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AMĀNALLĀH

AMĀNALLĀH (1892-1961), ruler of Afghanistan (1919-29), first with the title of amir and from 1926 on with that of shah. He was the third son of Amir Ḥabīballāh, who was assassinated on 20 February 1919 when Amānallāh was serving as governor of Kabul with control over the army and the royal treasury, an advantage that aided him to succeed in the struggle for the throne against his uncle, Naṣrallāh. Having secured power (an open *darbār* was held on 13 April), Amānallāh proceeded to declare a holy war against the British in India. He was strongly under the influence of the Afghan intellectual, author, and publisher of the journal *Serāǰ al-aḵbār*, Maḥmūd Ṭarzī (he had married one of Ṭarzī's daughters, Ṭorayyā, in 1914). Ṭarzī's influence worked in the direction of anti-colonialist, anti-British, pan-Islamic, and reformist attitudes; his journal exhorted Muslims to shed western imperialist control and to modernize. The Third Anglo-Afghan War (3 May-3 June 1919) gave vent to these concerns, while the Treaty of Rawalpindi, signed on 11 Ḏu'l-qaʿda 1337/8 August 1919, secured for Afghanistan full independence, including the right to conduct its own foreign affairs. Further negotiations led to the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921.

With independence secured, Amānallāh turned to internal modernization. He inaugurated a comprehensive series of legal, social, economic, military, and political reforms; he was both forerunner and emulator of Ataturk and Reżā Shah. The various legislative and executive measures can be roughly divided into three stages. The first (1919-23) was confined largely to legal codification; also in this period Afghanistan's first constitution was promulgated (9 April

1923). The second stage (1924-26) dealt mostly with military and executive reforms; a brief third stage (1928-29) sought to emphasize social and religious change. Reforms included the following: The army was reorganized, with military service now based on a lottery. Educational standards were imposed on the religious establishment, the privileges of which were curbed. Tribal subsidies were eliminated, internal customs duties were abolished, and payment of taxes in cash substituted for payment in kind. The first Afghan budget was compiled, import-substitution industries were founded, and agriculture promoted through tax incentives and land reform. Social reforms were inaugurated—by legislation, persuasion, propaganda, or royal fiat. Women were encouraged (not required) to unveil and to participate in public life; polygamy was discouraged, while slavery was legally banned. A strict anti-corruption campaign was launched. Education of both boys and girls received top priority; it was secularized and modernized to include foreign languages and study abroad. Public works programs included roads, bridges, and many public buildings; the first (and only) opera house in Afghanistan and a small railroad linking Kabul with a new administrative capital (Dār al-Amān) were constructed.

In foreign affairs, Amānallāh obtained diplomatic recognition of Afghanistan from most of the major powers between 1921 and 1923 (the United States, due to British influence and lack of commercial or cultural interests there, did not officially recognize Afghanistan until 21 August 1934; a resident mission was not opened in Kabul until June, 1942). Relations with Iran were nominally friendly but rather remote. Those with the USSR were cordial in the 1920s, when the Bolsheviks were asserting authority over the Muslim areas of the former Russian empire; but once they ended Bokhara's autonomy, Amānallāh was disillusioned and relations cooled. In British India officials had difficulty in accepting Afghanistan's total independence, while Afghans bitterly resented British patronizing attitudes. The tribal border areas were a constant source of ferment and trouble, and Amānallāh's public championing of the cause of Indian independence brought added irritation.

Amānallāh's reign produced mixed results. The Afghan economy was greatly stimulated, enabling Afghanistan to pay for its own development program and foreign technicians. Most of the educational reforms were accepted with gusto, especially by the young. The army reforms, implemented by a Turkish military mission, though well-intentioned, were poorly executed and caused disaffection, making the army almost useless during the final rebellion.

Religious and tribal resistance was concentrated on those features of the modernization program which curbed the financial and social privileges of the *mollā*s and the khans and threatened tribal autonomy. In 1924 the warlike Mangals and allied tribes started a major revolt which was put down with great difficulty. Amānallāh learned little from this close call and proceeded with his reforms. In 1927-28 after a triumphal tour of the Middle East and Europe, he and Queen Ṯorayyā returned even more convinced of the need for rapid modernization. In late 1928 he announced a greatly expanded reform program, but this was interrupted in early 1929 by another major tribal revolt. This time, caught between the Pashtun tribes of the east and the Tajik tribes of the north, Amānallāh's government collapsed. A brief comeback launched from Qandahār also failed. Disillusioned, he fled to Italy in June, 1929; he died there on 21 September 1961.

Views conflict as to why Amānallāh's modernization attempt failed. Many Afghans believe that the revolt was the result of a British plot, but careful research in the secret British files of the period has failed to substantiate this charge, and there is considerable circumstantial evidence to disprove it. A long-accepted theory holds that an inherently conservative, orthodox people revolted in protest against reforms involving women's freedom, an attempt to abolish the veil, an attack on polygamy, educational changes such as coeducation, secularization of the legal codes, and imposition of educational standards on religious leaders. But recent scholarship, working with newly available archives and oral history techniques, rejects this theory, maintaining that the rebellion was a classical tribal separatist movement reacting to the centralizing thrust of Amānallāh's political and economic reforms. The underlying resistance was not to the social and educational reforms but to such threats to the tribal autonomy, the vested interests of the khans, and the inflated privileges of the *ʿolamāʾ* as the anti-corruption drive, the lottery draft, the elimination of tribal and religious subsidies, equitable tax enforcement, and the roads and telegraphs which penetrated tribal areas and brought law enforcers, teachers, and tax collectors. According to this better supported thesis, rebel propagandists justified their revolt by using religious and social rhetoric to arouse mass feelings; the propaganda then became the accepted explanation for the rebellion. But the fact remains that the tribal people who rebelled were the least affected by the social and religious reforms, which were almost entirely urban phenomena. Amānallāh's reign and works are important not only as a prototype of an attempt to modernize a tribal society but also because almost the entire structure of later Afghan modernization has

been built on the base which he created.

See also Afghanistan x, xi.

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