



EQBĀL, MANŪĀEHR

EQBĀL, MANŪĀEHR (b. in Mašhad, 27 Ramažān 1327/14 Oct. 1909; d. in Tehran, 14 Āḍar 1356 Š./25 Nov. 1977), prime minister, minister of the Royal Court, head of National Iranian Oil Company, and professor of medicine (Figure 1). The fifth of eleven children of Mīrzā Abū Torāb Khan Moqbel-al-Saltāna (Eqbāl-al-Tawlīa), a landowner in Mašhad and member of the Fourth Majles (1921-23), Manūāehr completed elementary school in Mašhad and graduated from the Dār al-fonūn (q.v.) in 1926. He was sent to France by his father to continue his education, and in 1933 graduated with honors from the Faculté de Médecine in Paris, specializing in infectious diseases. After his return to Persia and military service, Eqbāl was appointed chief of the municipal health department of Mašhad in 1935. In 1939 he joined the Faculty of Medicine (q.v.) at Tehran University as an associate professor and was promoted to full professor in 1941. Eqbāl's French wife bore him three daughters, one of whom first married Prince Maḥmūd Režā and later Šahrīār Šafīq, Princess Ašraf's son (Alamūtī, pp. 2-6; Šafā'ī, pp. 287-89; Āqelī, pp. 878-79).

Eqbāl's political career may be divided into three distinct phases: the critical period of 1942-51; the post coup d'état period of 1953-60; and the period of 1963-77.

The 1942-51 period. Eqbāl's political career began in the period of political upheaval of the 1940s during which the shah's authority was challenged by the Majles, the communist and nationalist forces, and the press. Beginning his political career as deputy minister of health (*wazīr-ebehdārī*) in Aḥmad



Qawām's cabinet in 1942, Eqbāl eventually joined the royalist camp and developed a close relationship with the young shah and his twin sister, Princess Ašraf. In 1944-50 he consequently served as head of ministries of health, post and telegraph (*post o telegrāf*), education (*farhang*), interior (*kešvar*), and roads (*rāh*). When on 4 February 1949 the shah was shot in an assassination attempt at Tehran University, Eqbāl rushed the shah to the hospital and issued a medical bulletin on his condition. On the following day Eqbāl attended a special session of the Majles and announced the government's decision to outlaw the pro-Soviet Tudeh party. On March 12 he was appointed minister of the interior. Cooperating with 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Hažir, then minister of the royal court, his main task was to prevent the election of "undesired elements" to the Constituent Assembly (Majles-e mo'assesān), the Sixteenth Majles, and the First Senate. The Constituent Assembly met in May 1949 and empowered the shah to dissolve the Majles. The elections of the Sixteenth Majles in October, however, were vigorously denounced by Moḥammad Mošaddeq, the leader of National Front (Jebha-ye mellī) and, consequently, Eqbāl was moved to the Ministry of Roads. In June 1950, when General Hājj-'Alī Razmārā became prime minister, Eqbāl was named governor-general of Azarbaijan and president of Tabriz University. In September 1951, five months after the formation of Mošaddeq's government, he was forced to resign, owing to his differences with government policies (Šafā'ī, pp. 288-99; Azimi, pp. 201-17).

The post-coup d'état period of 1953-60. Eqbāl's political career advanced greatly in this period; he was appointed senator in 1954, president of Tehran University in 1955, and minister of the royal court in 1956. His presidency of Tehran University coincided with increasing government control over the university and restraint of academic freedom (Sīāsī, pp. 246-54).

Following the dismissal of the relatively independent cabinet of General Fażl-Allāh Zāhedī who had become premier during the 1953 coup, and discharging the cabinet of an old guard politician, Ḥosayn 'Alā', the shah, who intended to subordinate the parliament and bring the office of prime minister under his personal control, appointed Eqbāl to the office of prime minister on 4 April 1957. "Eqbāl, an eminently honest man with a reputation little sullied by scandal, and with a number of adherents of his own among conservative sections of society, was the man to stand up to the Majlis. He could say things in the House [Majles], in his measured tones and with his imposing presence, that many an Iranian of his class would perhaps have been too proud, perhaps



too silly, to say: it was Dr. Eqbāl who told the Majlis that he was the servant of the shah, obedient to the last degree, there to carry out the policies that were given him” (Avery, p. 470; see also Behnūd, pp. 423-26; Țolūī, pp. 421-23).

Meanwhile, at the urging of the United States, the shah initiated a two-party system in 1957 and launched an anti-corruption campaign. On his orders, Eqbāl founded the government majority party, *Ḥezb-e mellīūn* (Nationalists’ party) and another confidant, Amīr Asad-Allāh ‘Alam, formed the loyal opposition, minority party, *Ḥezb-e mardom* (People’s party; Alamūtī, pp. 10-12, 17-20).

Eqbāl proclaimed his program as “Work, work” and traveled extensively around the country with members of his cabinet, inaugurating such development projects as roads, schools, and public buildings (Alamūtī, pp. 103-12; Şafāī, p. 306). At this time a credit of seven billion rials was set aside from currency reserve for the expansion and development of industry and agriculture. In 1955 the second seven-year development plan was launched, which set the stage for the first postwar economic surge in Persia. However, Eqbāl disagreed with Abu’l-Ḥasan Ebtehāj, the powerful director of Plan Organization (*Sāzmān-e barnāma*), on the allocation of oil revenues for exclusively developmental projects. Eqbāl counteracted by sponsoring a bill in the Majles transferring the director’s power to the prime minister on 12 February 1959; Ebtehāj resigned on the same day (Ebtehāj, I, pp. 430-47; Alamūtī, pp. 80-87, 103-14).

Other measures taken by Eqbāl’s cabinet under the shah’s direction included the creation of the powerful security organization (*Sāzmān-e eṭṭelā’āt o amnīyat-e kešvar: SĀVĀK*) in 1957, and urging the Majles to enact the anti-corruption law (known as *az kojā āvarda’ī* “Whence did you get it?”) in 1958, the labor law in 1959 and the land reform law in 1960 (Alamūtī, pp. 88-97; Şafāī, pp. 307-9).

Mounting propaganda attacks by the Soviet Union against the shah for signing a mutual defense agreement with the United States in 1959 worried the U.S. government. It applied considerable pressure on the shah to implement a series of social, political, and economic reforms. Tightly controlled elections for the Twentieth Majles, in the summer of 1960, led to increasing criticism by the recently revived National Front and a number of independent and pro-American political figures forcing the shah to dismiss the prime minister on 28 August and to call for the resignation of all elected Majles deputies three days



later. Completing forty-one months in office, Eqbāl had the longest tenure of any prime minister to serve under the shah up to that time. In the new elections that were held in the following January, Eqbāl and about fifty members of Mellīūn party were elected, and he again assumed leadership of the parliamentary wing of “The Nationalist party.” The newly elected Majles was dissolved on 10 May 1961, and the shah reluctantly appointed ‘Alī Amīnī, a pro-American critic of the government with a reformist agenda, as prime minister. When Amīnī vetoed Eqbāl’s appointment as ambassador to England, he left the country for Paris, where he began a modest life in a rented two-room apartment (Alamūtī, pp. 115-49; Šafā’ī, p. 317; Gasiorowski, pp. 175-87).

The 1963-77 period. Following Amīnī’s fall from office in 1963 Eqbāl was named Persia’s delegate to the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with ambassadorial rank. On 7 November of the same year he was appointed executive director of the National Iranian Oil Company (N.I.O.C.; Šerkat-e mellī-e naft-e Īrān). Under his directorship salaries and fringe benefits of N.I.O.C. employees increased substantially. The company’s foreign dealings, however, as well as contract negotiations, pricing policies, and relations with Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) were all conducted under the direct supervision of the shah assisted by Finance minister Jamšīd Āmūzgār and Reżā Fallāḥ, a member of N.I.O.C.’s board of directors (Alamūtī, pp. 115-50; Alam, pp. 40, 62, 198, 209, 247, 251).

Eqbāl and ‘Alam were widely believed by the public to be the two main pillars of the shah’s regime. However, in the last 17 years of the shah’s reign ‘Alam played a much more important role. He was the closest advisor to the shah on major policy decisions and served as the shah’s liaison with the British and American ambassadors and other foreign officials. A number of factors may have influenced the shah to disfavor Eqbāl during the period of his drive toward autocracy in 1963-77. Firstly was the shah’s determination to bypass the heads of the agencies of foreign affairs, army, and oil industry in order to establish his personal control over these vital bases of political and economic power. Furthermore believing that old guard politicians were not only less obedient, but no more suitable for modern statecraft than a new generation of politicians, the shah preferred younger bureaucrats such as ‘Alī Manšūr, Jamšīd Amūzgār and Hūšang Anšārī who rose to prominence under his own patronage (Ashraf, pp. 1398-400). What also helped drive Eqbāl from politics were his arrogance, his personal social base, his connection with Freemasonry which the shah distrusted, and his strong connection with Princess Ašraf,



whose role in politics and whose criticism of the shah's indecisiveness and mismanagement infuriated the shah in the last years of his life. The bitter rivalry between Eqbāl and 'Alam, the shah's close confidant and court minister, also alienated the shah. The shah's inclination to disgrace Eqbāl on various occasions in the 1970s is believed to have eventually contributed to a heart attack that took his life (Alamūtī, pp. 149-159; Alam, pp. 211, 247, 404, 462).

Group affiliations. On the basis of his several terms as the Minister of Health, teaching at the Faculty of Medicine, and his premiership, Eqbāl emerged as the patron of a powerful faction of Persia's medical profession which controlled the country's Medical Association (Neẓām-e pezeškī) until the 1970s. Eqbāl was also a Grand Master of Freemasonry lodges, that included Homāyūn (Pahlavī) and Mawlawī in the 1950s-70s (Rā'īn, pp. 340-60). Eqbāl was also keenly interested in the Gonābādī Sufi order of which his father had been an active follower (Alamūtī, p. 173; Āqelī, p. 880). Eqbāl was also associated with the French Académie Nationale de Médecine. He served as chair of board of trustees and board member of fifty educational, professional and philanthropic institutions. He was awarded 17 honorary doctorate degrees from foreign universities as well as 22 Persian and 39 foreign decorations and medals (Navīdī, pp. 11-20).

Character traits. Eqbāl was generally regarded as an honest and ascetic man, with no desire for wealth or luxury. Nonetheless, his measured words, his impressive and imposing presence, and his close ties to the royal court gave him an air of superiority and arrogance (Alamūtī, pp. 137, 143, 149, 156-58, 170; Avery, p. 470; Şafā'ī, p. 322). Eqbāl's authoritarian character, his public expression of obedience and unswerving loyalty to the shah, his political ambition, and hard work combined to make him a trusted and subservient aide, though not a popular political figure, during a long political career that spanned nearly the entire period of Moḥammad Reżā Shah's reign.



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