

Anti-Shah Propaganda

The anti-Shah camp's propaganda centres on a few topics which they ardently stick to and repeat to death until some ignorant fool buys into it. I was reading a commentary by an anonymous compatriot (on a certain site which I do not like to advertise on my blog) and would like to share this compatriot's answers to the repetitive propaganda used by the anti-Shah camp. I have formatted the anonymous user's replies and added my own commentary to it as well.

Anti-Shah propaganda (1): If Shah was so great as many claim here, why there was an uprising (revolution) by millions of Iranians who toppled him from power?

Answer: One might expect a short and sweet answer to this question but if one is not aware of the complex circumstances that built up to the Islamo-Leftist takeover one might very well be duped into believing that the revolt was a popular one. First of all, despite there being large crowds, reaching the hundreds of thousands, there are no confirmed statistics of the actual crowds that were demonstrating but the numbers which are used by the Islamic Republic and other sympathizers are based on actual eye-accounts with substantial exaggeration added to these subjective accounts that run in the millions (!). Having said that, there were indeed very large crowds out demonstrating, causing havoc, destruction and spilling of innocent blood.

Why were they demonstrating? Well for the Islamo-Leftist factions in these crowds they were against the late Shah's democratization efforts and modernization plans that were in effect. The clergy was especially infuriated because they had lost the huge amount of lands which they had owned at the hands of the government which had confiscated these lands in their land redistribution plan. The muslim clergy was also feeling their influence and power over Iranian society slowly eroding due to the progressive agenda of the government and thus were fighting to keep their livelihoods of leeching upon Iranian society's ignorance. The left in particular disliked the fact that the Shah was harsh on leftist guerrillas and factions whose allegiance were to the Soviet Union and the fact that he was such a close ally to the U.S. These two potent forces had thus joined in what the late Shah of Iran called an un-holy alliance of Red (Leftists) and Black (Islamists), hellbent on destroying the Shah and his progressive vision of a prosperous, democratic, and modern Iran. To this end they had embarked on a massive propaganda campaign to spread lies and exaggerations about the late Shah and the Iranian Government. As an example, according to Akbar Ganji and Emadin Baghi (themselves revolutionaries and intelligence officers of IRI), revolutionaries exaggerated corruption of the Shah's Government (from murders to embezzlements and everything in-between) by factors of between 100 and 1500 to justify their take-over of the country. They also lied about the future, in the form of promises they made to the masses, from free bus service to free electricity and delivery of 350 tomans (Iranian currency) to everyone's house every morning. In effect those who bought into these lies and exaggerations had ambitious expectations of heaven upon earth by supporting the armed insurrection and demonstrations against the Shah's government – this despite their living standards being one of the best in the region, having risen from that of being a dirt poor, disease-ridden, lawless country to one of the world's fastest growing economies. Ungratefulness and greed is what marked the participation of many politically non-affiliated demonstrators.

Another variable in this regard, was also the unfamiliarity of people with any other system of government, even the democracies of the west. Once the exaggerations were taken out, corruption in the Shah's government was only slightly more than that in western democracies, and by the standards of neighbouring countries would make the Iranian government look exceptionally well! This was also an issue that had been acknowledged (corruption) by the Shah and which was continuously being addressed, taking into mind that Iran was still a developing country, which albeit having taking huge steps from the state it was before the Pahlavi Dynasty, still needed more time to reach the standards expected by people in the west. People knew none of this; that no government is perfect.

Another major factor in people joining the Islamo-Leftist Revolt was the religiosity of people: they were more comfortable with likes of Ayatollah Khomeini than the late Shah of Iran. Iran

had for 1400 years been partly under the yoke of Arabo-Muslim Occupation and later under the influence and control of the Muslim clergy which exercised supreme power over the population for centuries; thus Iranian society at the turn of the 20th century was not only poverty/disease/-stricken and illiterate but they were also highly superstitious due to the influence of the mullah's/ayatollah's in the muslim clergy. Again, great strides had been taken by the Pahlavi Dynasty to modernize and educate the country. Illiteracy levels which were in the region of 99% at the turn of the century had experienced an impressive improvement by the 1970's. However, even with a population that can read and write this did not present a definite cure to centuries-old ingrained/indoctrinated superstition. Thus their problem (the people who had joined the demonstrations) was not that the Shah was not good enough, their problem was that the Shah mandated their daughters to go to school without hejab (Islamic female headcovering), music to be played on radio, foreign films shown on TV, alcohol served in restaurants/cafe's, females attending universities and mingling with men freely etc... which were all "haraam" (Islamic term meaning "forbidden") in their views; otherwise the corruption of the Shah's government had nothing to do with 99% of the population which went about their own business day in day out.

Tying in with what I laid out earlier, they had also forgotten where they came from. When Reza Shah the Great took over the country, Iran had 3% literacy, when the Shah left the most pessimistic views show that Iran had 65%+ literacy rate. That is +60% change in 54 years. Secondly, per capita income increased from about \$150 to \$2400 (without adjustment for inflation). Schools opened, engineers and doctors replaced the superstitious appeal of going to the shrine of some dead muslim killer/thief/opportunist that had been glorified to sainthood by the muslim clergy. Working for companies replaced opium trade in the bazaar (traditional marketplace). All of this and more was just too much for people to digest and to accept in such a short time span, and others became greedy and arrogant, attributing all successes and advancements to themselves and not the policies of the catalyst that was the late Shah of Iran.

Having outlined the affinity with backwardness and superstitiousness, the majority of people who participated in the revolt thus made a better connection to a regressive and backward muslim clergyman like Ayatollah Khomeini, than with a patriotic/progressive/modern individual like the Shah of Iran and the new progressive clean-cut class of technocrats around him.

Anti-Shah propaganda (2): If he was a patriot working for people, why he had to resort to violence, imprisonment and torture of dissidents, SAVAK, Evin, etc.?