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CENSORSHIP
Article by **Ahmad Karimi-Hakkak**

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CENSORSHIP

CENSORSHIP (*sānsūr*) in Persia. Censorship has been exercised in most societies, including Persia, by the religious establishment, by the political authority, and by unofficial groups (see, e.g., Abraham, pp. 634-41; Anastaplo, pp. 634-41; and McKeon, pp. 1082-90). In the Islamic countries good conduct as a manifestation of individual morality was considered central to the ideal of social justice, and the notion of guidance, embodied in the precepts of "ordering good and forbidding evil" (*al-amr be'l-maʿrūf wa'l-nahy ʿan al-monkar*; see amr be maʿrūf), rested with the person in charge of the affairs of the Moslem community. Thus, to enforce *amr be maʿrūf* the office of *moḥtaseb* (q.v., market supervisor) was formed in the Islamic city to investigate abuses in the *bāzār* and city quarters and apply the appropriate punishment and corrective measures. The rise of the modern state and development of mass media (books, newspapers, movies, etc.) led the agencies of the government to assume the function of formal censorship. This article is mainly concerned with the censorship of press (newspapers and books) from the latter half of the 19th century to the present day.

Censorship of the emerging government press, 1267-1312/1851-95. Censorship of the press began in Persia shortly after the publication of the second Persian newspaper, the famous *Rūz-nāma-ye waqāyeʿ-e ettefāqīya* (established on 5 Rabīʿ II 1267/7 February 1851 by Mīrzā Taqī Khan Amīr-e Kabīr, q.v.), when Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (q.v.; r. 1264-1313/1848-96) appointed one of his court functionaries, a British subject named Edward Burgess (Berjīs Ṣāḥeb), first hired by ʿAbbās Mīrzā as printer to oversee (*mobāšerat*) the contents of the

paper (C. Burgess and E. Burgess, p. 113). After the ouster of Amīr-e Kabīr in 1265/1852 Burgess complained that the procedure for the publication of the *Waqāyeʿ-e ettefāqīya* deteriorated so much that he "publish[ed] nothing except the foreign news, without the prime minister's having previously revised it" (ibid., p. 116) and that he was "obliged to consult the prime minister and also sometimes the king himself about articles to be put in the gazette" (ibid., p. 115).

In 1300/1883 Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Ṣanīʿ-al-Dawla (later Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana), who had been in charge of the office of translation and the publication of two official papers since 1288/1871 (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *Montaẓam-e nāṣerī*, ed. Reżwān, III, p. 1923; Ādamīyat, pp. 387ff.) was made minister of publications (*wazīr-e enṭebāʿāt*) and was to supervise all printing presses and the publication of newspapers throughout Persia (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *Montaẓam-e nāṣerī* III, p. 2045; idem, *Rūz-nāma-ye ḵāṭerāt*, p. 203; idem, *al-Maʾāṯer*, pp. 161-62). Newspapers had enjoyed a certain degree of freedom while Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošīr-al-Dawla Sepahsālār was prime minister (1288-97/1871-80). Sepahsālār considered the press to be vital in enlightening the people (Ādamīyat, 1351, pp. 140-43, 386-416) and had endeavored to modernize it and expand its role. With the fall of Sepahsālār in 1297/1880, the situation of the press in Persia took a downward turn, and in 1300/1883 Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana was appointed minister of publications (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *Montaẓam-e nāṣerī* III, p. 2045; idem, *Rūz-nāma-ye ḵāṭerāt*, p. 203). In Rabīʿ II 1302/February 1885, at the suggestion of Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah ordered the establishment of an office of domestic censorship (*sānsūr-e dāḵela*) which was to check all newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, and so forth, before they were printed, and appointed Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana as its director (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *Rūz-nāma-ye ḵāṭerāt*, pp. 339, 341-42; idem, *al-Maʾāṯer*, pp. 44, 59, 161-62). Publications sanctioned by this office bore on the first page the stamp of a square-shaped seal depicting the lion-and-sun emblem on top of the word *molāḥaẓa šod* (inspected; Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *al-Maʾāṯer*, loc. cit.). On at least one occasion he personally burnt all the copies of a book of poetry which he had not checked himself, although its publication had been sanctioned by his deputy Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Forūḡī. On another occasion he had Dār al-Fonūn's printer bastinadoed for printing a tract without his permission (*Rūz-nāma-ye ḵāṭerāt*, p. 396; Ādamīyat, 1355, pp. 54, 66). Official papers and, at times, books were checked by the shah before publication. Once the shah ordered the recall of an almanac that had already been distributed (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *Rūz-nāma-ye*

ḵāṭerāt, pp. 203-04, 477, 1043). Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana's own books were no exception (ibid., pp. 1043-45). It was of course much more difficult to prevent newspapers that were published abroad, such as *Qānūn*, *Aḵtar*, *ʿOrwa al-woṯqā*, from reaching Persian readers. Not all the members of the cabinet were in favor of an office of censorship (in particular, the postmaster general, Mīrzā ʿAlī Khan Amīn-al-Dawla, saw to it that select readers received them, Ḥājj Sayyāḥ, p. 339), which made Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana suspect that some enlightened members of the government (e.g., Amīn-al-Dawla, Sepahsālār) were conspiring to have him removed from the office of publications.

This censorship drove the opposition press underground, but the Persian press published abroad continued to be smuggled into the country, the growing sensitivity of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah and his government notwithstanding (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *Rūz-nāma-ye ḵāṭerāt*, pp. 196, 379, 737-38, 748, 899; Ḥājj Sayyāḥ, pp. 332, 339, 349). At times, the shah would order the burning in his presence of offensive publications seized at border posts or through the mail and brought to his attention on his explicit orders (Moḥīṭ-Ṭabāṭabāʾī, pp. 48-9). He had Mīrzā Yūsof Khan Mostašār-al-Dawla, a reform-minded official and the former associate of Sepahsālār, beaten and laid in chains on the suspicion of writing an article for the paper *Aḵtar* (Eʿtemād-al-Salṭana, *Rūz-nāma-ye ḵāṭerāt*, p. 196) and the house of Mīrzā Moḥammad-ʿAlī Forūḡī searched because of his alleged friendship with Mīrzā Malkom Khan, the editor of *Qānūn* (ibid., p. 748).

In this environment a new phenomenon, known as the *šab-nāma* (lit. night letter), appeared on the Persian political scene (Kohan, I, p. 115). The *šab-nāma*s were strongly worded political opposition sheets, leaflets, tracts, or pamphlets, mostly expressing patriotic and democratic aspirations in simple prose and posted in public thoroughfares or slid under doors at night. The police code (*Badāyeʿ-e naẓmīya*) of 1296/1879 drafted by Conte de Monte Forte, an Italian officer hired in that year to modernize Persian police force, included articles dealing with the problem of curbing freedom of expression. The code, better known as *Ketābča-ye qānūn-e Kont* (the Conte code), stipulated jail terms for anybody who dared post bills against the shah in passageways (1 months-5 years), speak against the shah and the royal family (1-5 years), said or wrote anything of calumnious nature against the government (1-15 years). The publication of books found offensive to the religion, nation, or the government was punishable by one to five years' imprisonment (articles 3, 8, 20; see Sayfī, appendix, pp. 7-9, 12; Dāmḡānī, pp. 22-23).

Censorship of the emerging private press 1314-39/1897-1920.

During the entire reign of the sickly Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah (r. 1313-25/1896-1907), the tide of censorship followed the ebb and flow of the state policy toward the Constitutionalists. Thus, during the premiership of the reform-minded Prime Minister Mīrzā ʿAlī Khan Amīn-al-Dawla (1314-16/1897-98) a number of private newspapers began to be published, and punitive measures were rarely resorted to, but during the second tenure of Mīrzā ʿAlī-Aṣḡar Khan Amīn-al-Solṭān Atābak-e Aʿẓam (1316-21/1898-1903) severe limitations were placed on the publication of news in the national press, and orders were issued directly to the Ministry of Publication "henceforth not to allow entry in Persia" of "newspapers printed outside the borders and away from the seat of the state" (Kohan, I, p. 222). Nevertheless, both the *šab-nāma*s and the Persian press abroad thrived and eventually played a critical part in bringing about the Constitutional Revolution of 1323-24/1905-06.

The signing of the Constitution in 1324/1906 marks a definitively new stage in the life of the seventy-year-old Persian press. The original Constitution, modeled after the 1831 Belgian Constitution, set the principle of freedom of expression and of the press within the context of reporting parliamentary negotiations. "The press," it stipulated in article 13, "may report all the negotiations of the Majles without any distortions or changes in their meaniṅ . . . ." All newspapers, "as long as their content does not violate any of the fundamental principles of the state and the nation, are free and unconstrained to publish and publicize generally useful writings such as the negotiations of the Majles and popular opinion upon them." The article concludes, "If an individual should publish in newspapers and other publications anything contrary to the above-mentioned or based on personal malice, or should defame and slander another, he shall be lawfully prosecuted, tried and punished" (Farhang Qahramānī, p. 15).

It was obvious to the Constitutionalists, even before the Constitution was signed by Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah, that many of its vague phrases required clarification. Accordingly, within a few months after the first Majles had been inaugurated, the Supplement to the Constitution (*Matammem-e qānūn-e asāsī*) was drafted and, after some wrangling, signed by Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah on 29 Šaʿbān 1325/7 October 1907. Its Article 20 clarifies and expands the concept of freedom of the press by stating that "all publications, except misleading (*ẓalāl*) books and materials injurious to the glorious religion are free, and censorship

(*momayyezī*) in them is forbidden." The article stipulates, however, that "in case anything contrary to the Press Act (*Qānūn-e maṭbūʿāt*) is published, the publisher or the writer shall be punished in accordance with the provisions of that law." In the following years this and other laws regarding freedom of expression governed the relationship between the press and the state, and although the actual enforcement of the laws was rarely determined by their letter or spirit, theoretically at least punitive censorship had replaced prior censorship (see Kohan, II).

The period between the signing of the Constitution and the passage of the first Press Law in Moḥarram 1326/March 1908 (Kohan, II, Appendix I) was marked by the fervent activity of the Persian press. Backed by the newly opened Majles the press immediately broke free from virtually all forms of prior official control. The newspaper *Anjoman* became the first Persian newspaper published in Persia without being submitted to state censorship (Kasrawī, *Mašrūṭa*, p. 268). The Press Law of 5 Moḥarram 1326/8 February 1908 imposed some restrictions on the press, which had enjoyed considerable freedom in the period immediately following the Constitutional Revolution. Article 4 restricted the publication of books, particularly those dealing with religious matters (*kotob-e maḏhabī*), which had to be submitted for appraisal (*naẓar wa momayyezī*) to a council dealing with religious sciences (*majmaʿ-e ʿolūm-e dīnīya*) in the Ministry of Education, and article 31 made it illegal to insult the monarch.

Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah's coup against the Constitution in Jomādā I 1326/June 1908 dealt a serious blow to the freedom of expression in Persia. Jahāngīr Khan, the editor of *Ṣūr-e Esrāfīl* and Solṭān-al-ʿOlamāʾ, the editor of *Rūḥ al-qodos*, were executed. Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah was ousted after a year (succeeded by his son Aḥmad Shah), but the government continued to use its authority to suppress papers critical of its policies. Protests by journalists were useless, and at least on one occasion was a paper suppressed for protesting too vehemently (Ṣadr Hāšemī, *Jarāʾed wa majallāt* I, pp. 346-47, II, p. 12, III, pp. 62-64). The disbandment of the Majles in 1329/1911 following the landing of Russian forces in Gīlān was the start of an era of crisis and instability, during which censorship by the government as well as the occupying forces of the Russians in the north and the British in the south was in full force (Malekzāda, VII, pp. 74, 82-83, 102-04; Bahār, I, pp. 8-13; Kohan, II, pp. 592-607). Throughout these years, up to the Russian Revolution, Persian authorities not only exercised harsh punitive censorship but also at times prior censorship of the

press. Meanwhile, the forces of occupation, especially Tsarist troops in the north, had clamped down on the provincial press, eventually pushing some outspoken journalists of the time (e.g., Moḥammad-Taqī Bahār) to the capital. Finally, Prime Minister ʿAlāʾ-al-Salṭana in 1335/1918 received the approval of his cabinet for two resolutions curtailing the freedom of the press (Kohan, II, p. 667) that remained in force until the coup of 1299 Š./1921 and were at least partly responsible for the demise of several daily newspapers published in Tehran.

Censorship under Reżā Shah (1299-1320 Š./1921-41). With the coup d'etat of 3 Esfand 1299 Š./22 February 1921 the process of subjugating freedom of expression to constraints of a political nature began. That year, under the premiership of Aḥmad Qawām (Qawām-al-Salṭana), while a bill instituting jury trial for violations of the Press Act was being discussed in the Majles, an anti-clerical poem by ʿĀref Qazvīnī appeared in the newspaper *Nāhīd*, and several articles criticizing the *ʿolamāʾ* and religious establishment were published in other newspapers. This was followed by protests and proclamations on the religious side against the authors, and Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem Kaḥḥālzāda, the editor of *Pažūheš*, was excommunicated (*takfīr*) and condemned to death for apostasy (*mahdūr-al-dam*). Thus, the Majles ratified a law to censor the religious content of the press (*Qānūnrājeʿ be neẓārat-e maṭbūʿāt*) on 10 Ābān 1301 Š./1 November 1922, and a cleric known as Šams-al-Afāżel was named as the press censor (*nāẓer-e šaṛʿīyāt, momayyez-e maṭbūʿāt*) in the ministry of education (*Wezārat-e maʿāref*) to oversee the press and censor the antireligious materials, but soon a comprehensive censorship was imposed over the press by the military regime, which undermined the office of the religious censor (Bahār, I, pp. 245-59; II, pp. 25-26; Abūtorābīān, pp. 221-22).

With the rise of Reżā Khan to power the Persian press was faced with new challenges. While still minister of war Reżā Khan issued several declarations to make it known that he would not tolerate opposition from the press. For instance, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the coup d'etat of 3 Esfand 1299 Š./21 February 1921 and in response to an anonymous letter published in *Setāra-ye Īrān* in which the coup had been attributed to Noṣrat-al-Dawla Fīrūz Mīrzā and British designs, he issued a proclamation, threatening that in the future he would punish the author of anything contrary to the official explanation of the coup and suppress any paper that dared publish it (Wilber, 1975, pp. 62-66; Makkī, I, p. 484). A few months later he reacted to another

critical essay by having the editor arrested and brought to his office, where he personally gave the editor a severe beating before sending him to prison. Others were forced into exile, jailed, or murdered (Daštī, pp. 95-97; Bahār, I, pp. 245-59, II, pp. 115-27, 139, 187, 319; Wilber, pp. 66-68, 131, 142, 147-148).

As a military man Reżā Shah was inclined to rely primarily on physical force in his encounters with the press. As early as 1301 Š./1922, shortly after the transfer of the old censorship office (Edāra-ye rāhnemā-ye rūz-nāma-negārī) from the Ministry of Education to the expanding police department, ʿAlī Daštī, the editor of *Šafaq-e sorḵ* addressed a basic question to the powerful minister of war: "Is not judgment in the contents of the press totally outside the functions of a military officer?" (Ḵᵛājanūrī, p. 173; Wilber, p. 145). The process of taming the press and the imposition of state censorship over the conduct and opinions of the citizenry began when few days after publishing the first issue of his newspaper, *Qarn-e bīstom*, on 7 Tīr 1303 Š./28 June 1924, Mīrzāda Ešqī, a popular poet and journalist, was assassinated by the rising military regime (Bahār, II, pp. 104-14; Daštī, p. 102-04). Later, the police department issued an order to all Persian printing presses that any sheet of paper to be printed must bear the signature of the official censor on top (Ḵāmaʾī, p. 76). The order remained in effect for the entire period of Reżā Shah's rule and succeeded, despite occasional lapses, in reducing the press to little more than official publications. In 1310 Š./1931 a vaguely worded law was enacted against "collectivist ideologies," which further restricted the expression and propagation of ideas deemed incompatible with the official policies of the state (M. Ḥoqūqī, pp. 71-73; *Eṭṭelāʿāt*, 11 Ābān 1317 Š./1938, p. 1; Ḵāmaʾī, pp. 241-71).

Having little experience in such matters, officers who supervised the work of civilian censors were of course a poor match for adept writers and journalists, such as Arānī, who placed pages of Marxist essays between pages containing ordinary and harmless topics (Ḵāmaʾī, 1984, p. 76). Eventually, Arānī and his associates were arrested and tried, but not without leaving a strong impact on censorship procedures and exposing the insufficiency of the existing controls.

In 1314 Š./1935, in the middle of the officially sponsored movement for language purification, Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda, an outstanding scholar, who at this time was Reżā Shah's emissary to Paris, wrote an essay in which he argued in favor of gradualism and caution in replacing Arabic words in Persian with new words of Persian derivation. When Reżā Shah saw the article he was infuriated and suppressed the paper in which the article had appeared and ordered its owner and editor to be thrown in jail. Taqīzāda was

forced to resign his diplomatic post and assume a teaching position at London University, a position which he held until after the abdication of Reżā Shah (Wilber, p. 169).

Thus, toward the end of Reżā Shah's rule, the Persian press was reduced to a dozen periodicals and only two dailies of relatively wide circulation, all parroting the policies articulated by the state. Even so, news items and press articles, like all other materials to be published, were "vetted at a central censorship department under police supervision, where everything intended for print was gone over carefully by a group of experts" (Suratgar, p. 155). If an item that was considered harmless by the censors happened to annoy the shah and the police authorities after it had been published, those responsible would at best lose their licenses and even be temporarily incarcerated. At one point Reżā Shah had issued orders to the Persian press to reply in kind to a cartoon in a French newspaper at which he had taken offence. One paper had done so by publishing a brief note to the effect that the cartoon had been in poor taste, and that it was "below the dignity of the Persian press to reply" to such cheap humor. Instead of being pleased with this denunciation, the shah ordered the newspaper banned and the editor jailed for having disobeyed the royal command (Suratgar, pp. 155-56).

Censorship and democracy (1320-32 Š./1941-53). Reżā Shah's abdication in 1320 Š./1941 and the restoration of parliamentary rule brought with it a return of the political freedoms, and the Persian press began to proliferate again. Around 500 newspapers and periodicals are known to have been published in Persia between 1320 Š./1941 and 1332 Š./1953. Except for the censorship in matters pertaining to foreign affairs, administered by the Allied Forces of occupation (Lenczowski, pp. 206-11), few instances of prior censorship are known to have occurred in this period. Even when the government of Qawām-al-Salṭana attempted to control the press by passing an amendment to the Press Act in 1321 Š./1942, the restrictions were reduced by the Majles to a few, and the sanctioning of some punitive measures ("Qānūn-e eṣlāḥ-e qesmat-ī az qānūn-e maṭbūʿāt," in *Moḏākarāt-e Majles*, session 120, 1 Dey 1321 Š./22 December 1942, p. 28). Thus, from time to time, journals were banned for a while depending on the gravity of their offense as determined by various government offices or officials. Only after the attempt on the shah's life in February 1328 Š./1949 did censorship against the publications of the Tudeh (Tūda) Party, which was blamed for the attempt, take on new dimensions. The typical response on the part of the Persian press was to publish the banned

journal under a new name and apply for a new license. This was possible under the law because newspapers and journals were allowed to publish pending the review of their application for licensing.

Prime Minister Moḥammad Moṣaddeq assumed a different attitude during the years of struggle (1330-32 Š./1951-53) against the Anglo-Persian Oil Company. Moṣaddeq, who was repeatedly advised to suppress the opposition papers, which were deemed by public opinion to be opposed to that national undertaking, refused to do so. Although newspapers openly critical of his position, such as the right wing *Ātaš*, *Dād*, *Erāda-ye Āḏarbāyjān*, *Farmān*, *Ṣadā-ye mardom*, *Waẓīfa*, *Ātašbār-e šarq*, and *Nabard-e mellat* (see, e.g., Torkamān, pp. 54-57, 66-69, 80-82, 163-65), the left wing *Be-sū-ye āyanda* (the organ of the Tudeh party, which was published under several different names, including *Jahānbīn*, *Dež*, *Ṣobḥ-e pāydār*, *Šajāʿat*, *Jaras*, *Rastāḵīz-e ḵalq*, *ʿAlāj*, *Navīd-e āyanda*, *Rāhnemā-ye mellat*, *Āḵarīn nabard*, *Saranjām*, *Ṣobḥ-e tābān*, and *ʿAṣr-e now*), and the fascist *Sūmka* (see, e.g., Nīkbīn, pp. 577-661), hammered away at government policies with unprecedented vehemence, Moṣaddeq refused to suppress them, arguing with his supporters that a healthy press and the liberty to express opinions freely were essential components of his democratic ideals (see, e.g., Moṣaddeq, p. 369; Bozorgmehr, I, pp. 365-66, II, pp. 709, 724; Etteḥādīya-ye anjomanhā-ye eslāmī, p. 113). Using his plenary power, Moṣaddeq prepared a comprehensive press bill ensuring freedom of expression for the press, including trial by jury for offenses committed by the press (text in Abūtorābīān, pp. 225-36).

Censorship and autocracy (1332-56 Š./1953-77). For the military government that came to power as a result of the coup d'etat of 28 Mordād 1332 Š./19 August 1953 immediate suppression of the opposition press was a matter of survival. The law of 1310 Š./1931 against "collectivist ideologies" provided a pretext and was invoked with military efficiency in many cases dealing with freedom of expression. All the journals that had supported Moṣaddeq, as well as the entire leftist press, were banned within a few weeks, their printing presses confiscated, and their writers and editors arrested or forced to flee the country. Ḥosayn Fāṭemī, foreign minister in the Moṣaddeq government and editor of *Bāḵtar-e emrūz*, was executed for his three provocative antimonarchistic editorials of 26-28 Mordād 1332 Š./17-19 August 1953, and Karīmpūr Šīrāzī, another antimonarchistic journalist, was burned alive in his prison cell (Faroughy, p. 15). Military officers were installed as press censors and overseers of book publications. Newspapers and magazines were

regulated by a new Press Act, enacted in 1334 Š./1955 and amended by decree in 1342 Š./1963, according to which "only a Persian of good character and education, and possessing funds to operate for a stated period," might apply for a license to a press commission set up in the Ministry of Information (Abūtorābīān, pp. 236-48; Wilber, 1976, p. 214). Once the license had been secured, a number of restrictions were set on the editor and the writers; violating them would result in the immediate suspension of the license, heavy fines, and jail for those responsible. Among the banned subjects were "attacks on the royal family, printing false news, revealing military secrets, publishing material injurious to Islam, or printing of obscene material" (ibid.).

In 1336 Š./1957 a new security police, the Organization of State Security and Information (Sāzmān-e eṭṭelāʿāt wa amnīyat kešvar), known by its Persian acronym SAVAK (Sāvāk), was established, which, among other things, intervened to regulate the Persian press and the fledgling book industry.

During the 1340s Š./1960s the mechanisms and methods of censorship became more sophisticated as the struggle to preserve a certain degree of freedom of expression was intensified. The question of state-imposed restrictions on free speech emerged as "a significant feature" of social life and increasingly "another indication of fear among top officials" (Upton, p. 114). As a result, not only was "the possibility of constructive public discussion of political and economic problems" facing the country stifled, "meaningful instruction in the political and social sciences in the universities" was increasingly inhibited, as well (ibid.).

It proved less easy to censor books, especially collections of poetry, fiction, and drama. Modern Persian writers, who were very much concerned about social events, were by this time at the center of the opposition. Through the use of a strong vocabulary of light and darkness, of good and evil, and of right and wrong they described the social scene as a wasteland and the state as an intolerable obstacle on the path to freedom and human fulfillment. However, they also more and more used a symbolic language that made it hard for the state to put its finger on banned expressions. In 1344 Š./1965, book publishing was subjected to new regulations. Whereas the Press Law of 1325 Š./1946 had stipulated that writers or publishers could register their books with the National Library, according to the new regulations the publisher was "required" to submit two copies of the "unpublished manuscript" to the "Ministry of Information." Submitted manuscripts were then often changed to reduce oppositional elements (Kānūn, II, pp. 34-40).

On one occasion, in Bahman 1347 Š./February-March 1968, plans were announced for a state-sponsored "Congress of Persian Poets and Writers," but in response a few writers issued a statement to the effect that in the absence of freedom of expression and publication the inauguration of a gathering of writers sponsored by the queen seemed inappropriate. This statement was followed by another, signed by forty-nine writers and poets, in which the formation of a writers association was called for. Although the association that was formed eventually played a significant part in the events that led to the Revolution of 1357 Š./1978-79, it was utterly unsuccessful in combating the problem of censorship. After close to two years of activity the Writers' Association of Persia (Kānūn-e Nevīsandagān-e Īrān) was forced into hibernation, and some of its leading members, including the authors Maḥmūd Eʿtemādzāda (Behāzīn) and the poet Farīdān Tonokābonī, and Moḥammad-ʿAlī Sepānlū, were arrested and tried on charges of instigating sedition against the state (Karimi-Hakkak, 1985b, pp. 195-208).

In the early 1350s Š./1970s the situation deteriorated further. In 1350 Š./1971 a bill was enacted to protect and defend the rights of writers and artists (ibid.). At the same time SAVAK began periodic inspection of public and school libraries, removing from their shelves what it considered "misleading" material, meaning not only works branded as Marxist and Communist, but also the writings of such Persian writers and poets as Ṣādeq Hedāyat, Bozorg ʿAlawī, Jalāl Āl-e Aḥmad, Ḡolām-Ḥosayn Sāʿedī, ʿAlī Šarīʿatī, and Ṣamad Behrangī. During the same period the volume of underground unauthorized publications grew tenfold (Philippe, pp. 16-18).

Censorship and the "Islamic" revolution (1357-59 Š./1978-80). The advent of a revolutionary movement in the late 1350s Š./1970s, which was accompanied by a relaxation of censorship, led to an immense outburst of intellectual activity. The Writers' Association of Persia was reinstated in a new and far more radical form and sponsored ten evenings of literary readings in the fall of 1356 Š./1977, an event recognized as an early sign of the emergence of a popular revolt against the regime (Karimi-Hakkak, 1985b, pp. 212-23). According to some estimates, between that event and the final collapse of the monarchy in Bahman 1357 Š./February 1979, hundreds of titles known as *čāp-e safīd* (i.e., with blank covers) were published in Persia, including many previously banned books on the political history of Persia, leftist theory and practice, and the writings of members of various ethnic minorities in their own languages (for an annotated bibliography of these titles, see "Farhang-e

zīrzamīnī dar setīz-e bā eḵtenāq," in *Āyandagān*, various issues Dey-Bahman 1357 Š./January-February 1979). To make up for the deficiencies of academic and public libraries various political organizations, student groups, and even neighborhood mosques established small libraries, lending books to eager readers incited by the spectacle of a revolution in the making. Official press censorship fast disintegrated and was replaced by a glaring diversity of competing opinions. Although there are no reliable figures concerning the number of daily newspapers and periodical publications in this period it can safely be assumed that the number of Persian political publications increased markedly (Philippe, pp. 15-23).

However, the clerical leaders of the Revolution desired to purge it of non-Islamic tendencies. In the course of the many processions that were organized in the months leading to the insurgency in Bahman 1357 Š./February 1979 militant Muslims pulled down slogans and portraits they disapproved of. Barely a month after the February insurgency Khomeini delivered a speech in which he asked the press to correct its attitude toward the "Islamic Revolution," and soon after the Tehran daily newspapers *Eṭṭelāʿāt* and *Kayhān* were taken over by religious groups (Ḵomeynī, VI, pp. 191-93). The incident was the first in a series of attempts to force the Persian press to conform to the new Islamic state (Taheri, p. 26).

During the period between Bahman 1357 Š./ February 1979 and Ḵordād 1360 Š./May-June 1981, when the final showdown between the Islamic Republic and the secular intellectuals took place, the Persian press struggled feverishly to survive without succumbing to the new system of suppression and censorship, on one hand, and the steady ascendancy of a hard-line fundamentalist outlook in the bureaucracy, the higher education system, and the mass media, on the other. In the summer of 1359 Š./1980, shortly after the universities had been violently closed down, the Islamic Revolutionary Court of Tehran issued a decree stating that, in order to print, offset, or mimeograph any books, booklets, periodicals, journals, newspapers, pamphlets, tracts, or any written material, a printing house must first inspect and verify the seal of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance (Wezārat-e Eršād-e Eslāmī) on the paper on which the writing appeared. The full range of the strategies of avoidance and evasion, learned in over a century of confrontation with state censorship, was called upon to ensure the survival of publishing activities under these new unfavorable circumstances. But even when they evaded the censor, writers, editors, and publishers still risked the wrath of the club-wielding gangs of

*ḥezbollāhī*s, who frequently attacked bookshops, burned books, and beat suspected violators of a code that was never clearly defined (Karimi-Hakkak, 1985a, pp. 159-80).

At the same time the leaders of the Islamic Republic were formulating its official attitude to freedom of expression. The Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran, ratified by the Experts' Assembly (Majles-e Ḵobragān) on 27 Ābān 1358 Š./18 November 1979, states in article 24 that "publications and the press are free to publish their ideas unless they are injurious to the fundaments of Islam or public rights" (*Qānūn-e Asāsī-e Jomhūrī-e Eslāmī-e Īrān*, p. 29). In this, as in several other issues related to individual and civil liberties, the new constitution shows a remarkable degree of affinity with the document it replaced, the Constitution of 1906-07. Many of the provisions in the new constitution against prior censorship and the limitations it placed on punitive actions by the state were never supported by legislation, nor were they ever tried in the judicial system. In practice the state's various political alliances have determined its attitude to the publication and dissemination of ideas, and some political parties have agreed to all kinds of restrictive, even unconstitutional, measures in their attempts to win favors from the authorities. A striking example of this opportunism was the attitude of the Tudeh party in the first three years after the revolution. Comparing the publication of certain kinds of art and literature to "holding drugs under another person's nose," one Tudeh party sympathizer expressed the opinion that if the artist does not take the interests of the society into consideration, "inevitably external supervision becomes necessary, a supervision which, contrary to the liberalists' propaganda, does not have to be detrimental to artistic freedom" (Āryanpūr, p. 44). Such statements have provided justification for acts of violence, imprisonment, torture, summary executions, and other violations of human rights clearly incompatible with the spirit of the constitution.

In the 1360s Š./1980s the state's policy toward the press and publishing industry has reflected both a fundamental fear of secular ideologies and a deep desire to push the intellectual community into greater conformity. After the 1360 Š./1981 crackdown on academic and intellectual life (see, e.g., Ḵomeynī, IX, pp. 2, 86-87, XV, pp. 37-38, XVI, pp. 82, 137; see also Karimi-Hakkak, 1985a, pp. 174-79), the government has used a great variety of strategies to silence the intellectual opposition, applying extralegal pressures ranging from threats to the lives of individuals and organized attacks on

bookstores by gangs of *ḥezbollāhī*s to the establishment of a state monopoly on the importation of paper, ink, print machinery, and more sophisticated equipment needed for the printing of books and journals. Recently, however, the state has permitted a handful of literary and cultural journals, which, under the strict supervision of the Ministry of Islamic Guidance, publish works by the country's leading writers, poets, and other intellectuals. In 1367 Š./1988, with Ayatollah Khomeini's *fatwā* condemning Salman Rushdie, author of *The Satanic Verses*, to death, a new kind of censorship was introduced.

An assessment of the censorship situation in present-day Persia must take into account the anomalies inherent in the relationship between a largely secular intellectual community and a state led by ideologically motivated theologians fundamentally at odds with such modern secular concepts as human rights and freedom of expression. Ayatollah Ḥosayn-ʿAlī Montaẓerī (then designate successor to Ayatollah Khomeini) in his important speech on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the revolution on 22 Bahman 1367 Š./11 February 1989 expressed the fear that when his statements are censored, one can only imagine what might happen to other people's expression of opinion (*Tehran Times*, 24 Bahman 1367 Š./13 February 1989, p. 1). To cite only one incidence of censorship, the fourth edition of the *dīvān* of Moḥammad-Taqī Bahār "Malek-al-Šoʿarāʾ" (Tehran, 1368 Š./1989), which had previously been censored repeatedly to expurgate allusions to his opposition to and criticism of Reżā Shah's rule, was this time censored in the direction of lessening its adversarial attitude toward the current regime's vision of Islam. Some of these cases of censorship in the previous regime and the present one included: 1. obliteration of the *dīvān* in 1310 Š./1931, which being self-censored even did not contain any critical poem against the shah; 2. expurgation of four poems (*Mosammaṭ-e mowaššaḥ*, *Īnak ḡazal*, *Jomhūrī-nāma*, and *Yak šab-e šūm*) in the third edition (1354-55 Š./1975-76)—the poems which were published in the first and second editions (1325 Š./1946 and 1343-44 Š./1964-65) with minor deletions; 3. inclusion in the fourth edition of the *dīvān* (1368 Š./1989) of these four poems, in addition to other anti-Reżā Shah poems, while deleting such poems as *Ey zan* and *Čahar ḵeṭāba*, in which Bahār supported women's freedom and criticized religious fanaticism.

Perhaps the greatest single difference between the censorship imposed by the monarchy and the fundamentalist theocracy is the shift in emphasis from prohibitive to prescriptive censorship: whereas the censorship enforced in the 1310s./1930s and the early 1350s Š./1970s—the harshest in post-Constitutional

Persia—tended to stifle expression and impose silence, that of the 1360s./1980s aims at dictating what ideas ought to be propagated and how. In this, at least, it has added a new dimension to the moral, social, and political constraints on public expression of ideas in Persian society.

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