

## THE CROWD IN IRANIAN POLITICS 1905-1953

GEORGE RUDÉ'S OBSERVATION THAT "PERHAPS NO HISTORICAL phenomenon has been so thoroughly neglected by historians as the crowd"<sup>1</sup> is especially true of the Middle East. While European journalists have invariably portrayed oriental crowds as "xenophobic mobs" hurling insults and bricks at Western embassies, local conservatives have frequently denounced them as "social scum" in the pay of the foreign hand, and radicals have often stereotyped them as "the people" in action. For all, the crowd has been an abstraction, whether worthy of abuse, fear, praise, or even of humour, but not a subject of study.

This paper has three aims. First, it will discuss the rôle of the crowd in modern Iran. The subject will be limited exclusively to political crowds, for to have included all public disturbances — such as bread riots, demonstrations against taxes, "collective bargaining by riot", and communal conflicts — would have meant undertaking a task as formidable as that of Rudé: perhaps even more formidable, since the street has played a more important rôle in Iran than in England and France. Secondly, it will attempt to portray the "faces in the crowd", comparing the social composition of pre-industrial demonstrations with those of the semi-industrial. Thirdly, it will make some general comparisons with European public disturbances by contrasting the conclusions found here with those drawn by Rudé.

### I

#### THE ROLE OF THE CROWD

Absolutism in nineteenth-century Persia had more in common with the Tudor form of government in England than with the "oriental despotism" described by Karl Wittfogel.<sup>2</sup> The Qajar dynasty based its power not on a standing army, nor on an extensive bureaucracy, for it had neither, but on the readiness of the magnates, the *ulama* (religious authorities), the judges, and the guild masters to enforce the Shah's will, and the disposition of the subjects to submit to his authority. Public dissatisfaction was channelled through petitions, meetings, strikes, and the taking of *bast* (sanctuary) in holy places, in the royal palace, and in telegraph offices where the protesters had

<sup>1</sup> G. Rudé, *The Crowd in History, 1730-1848* (New York, 1964), p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> Karl Wittfogel, *Oriental Despotism* (New Haven, 1957).

access to the Shah. Those who took their protest outside these bounds were brought to heel not by the state machinery, but by subjects who were willing to enforce the royal writ.

The impact of the West undermined this form of government. Military defeats, the collaboration of the royal family with the imperial powers, the granting of concessions, monopolies, and privileges to "the heathen", the inability of the government to help Persian merchants against European traders, the failure to protect home industry from foreign competition, and the introduction of the subversive doctrine of the "Rights of Man" created an acute crisis of confidence. The Qajars ceased being God's appointed protectors of His people and the bulwarks against social dissolution, and instead became an ineffective and a corrupt family joining in the plunder and the destruction of the country.

The *ancien régime* was still intact at the end of the nineteenth century, although its foundations had received a drastic jolt in a major political earthquake during the Tobacco Crisis of 1891-2.<sup>3</sup> It began to crumble in 1905. The upheaval started in April with a petition drawn up in Tehran against the European official in charge of the Customs. When the petitioners failed to obtain a response from the government they called for a general strike and took sanctuary in the Abdul Azim Mosque outside the capital.<sup>4</sup> A week later the Shah agreed to examine the matter, and the assembly dispersed. However, he failed to take any meaningful action, and consequently nine months later when the Governor of Tehran tried to lower the price of sugar by victimizing a few prominent merchants, the events of April were repeated, but with greater intensity. A general strike was organized, one group of protesters took sanctuary in a mosque in Tehran, and a procession of two thousand made its way to Abdul Azim. They remained there until the Shah accepted their main

<sup>3</sup> For the Tobacco Crisis see N. Keddie, *Religion and Rebellion in Iran* (London, 1966).

<sup>4</sup> Information on the crowds during the Constitutional Revolution and the Civil War has been obtained from: A. Kasravi, *A History of the Iranian Constitution* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Chap-i Amir Kabir, 1961); A. Kasravi, *An Eighteen-Year History of Azerbaijan* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Chap-i Amir Kabir, 1961); Y. Doulatabadi, *An Autobiography* (in Farsi) (Tehran: Chap-i Chahar, 1961), vols. i and ii; M. Malekzadeh, *A History of the Constitutional Revolution in Iran* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Ketab-i Khaneh-i Suqrat, 1962), vols. ii and iii; the newspaper *Hablul Matin*; M. Khurasani, *The Genesis of the Constitution in Iran* (in Farsi) (Meshed, Chapkhaneh-i Khurasan, 1953); M. Taherzadeh, *The Revolt in Azerbaijan during the Constitutional Revolution* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Sherat-i Eqbal); British Government, *Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Persia, December 1906-October 1913* (London, H.M. Stationery Office, May 1911-April 1914).

demands: the removal of the European Customs official, the dismissal of the Governor, and the creation of a "House of Justice". Again they were fooled, for as soon as they returned to work the promises were forgotten. All seemed quiet on the surface until July 1906, when an attempt to arrest a prominent anti-government preacher sparked off another crisis, this time even more intense than the preceding one. A large and angry crowd tried to release the victim, the police fired, killed another cleric and fled in face of the threatening throng. For two days the streets of the capital were taken over by demonstrators while a thousand protesters took sanctuary in the holy city of Qom outside Tehran, and fifty fled to the British Legation. Within eight days this fifty had increased to fourteen thousand. This time the protestors were not satisfied with royal pledges and with a "House of Justice". They demanded a written constitution and an elected parliament. They camped on the Legation grounds for three weeks, until the Shah capitulated.

The revolutionaries had obtained their constitution, but they had not yet secured it on a firm foundation. The court had lost its absolute power, but it was not yet willing to accept the new order. The struggle between the two continued for the next three years, with the former attempting to preserve what it had won, and the latter striving to regain what it had lost. For both the streets were a vital weapon in the conflict. When the Shah procrastinated over the parliamentary elections, there were strikes and demonstrations in Tabriz for ten days running. When he delayed over the signing of the final draft of the Fundamental Laws, there were protest rallies in most towns; in Tabriz armed volunteers prepared to defend the city while a multitude of twenty thousand vowed to "remain away from work until the Laws were signed".<sup>6</sup> Their strike continued for a whole month. When the conservatives in Tabriz tried to undermine the constitution, the radicals organized continuous mass demonstrations until their opponents left the city. When it became apparent that the Shah's chief minister was plotting against the radicals, a general strike was organized in Tehran demanding his resignation, and when he was murdered fifteen thousand gathered to pay their respects to the dead assassin and to pledge their support for the revolution.

In the meanwhile the court had not remained idle. It had mobilized its supporters, and by December 1907 it was able to show its strength by assembling ten thousand menacing royalists in the

<sup>6</sup> Kasravi, *A History of the Iranian Constitution*, p. 336.

expansive Artillery Square at the centre of the capital. The constitutionalists responded by collecting outside the Parliament Building. For three days the two sides faced each other until the Shah dispersed his supporters. However, this was only a tactical retreat, for six months later these events were repeated, but with a different conclusion. The Cossack Brigade, the only effective military force on the royalist side, first bombarded the Parliament Building, and then a group of monarchists pillaged the Chamber. Martial Law was decreed and all public meetings, even Passion plays, were prohibited. The conservatives had won in the capital, but the capital was not the whole of Persia. In the provinces the struggle continued: protest meetings were organized, strikes were called, and arms were displayed. By July 1909, only thirteen months after the Shah's successful coup, active resistance reappeared even in the capital. A general strike was organized while a force of volunteers from Resht and an army of tribesmen from Isfahan converged upon Tehran. The Shah was deposed and his throne was given to his twelve-year-old son. The Civil War was over.

During the next twelve years the conflict between the royalists and the constitutionalists was replaced by the struggle between the imperial powers and the Persian nationalists. The issues that brought the masses into the streets were no longer those dealing with constitutional rights, but those touching national integrity.<sup>6</sup> During the Civil War Russian troops had moved towards Tabriz to "prevent anarchy". Mass demonstrations throughout the country failed to stop their advance, and, gradually, during the next few years they expanded their occupied territory in the north. In the south, British troops arrived in October 1911 and proceeded to Shiraz to safeguard British "lives and property". The climax came in November 1911, when the Russian government sent an ultimatum to the Persian cabinet demanding payment for the army that had been despatched south and forbidding the cabinet to hire foreign advisers without the consent of the two great powers. The government was willing to submit, but the deputies, encouraged by massive demonstrations outside the Parliament Building, refused to capitulate. The ministers, caught between the devil and the deep blue sea, between the imperial powers and the angry public, chose the former. The volunteers and the tribesmen, who had saved the constitution only

<sup>6</sup> Information on the crowds during the struggle against the Imperial Powers has been obtained from: the newspaper *Kaveh*; British Government, *op. cit.*; *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-39*, 1st ser. (London, 1963), vols. iv and xiii; M. Shuster, *The Strangling of Persia* (New York, 1920).

two years earlier, now forcibly closed parliament, sent the deputies packing, and declared Martial Law. However, nineteen months later parliament was reconvened because of "threats" of demonstrations and strikes.<sup>7</sup> The country continued to be occupied throughout the First World War, and it was not until the Russian Revolution that the danger from the north ceased. Instead, the threat from the south increased. The Anglo-Persian Agreement of August 1919, drawn up by Lord Curzon, intended to reduce Persia into a vassal state. What destroyed these plans was the public and its chief weapon, the streets. Curzon was informed by a British General in Persia: "the feeling grew that Great Britain was a bitter foe who must be rooted out of the country at any cost".<sup>8</sup> Again, the cabinet had fallen between two opposing forces, between the outraged public and the British who continued to occupy the country. This led to a twenty-month period of acute political instability during which the premiership changed hands nine times.

It was in this atmosphere of insecurity that an unknown colonel by the name of Riza Khan marched into the capital with a brigade of unpaid Cossacks and installed a new administration. He proceeded to calm the nation by annulling the Anglo-Persian Agreement, and to pacify Curzon by appearing as the "man on horseback" who was going to save the country from Bolshevism. During the next three years he was the power behind the throne, making and unmaking deputies, ministers and premiers. By March 1924 he felt confident enough to attempt the elimination of the two-thousand-year-old monarchy and the establishment of a republic. A Bill proposing such a change was introduced into a packed parliament, and its smooth passing into law seemed guaranteed. Again, the public stepped into the scene and ruined the act. Some thirty thousand monarchists besieged the Parliament Building while a small group of republicans collected nearby.<sup>9</sup> The Bill was hastily withdrawn, and eventually a compromise was reached: the Qajar dynasty was constitutionally deposed, but instead Riza Khan became Riza Shah.

Between 1925 and 1941 the new king ruled with an iron hand. Basing his power upon the modern army and bureaucracy, both of which he vastly expanded by using the increasing revenues from oil,

<sup>7</sup> British Government, *op. cit.*, vol. iii, no. 2, p. 134.

<sup>8</sup> *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, xiii, p. 586.

<sup>9</sup> Information on the crowds during the Republican Crisis have been obtained from : H. Makki, *A Twenty Year History of Iran* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Chapkhaneh-i Majlis, 1945), vol. ii, pp. 319-49; H. Mustaufi, *An Account of My Life* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Ketab-i Furush-i 'Alami, 1947), vol. iii, part 2, pp. 410-30; Doulatabadi, *op. cit.*, vol. iv; M. Hedayat, *My Memoirs* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Ketab Furush-i Zavar), p. 363.

he was able to control not only the ministers, the deputies and the press, but also the public. "Oriental despotism" was gradually introduced into Iran in these years in the form of westernization and modernization. As a result of this change, the crowd ceased to be a factor in politics. With the exception of two May Day Parades and three religious outbursts, all of which were promptly dispersed by the army, demonstrations disappeared from the scene and became a historical phenomenon belonging to the "anarchistic" past.

The crowd returned with a vengeance after August 1941, when the Allied invasion crushed Riza Shah's army, forced him to abdicate in favour of his son, and freed the public of his absolutism. It was not until August 1953 that the court, supported by an army which had been re-equipped, re-trained and enlarged, was able to depose the cabinet, re-establish autocracy and again control the streets. In the intervening twelve years the crowd was a major element in politics, and although many tried to mobilize the masses and to use the streets as a weapon, only two organizations had notable success: the Tudeh Party and the National Front.<sup>10</sup>

The Tudeh Party's first major showing in the streets came on 21 October 1943, when it held a rally to celebrate its second anniversary and to start its election campaign for parliament. The response surprised most observers, perhaps even its organizers. The party press probably inflated the figures when it claimed that over forty thousand attended the meeting, but it did not exaggerate when it described the crowd as "the largest in Tehran's history".<sup>11</sup> In the same year, Tudeh demonstrators in Isfahan proved so "decisive" that the Governor had to escape from the city.<sup>12</sup> In the autumn of 1944, the Tudeh Party organized meetings throughout the country to protest against a cabinet that had refused to negotiate an oil agreement with the Soviet Union. The United States Minister in Tehran described the rally of thirty-five thousand outside the Parliament Building as "orderly".<sup>13</sup> When the same government resigned, *The New York Times* correspondent reported that these mass demonstrations were "largely responsible for the overthrow of the cabinet".<sup>14</sup> The peak of Tudeh Party activity came in 1945-6. On Constitution

<sup>10</sup> Information on the crowds of the period from 1941 until 1953 has been obtained from newspapers of diverse political views. Those most relied upon have been: *Mardom*, *Zafar*, *Rahbar*, *Ettelaat*, *Keyhan*, *Jebeh*, *Democrati-Iran*, *Ra'ad Emrus*, *Emrus va Farda*.

<sup>11</sup> *Mardom*, 22 October 1943.

<sup>12</sup> N. Fatemi, *Oil Diplomacy* (New York, 1954), p. 216.

<sup>13</sup> U.S., Dept. of State, *Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the U.S.* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), vol. v, 1944, p. 461).

<sup>14</sup> *The New York Times*, 17 Mar. 1945.

Day, in August 1945, it held mass celebrations in over twenty towns. One non-Tudeh journalist estimated the crowd in the rally in Tehran to be over forty thousand.<sup>15</sup> In February 1946, it held a memorial service at the grave of Dr. Arani, the "spiritual father" of the party and a marxist who had died in one of Riza Shah's prisons; fifteen thousand packed into the cemetery.<sup>16</sup> On May Day, parades were held in twenty cities: in Isfahan the meeting attracted forty thousand; in Tehran fifty thousand;<sup>17</sup> and in Abadan, according to both *The Times* and the Tudeh Party press, eighty thousand.<sup>18</sup> All records were surpassed in October 1946, when a hundred thousand took part in its fifth anniversary celebrations in Tehran.<sup>19</sup>

The Tudeh Party was suppressed after December 1946, and the streets remained relatively deserted until the autumn of 1949, when the National Front began its campaign for free elections and for the nationalization of the oil industry. The new era began in October 1949, when a small group of anti-court politicians, led by Dr. Mossadegh, staged a minor demonstration in the palace grounds protesting against royalist interference in the parliamentary elections. Within a year Mossadegh had the support not only of a few politicians, but also of the masses in the streets. As a militant nationalist and a staunch constitutionalist, he was determined to bring the oil industry under Iranian ownership and to force the Shah out of politics completely. After a campaign of petitions, strikes, demonstrations and rallies, the National Front forced a reluctant parliament and an antagonistic court to accept Mossadegh as Premier and to pass the oil nationalization bill into law.

Mossadegh had come to power by the streets; he continued to remain in office similarly. Every time the opposition reared its head, whether in parliament or in the court, he would make a direct appeal to the public, and would rely on demonstrations to bring his opponents "under his influence".<sup>20</sup> The royalist Speaker of the House cried in exasperation:

Is this man a Prime Minister or a mob leader? What type of a statesman says, "I will speak to the people" every time there is a political issue to be solved? I have always considered this man to be unreliable, but, in my wildest nightmares, I never imagined that an old man of seventy could be a demagogue, a rabble rouser who would not hesitate to surround the Parliament Building with thugs.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Tofeq*, quoted in *Rahbar*, 6 Aug. 1945.

<sup>16</sup> *Mardom*, 2 Feb. 1946.

<sup>17</sup> *Zafar*, 3 May 1946.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, and *The Times* (London), 30 July 1946.

<sup>19</sup> *Rahbar*, 8 Oct. 1946.

<sup>20</sup> *Ettelaat-i Haftegi*, 20 June 1951.

<sup>21</sup> M. Fateh, *Fifty Years of Iranian Oil* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Sherkat-i Saham-i Char, 1956), p. 58p.

The ultimate use of the crowd came in July 1952, when the Shah refused to discard his unconstitutional custom of appointing his own nominees to head the War Ministry. Mossadegh resigned as premier, and appealed directly to the people. His "charisma" again proved successful: National Front and Tudeh Party demonstrators poured into the streets, and after three days of bloodshed, the Shah was forced to recall Mossadegh and to hand over to him the Ministry of War. The crowd had defeated not only the court and the politicians in parliament, but also the armed forces of the state.

The July 1952 uprising was the combined effort of both the National Front and of the Tudeh Party, but the thirteen months following the victory saw the gradual weakening of the former and the steady strengthening of the latter. One Iranian observer wrote: "if in the nationalistic rallies before 1952 one-third of the participants were Tudeh Party members, and two-thirds were National Front supporters, after 1952 the rôles were reversed".<sup>33</sup> This trend was conspicuously apparent at the anniversary of the July uprising. The two held their own separate rallies in Parliament Square: the Tudeh Party meeting attracted as much as a hundred thousand, and outnumbered the National Front by five or even ten to one.<sup>34</sup> This further weakened the National Front, for some of its supporters now turned to the Shah for protection against the "red menace". On 18 August, the day before the generals struck against Mossadegh, there were Tudeh Party demonstrations throughout the country, "even in tuberculosis hospitals", while National Front supporters were nowhere to be seen.<sup>34</sup> On 19 August, the army cleared the streets of demonstrators while royalist groups systematically pillaged the homes and the offices of their opponents.<sup>35</sup>

Thus, the crowd was not just a factor in politics; it was a major factor. It was instrumental in carrying through a Constitutional Revolution and in winning the Civil War, in struggling against the Imperial Powers and in defeating the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919, in preserving the Monarchy and in preventing the establishment

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 653.

<sup>34</sup> *The New York Times*, 23 July 1953.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 19 Aug. 1953.

<sup>36</sup> Information on the royalist crowd of 19 August 1953 has been obtained mostly from: R. Cottam, *Nationalism in Iran* (Pittsburg University Press, 1964), pp. 38, 155, 226; The Central Committee of the Tudeh Party, *Concerning 19 August* (in Farsi) (1953); Aresh, *The Revolution for the Monarchy* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Chapkhaneh-i Majlis, 1954).



of a Republic in 1924; and between 1941 and 1953 it was the main weapon of the Tudeh Party and of the National Front, providing with them a lever by which they could put pressure upon the decision-makers.

## II

### THE FACES IN THE PRE-INDUSTRIAL CROWD, 1905-25

In the traditional economy the bazaar was more than a marketplace; it was the granary, the workshop, the bank and the religious centre of the whole society. It was there that landowners sold their crops, craftsmen manufactured their wares, traders marketed their goods, those in need of money raised loans, and it was there that businessmen built and financed mosques and schools. Moreover, the bazaar was not an amorphous mass of merchants, traders, craftsmen, money-lenders, pedlars and mullas, but was tightly structured into guilds. Each craft, each trade, and each unskilled occupation had its own organization, hierarchy, traditions, and sometimes even its own secret dialects.<sup>26</sup> In 1926 there were over a hundred different guilds for craftsmen, some seventy for traders, and forty for those without skills or financial resources.<sup>27</sup>

The Constitutional Revolution was a movement of the bazaar. Its rank-and-file came from the guilds, its financial backing from the merchants, its moral support from the religious authorities, and its theorizing from a few westernized intellectuals.

The initial crisis of April 1905 was instigated by the money-lenders and the cloth-dealers of Tehran. The former were protesting at the failure of the Treasury to meet its financial obligations. The latter were criticizing the policies of the European Customs Official. One of the organizers of the demonstration informed a newspaper correspondent that the merchants in the crowd were protesting against the new tariffs which favoured Russian companies against Persian traders: "We must encourage home industry, even if its quality is not as good as foreign imports. The present trend of increasing imports will inevitably lead to the destruction of our industry and trade".<sup>28</sup> The strike organized by these protesters closed down the cloth-dealers' market, the money-lenders' arcades and the inns. The procession that made its way from Tehran to Abdul Azim was led by a prominent

<sup>26</sup> M. Hussein-Khan, *The Geography of Isfahan* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Tehran University Press, 1963).

<sup>27</sup> Iranian Government, *Parliamentary Debates*, The Sixth Majlis, The Fortieth Meeting, 11 December 1926.

<sup>28</sup> *Hablu'l Mann*, 19 June 1905.

shopkeeper and a scarf-seller. Their followers were members of the cloth-dealers and of the money-lenders guilds. They also had the support of the religious authorities, for they had circulated a photograph of the Customs Official masquerading in clerical clothes. Although the demonstrators failed to obtain their main objectives, five months later the Ministry of Finance conceded to the merchants an advisory council through which they could express their views on tariffs and customs.

The assembly that took sanctuary in a mosque in Tehran during December 1905 was formed of wealthy traders protesting against the bastinadoing of two prominent sugar merchants, one of whom had built three mosques. They were supported by the bazaar, which went on a general strike, and by a group of religious leaders, who took *bast* in Abdul Azim with their families and theology students. Their one month stay in Abdul Azim was financed by a wholesale dealer and by a few prominent merchants.

The intensity of the crisis in July 1906 was generated by the active participation of all the craft and trading guilds, who until then had limited themselves mostly to organizing sympathy strikes for the merchants and the *ulama*. The three-week protest of the fourteen thousand in the British Legation was organized by the Society of Guilds, a recently-formed association of all the guilds in the bazaar. Those participating in the crowd were mostly craftsmen and traders with their apprentices and journeymen. One observer wrote: "I saw more than 1,500 tents, for all the occupations, even the cobblers, the walnut sellers, and the tinkers, had at least one tent".<sup>20</sup> The British Minister reported to the Foreign Office:

The crowd of refugees was organized by the heads of the guilds, who took measures to prevent any unauthorized person from entering the Legation grounds . . . . No damage of wilful character was done to the garden, although, of course, every semblance of a bed was trampled out of existence, and the trees still bear pious inscriptions cut in the bark. Discipline and order were maintained by the refugees themselves.<sup>21</sup>

The protesters permitted some students from the Technical College, the Military Academy, and from the Agricultural School to join their ranks. Outside the garden walls, in the streets of Tehran, the wives of the protesters held periodic demonstrations, and in Qom a thousand religious leaders and theology students staged a concurrent *bast*.

The importance of the bazaar in the revolutionary movement can be seen in the First Electoral Law of 1906.<sup>21</sup> The electorate was

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Kasravi, *op. cit.*, *The History of the Iranian Constitution*, p. 110.

<sup>21</sup> British Government, *op. cit.*, i, no. 1, p. 4.

<sup>21</sup> The Electoral Law of 1906, E. Browne, *The Persian Revolution of 1905-9* (Cambridge University Press, 1910), pp. 354-61.

divided into six categories: the Princes and the Qajar tribe; the landowners; the nobles; the Doctors of Divinity and the theology students; the merchants; and the guilds. Tehran, with a total representation of sixty delegates, was apportioned four seats for the *ulama*, ten for the merchants, and thirty-two for the guilds. Of all the deputies elected to the First National Parliament, 26 per cent were guild members, 20 per cent were *ulama*, and 15 per cent were merchants.<sup>32</sup>

The bazaar continued to be the bastion of the constitutional movement throughout the Civil War. At critical periods it was regular practice for the religious leaders, the merchants and the guild masters to call for strikes and demonstrations, for the workshops, stores and markets to close, and for the bazaar community to congregate at the designated street square. Between July 1906 and July 1909 this procedure was carried out in Tabriz in response to at least eight separate issues. When the streets were too dangerous the protesters would go directly to a place of safety. After the bombardment of Parliament, the British Minister reported that in Isfahan a crowd of some two hundred persons, "mostly small shopkeepers", tried to enter the Legation grounds.<sup>33</sup> At one point in Kermanshah, "the whole of the trade and employment of the town down to the porters", took sanctuary in the Telegraph Office.<sup>34</sup> When a show of force was needed, volunteers would arrive with their own rifles and ammunition, indicating that the hard-core militants were affluent enough to possess a weapon that was too expensive for the majority of the population.<sup>35</sup>

The social composition of these radical crowds is also reflected in the backgrounds of the revolutionaries who were executed in Tabriz.<sup>36</sup>

Among the thirty martyrs whose professions are known, there were five merchants, three religious leaders, three government employees, two shopkeepers, two arms dealers, two pharmacists, one carpenter, one tailor, one baker, one coffee-house keeper, one jeweller, one auctioneer, one musician, one journalist, one barber with his apprentice, one painter, one preacher and one school principal. Another four were hanged for being related to prominent revolutionaries: two of them were sons of a merchant who had organized the

<sup>32</sup> Z. Shaj'ehi, *The Members of Parliament* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Tehran University Press, 1965), p. 176.

<sup>33</sup> British Government, *op. cit.*, I, no. 2, p. 46.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, I, no. 1, p. 27.

<sup>35</sup> Taherzadeh, *op. cit.*, vi, p. 47.

<sup>36</sup> Information has been obtained from: Kasravi, *An Eighteen-Year History of Azerbaijan*; Taherzadeh, *op. cit.*; Malekzadeh, *op. cit.*, vol. vii.

Social Democrat Party in Tabriz, and the other two were nephews of Sattar Khan, a horse dealer who had become the commander of the local volunteer force.

The history of the Constitutional Revolution has been written mostly by liberal activists who have glossed over the popular appeal of the reactionary side, and have dismissed the royalist demonstrations as mobs of "ruffians", "hooligans", and of *lutis*.<sup>37</sup> Even the few writers who have admitted that the court had some popular appeal have failed to explain and account for the phenomenon.<sup>38</sup>

The royalist crowds can be explained by the presence of three different elements who sympathized with the reactionary cause. First, there were those who had economic ties with the court, and therefore had a vested interest in preserving the old order. Second, there were various religious leaders who feared that the constitution was only the first step towards "anarchism", "nihilism", "equality", "socialism", and the "Babi heresy".<sup>39</sup> The participation of this religious element converted the pro-Shah demonstrations into "Islam and Shah" crowds. Third, there were occasionally "the poorest of the poor", the *sans-culottes*, who had a strong dislike for the wealthy in the bazaar, and who had gained nothing from this revolution of shopkeepers, money-lenders, and merchants.

The Qajars, with their vast family wealth and their generous income from the state, controlled a network of patronage. They granted gifts and pensions to their favourites, offices and salaries to their faithful administrators, and provided employment for thousands of household servants, stable-hands, labourers and craftsmen hired in the royal palaces, stables, farms and workshops. Moreover, many of the magnates, both in the capital and in the provinces, imitated the royal way of life. Thus, when the parliamentary régime, in its first year, proposed a budget which trimmed the court allocation,

<sup>37</sup> *Lutis* were muscular athletes from the Houses of Strength that existed in the various precincts. Many of them worked as pedlars, and some were prosperous enough to own shops, but most were willing to put their physical abilities in the service of an employer, so long as their assigned task did not conflict with their strong religious beliefs. They were to be found on both sides during the Civil War.

<sup>38</sup> M. A. Bahar, *A Short History of Political Parties* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Chap-i Rangin, 1943), writes: "During the revolution, the upper and the lower classes supported absolutism, and only the middle class advocated constitutionalism" (p. 2).

<sup>39</sup> A proclamation of the conservative *ulama* published in Karavi, *A History of the Iranian Constitution*, p. 415.

eliminated the revenue of the Crown Prince, cut off some two thousand pensioners and courtiers, and planned to collect the tax arrears of landowners, it threatened not only the social power of the royal family and the aristocracy, but also the economic livelihood of those in their service. The Household Treasury, which until the revolution had made a special point of promptly meeting all its commitments even when the State Treasury was in dire difficulties, now delayed over its remittances, and informed those on its pay-roll that their salaries and wages could not be paid because of the budget.<sup>40</sup> As was intended, these retainers flocked to royalist rallies. One veteran of the Civil War wrote:

In those days, a common method of abuse was to describe someone as having "the character of a groom", or "the mentality of a footman", for these and other lackeys had been pampered by the court, and as a result had become the meanest, the most backward, and the most fanatical advocates of absolutism in the whole population of Tehran.<sup>41</sup>

These retainers provided the reactionary demonstrations with a faithful nucleus; the presence of religious figures supplied them with an ideological content. Although most of the *ulama* had close ties to the mosques and the religious schools located in the bazaar, there were some whose salaries, fiefs and appointments linked them to the Shah and the state, rather than to the business community. Thus the religious hierarchy, even before the Constitutional Revolution, was sharply, but unevenly, divided between the few who expressed the views of the court and the many who sympathized with the bazaar. Initially, the latter by far outnumbered the former, but as the revolution progressed, and as the radicals made their aims clear — demanding the equality of all citizens, irrespective of their religion, the building of state schools independent of the religious establishment, and the imitation of the European mode of life — some of the liberal *ulama* deserted the cause for the safety of the old order: "No Absolutism, No Islam". In July 1907, one of the leading religious figures in Tehran declared himself against parliament, and together with some seventy theology students took sanctuary in Abdul Azim. Ahmad Kasravi, the anti-clerical historian of the Constitutional Revolution, writes: "this was the first defection from the masses".<sup>42</sup> Three months later, a larger group of five hundred took *bast* in the same place, and declared that the religious law was in danger. Kasravi comments that this had a strong demoralizing effect on the

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 488; Taherzadeh, *op. cit.*, iv, p. 59; Malekzadeh, *op. cit.*, ii, p. 93.

<sup>41</sup> Taherzadeh, *op. cit.*, iv, p. 59.

<sup>42</sup> Kasravi, *A History of the Iranian Constitution*, p. 226.

radicals, for the religious figures who led the protest were highly "respected by the people".<sup>43</sup>

The ranks of the "Islam and Shah" crowds were also, at times, swelled by the participation of the "lower classes". Their rôle can be accounted for by the issues of bread and the right to vote, and by their allegiance to the orthodox Shi'ite faith.

In the early stages of the revolution the rebels had succeeded in attracting the poor to their side by championing the cause for cheaper bread, and by waging a war against the government over the question of high food-prices. Thus, the petite bourgeoisie of bazaar and the poor of the slums had been able to work together against the court. The two parted company when the régime changed, and when it became apparent that the new administration was no better than the old in its promise to lower food-prices. The breach was further widened by moneyed interests in parliament who advocated a free market in agricultural goods, and an end to the traditional policy of stabilizing bread prices by government interference in the sale of wheat.<sup>44</sup> This conflict between the poor and the radicals over the issue of bread broke into the open in Tabriz. In June 1907, the pro-constitutional Town Assembly was besieged by an angry crowd demanding cheaper bread, and one of its prominent members, a wealthy corn-merchant, was lynched in the outburst. Two years later, the British Minister reported to the Foreign Office that the constitutionalists in Tabriz were in a "critical situation", and that "they feared a popular rising from the starving poor".<sup>45</sup> Kasravi comments:

In Tabriz during the Constitutional Revolution, as in Paris during the French Revolution, the *sans-culottes* reared their heads. The driving force of these men was towards anarchy. First, to overthrow the despotic order, and then to turn upon the rich and the propertied classes. It was with the backing of these men that Danton and Robespierre rose to power. In Tabriz no Dantons and Robespierres appeared, but if they had we also would have had a "reign of terror".<sup>46</sup>

In Isfahan such leaders did make a brief appearance. A peaceful procession of women presenting a petition to the President of the Municipality asking for cheaper bread, turned into a riot when they were given "an obscene answer". They chased him through the streets and eventually killed him, sacked the government offices, and opened the city prison. By the time the Governor ordered the troops

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 386.

<sup>44</sup> *Hablu'l Matin*, 23 Sept. 1907.

<sup>45</sup> Great Britain, *op. cit.*, i, no. 2, p. 97.

<sup>46</sup> Kasravi, *A History of the Iranian Constitution*, p. 355.

to fire, the bread riot had turned into a political movement led by the "reactionary clergy".<sup>47</sup>

The revolution failed not only in lowering the price of bread, but also in providing the poor with the right to vote. The Electoral Law disqualified all landowners who owned less than £200 worth of land, merchants who did not occupy "a definite office", craftsmen and traders who did not belong to "a recognized guild" and who were not in possession of a shop "of which the rent corresponded with the average rents of the locality".<sup>48</sup> In the first election in Tehran only one hundred and five guilds were permitted to participate.<sup>49</sup> The lowest paid groups, such as coolies, carpet-weavers, dyers, bricklayers, labourers, muleteers and camel-drivers, were not recognized as constituting valid associations, even though many of them paid guild taxes. Moreover, these occupations not only gained nothing from the revolution, but also suffered economic hardship from the frequent general strikes which lowered the demand for labour and further raised prices. These factors caused strains in the movement, even during the early days of the revolution when no defections had yet occurred. One of the participants in the venture into the British Legation has written:<sup>50</sup>

I clearly remember the day when our Propaganda Section was informed that the reactionaries were sowing discontent among our ranks, especially among the young carpenters and the illiterate sawyers. The former were angry at being taken away from their work, and demanded to know what they had to gain from the whole escapade. The latter were even more difficult, for they refused to accept any logic. If these irresponsible groups had walked out of the Legation our whole movement would have collapsed, and there would have been an open conflict between the various guilds. Fortunately, we succeeded in persuading them to vow that they would continue to remain in sanctuary with the others.<sup>50</sup>

Religion also played a rôle in attracting the poor towards the royalist side. While the lower classes tended to be staunch advocates of the orthodox Shi'ite faith, many of the Westernized intellectuals in the constitutional movement held anti-clerical opinions, and some of the wealthy in the bazaar were tempted by the Sheikhi heterodoxy and the Babi heresy. Thus, when the royalist *ulama* raised the banner of "Islam in Danger" they were able to undermine the mass basis of the constitutionalists.

The participation of the different groups in royalist demonstrations can be seen both in Tabriz and in Tehran. Throughout the Civil

<sup>47</sup> Great Britain, *op. cit.*, ii, no. 2, p. 65.

<sup>48</sup> The Electoral Law of 1906, Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 356.

<sup>49</sup> *Hablu'l Matin*, 12 Nov. 1906.

<sup>50</sup> Khurasani, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

War, the city of Tabriz was geographically divided between the monarchists entrenched in the northern precincts, and the radicals holding out in the southern districts. The court and the orthodox *ulama* found their adherents in the poor areas of Davache and Sarkhab; the constitutionalists and the Sheikhi leaders drew their support from the prosperous parishes of Khiaban and Amirkhizi. The slum precincts were bulwarks of reaction, and centres of royalist riots; the middle-class regions were hotbeds of political discontent, and staging-grounds for radical rallies. In the capital, the social bases of monarchism could be seen at the Artillery Square meeting of December 1907. In the crowd, there were religious leaders with their theology students from the conservative Society of al-Mohammad, courtiers with their retainers, footmen, grooms, camel-drivers, muleteers and craftsmen from the royal palaces, labourers from the Shah's stud farm outside Tehran, *lutis* in the pay of the court, and the "poorest of the poor" who had no reason to be on the same side as the wealthy constitutionalists of the bazaar.

With the invasion of Persia by the Russians in November 1911, the royalist and the radical demonstrators merged into one large nationalistic crowd. In Tabriz, the bazaar went on a general strike, and the conservative *ulama* led the protest procession. At Meshed, the Russian artillery bombarded the shrine in which "an enormous mob" had taken sanctuary.<sup>51</sup> The bazaar at Enzeli closed down and when some Tsarist officers attempted to open the food stores, a peasant assaulted one of them with a stool and so sparked off a riot in which twenty-two civilians were killed. In Shiraz, the whole population refused to buy British goods, withdrew its savings from the Imperial Bank and declined to sell supplies to the British garrison. His Majesty's Minister complained that the attitude of the local bazaar was "scandalous".<sup>52</sup> The strongest revulsion against the invasion occurred in Tehran. During the parliamentary debate on the ultimatum, three hundred women marched into the public gallery, "with pistols under their skirts or in the folds of their sleeves",<sup>53</sup> and threatened to shoot any deputy who was willing to submit to the Russians. Outside, the Belgium-owned tramway was deserted on the mere suspicion that Russians had shares in the company; "crowds of youths, students, and women filled the streets,

<sup>51</sup> Great Britain, *op. cit.*, ii, no. 4, p. 88.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, no. 3, p. 117.

<sup>53</sup> Shuster, *op. cit.*, p. 198.



dragging the occasional absent-minded passenger from the trams, smashing the windows of shops which still displayed Russian goods, and seeing that no one drank tea because it came from Russia".<sup>64</sup> The crowds became even larger when parliament was forcibly closed, and the deputies had no alternative but to take their case to the streets. In Parliament Square, "the largest rally up to that point in Persian history"<sup>65</sup> assembled shouting "Independence or Death", while in the poorer sections of the city the *sans-culottes* took to the streets demanding cheaper bread. However, unarmed demonstrators were powerless against Western troops; extensive strikes and boycotts hurt the bazaar more than they scandalized the foreign representatives; and expressions of public outrage had no influence on imperial governments located in far-away St. Petersburg and Westminster. The boycotts fizzled out, the rallies disappeared, and what resistance remained moved from the cities into the desert. It was not until after 1918, when St. Petersburg had vanished and Westminster was in disarray, that the same nationalistic crowds reappeared in Persia.

The conservative and the radical crowds regained their separate identities during the republican crisis of 1924, but they were not the same "Islam and Shah" or the same revolutionary rallies of the earlier period. The old faces were now demonstrating under a new banner, and fresh faces were shouting novel slogans.

Three days before the republican majority in parliament was scheduled to introduce a Bill proposing the abolition of the monarchy, some eight thousand royalist guild-leaders in Tehran flocked to the main mosque in the bazaar, where they heard preachers extol the divine authority of the crown. Recent events in Turkey, where the elimination of the Sultanate had been preceded by the eradication of the Caliphate and by an attack upon the *ulama*, had convinced the religious establishment that Monarchy and Islam stood and fell together. In the mosque, a petition was drawn up, signatures were collected, and each of the guilds elected their own representatives to present their plea to parliament. The following day this delegation obtained a hearing in the House, but the hostile reception it received, and the rumours that its leader had been physically assaulted by one of the deputies, caused an uproar in the bazaar. On the morning the

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 184.

<sup>65</sup> "Demonstrations and Meetings in Iran" (in Farsi), *Ettelaat-i Haftegi*, 26 Apr. 1951.

Bill was read, the stores and workshops closed, and an angry procession, shouting "We want to keep the religion of our fathers, we don't want a republic, we are the people of the Koran, we don't want a republic", made its way from the bazaar to Parliament Square. The demonstrators broke through the police barriers and flooded the square, where they remained peaceful until one of the army officers used his horse-whip on a religious leader who had played an important rôle in the constitutional movement and was now advocating the conservative cause. Missiles were hurled, Riza Khan was punched, a number of heads were broken, and some one thousand demonstrators were arrested, before the Speaker of the House intervened and informed the army commanders that it was an inalienable right of the people to express their views in the sanctuary of Parliament Square. Riza Khan disappeared into a back room with the religious and the bazaar leaders, and announced that since the nation had shown itself to be against republicanism he was willing to bow to the will of the people and to forget the whole issue. Two days later, he set off on a religious pilgrimage to prove to the public that he was a good Muslim.

While this huge demonstration of monarchists was sabotaging the republican plans, some three hundred "red shirts" were staging a counter demonstration on the other side of Parliament Square. This rally was sponsored by the secularist Modern Party and by the reformist Socialist Party, and was helped by the left-wing Trade Union Council and by the Communist Party. Those participating were mostly militants from the recently formed trades unions, teachers, telegraphists, pharmacists, and workers from the printing shops, bakeries, public baths, and shoe factories. They were joined by civil servants who had been given a day off in order to "express" their republican sympathies.

This republican demonstration can be considered the first "modern" crowd in Persian history, for it was organized by political parties and its participants were members of the new classes. The fact that it was so small, while its rival was so large, is an indication of the economic and social, as well as the political backwardness of the country in 1924.

### III

#### THE FACES IN THE SEMI-INDUSTRIAL CROWD 1941-53

Two factors made the crowds of post-Riza Shah's Iran different from those of pre-Riza Khan's Persia. One was the changed social structure caused by modernization and industrialization. The other

was the spread of socialism, an ideology that attracted not only the modern working class and segments of the new intelligentsia, but also the traditional wage-earners of the bazaar. The new class-consciousness alienated the journeyman from the master, the apprentice from the craftsman, the employee from the employer, and thus broke asunder the old guild-system which had proved so effective during the Constitutional Revolution and the republican crisis of 1924. In the past, there had been strains within the guilds, but they had been overcome; there had been desertions to the opposition, but they had occurred *en masse*, and the individual guilds had preserved their traditional unity between masters and journeymen. Now, the latter were no longer willing to follow the political policies of the former, and instead demanded "associations which would represent their class interests"<sup>56</sup> and would protect their wages during periods of spiralling inflation. Many left the guilds and formed their own trade unions. Those who remained no longer complied with the wishes of their masters. Moreover, they were no longer swayed by the words of the bazaar *ulama*, who continued to be closely associated with the business community, but instead searched for more radical spokesmen. As a Western correspondent reported: "the masses are being stimulated to think and act politically for the first time".<sup>57</sup> A pre-electoral survey of the traditional guilds in Tehran, conducted for the Prime Minister in 1949, indicates that in few of them would the employers and the employees vote for the same candidates; in most, the former favoured the conservative and the religious contestants, while the latter preferred secular radicals sponsored by the Tudeh Party.<sup>58</sup>

The changed environment is strikingly apparent when one compares the somewhat ridiculous turnout of the republicans in 1924 with the mammoth rallies organized by the Tudeh Party. Their sizes were extremely disparate, but their social composition was not. Both were formed predominantly of the modern middle class and of the working class. Most Tudeh Party meetings were co-sponsored by the Central Council of United Trades Unions (C.C.U.T.U.), which, at its height in 1945, claimed a total membership of 400,000.<sup>59</sup> Although the C.C.U.T.U. was, for the most part, an organization for the modern working class — for factory, communications and oil

<sup>56</sup> A quotation from a trade union pamphlet, *Rahbar*, 31 Jan. 1944.

<sup>57</sup> *The New York Times*, 17 Mar. 1945.

<sup>58</sup> "An Electoral Survey" (in Farsi), *Khandani-ha*, vol. xvi, no. 53, 23 Jan. 1966.

<sup>59</sup> World Federation of Trade Unions, "Report on Iran", *Report on the Activities of the W.F.T.U.* (1949), pp. 105-70.

workers — it also had many members among the traditional wage-earners in the bazaar, and numerous professional affiliates, such as the Union of Office Employees, the Union of Teachers, the Association of Lawyers, the Syndicate of Engineers and Technicians, and the Society of Doctors.

At the memorial meeting by Arani's grave in 1946, which 15,000 attended, twenty-eight different organizations were represented: eleven factory syndicates, four trades unions from the bazaar, five student groups, The Society of Women, and seven party branches.<sup>60</sup> At the party's fifth anniversary rally, 100,000 participated. One reporter estimated that the bulk of the crowd, some 70 per cent were wage-earners, and some 17 per cent were students, office-workers and intellectuals.<sup>61</sup> The proletarian element was even more pronounced in industrial centres such as Abadan and Isfahan. A British Labour M.P. who visited the oil fields wrote:

With the spread of communistic literature, the ignorant, if I may say so, the semi-literate Persian workers began to listen to this ideology and for four years they organized themselves in an underground way into some sort of trade union entity . . . and took into their ranks persons with communistic ideology as their leaders. On May Day, in 1946, the union came into the open, and paraded in Abadan 81,000 strong; 81,000 who are intent on serious business is an industrial force to be reckoned with.<sup>62</sup>

The fact that they were serious was apparent when one hundred and twenty unions in the oil industry and twenty in the bazaar, involving a total of 50,000 workers, called a general strike. The oil company's attempt to break the strike by hiring blacklegs caused violent riots in Abadan and Ahwaz, where a total of 196 workers were killed.<sup>63</sup> The situation was similar in Isfahan, the Manchester of Iran. The local Tudeh Party derived its strength mostly from the trade-union movement in the nine large textile mills, which employed 11,000 workers, and to a lesser extent from the 35,000 wage-earners in the bazaar.<sup>64</sup> In July 1943, only eighteen months after the introduction of trade unionism into the city, the Iranian labour movement achieved its first major victory: the left-wing unions obtained the closed shop, the right to collective bargaining, and recognition from the mill-owners and from the government.<sup>65</sup> The next three years were, in the words of a British Army Officer who was stationed there,

<sup>60</sup> *Mardom*, 1 Feb. 1946.

<sup>61</sup> *Rahbar*, 6 Oct. 1946.

<sup>62</sup> J. Jones, "My Visit to the Persian Oil Fields", *Royal Central Asian Journal* (January, 1947), vol. xxxiv, part 1, p. 60.

<sup>63</sup> *Zafar*, 15 June 1946.

<sup>64</sup> *Rahbar*, 4 Mar. 1945.

<sup>65</sup> *Rahbar*, 18 June 1944.

“a struggle between management and labour”.<sup>66</sup> When the factory owners attempted to form their own “yellow unions”, the struggle was taken outside the plant gates into the streets, and the local authorities were faced with “a workers’ revolt”.<sup>67</sup> The unions took over not only the factories and their granaries, but also the whole city. The propertied classes were horrified: “the concept of private property has been violated”.<sup>68</sup>

The social composition of those attending Tudeh Party rallies is reflected in a published list of 167 demonstrators arrested after Peace Partisan meetings in Isfahan, Abadan and Shiraz, during 1951-2. Among the twenty-eight detained in Isfahan, there were twenty-three workers, one journalist, one office employee, one religious leader, one student and one unemployed worker.<sup>69</sup> Of the hundred and ten imprisoned in Abadan, thirty-five were students from an industrial school, sixteen were workers’ apprentices, fifteen were workers, fifteen were high school students, another fifteen were office clerks, ten were teachers, three were engineers, and one was a tradesman.<sup>70</sup> In Shiraz twenty-nine were seized: ten students, six teachers, three workers, three journalists, three clerks, one artisan, one artist, one farmer, and one agricultural labourer.<sup>71</sup>

The working class and a segment of the modern middle class formed the bases of the Tudeh Party. The traditional middle class of the bazaar, and the section of the modern middle class that considered the Tudeh Party too sympathetic towards the Soviet Union and too radical in its social policies constituted the bulk of Mossadegh’s nationalist movement.

The first time Mossadegh proved that he had a following in the streets was in March 1945, after a speech in parliament in which he denounced his fellow members as “corrupt” and described the House as “a den of thieves”. The following day the whole bazaar came out on strike in his support, and a throng of law students carried him from his home to Parliament Square. The police tried to prevent them entering the square, and in the process killed one student and wounded three others.<sup>72</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Major E. Sykes, “Isfahan”, *Journal of the Central Asian Society*, xxxiii (January-October 1946), p. 312.

<sup>67</sup> Fatemi, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

<sup>68</sup> A quotation from Sheif-Pour Fatemi, a local magnate, *Ra’ad Emruz*, 2 May 1944.

<sup>69</sup> *Besuyeh-i Ayandeh*, 15 Oct. 1951.

<sup>70</sup> *Besuyeh-i Ayandeh*, 2 Mar. 1952.

<sup>71</sup> *Besuyeh-i Ayandeh*, 21 Apr. 1952.

<sup>72</sup> H. Key-Ostovan, *The Politics of Negative Equilibrium in the Fourteenth Parliament* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Taban Press, 1946), i, p. 290.

During the oil crisis, Mossadegh's two pillars of strength within the National Front were the Iran Party and the Mojahedin Islam Society. The former had started as an engineers' association, and although it had transformed itself into a national party, it continued to be predominantly an organization of the salaried middle class: engineers, lawyers, doctors, teachers and civil servants. Its rallies were well-attended by undergraduates, highschool students, and white-collar workers. The latter was a loosely-knit society of merchants and clergymen, and was led by Ayatollah Kashani, a prominent religious figure. His activities were centred in the mosques and the traditional schools of the bazaar, and his followers were mostly mullas, shopkeepers, traders and workshop owners. Even his proclamations calling for demonstrations made a special point of appealing directly to "the merchants, the traders and the guilds of the bazaar".<sup>73</sup> Kashani was, in fact, the heir of the early constitutional leaders, but with the significant difference that he had lost the traditional rank-and-file, the wage-earners of the old economy.

The three days that shook the world and returned Mossadegh to power were the combined effort of the Tudeh Party and of the National Front, both of whom were brought together by the government's declaration of war on communism and on mullas who meddled in politics. The revolt broke out in Tehran as soon as the news reached the bazaar that Mossadegh had been forced to resign. An angry assembly of "traders and guildsmen" fought with the security forces and made their way to Parliament Square.<sup>74</sup> The National Front deputies, encouraged by this enthusiasm, called for a general strike. Their call was answered the following day by the bazaar where "not a single store was open".<sup>75</sup> At this point the Tudeh Party joined the movement, and summoned its supporters to join the strike and to demonstrate in the streets. The effectiveness of this proclamation was apparent when the whole economy ground to a halt and demonstrators took over most of the capital. An anti-communist intellectual wrote: "it must be confessed that the Tudeh Party played the most important rôle in this popular uprising, and that the National Front held only a secondary part".<sup>76</sup> After a whole day of bloodshed, at the end of which there were signs of defections within the army, the government capitulated.

<sup>73</sup> *Ettelaat*, 10 July 1952.

<sup>74</sup> *Ettelaat*, 19 July 1952.

<sup>75</sup> *Ettelaat*, 20 July 1952.

<sup>76</sup> A. Arsanjani, *The Thirtieth of Tir* (in Farsi) (Tehran, Chapkhanehi Atesh, 1956), p. 4.

The heaviest fighting had taken place in four different areas: in the bazaar, especially in the market places for the drapers, the vegetable-sellers and the metal crafts; in the working-class districts, near the factories in the eastern section of the city, and by the railway repair shops near the station; *en route* from the university to the Parliament Building, where a procession of students had been intercepted by the army; and by Parliament Square, the traditional rallying point for protest meetings. The worst slum districts in the southern parts of the city were significantly quiet.

A list of those declared missing as a result of these riots in Tehran provides a sample of the social background of the demonstrators. Among the twenty-six whose occupations are given, there were six factory workers, four pedlars, three drivers, three students, three apprentices, two craftsmen, one office-worker, one labourer, one farmer, one coffee-house keeper, and one unemployed worker.<sup>77</sup>

The revolt in the provinces followed a similar course. It began with strikes and riots in the bazaars of most towns. It snowballed into general strikes and mass demonstrations as the working class joined the protest. In Abadan, the refinery workers stopped work, and a crowd of 40,000 assembled outside the Telegraph Office. In Isfahan, all the guilds marched in protest, but the textile workers were prevented from joining the demonstration by a network of machine guns placed around the mills.<sup>78</sup>

The semi-industrial environment was noticeably different from the pre-industrial, not only because of the expansion of the radical secular crowds, but also because of the shrinking of the "Islam and Shah" riots. In 1924 the republicans had seemed ridiculous; now it was the monarchists who appeared pathetic. Through most of this period, the scene was devoid of any major royalist demonstrations, and it was not until 1 March 1953 that a public expression of sympathy for the Shah occurred in the streets of Tehran. On that day, the court leaked the rumour that the Shah was planning to go into exile because of Mossadegh. A throng of some three hundred royalists, led by two prominent clergymen, and composed of axed army officers, soldiers dressed in civilian clothes and members of the Fascist Sumka Party, assembled outside the palace.<sup>79</sup> In the same week, a minor royalist riot broke out near the Prime Minister's home. The

<sup>77</sup> *Ettelaat*, 30 July 1952.

<sup>78</sup> *Bakhtar-i Emruz*, 20 July 1952.

<sup>79</sup> *Ettelaat-i Haftagi*, 5 Mar. 1953; *Besuyeh-i Ayandeh*, 5 Mar. 1953.

disturbance was led by some *chaque-keshan*, the *lutis* of the earlier period.<sup>80</sup>

The monarchist demonstration that appeared on the last day of Mossadegh's administration was more substantial, but it was by no means a major crowd. One Western observer gave it a generous estimate of 3,000.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, it played no important rôle in the crisis, but merely provided an acoustical diversion while the army officers executed their military *coup d'état*. The composition of this riot has been a subject of much political controversy. In the eyes of the present régime, the demonstrators represented "the people". To the opposition, they represented nothing but a handful of "thugs" and reactionary mullas hired by the American C.I.A. The truth is closer to the second version than to the first, but with the important qualification that some individuals from the slum population also participated in the riot. It is not certain whether they were rewarded for their show of enthusiasm towards the Shah, but it is obvious that "the poorest of the poor" had few ties with the radical movement, that they were hurt by the rising cost of living and the increasing unemployment; they were thus suitable material for the royalist *ulama* and *chaque-keshan*. As the demonstrators made their way from the southern slum areas, through the bazaar, into the centre of the capital, they were joined by policemen and soldiers,<sup>82</sup> and by eight hundred armed peasants who had been supplied with army rifles and had been transported to the city in military trucks.<sup>83</sup>

#### IV

##### SOME COMPARISONS WITH THE EUROPEAN CROWD

Many of the conclusions drawn by Rudé for France and England also apply to Iran. In all three societies, the crowd was a means, often the only means, of expression for the masses. Before the Constitutional Revolution, demonstrations were recognized forms of protest, and accepted methods for checking the arbitrary powers of the monarch. In 1906 the propertied classes obtained the vote, but the vast majority of the population remained outside the political system. Universal male suffrage was introduced in 1919, but because of the economic relations existing between the landowners and the peasants, and because of increasing government interference in the voting, elections did not guarantee true representation. Between 1919

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>81</sup> S. Margold, "The Streets of Tehran", *The Reporter*, 10 Nov. 1953, p. 15.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> *Ertelaat-i Haftegi*, 28 Aug. 1953.



and 1953, 57 per cent of the deputies were landowners, 20 per cent were senior bureaucrats, 10 per cent were wealthy merchants, and only one per cent were from the "lower classes".<sup>84</sup> As far as the discontented were concerned, the right to vote in elections was meaningless, while the right of vote with their feet in the streets was all-important.

Similar faces appeared in the crowds of all three societies. Those who attacked the Bastille, took part in the Gordon Riots, and participated in political rallies in Iran, were not riff-raff, thieves, criminals, vagrants or the professionally unemployed, but were sober and even "respectable" members of the community. During the pre-industrial period in Iran, merchants, shopkeepers, traders, craftsmen, apprentices, journeymen, clergymen, and students from the traditional schools formed the bulk of the crowd. As the country industrialized, factory workers, clerks, teachers, undergraduates, and high-school students joined the ranks. In Tehran, as in Paris and London, the main centres of radical activity were not the slums, but the regions of industry, crafts, and trade.

In both Europe and Iran, the conservative and the religious elements — the "Church and King" riot and the "Islam and Shah" demonstration — shrank as society developed, and as secular radicalism took the place of loyalism and orthodoxy.

In Iran, as in Europe, bread shortages and high prices often acted as a stimulus in driving people into political movements that were not solely concerned with economic issues. The public disturbances of 1905-13 and of 1919-21 took place in years of bad harvests and bread shortages; those of 1941-6 and of 1951-3 in periods of acute inflation. Only the crisis of 1924 was purely ideological.

Moreover, in all three countries, crowds were not fickle, irrational, nor blood-thirsty except when faced with starvation. On occasions when rioters indulged in destruction, their violence was directed more at property than at people. Blood was shed frequently by the authorities, rarely by the demonstrators.

So much for the similarities. Three main differences can be seen. First, public disturbances in Iran broke out only in the towns, while in Europe they occurred as frequently in the villages as in the cities. Second, the Iranian crowd was more successful than its French and English counterparts. Third, in Europe there was a transition from riots to strikes, organized demonstrations and rallies, as the economy developed; in Iran this change did not take place, for general strikes, public meetings and organized protests were as much features of the pre-industrial economy as of the semi-industrial society.

<sup>84</sup> Shajé'ehi, *op. cit.*, p. 177.

Rural tranquillity can be explained by peasant passivity. During the turbulent years of 1906-13, when there were frequent disturbances in the towns, there were only three recorded incidents of peasant ferment. Near Rasht peasants refused to pay taxes and took sanctuary in the town mosque.<sup>85</sup> Near Talish they attacked the house of the Governor.<sup>86</sup> In one mass action against heavy taxation, they captured the town of Yazd.<sup>87</sup> In the twelve years between 1941 and 1953, there were only four incidents of rural agitation of any significant size. In 1941, after the flight of the authorities from the advancing Soviet army, a number of villages in Azerbaijan appropriated the grain set aside for their landowners.<sup>88</sup> Near Tabriz, in 1945, a mob of peasants lynched a landlord.<sup>89</sup> In August 1946, there were widespread fears of a "war breaking out between peasants and their masters" in the areas south of Tehran.<sup>90</sup> And in 1952-3 armed villagers in Kurdistan fought their landowners.<sup>91</sup> However, these incidents were rare; the peasant continued to be apathetic, his political activity limited to being shepherded to the polls to vote for the local magnates. Political scientists and historians have failed to explain this phenomenon of rural passivity. The answer will probably be found by social psychologists.

Rudé gives two factors which determine whether the crowd succeeds or fails: the attitude and strength of the armed forces, and the policy of the ruling class. In Iran, the crowd, much of the time, functioned in favourable conditions. Until Riza Shah, the troops at the disposal of the government were few and unreliable. In the crisis of July 1906, when 14,000 had taken sanctuary, the Commander of the Tehran regiments made the "fatal announcement" that his troops would not fight against the protesters.<sup>92</sup> As one observer noted: "what can the Shah do with his unarmed, unpaid, ragged starving soldiers, in the face of the menace of a general strike or of a riot".<sup>93</sup> After Riza Shah, the army was better armed and paid, but it was not always willing to obey commands. During the general strike in the oil industry in 1951, the local soldiers refused to fire.<sup>94</sup> In the

<sup>85</sup> Great Britain, *op. cit.*, i, p. 26.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>88</sup> J. Moose, "Memorandum on Azerbaijan" (unpublished report sent to the State Department in Oct. 1941, filed in the State Department, no. 740.0011 EW).

<sup>89</sup> H. Faboud, *L'Evolution Politique de l'Iran* (Lausanne, 1957), p. 206.

<sup>90</sup> *Khandani-ha*, 13 Sept. 1946.

<sup>91</sup> *Ettelaar-i Haftegi*, 19 Sept. 1952.

<sup>92</sup> British Government, *op. cit.*, i, no. 1, p. 4.

<sup>93</sup> Browne, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>94</sup> *Ettelaat-i Haftegi*, 19 Apr. 1951.

dramatic events of July 1952, there were dissensions in the ranks. Moreover, demonstrators often received political help. During the Constitutional Revolution, the British and even some courtiers gave them protection. In 1924, the Speaker of the House intervened on their behalf. And throughout the period between 1941 and 1953, many politicians had a vested interest in preserving the freedom of the streets, for they realized that the suppression of the crowd would result in the re-establishment of court autocracy. When these factors were missing, the Iranian crowd proved as ineffective as its European counterparts.

Riots are the product of spontaneity; strikes, rallies and demonstrations that of organizational premeditation. In Europe, through the long duration between the decay of the traditional guilds and the rise of modern trade unionism, there were few organs that could represent popular interests and mobilize the workingman into effective pressure-groups. Thus, public dissatisfaction was expressed often through outbursts of unplanned rioting, rarely through organized protest. In Iran, the transitional period between the decay of the guilds and the birth of unionism did not take centuries, but a mere fifteen years. As a result, the crowd in Iran, even more so than in Europe, was rarely a "mob", but was usually a demonstration or a rally.

*Columbia University, New York*

*E. Abrahamian*