia and Britain not been so important, had their strategic rivalry in Asia not been so serious, had their statesmen not sought influence and their officials not been involved in the demarcation of her frontiers, had their nationals not sought economic concessions, then it is possible that the outcry against misgovernment in Persia would have been much less vociferous; for the suspicion that Islam was being threatened by the unbeliever would have been very greatly reduced. Loans, concessions and the fact that British officials were demarcating Persia's south-eastern frontier; all of these deepened the humiliating realisation that Persia was not capable of managing her own affairs, be they internal and economic, or external and territorial. It is true that in the north-west also Persia could not defend herself against Kurdish and Turkish incursions, but the presence of Colonel McMahon and his accompanying party of over 1,500 men in Sīstān was a more painful reminder of Persia's weakness.⁷ It is also worth

7. F.O. 60:651. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.182, 29 December 1902. See also G.P. Tate, The Frontiers of Baluchistan, London 1909, p.76. Most of that book is concerned with the Sīstān Arbitration Mission of 1902/5. The author was a surveyor with that Mission.

noting that the size of McMahon's party did little to allay Russian suspicions of British aims in south-eastern Persia.⁸

An important feature of Anglo-Russian rivalry was the wide extent of its impact on Persian society. The burdensome terms of the various loans, and the fact that much of the money was wasted, caused much discontent among the educated classes and the merchants; but the poor and the illiterate bitterly resented the more obvious signs of Persia's impotence such as the use in Tehran of a Muslim graveyard for the building of a Russian bank. British schemes to supply piped water to the inhabitants of the capital met similar opposition.⁹ When British officials in Bushire tried to enforce quarantine measures against Persian pilgrims this was seen by the faithful as an attack on Islam by the unbeliever, rather than as a genuine attempt to improve standards of public health. The superstitious could be encouraged to believe that the disinfecting stoves were in fact going to be used to kill Muslim children.¹⁰ The cholera epidemic of 1904 added a further horrible burden to the lot of the population, but attempts by Europeans to restrict freedom of movement within Persia were misunderstood and resented, particularly when they were applied to a revered religious figure and his followers who were proceeding on a pilgrimage to Mashhad.

If the presence of more foreigners exacerbated discontent in Persia, essentially by revealing to a wider range of the population the impotence of the government, it also encouraged some sections of the population to

8. F.O. 416:11. Lansdowne to Scott (St.Petersburg), No.426, 31 December 1902.

9. F.O. 60:665. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.25, 26 February 1903.

10. F.O. 60:609. Durand to Salisbury, No.91, 16 September 1899.

view foreign governments as the primary source of their country's problems, and by doing so it probably deflected attention from weaknesses within Persian society and the system of government. The widespread interest in the Boxer rebellion in China and later in the Boer and Russo-Japanese wars has been noted, and so too has the warmth and rapidity of the welcome given to Japanese victories.¹¹ Those victories certainly encouraged hopes, hopes which were not capable of fulfilment, that Persia too could quickly proceed to reassert herself against Russia.

Anti-European feeling was also increased by the fact that control of the two most effective organs of government in Persia, the Cossack Brigade and the Customs administration, were obviously in foreign hands. That the maintenance of law and order in the capital city was the task of troops who were led by Russian officers and supplied with Russian equipment was an affront to Persian sensitivities. The fact that the Belgians levied new and more onerous duties on essential commodities such as tea and sugar, and that their chief official regarded the clothes of a religious dignitary as a suitable costume for a fancy dress party, served only to inflame emotions which were already highly charged.¹²

From the study of the reform of the Customs administration two important findings emerged. In the first case it can be seen that change under an absolute Shāh, was by no means an impossible task. The reforms were financially successful and although their implementation caused a temporary trade recession (particularly in the south of Persia), the volume of imports and exports does not seem to have suffered any permanent decline.

11. F.O. 60:684. Hardinge to Lansdowne, Telegraphic No.19, 12 February 1904.
 12. F.O. 60:698. Hardinge to Lansdowne, No.40, Confidential, 28 February 1905. This file in the Public Record Office also contains a copy of that photograph.

There was widespread resentment at, and much vocal opposition to, the presence and activities of the Belgians; but revenues accruing to the central treasury certainly increased greatly. Had port facilities and security along the roads been improved, then mercantile opposition to the changes would probably have decreased. The second conclusion to be drawn from the reform of the Customs is one which was little noticed at the time, but its long-term significance was profound. This was the fact that modernisation quite simply meant more government, and when the minimal amount of government which already existed was seen as intolerably oppressive, then the difficulties in implementing widespread reforms were very much increased. Here, as elsewhere, Muzaffar al-Dīn's legacy was a poor basis from which to begin the process of rebuilding an effective monarchy.

Other aspects of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn which have been noted are that the most effective voice of opposition to the Shāh came from the religious classes, and that the motives of those classes were very mixed. The religious leaders were the natural voice of the people, because of their many and intimate links with them; but at the same time some members of those religious classes were obscurantist, and some were unscrupulous. A few may even have been both. In both Isfahān and Shīrāz antagonism against religious minorities was incited, and it was an important factor in events. The accusation that 'Alā' al-Dawla's house contained the dagger with which Husayn was slain at the battle of Karbalā¹³ was used in the campaign to stir up opposition to him. Superstitious beliefs were present among certain sections of society, and some of the

13. H. Algar, Religion and State in Iran 1785-1906, Berkeley 1969, p.252.

religious classes exploited the opportunities presented by this situation. It is not surprising that the reaction of the religious classes to the demand for a constitution was far from uniform, and even those who supported that demand were careful to ensure that all legislation would be subject to the scrutiny of, and potential veto by, a group of five mujtahids.¹⁴

The picture which emerges of the reign of Muzaffar al-Dīn is one in which old problems not only persisted, but grew worse; the sources of discontent were already many when he came to the throne, but the extent and intensity of discontent undoubtedly increased. The personality of the Shāh was such that he was certainly unwilling to take, and probably incapable of taking, the firm and decisive action which was required to restore the position and authority of the monarchy. At the same time Russia and Britain were determined to preserve their interests in Persia, and the rivalry between the two powers increased the difficulties facing the country. From these circumstances there emerged a constitution - but it provided no real answer to Persia's many problems.

14. Article 2 of the Supplementary Fundamental Law of October 7th 1907, in E.G. Browne, The Persian Revolution, Cambridge 1910, pp.372-3.

APPENDIX

Brief notes on European officials whose names recur frequently in the text of this thesis.

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| ADCOCK, Dr. H. | Personal Physician to Muzaffar al-Dīn while he was Valī'ahd in Tabriz, and Consulting Physician-in-Chief to the Shāh from 1896-1906. |
| AGANOUR, Dr. M.S.P. | Acting Consul, and Acting Consul-General in Isfahān from 1896. The post of Native Agent in that city had earlier been held by his father, Mr. S.P. Aganoor, for nearly forty years. |
| BAGGALEY, H. | British Vice-Consul in Yazd from March 1905. |
| CHERNOZABOFF, Colonel
(no initial known) | Russian army officer in charge of the Persian Cossack Brigade from March 1903 to September 1906. |
| CHURCHILL, G.P. | Acting Oriental Secretary at the British Legation from April 1903. |
| DAMBRAIN, C. | Belgian Customs official who arrived in Persia in 1901 (?). Was appointed Director of Customs at Bushire in January 1902, and became Director-General of Persian Customs for the ports of the Persian Gulf from June 1903 till May 1905. |
| DES GRAZ, C.L. | First Secretary at the British Legation in Tehran from March 1901. Acted as Chargé d'Affaires, May to October 1902. |
| DOUGLAS, Major J.A. | British Military Attaché in Tehran from January 1903. |
| DURAND, Sir H.M. | British Minister in Tehran May 1894 to October 1900. |
| ERSKINE, The Hon.W.A.F. | Acting Third Secretary at the British Legation June 1901 to December 1903. Acted as Chargé d'Affaires October and November 1902. |
| GRAHAME, T.G. | British Vice-Consul in Tehran June 1898 to July 1903, thereafter Consul in Shīrāz. |
| GRANT DUFF, G.M. | Second Secretary at the British Legation October 1892 to May 1895. Attached to the entourage of the Shāh during Muzaffar al-Dīn's visit to England in 1902, accompanied Viscount Downe to Tehran with the mission to present the Order of the Garter to the Shāh, January to February 1903. Was appointed First Secretary to the British Legation in Tehran August 1903. Acted as Chargé d'Affaires October to December 1904 and September 1905 to September 1906. |

- HARDINGE, Sir A.H. British Minister in Persia October 1900 to January 1906.
- HARDINGE, The Rt.Hon.C. First Secretary of the British Legation September 1896 to July 1898.
- HEYNSENN, J.B. Belgian Customs official who arrived in Persia in 1900, became Director-General of Persian Customs for the ports of the Persian Gulf from June 1905.
- KEMBALL, Lt.-Col.C.A. Acting Political Resident in the Persian Gulf April 1900 to June 1902, and Political Resident June 1902 to May 1904.
- KOSSAGOSWIKI, Col. V.A. Russian army officer in charge of the Cossack Brigade from the summer of 1894 until March 1903.
- LIAKHOFF, Colonel V.P. Russian army officer in charge of the Cossack Brigade from September 1906.
- LINDLEY, Dr. L. Assistant Physician at the Court of Muẓaffar al-Dīn Shāh from 1900, and later Consulting Physician-in-Chief to the Shāh from 1906 (on the retirement of Dr. H. Adcock - see above).
- McDOUALL, W. British Vice-Consul at Muḥammara from June 1890, and Consul for 'Arabistān' from February 1904.
- MINCHIN, Lt.-Col.C.F. British Consul-General for Khurāsān and Sīstān October 1903 to July 1905.
- NAPIER, Major H.D. British Military Attaché in Tehran September 1901 to December 1902.
- NAUS, J. Belgian Customs official who held many positions in Persia after his arrival in March 1898. Placed in charge of the reform of the Customs administration in March 1899. Resigned in February 1907.
- ODLING, Dr. T. Arrived in Persia in 1872 and employed as doctor to the Indo-European Telegraph Department. Appointed doctor to the British Legation in 1891, died in Tehran 1905.
- PICOT, Lt.-Col. H.P. British Military Attaché in Tehran from November 1893 to September 1900. Also acted as Oriental Secretary for part of this period.
- PREECE, J.R. British Consul in Isfahān from August 1891 until his retirement in March 1906.
- PRIEM, J. Belgian Customs official who arrived in Persia in March 1898. Served first in Kirmānshāh and later as Director-General of Customs in Āzarbāyjān.

RABINO di BORGOMALE, H.L.	Son of J. Rabino (see below) worked for the Imperial Bank in Kirmānshāh and was appointed British Vice-Consul in Rasht during 1906.
RABINO di BORGOMALE, J.	Chief Manager of the Imperial Bank in Tehran from its foundation in 1889 until 1907.
SCHINDLER, General Houtum	Worked for many years in Persia, first in the employment of the Indo-European Telegraph Company then for the Persian Telegraph Service. He was also employed for a time by the Passport Section of the Persian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and by the Imperial Bank.
SCHNEIDER, C.J.	Assistant British Military Attaché from January 1899 and later Military Attaché and Oriental Secretary from October 1900 to September 1901. Was Acting Consul in Isfahān June to December 1899.
SPRING RICE, C.A.	First Secretary at the British Legation from October 1898, Chargé d'Affaires from March 1900 to February 1901. Then posted to Egypt, returned to Persia as British Minister in July 1906.
SYKES, P.M.	British Consul in Kirmān from October 1894. Was Assistant Commissioner on the Persia - Balūchistan Frontier Commission January to April 1896, and served as Consul in Kirmān until July 1899. Returned to Kirmān after serving in the war in South Africa in January 1903 and was appointed Consul-General for Khurāsān in February 1906.
WOOD, G.C.	British Consul-General in Tabriz from June 1892 to May 1903.
WRATISLAW, A.C.	British Consul-General in Tabriz from August 1903.

NOTES

1. Information on British diplomatic and consular officials drawn from Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book, London, annually (editions used 1897 to 1908).
2. Information on Belgian Customs officials drawn from A. Destrée, Les Fonctionnaires Belges au Service de la Perse 1898-1915, Tehran-Liège 1976, annexe No.11 Répertoire alphabétique des fonctionnaires belges au service de la Perse entre 1898 et 1915, pp.329-349.

3. Information on other British officials in Persia drawn from D. Wright, The English Amongst the Persians, London 1977.
4. Where no terminal date of service is given, the man in question was still in office on the death of Muzaffar al-Din Shāh on 8 January 1907.

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C.9044-117, C.9496-17.

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Cd.429-143.
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4. OTHER SOURCES

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