

operation, and even if the doctor was able and willing to operate on me, there were no facilities for it on the way from Tehran to Anzali. So I did not accept his condition and bid him goodbye. Instead, I decided to travel a day before him so that if anything happened during the journey, he could catch up with me on the way,, and I would then pay him the fees he asked for.

The Tehran Anzali coach transport monopoly was at that time held by Arbab Bahman who was a Zoroastrian. I was told that Dr Kirk had operated on this gentleman's son in the American Hospital in Tehran, and for that reason he had been able to obtain a letter of introduction from the Arbab to the transport officers. That letter ordered the officers to give priority to Dr Kirk over the other passengers in changing the horses on the way.

I made some discreet investigations and found out which day Dr Kirk was going to travel. It was a very cold winter's day. Together with my brother Abulhasan Diba, and my butler Abdul Rahim Khan, we started the journey from Tehran to Anzali. The first staging was a place called ShahAbad, some four farsangs⁸ away from Tehran, where the horses had to be changed. We were about to move on when a coach arrived and Dr Kirk and his wife got off. Dr and Mrs Kirk expressed surprise at seeing us. The doctor said: "We are fellow travellers after all". I said to him that it was lucky for me that we were to travel together. However, if he got his horses and left immediately, my plan to travel ahead of him would not succeed. So I asked for the second man in command in the carriage station and told him that I was unwell and needed to reach the district of Yanghi Imam by night to rest. I asked if he could kindly attend to the doctor a little later, to allow me to travel to Hesarak before him whence I could reach Yanghi Imam by night. Having witnessed that I had been carried on a stretcher from the coach, the station officer agreed to afford us this favour and received my little bakhshish.

Before sunset we arrived at Yanghi Imam and rented one of the two rooms which were available in a building in front of the coach station. The doctor who arrived afterwards rented the other room. On his own initiative, he paid me a visit and when

he was leaving, according to the practice in Tehran, my butler gave him an envelope which contained 50 rials. But he refused to take it. After dinner, Dr Kirk showed the letter of introduction from Arbab Bahman to the man who was in charge of the coach station. The man said that he would comply with the letter and what his master the Arbab had ordered, but in the circumstances he could do very little to oblige, since the horses were tired and could not be taken out of their stables before they were fed. It would be a foolish thing, the man explained, to take the horses out at that time of the night. It was probable that the horses would not manage to take the doctor to the next station and, in that cold winter, his innocent child's life would be in danger. Since you could not beat that argument, Dr Kirk and his family spent the night in Yanghi Imam.

I was watching out to see whether the doctor would sense what was happening and would give the manager an unusually large tip in order to ensure that he could travel before us in the morning. As it happened, on the following morning, before the Kirks had got up, we got our horses and moved out of Yanghi Imam. We did not see Dr Kirk until we reached the city of Qazvin.

The coach station at Qazvin had changed quite a lot since I had last seen it before the First World War. Prior to the war, the coach station and the guest-house were both on the same site. Now, the station guest-house was occupied by Russian troops, and the passengers had to stay in different inns around the town. The coach driver took us to one of these inns in the city. Dr Kirk who had been taken to another inn later came to visit me.

The coach driver who had promised to have the coach ready before sunrise kept his word. From the city of Qazvin onwards we were ahead of Dr Kirk in all the stations until Sefid-Kutleh, the station immediately before the city of Rasht, where he caught up with us. However, there was only one room available in the station guest-house at Sefid-Kutleh and that had been taken by ourselves. So Dr Kirk said to us "You have to put us up overnight. Otherwise, let us move on before you, and in return I promise to get your tickets before you arrive at Port Anzali, and reserve your place on the boat as

well'. I replied that the choice was entirely his. He answered that although he was sure that no one was trying to detain him, he wondered how it was that the letter of introduction that he had obtained from Arbab Bahman had had no effect at all in the course of his journey. I said that perhaps this was due to the fact that I had secured no right of priority, and this made him laugh. However, this time as soon as he asked for special treatment his coach was made ready for him and he left.

We had hoped that Dr Kirk had reserved our place on the boat at Port Anzali. However, because of the war, anyone wishing to purchase tickets had to present his passport and travel documents; Dr Kirk had been unable therefore to buy our tickets or reserve our seats. So we bought our own tickets after our arrival at the port, but we travelled on the same ship as the Kirks. That night I was ill. The following morning, before reaching land, I gave the doctor 400 Russian roubles, as we had agreed, which at that time was almost 1,000 rials. He did not wish to accept it. He had found out that Baku railway station could not take on any passengers for another fifteen days, due to the troop movements, so he asked me if it was possible for him to be present in the theatre during my operation, and come and see me afterwards during my stay in hospital.

There was a large hospital in Baku which had been built by a German national before the First World War. After the declaration of war, he had assigned it to a Russian national and left. I immediately went to that hospital and a famous surgeon called Dr Finglestein operated on me while Dr Kirk was in attendance. After the operation, they showed me a piece of my appendix which they had put in alcohol. The surgeon told me any further delay would have been dangerous. My post-operation stay in the hospital was rather short because of the arrival of many war casualties. I was discharged from the hospital and went to a local hotel. Because the weather in Qafqaz was milder than Baku, I went to Tiflis so that I could rest there for a while. In the meantime I received a telegram asking me to return to Tehran as soon as possible. The telegram had been sent to Petrograd (St Petersburg) via Shu'a al-Dawleh Diba who was the Iranian consul-general in Tiflis. But more on this issue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 17 FOURTEEN MONTHS IN THE POSITION OF THE SECRETARY OF THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE

There was a young patient in the Baku Hospital who shared a room with me, and was vehemently opposed to the Tsarist regime. Judging by what he said, it was apparent that before long big changes would take place in that country. These aspirations for political freedom which were current in Russia were not without their impact on neighbouring Iran. Indeed, it was due to these circumstances that Vusuq al-Dawleh¹ (the Iranian prime minister) contemplated certain changes within his government. He thought that by bringing a number of his opponents into the cabinet, he could ensure that he would last longer in office.

To bring about these changes, Vusuq al-Dawleh could do no better than form a coalition with Qavam al-Saltaneh who, although his brother, was not on good terms with him. Qavam al-Saltaneh had a number of influential friends, and his entry into the cabinet would please and pacify them all. On the basis of such calculations Vusuq reshuffled his government, bringing Qavam al-Saltaneh into office as minister of finance. Qavam was the type of man who wanted to show people that he was always trying out new ideas when he was in office. During his term of office as minister of finance I saw a formal photograph of the Belgian advisers in Iran wearing Iranian dress and hats. As a public relations exercise, this photograph was designed to tell people that the foreign advisers were so loyal to the Iranian ministry of finance that they would all wear Iranian dress, even at official ceremonies.

My working experience in the ministry of finance in the pre-constitutional era and my subsequent education in Europe, had made me an ideal candidate for the post of secretary to the ministry of finance in Vusuq's reshuffle. I was sent a telegram via the ministry of foreign affairs to return to Tehran. As I later learned, this had been sent on Qavam's instructions. On my arrival in Tehran, Qavam came to see me and told me of his wish to appoint me as secretary to his department.

I did not wish to resign my post as a member of the auditing commission for government expenditures which was a straightforward civil service post; and I did not care to take up a political appointment which would make me dependent on the existing government. However, there were two reasons why I could not continue my work in the auditing commission. First, I could no longer achieve anything useful because only a couple of applications per day were referred to the commission for auditing. In fact most of the payments were being made by the treasury without our approval in the commission. The second reason was that my mother had been a friend of Qavam's mother-in-law. I was a child when she came for a visit one day, had a sudden stroke in our house, and died shortly afterwards. Qavam himself was also a friend of mine. Once we had even talked about going together to Europe for education and staying there for a few years.

I remember the exact day that Qavam and I spoke of our trip to Europe together. It was the day that the prime minister of the day had invited a group of people to ask them to make contributions towards the raising of the capital to set up a national bank in Iran. Ehtisham al-Saltaneh, the Majlis speaker, was pressing for these contributions very vigorously. During conversation, an argument broke out between him and Zia'al-Mulk Hamadani. The Majlis speaker said that people like Zia'al-Mulk had benefited all their life from the country, and it was time they repaid some of their debt by making contributions for the setting up of a national bank. Zia'al-Mulk retorted that all his life he had lived modestly like a peasant, and he had not received a penny unlawfully from the state funds. Even so, he continued, he was able and willing to offer the services of the Hamadan regiment, which was under his command, at his own expense anywhere it was required. There were similar exchanges and arguments between the Majlis speaker and a number of other people present there. Qavam al-Saltaneh and I, sitting in a corner of that large reception room, were talking about the possibility of our trip to Europe to receive education. The meeting convened on that day came to an end without any positive results as the entire time was taken up by those silly

arguments.

In short, Qavam's pressure through my mother and my own friendship with him persuaded me to accept the deputyship at the ministry of finance. However, I made my acceptance conditional on the proviso that the presidency of the department of accounts was also attached to my jurisdiction. I did so in order to ensure that the commission for auditing public expenditures could to some extent fulfil its duties. If the legislator's objective could not be achieved for lack of an approved general budget, I wanted to ensure that at least no money would be paid out of the treasury without it being audited by the commission.

Qavam, the minister of finance, accepted this condition and attached the auditing commission to my office. As a result, when I took up my office no payments could be made by the treasury without the endorsement of the auditing commission. In this, I had the backing of the minister. After a little while, however, my relationship with my former colleagues in the commission badly deteriorated. They were spending too much time debating and discussing every single application for expenditure, and consequent delay in the payment of bona fide claims led to many complaints. Made by various ministers, all these complaints were directed to me as the secretary responsible for the auditing commission. This led me to authorise the payment of the funds without prior auditing by the commission.

Although, because of the commission's delay, some payments had to be made without auditing, thanks to my being in charge of the accounts department the cabinet refused to endorse some of the applications for funds. As long as I was secretary, neither the ministers, nor the cabinet as a whole managed to contravene the statutory provisions of the ministry, although their personal complaints to me [about the rigid application of the law] abounded. By way of illustration, I refused to enforce a resolution which had been approved by the cabinet because I found it to be against the statutory provisions.

[Let me give an example of such contraventions before my time.] Before the Constitutional Revolution, Vusuq al-Dawleh, serving as the chief official accountant of Azerbaijan, had come into

contact with Amir Bahadur.' They became friends, and several years later, after the shelling of the Majlis, Vusuq did Amir Bahadur a favour. The government of Vusuq approved the payment by the treasury of some 1,800,000 rials before an audit to Amir Bahadur as an advance payment for his claims on the government. Amir Bahadur's claims were on account of expenses incurred during and after the shelling of the Majlis. His point was that he had paid these expenses on behalf of the government [of Mohammad Ali Shah] but that he had not been reimbursed. There was in fact no justification for the reimbursement of these expenditures which had been incurred in fighting the constitutionalists and freedom-fighters, after the constitutionalists had won the battle and were in power. The payment was particularly inadvisable considering that it was equivalent to exactly 1 per cent of the total expenditure budget of the state. Indeed such a payment to Amir Bahadur could have made it impossible to meet the government's urgent expenditures. In spite of all this, no one had objected to this irregular payment.

There were a number of similar cases which were not enforced during my office. Such action was facilitated by the disappearance of the Tsarist Russian empire, one of the signatories of the 1907 Treaty,' from the colonial scene. This allowed the Iranian people to express their views about public issues, and, hence, public affairs were conducted rather more in the interests of the country. The government of Vusuq, although supported by foreign powers, failed to bring the country fully under its control. Having failed in one of its main ventures, namely the ratification of the 1919 Agreement, it was forced to resign. The successive governments insisted that I should stay in my job as the secretary. Every new finance minister felt he had to work with me [because of my popularity], and I myself wished to serve, to show my appreciation of the people's support and encouragement. Therefore, whoever was appointed as minister of finance would feel obliged to invite me to continue my work. I should admit that I was ready in those days to work with people with whose thinking and politics I disagreed, because the personal views and attitudes of the min-

isters of the day did not have the least effect on my work, on account of the support which I enjoyed from the people.

My appointment as secretary in the ministry of finance was most effective and lasted for fourteen months in difficult circumstances. The government was weak, the taxes were not collected properly and there was no foreign aid or oil revenue to help the treasury. I had made certain arrangements in the ministry whereby no letter could be signed by the minister unless I had seen it first in my capacity as secretary. All ministerial letters were sent to the minister to sign after my prior approval. I had had two rubber stamps made, one reading 'with the minister's signature' and the other, 'with the signature of the secretary'. Every letter signed by the minister was identified by the first, and every letter bearing my own signature, by the second stamp. This procedure caused some friction between the minister and myself. The minister used to say that there should be no formal distinction between the minister and the secretary, so there was no need to identify the letters separately in that fashion. I explained that his statement was absolutely right so long as the letters signed by the minister and the secretary were all in the interests of the country and in accordance with the law. However, assuming that there might be an occasion when the law was breached, it would be far better to be able to identify the person who had signed a particular letter in contravention of the law.

Freedom of expression was a double-edged sword. On the one hand, people could express their views about public affairs, and so government departments functioned within the law and in the interest of the country. On the other hand, there were some unscrupulous people who abused this freedom, using every possible excuse to avoid paying tax. These people's delay or default in paying their taxes doubled the volume of correspondence between them and the ministry of finance. The increase in workload was such that I had to work round the clock, and had only a few hours' sleep every day. I went to work in the ministry an hour before the office hour, and I stayed there in the evening long enough to ensure that nothing was left unattended.

I put up with all these difficulties because I felt I was able to render a service to my country, thanks to the people's support. My conflicts with anyone or any given class or profession, were based simply on the interest of the country. There was no intimidation or use of force to silence people, or discourage them from speaking their minds, or make them obey the government's dictates. The reason for the orderly progress of government affairs in that period was that the country's elite was committed [to the good of the people] and it was that very commitment which led a number of leading politicians and deputies in the Third Majlis to give up their posts and salaries [during the First World War], leave Tehran and other cities, and suffer misery and misfortune inside and outside the country.'

The middle and lower classes still have some force of conviction. But because the important political posts are now monopolised by agents of foreign powers, and the people's right to free elections has been usurped, the ordinary people can neither express their views nor exert any influence on the running of public affairs. However, let us not be distracted from what I was originally talking about.

During my work as the secretary in the ministry of finance I used to examine all the letters going out of the ministry. Anything which was not in the interest of the country I would reject outright; and whatever was necessary to accept, I would put my signature to. Those decisions which had to be taken by the minister were drafted in proper form, put in a special folder, and sent to him for signature. As it happened, I had to work with a minister who was both unwell and lazy. It would be better not to say anything about his other agreeable qualities. This minister had rented a place in Shimiran, north of Tehran, both for relaxation and recuperation. The reception rooms in that house had several in-built niches. He did not open any of the folders containing the letters and documents to be seen and signed by him, but simply piled them on top of each other in one of those niches. Not infrequently there were letters which had to be signed immediately. In such cases we attached a red mark to the folder to indicate its urgency. But even these urgent tasks would be left unattended for quite a while, and after two

months his reception room looked like a large overstocked library.

People frequently came to the minister's chef de cabinet [private secretary] demanding a reply to their letters. Handling these inquiries would prevent some of the civil servants from attending to their normal duties. This was too much to bear and I felt I had had enough, so I told the chef de cabinet to direct the inquiring public to the residence of the minister in Shimiran to ask for a reply to their letters from him personally. This, as one could imagine, made him furious. Faced with demanding individuals, the minister decided to solve the problem by sending back to us all the letters, documents and files which he had kept in his house. However, because there were no taxis in those days, he ordered a number of carriages to be hired to transfer all those files to the ministry. The files were covered with pieces of cloth so that people could not see what was inside the carriage. Accompanying the files was a memorandum from the minister to the secretariat which read:

I am sending all the files which were in my house. File away all those letters which no longer need attention due to lapse of time. Return to me those which still need to be signed.

The chef de cabinet showed that memorandum to me. I said it would have been nicer had the minister said 'send the rest as well so that I can keep them till they are out of date'.

This attitude made me want to give up as well. When he realised what had happened, the minister sent his son to me for reconciliation. As a result, it was resolved that the minister should work three hours per day with me in the ministry, without receiving visitors during that time. However, after only a few days he stopped coming to the ministry, and continued receiving visitors at his residence in Shimiran. Faced with this, I resigned my office although, I should add, there were other reasons for my resignation.

One major reason for my decision was the abuse of authority by the minister of finance in the course of fixing the landlords' liability for agricultural tax. That year there had been a drought and the harvest was not expected to be good. The landlords antici-

pated that the price of corn would soon increase sharply as a result of the drought. So they would use any means to try and obtain a note from the minister ordering the local departments of finance to reduce their agricultural tax liability for the coming year. This was done by fixing the amount of agricultural tax on the basis of the average price of corn in the preceding years. At that time the average price of every kharvarl of wheat was still less than 100 rials, whereas, by the last months of the year, the price jumped to over 10,000 rials per kharvar. Even though I had ensured that all letters signed by the minister had a copy on file sealed by the rubber stamp 'signed by the minister', I was still afraid that something like the looting of Qa'im-Maqam's house, which I remembered from my childhood, would also happen to me. That looting incident had occurred because of the shortage of bread in Tabriz. As the ministers of finance did not last long in office due to constant reshuffles, people would consider me to be the permanent office holder in that ministry. Thus, they might well have held me as the man responsible for the shortage and high price of bread. So I saw fit to resign from my job before the harvest came in and, thus, save myself from a moral responsibility.

FOOT NOTES TO CHAPTER 17

1. Tr. Hasan Vusuq al-Dawleh formed his cabinet on 7 August, 1918. His government fell in July 1920.
2. Tr. The Iranian term is 'assistant minister' (sometimes incorrectly translated into 'deputy minister'). However, the rank corresponded partly to (the British) 'minister of state', and partly to 'permanent secretary' (i.e. a mixture of the two), neither of which existed in Iran. Hence our choice of the term secretary.
3. Tr. Amir Bahadur-i Jang was Mohammad Ali Shah's minister of war, and one of his staunchest supporters in his struggle against the constitutionalists.
4. Tr. "the Anglo-Russian Agreement of 1907 which dealt with Iran, Afghanistan and Tibet. So far as Iran was concerned, the two great powers divided the country into three spheres of interest. The Russian sphere of interest included northern and central parts of Iran, whereas the British were given a free hand in the eastern and south-eastern parts of Iran, with Tehran and the environs left as the 'neutral' zone.
5. Tr. The provisional government of the Muhajim in the west of the country, and their declaration of war on the Allies.
6. Tr. Equal to 300 kg.
1. Tr. The Red Cross used to be called the Lion and Sun Society in Iran. After the 1979 revolution the name was changed to Red Crescent.
7. Tr. Mehdi Quli Hedayat, Mukhbir al-Saltaneh, served under the

Qajars as governor-general of Fars (1910), and governor-general of Azerbaijan (1921), and under Reza Shah as prime minister (1926-33).

8. Tr. Mohammad Ali Furughi, a noted statesman and scholar, was a minister, and prime minister, several times during his career. He was the author of a number of scholarly works including Sayri Hikimat dar urupa (A History of European Philosophy).
9. Tr. The Perso-Arabic letter 's' here stands for 'God's blessings and peace be upon him'.
10. Years later (in 1953-4), in my trial in the military court at the Saltanabad, the question of this sentence and my 'excommunication' was brought up once again. A French text of my thesis had been lost in the looting of my house during the 19 August 1953 coup. I had managed to get a copy of its Persian translation and submitted it to the court.
11. If Ashtari were still alive and asked about the reason for my being convicted in the military court he would have answered the same.
- Tr. A coalition of democratic and socialist radicals led by Mirza Kuchik Khan.
12. Tr. The famous mosque in central Tehran built by Fath'ali Shah Qajar. It was renamed 'Imam Mosque' after the 1979 revolution.
- Tr. Husain Ala, Mu' in al-Vizareh, (1883-1964) a lawyer by training who served in high offices as ambassador, minister, prime minister and court minister under the Pahlavis.
13. Tr. In this translation the chief administrator of the state is identified by different expressions: those coming after the post-constitutional era are called prime minister, those of the pre-constitutional era are referred to as grand vazir.
14. Tr. The Turks marched into Iran and advanced as far as Hamadan (1916). The Russians had already taken up position to the north and the British to the south and south east.
15. Tr. There was a traditional fortune-telling practice which consisted of calculating the number of rosaries. A certain number had customarily been deemed as being a good omen and a certain number as being bad.
16. Tr. As has been noted before, Abdol-Husain Mirza Farmanfarma (1858-1939) was Dr Musaddiq's uncle on his mother's side.
5. Tr. Abbas Mirza Nayib al-Saltaneh, the famous son, designated heir and crown prince of Fath'ali Shah (d. 1834), who died before his father, was admired as a modernist-reformist army commander and crown prince.
17. Tr. See chapter 9, footnote 1, p. 145.
18. Tr. He was the Iranian expatriate who advised the author in Paris during his first trip to Europe. See chapter 9, above, p. 142.
19. Tr. Farsakh or farsang is the traditional Iranian unit of length equal to 6.24 kms.

ایرانی ام، ایران زمین را دوست دارم

نوار کاست و لوح فشرده‌ی صوتی «ایرانی ام، ایران زمین را دوست دارم»، با شعر و صدای پروفیسور حسن امین، با موسیقی مناسب به تعداد محدودی آماده‌ی عرضه به دوستان و مشترکان مجله است.
برای دریافت آن با تلفن‌های ۶۶۹۶۸۴۸۷ و ۶۶۹۶۸۴۸۸ تماس بگیرید.