

Hoveyda and Ardeshir Zahedi

A Curious Cohabitation

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For the past decades the curious cohabitation, collaboration and personal relations of Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda and the Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi has been "the talk of the town." So many writers, journalists, film makers and TV producers have shown interest and looked for answers to their questions. In two extensive interviews, one for the third volume of his Memoirs and the other with Miss Najmieh Sadjadi, a columnist for the political and cultural monthly magazine: NASIME BIDARI, Ambassador Zahedi speaks of his friendship, collaboration but also serious differences with a man who for 13 years served as the head of the government.

Azadi Magazine is happy to publish extracts of these two interviews in two successive issues. Here is part one.

AZADI MONTHLY MAGAZINZ

Let us address your relationship with the Prime Minister. The disagreements and bickering between the two of you was an item that was always a subject of talk in political circles and among the peo-

ple. One of these instances was the famous meeting of the members of the cabinet to address the crisis in Tehran University, a story which received a great deal of embellishment. It made everyone in the country very happy that you thwarted the efforts of the late Hoveyda and SAVAK who were inclined to intervene militarily in the university. You have already given an account of this event, so we are not going back to it. What was the root cause and origin of this disagreement?

I had no personal disagreement with the late Hoveyda. The first difference of opinion - I say difference of opinion and not a difference - as I have already mentioned, occurred between us over the issue of the budget and the regulations governing the work of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I was not a staff member of the Foreign Ministry. At the time of my first ambassadorship to Washington and then London, I noticed that the structure and modus operandi of the Ministry was by no means suited to the requirements and exi-

gencies of our country.

When some people looked from outside, they had the impression that the Foreign Ministry was an apparatus set up in service of reveling and having a good time. Perhaps this was an accurate assessment in some instances. Nevertheless, after I assumed the office of Minister of Foreign Affairs, I realized that in contrast to the small minority that deservedly became the subject of public criticism, the bulk of diplomats and staff, from the rank and file to the highest, were diligent and honourable individuals who cared about the prestige of their country and worked hard to secure its best interests. It was of prime importance to get the system moving forward and invigorate it. I myself worked 14 to 15 hours a day. I wanted to shake up the system and I did shake it up. Whatever success that was achieved was the fruit of the collective effort and devotion of my colleagues.

With such a mental predisposition and quality of effort, and with the objec-



tives we had in mind and the methods we needed to bring into play, we had to provide minimum necessary comfort and a suitable standard of living for our employees. This had to be done within a legitimate and equitable framework so that it would behave the dignity and stature of their country and be on par with their international peers.

All these points are a reiteration of what I have mentioned before in chapters that covered the beginning of my career in the Foreign Ministry and also in the segment concerning the policy of national independence. I have touched upon them in all the other matters that I have related. I presented all my programmes to His Majesty and received his approval. The Shah's aim in appointing me to this position was perhaps to transform the system. Once in Vienna, he quipped with a smile that now, no one would be able to hold back Ardeshir.

As I said earlier, the charter of the Foreign Ministry was drafted with all due care and precision under the super-



vision of highly qualified experts. The salaries and benefits of the staff needed to be brought in line with the stated objectives of the charter. We got all this ready and all of a sudden, I was confronted with the opposition of Hoveyda. He asserted that the charter should have first been sent to the Iran Novin Party and then to the parliament. He took his complaint to the King.

This unreasonable expectation made me angry. As a foreign minister, I had nothing to do with the party. I neither approved nor disapproved of it. What I was saying was that being foreign minister represents a link between the country and the outside world. The Foreign Ministry should stay away from internal political manoeuvring. Today, a government comes and tomorrow it could be replaced by another. Foreign policy should enjoy stability and continuity. Personally, I was also against joining a political party. Even when the Rastakhiz party was established and it was said that it was His Majesty's order that everyone should consider themselves as its members, I clearly stated I would not go to the party and did not accept its membership. I have a document in the Shah's own handwriting in my files implicitly admitting that the scheme of working with one political party was a mistake.

Hence, I told His Majesty that I could not report the activity of the foreign ministry to the party. Once the charter was sent to the parliament,

I would go and defend it. I added: 'I am yours and also the country's foreign minister'. Eventually the king accepted my view that at least as long as I remained there, an exception should be made about the foreign ministry. And this matter was concluded. Nevertheless, the late Hoveyda's grievance regarding the issue persisted.

Not long after this, the issue of the Foreign Ministry's budget came up. The programmes that I had envisaged for the foreign ministry, that I have already mentioned in relevant chapters, required money. If you lack a sufficient budget and up-to-date equipment, rely-



At a Cento Annual Meeting: from left Mr. Dehlavi Pakistani FM, Mr. Zahedi Iranian FM Mr. Ihsan Sabri Turkish FM and Late Amir Abbas Hoveyda, Prime Minister at the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Tehran

ing only on telex machines to send your messages and your diplomatic pouch has to wait for an agent to deliver it in person, you will not be able to keep pace with the developed world and succeed in advancing. You cannot tie a person's arms and legs and expect him to run. This would only result in his falling down and injuring himself.

A difference of opinion (I am

saying a difference of opinion and not a rift) occurred over making provisions for the funds necessary for the Foreign ministry between the Prime Minister and I. I was waiting for an opportunity to broach the subject to the Shah in the presence of the Prime Minister so the king would, so to speak, settle the problem between us. This opportunity arose during a trip to Pakistan to take part in the R.C.D. summit. I was accompanying the king to Pakistan on an Iran air plane. It should be remembered that the Shah still did not have a private aircraft at the time. The late Hoveyda was seated next to me facing the Shah. A little

further behind him was General Fazeli, the special equerry of the Shah who was gesticulating to me to speak calmly. I had brought a thick file with me, and as I put it on the table, I said 'I had mentioned to Your Majesty before that I was not interested in holding an office. I have no quarrel with the Prime Minister either. I dislike talking behind people's backs therefore I would like to say whatever I have to say

in front of him.'

It was the concluding months of Field Marshal Ayub Khan's government, and during the flight, I remarked to the Shah that he had ordered the Prime Minister, the Minister of Finance and the head of the Planning and Budget Organization to reform the budget of Foreign Ministry many times, and had also approved of it in the Economic Conference. I added "Thus far Your Majesty's orders have not been implemented. As it stands, the foreign ministry is not able to perform its tasks. I am not in love with the foreign ministry and I loathe creating difficulties for His Majesty, Prime Minister or anyone else. If you do not wish me to remain in this job, I will leave. Here is the file containing all the documents."

Here the Prime Minister turned towards me and said: 'are you joking dear Ardi?' (he used to call me dear Ardi or Ardeshir in private, and I used to call him Amir-Abbas or Amir). I replied: 'when it comes to serious matters, I never joke, neither with you nor with anyone else. I am saying my piece and here are the relevant documents.' His Majesty was very upset with this exchange. He coolly listened to our views and then ordered that a committee be formed to deal with this issue in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs after our return. In this committee, Mr Djamshid Amouzegar, the Minister of Finance, Mr Manuchehr Goodarzi, the Minister for the Civil Service, and a few of the high-rank-



ing personnel of the foreign ministry, in particular Dr Abbas Nayeri, were present. To forestall the distortion of the report of our discussion to the Shah, I requested that Mr Moeinian should also be present in the meeting... The problem was solved. Nevertheless, the gripe and bitterness persisted.

These kinds of disagreements always occur but never develop into political wrangles and confrontation.

Various instances transpired. At present, I can remember one of them and will recount it. The day that the President of Czechoslovakia was paying a visit to Iran, the Prime Minister kindly offered to come to the foreign ministry so we could have lunch and then go to the airport together while talking about work. We had our lunch and then came down. I never used the ministry's car and rode in my own personal vehicle. I sat in the driver's seat and the Prime Minister took the seat beside me. Ali Khan, the foreign ministry's driver, sat in the back seat. He was a decent and loyal man. During the time Dr Ali-Gholi Ardalan was minister, he had sustained facial injuries in a car accident. I liked him very much and always took great care of him, lest he felt that his presence was unnecessary.

In any case, we moved from the Foreign ministry to Ghassem-ol-Saltaneh Street and drove up towards Naderi Avenue and the Soviet Embassy in order to turn right and head towards the airport.

Suddenly, the Prime Minister started whining about Savak, saying that they were trying to control our activities. They recorded our telephone calls and reported them. Was he really complaining, or did he wish to hint that he was being informed of my comings and goings and my conversations? I don't know. I replied: "So much the better! Let them do it, what difference does it make? We have nothing to hide. Moreover, you are the Prime Minister and Savak is legally under your supervision. You are the only person who has a right, any time, day or night, anywhere in the country, without prior warning, to go into any spot or building belonging to SAVAK and carry out an inspection. You can summon the director of Savak and ask him, 'what are you doing this for?' Do we have anything that needs hiding? I have no business interfering in His Majesty's private life, but I relate to him even my own revelling and I have no anxiety that my comings and goings and words be reported to him from other channels.

We were talking like this for a few minutes. Hoveyda was sitting in front of the car beside me and we reached the Culture Amphitheatre (Talar Farhang). Amir-Abbas said: 'Yes, we should remain in power for twenty years. His Majesty has also said the same thing.' Hearing this was like getting an electric shock. I slammed on the breaks and the car jolted so violently that poor Ali Khan was thrown from the back seat and the late Hoveyda's head hit the wind-

screen. I said: 'dear Amir, I was His Majesty's son-in-law, I could not live more than a few years with my wife. And you are saying I should remain Foreign Minister and you Prime Minister for another twenty years? No, this is not for me. It is neither prudent for me, nor for you or His Majesty that we would grab the office of a minister or prime minister.'

Hoveyda was very miffed and I became cross. We did not speak again all the way to the airport. After welcoming the President and accompanying him to the Golestan Palace, we made our departure. The day after, when I finished reporting the daily matters to the Shah, he remarked: "and what else"? I asked: 'regarding what issue?' The Shah asked: 'what did you say in the car?' I replied that it was a friendly discussion: "The Prime Minister said we ought to remain for twenty years. When I put on the brakes, I was very embarrassed, and he added that His Majesty had said so.' I replied: 'first of all, if we remain in office for twenty years, we will create twenty million enemies for His Majesty. Secondly why, whatever comes up, do you remark that it is His Majesty's order?' The Shah said: 'Was this all?' And I replied this was the exact truth. The Shah knew that I never lied to him; and perhaps this was one of the reasons he tolerated my behaviour and approach. He then smiled and said the incident had been reported to us differently.

In any case, this is an issue that belongs to history and I would like to mention here that my opposition to the choice of Her Majesty as regent was on the basis that I found the idea and decision to be unconstitutional. I never wished for an act to be carried out in the name of the Shah that would be contrary to the correct norms and standards and would give rise to controversy. It is for this very reason that this resolution never went to the National Consultative Assembly and never gained a lawful aspect. I disagreed with Hoveyda on this issue as well.

Was Mr Hoveyda used to making these types of complaints?



PM.Hoveyda and Foreign Minister Ardeshir Amir-Abbas Qomi

Unfortunately, he was used to griping about various people. He grumbled about his colleagues, or people he considered as opposing him or being in his way. He was constantly nagging about them, badmouthing them to the Shah and going as far as doctoring and distorting reality and creating divisiveness and animosity between his rivals. The Shah did not usually pay attention to all



this, especially if he knew that the Prime Minister had a personal grudge against someone or harboured some hostility towards that person.

However, neither this approach of Hoveyda's was appropriate and honourable, nor His Majesty's reactions who permitted him to behave in such a manner. This was one of the main problems of leadership in our country at the time. This way of acting created a type of malaise and mistrust among those in charge in the country and impaired the accomplishment of tasks. In any case, this tendency of Hoveyda's did not befit the head of a government. It did not show any grit.



Ardeshir Zahedi seen behind the HIM and

This incident was very interesting; were there other instances too?

We should have been on amicable terms, but there were many such instances that soured our relationship. I have, for instance, mentioned the episode regarding his welcoming the German ambassador at the airport that went against the diplomatic protocol because he had not

yet been officially confirmed in his post as ambassador. In other words, he had not been presented to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Shah had not yet accepted his credentials. According to diplomatic practice, the head of the Protocol of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs goes to the airport to welcome the ambassadors who arrive in the country. I became angry when I heard that Hoveyda had personally gone to the airport. I telephoned and said that he should not have done so because it was contrary to standard practice and in the future other ambassadors might expect the same treatment. I wrote a long letter to His Majesty and the next day when I had an audience with the King, I ran into Hoveyda. He said: 'I was just visiting the Shah, and when I mentioned to him the story of the letter that was dispatched, the Shah remarked that coincidentally, in this case, Ardeshir was right but ask him to retract the letter.' I said: 'that's impossible. I will not go back on my word, and the letter has been classified and registered as an official document of the foreign ministry.' When he came to see me, this new ambassador was leaning back cross-legged and since it was against etiquette, I banged on the table so hard that the cup of tea on the table spilled and I cut short the meeting. On the day of the King's audience, I was taking him to His Majesty to present his credentials. He was so frightened of what I had done that his legs were trembling and it led to a formal complaint of the foreign

ministry or cancellation of the meeting that Mr Robert Buron, the minister in the cabinet of Charles de Gaulle and the head of the Seminar of Economic Development had organised at the Pahlavi University - a seminar that had been inaugurated with a message from His Majesty.

At the last minute, I organised a luncheon in the foreign ministry for him and a few others and I took Buron for a few minutes to His Majesty, although it was not in his schedule. Everyone was delighted and returned to their country happy and satisfied. Hoveyda's soreness against me however remained. And so on,

and so forth. Ultimately my reservations about Hoveyda were of a fundamental nature.

To be continued.....



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"We must give people what they need. We should not force things on them and instead of earning their gratitude, provoke resentment and negative reactions."

"SAVAK and Hoveyda wanted to keep His Majesty's mind unperturbed rather than telling him the truth"

For the past decades the curious cohabitation, collaboration and personal relations of Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda and the Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi has been "the talk of the town." So many writers, journalists, film makers and TV producers have shown interest and looked for answers to their questions.

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government.

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AZADI MONTHLYMAGAZINE

PART TWO

Let us then turn to other points on the late Hoveyda.

Hoveyda, who came to office under special circumstances after the assassination of Hasan Ali Mansur considered his government as a kind of interim cabinet at the beginning. Gradually

was going on in the country from the Shah as much as possible. Even Her Majesty who had a lot of affection for him has admitted this point in her memoirs.

I remember one day as I was going up the steps of the palace to have an audience with the Shah, I saw Hoveyda standing behind a column in the hallway. I asked with astonishment: "Amir, what are you doing here?" He replied that His Majesty had given him some orders. He added 'I have come to say farewell.' He was scheduled to travel to Romania, and I had charged Dr Abbas

He replied: "they have told him that people are unhappy and the Shah was distraught; wondering about the source of people's dissatisfaction. It would be advisable to form a committee to look into this issue." I asked for further clarification. When he was finished, I said: "No one has undermined us. If you consider what you have told me as undermining, I am the one undermining". We need to understand the reasons of malcontent among people, youth and the university students. If the causes for dissatisfaction continue, these people can be easily



however, he became so power thirsty that he wished to hold on to his position as an end in itself, and not as a means of serving his country. He longed to remain head of government at any price. He was hiding the reality of what

Nayeri to accompany him as the representative of the Foreign Ministry. In any case we entered the room. When we were alone, he said "yes, they have gone and undermined us in front of His Majesty." I asked: "how?"

manipulated to join the throngs of the opposition. Afterwards the issue of the assassination of General Farsio came up. Again, I raised the point regarding the dissatisfaction of the youth. The poor General



had a bullet wound and was fighting for his life. I went to visit him in the hospital. A few top Generals of the army were present. Privately, the doctors told me that there was no hope for him pulling through. I mentioned to Hoveyda that I intended to suggest to His Majesty to visit this officer in the hospital. I pointed out to him: 'this was where the dissatisfaction lied. Nobody has conspired to undermine you.

What is at stake is the fate of a country that cannot afford negligence. Dear Amir, this is the reality.'

The Prime Minister responded, 'Yes, His Majesty has said that a committee comprised of you, me, and the Minister of Court should be formed to look into this issue.' I told the Prime Minister that I was unable to participate since first of all I was the Foreign Minister and was constantly travelling, and secondly the managing of the country's internal affairs was his responsibility. I further remarked that I had still not forgotten the episode concerning my criticism of the Tehran traffic which had been a source of public vexation and dismay.

I added: "Under your directives (the Prime Minister's) the Head of the Constabulary and various authorities came to see me. We discussed the matter for hours. We made plenty of efforts and compiled reports, but it didn't get anywhere. I also recollect the problem of the military intervention in the university which you and Savak had prescribed. Therefore, it makes no sense for me to get involved in this. You do as you deem appropriate, but again, no one has tried to do you in.

I mentioned to His Majesty that incidentally the previous day, General de Gaulle had fired his Prime Minister. I noticed that this news greatly perturbed Amir-Abbas and had made him worried lest the Shah also decided to do the same thing.

And then what happened?

Here, I would like to refer to another incident that took place sometime later. One day, I was sitting in my office when General Gholam Ali Oveissi, the Commander of the Gendarmerie, telephoned me sounding very distraught. He said that something awful had happened and I was the only one who could inform His Majesty. An hour earlier, when General Farsio was leaving his house, he was ambushed by a terrorist group and came under machine gun fire and Molotov cocktail. He was now in a very critical condition. I said it was incumbent on him to tell His Majesty, but I would also let him know that General Oveissi had something urgent to communicate regarding the Judiciary organisation of the army. It was close to noontime, so, as usual, I would be received by the king. At that time, His Majesty was residing at the Sahebgheranyeh Palace. He was very dejected and upset. I related the matter to the Shah and said that I had just returned from the hospital and had conveyed to General Farsio his kind wishes and regards. He was in such a mood that tears filled his eyes. I started crying too. His comportment and gestures showed his emotions. When the normal daily business was finished, I said, 'Your Majesty, I have something to relate.'

He said: "Go right ahead". Using this expression in talking to me was a sign that he was feeling downcast by the circumstances or by me. I said, 'You remember that I had mentioned to you that in my youth I suffered from ulcers? Now every time I have stomach ache, I go to the same doctor who has the record of my illness. Two or three years ago I was ill again, and this doctor suspected that I might be suffering from throat cancer. You said that I should go to the specialist in Zurich. Now every time I have throat problem, I go to this doctor. Presently, our country has fallen ill. It is afflicted with a problem. This incident of Farsio's attempted assassination is a sign that there is a problem in our country.'

His Majesty stated that we provided a good life for our people, what else did they demand? I said, 'Let's assume we give them gold ingots. They will gain nothing by eating gold ingots, except developing a terrible disease and dying. We should give them bread and invest the gold ingots in the bank for the benefit of the country. We must give people what they need. We should not force things on them and instead of earning their gratitude, provoke resentment and negative reactions.' My words had a very heart-warming effect. We had a long conversation and afterwards went and had lunch together.

Later, of course, the question of assessing the causes of dissatisfaction was brought up. The army was given the task of investigating the problem. They formed a think tank. However, as a result of Hoveyda's opposition who imagined

a conspiracy against him, none of these efforts got anywhere. He did his utmost to prevent the Shah from hearing about public discontent and as the saying went "to keep His Majesty's mind unperturbed". Some members of his inner circle and a number of those in charge of intelligence also assisted Hoveyda in his stratagem. And eventually, we witnessed the consequence of all this.

This is another matter which I should perhaps relate in another volume of my memoirs. My intention is to analyse the causes and factors contributing to the revolution; a revolution that was due to many internal catalysts as well as foreign incitements.

Regarding Mr Hoveyda, I should add that his anxiety, lest a rival might emerge and challenge his grip on power, caused him to undermine all those individuals in his cabinet who possessed a strength of character. A boss should support his colleagues and invigorate them. If they have some weaknesses, he should try to find a way to redress those weaknesses or remove these people from their jobs.

In any case, he did not deserve the grim fate that befell him. Maybe if Hoveyda had pursued his career in diplomacy or in international organisations, it would have been better for him and for Iran. No doubt he would have made a first-rate ambassador in an important diplomatic post. But perhaps thirteen years, as the head of the cabinet, especially with the authority he enjoyed towards the end, was not good for Iran and for Hoveyda himself, which resulted in his paying the ultimate price.



In a more recent interview with the columnist of Nasime Bidari, Mrs Najmieh Sadjadi, we read the following exchanges:

For five years you served as the Minister of Foreign Affairs in Mr Hoveyda's cabinet. Before talking about this particular period could you say how you came to know Mr. Hoveyda?

It started with friendship. It goes back to 1954 when he worked in Switzerland. Later he moved to the Iranian Embassy in Turkey but had problems with General Arfa, our Ambassador. I spoke to his Majesty about his difficulties and he agreed to his return to Iran.

From the very beginning Hoveyda liked to work at the National Iranian Oil Company which was under the executive directorship of Mr Entezam and the two knew each other well. Soon Mr Mansour became Prime Minister and Hoveyda entered his cabinet as the Finance Minister. At that time, I was ambassador in UK and we were engaged in negotiations on the Iranian oil. Hoveyda came to London to participate in our sessions as Minister of Finance. At the same time Dr Manouchehr Eghbal who was then the managing director of the NIOC also joined us.

Hoveyda did not trust some of the members of the Iranian delegation and thought that were too close to the British. I was not happy about this and told him that I cannot report such a thing to Tehran and in any case those who have been officially sent by Tehran should participate in our discussions. He also



did not see eye to eye with Dr. Eghbal. In fact, it was not clear which one of the two was at the head of the Iranian delegation. Before this, Dr Eghbal had a higher rank at the NIOC and was not happy about Mansour's government decision to raise the price of domestic petrol. I suggested to his majesty that it would be better if Dr Eghbal returns to Tehran and let the Minister of Finance in charge.

The Shah agreed; Dr. Eghbal went for another meeting to Vienna, Hoveyda and I continued our discussions with the British. Throughout our negotiations, Prime Minister Mansour was in contact with Mr. Hoveyda and myself to be informed of the situation. I finally told him that once we have reached decisions, I shall report directly to His Majesty and inform him too. I asked Hoveyda to say the same thing.

I then arranged for private meeting between Hoveyda and Lord Shawcross who was the principal advisor of the SHELL company. I wanted them to know each other so that our negotiations could advance more smoothly and come to

conclusion quickly. This is in fact what happened. All this was about a year before I was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Soon after I joined his cabinet, I confronted several issues on which we disagreed. Everyone knows that the appointment of Hoveyda as Prime Minister was the issue of the assassination of Prime Minister Mansour. To many including Hoveyda himself this came as a surprise. He did not expect it and when his nomination was announced he thought it would a position by interim. Once he was confirmed as PM, his attitude started to change. Gradually he was seduced by the taste of power and was ready to do anything to stay in his position. He now wanted power for the sake of power. All these are documented and many of these I have published in the third volume of my Memoirs that deals with the period I served as Foreign Minister.

What were the major problems you had with him?

We certainly had no conflicts as such. We just had different ways of seeing things and had different solution for

some problems. There were several things happening in government with which I could not agree. However, we remained in good personal relation and spoke together like two good friends. My problems were not with Hoveyda himself but with Hoveyda the Prime Minister and in relation with our functions. The first of such cases was related to the charter of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

With group of experts we had worked hard on drafting the new charter the ministry needed to implement its reforms. Hoveyda was not happy and wanted the project first to be presented to his majority party "The Iran -e- Novin" to be studied before presentation of the bill to the parliament. I was seriously angry. As minister of foreign affairs, I had nothing to do with political parties. I believed strongly that the ministry should remain out of party politics. Parties come and go and every election may bring fundamental changes but our foreign policy needs continuity and stability. I myself was never member of any political party. Even when the Rastakhiz or "Resurrection Party" was created by the Shah and he ordered every Iranian to join, I wrote a letter to him to say that as minister of foreign affairs I had no intention to join. I have his handwritten answer and he accepted my request.

Concerning the charter of the ministry, I told His Majesty that I did not want to go through the party. Once the bill is presented to the Parliament, I will go defend it and answer the questions. Once again, the Shah accepted and the Foreign Ministry was made

an exception to the rule at least as long I was responsible. Hoveyda, naturally, was not happy about this.

Short time after the question of the Charter, we faced difficulties about the budget of the ministry. During the discussions on the question we had an official trip to Pakistan in the company of the Shah. Mr. Hoveyda was with us. During our flight I started talking about the question. I had a big file full of documents that I put on the table in front of the Shah and said "You know, your majesty, that I am not that attached to my position. I have no personal grudges against the Prime Minister and I do not like to speak behind anybody's back. Several times you have ordered the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to revise the budget of the ministry of Foreign Affairs and so far, nothing has been done. The ministry under my responsibility cannot function properly in such conditions. I do not want to create problems for anyone; If you do not want me to stay, I resign."

Prime Minister Hoveyda turned to me and said "Ardeshir, you must be joking!" I said "No I am not joking neither with you nor with anyone else." His Majesty was visibly disturbed by my reaction but continued with his usual patience listening to us and at the end ordered the government to solve the problem as soon as we are back. Once gain Hoveyda did not like it.

Why didn't you attend the cabinet meeting and how did Hoveyda react to this?

I attended those sessions where there was something related to my ministry. Everybody knows this and His Majesty was informed.

You used to report directly to

the Shah. Was Hoveyda, as the head of the government, complaining about this and your rare attendance of His Cabinet meetings?

The day I was appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs I said publicly that no one can and should interfere in the affairs of my department be it Prime Minister or a member of the royal family.

The day I returned to Tehran to assume my new responsibilities, Amir Abbas Hoveyda, Alam the Court minister and several others had come to the airport to welcome me. Hoveyda kindly suggested to drive me to my home in his car. The following day also he came to pick me up to take me to Saadabad Palace to officially introduce me to the sovereign as Minister of Foreign Affairs.

These were opportunities to discuss between us our future relations. I started telling him that I was a stubborn person and prefer to be frank with you and settle all issues before I start. First of all, I want you to tell me directly whenever there is problem. Next, I will not accept anyone criticising my predecessor, Mr. Abbas Aram. Thirdly I do not want anyone interfering in the affaire of my ministry. Good or bad whatever is done there I assume the whole responsibility. I have different methods of working from my predecessor and intend to change many things. I have several reforms in mind. Hoveyda very kindly accepted all my arguments.

When I said that I unusually did not attend the cabinet meeting should not be interpreted as if I did not know what was going on there. Besides I had informed His Majesty, the Prime Minister and the other members of his cabinet that my job required frequent trips



abroad to attend meetings and carry on my duties and could not be regularly present in the cabinet meetings, especially those in which there was nothing concerning my ministry in the agenda. But I appointed my deputy, Mr. Amir Khosrow Afshar who was an experienced and highly respected colleague to represent me. There was no intention to undermine Hoveyda's authority or ignore others. This simple matter was interpreted differently from the very beginning and generated many unfounded rumours around our relationships.

But you normally had a critical view of Hoveyda's method of governing. This certainly had an influence on your personal relations. I want you to say which particular aspects of Hoveyda's actions you disapproved; did you have problems with some members of his team or was your criticism directed to him personally?

Hoveyda had a multi-million secret budget at his disposal that he spent the way he deemed appropriate. He thought he could buy everyone with money. Starting with some of the clergy, members of security or the police benefited from his generosity.

This was going on at a time when other ministries had urgent financial needs for their projects. Hoveyda continued to delay their demands from day to day. He was so attached to his position that he was ready to do anything.

Once he had said that he saw himself as the chief of the Shah's Bureau, carrying out orders. Why should a prime minister ever say such a thing? My problem with Hoveyda was that in whatever he did or wanted to do he always associated the name of Shah to transfer the responsibility to him.

There was a young man near our house named Samad. He had a small fruit shop. One day he was beaten in public by the special police in charge of price controls. When I saw His Majesty that day, I asked him "Your Majesty do you know Samad, Ahamad Ali and Hasanali Jafar?" He was surprised and said no, who are they? I said but they had received their sentences in your name, by your order and flagellated in public eyes. Everyone is using your name to advance his decisions and this creates enemies for the Shah.

I could not accept this and continued to criticize.

The final part will continue on the Next Issue of AZADI

Hoveyda and Ardeshir Zahedi

A Curious Cohabitation

“Hoveyda did not deserve the grim fate that befell him.”

“A polyglot and highly cultivated man, he would have made a first-rate ambassador but perhaps thirteen years at the head of the government was neither good for Iran nor for Hoveyda himself.”

For the past decades the curious cohabitation, collaboration and personal relations of Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveyda and the Foreign Minister Ardeshir Zahedi has been “the talk of the town.” So many writers, journalists, film makers and TV producers have shown interest and looked for answers to their questions. After several decades, Ardeshir Zahedi finally speaks about his relations with late Mr. Hoveyda and throws light on the mysteries.

In two extensive interviews, one for the third volume of his Memoirs and the other with Miss Najmieh Sadjadi, a columnist for the political and cultural monthly magazine: NASIME BIDARI, Ambassador Zahedi speaks of his friendship, collaboration but also serious differences with a man who for 13 years served as the head of the government.

Azadi Magazine is happy to publish extracts of these two interviews in three successive issues. Here is the final part, part three.

AZADI MONTHLY MAGAZINE



PART THREE

Despite friendship you always had a critical view of Hoveyda’s government and this could not have been without some effect on your relationship. Which aspect of his government troubled you? Did you consider some of colleagues inefficient or was your criticism directed at the Prime Minister himself?

Hoveyda had a multimillion secret budget for his office and used it at his discretion to advance certain projects he had in mind. He thought that he could buy everyone with money be it the members of clergy or the laymen. The police department, the ministries needed extra budget to cope with the new responsibilities and developments. He had the habit of delaying answers and would keep them waiting. He was so lost in his own world with a priority to keep his job at whatever price possible.

On one occasion he had said that he was simply the director of the secretariat of the Shah. Why should a Prime Minister have said a thing like that. My problem with Hoveyda and number of others was that in

truth from the Shah or was misinforming him? Besides the Shah had several sources of intelligence and it was not only through Hoveyda that he got his information.

This is true. For example, I had regular audiences and reported to him directly on matters concerning my diplomatic missions. Savak, the office of the Chief of Staff and certain key military commanders had their own contacts with the Shah and were regularly received by him in private. So, in many of the sensitive domains Hoveyda was not involved or even informed and he could not then report on those issues. On other questions that fell within his field of responsibility he always tried to give a positive picture to the Shah. He did not want the Shah to know about the negative aspects or the shortcomings, not to disturb the peace of his mind as he called it. Yet it was the duty of the Prime Minister to tell the Shah the truth and let him know all the facts.

He always suspected people working against him and trying to create a distance between him and the king. One day when I was entering the palace for my daily audience, I saw him standing on the stairs at the entrance. I asked him what he was doing there at that time. He said that he was going on an official visit to Romania and had come to say goodbye and take his leave. We spoke about different matters and suddenly he said: “Once again they

everything they did and said they implicated the Shah. This was the best way to escape responsibility.

One day I heard the owner of a small fruit shop near our house whose name was Samad was beaten in public and accused of overpricing his goods. The same day I had an audience with Shah. I asked him “Your Majesty do you know Samad? What about Ahmad Ali and Hassanali Jaffar” He said that he had never heard of them and do not know who they were. I continued “But Your Majesty, they have been beaten in your name and by your order.” To get their jobs done without facing challenges, they related everything to the Shah and continued to create enemies for him. I could not accept this.

Hoveyda also had the habit of nagging about his colleague when he was alone with Shah. Fortunately, the Shah did not pay much attention to this especially when he knew that Hoveyda did not like the person he was complaining about and was only making an effort to settle his personal accounts.

To what extent would you say that Hoveyda was hiding the



have gone to the Shah and said something against us. They have told him the people are unhappy and dissatisfaction is growing. The Shah wanted me to form a committee to search for the reasons and come up with suggestions." I told him no one has complained about you. If you are referring to dissatisfaction of the people, the origin has been me and no one else. I have been telling the Shah that we should take the discontentment of the people and particularly the students seriously. I had added that if the situation continues the young people will become easy preys for our enemies. This is to me a critical and urgent matter to attend to. Unfortunately, Hoveyda did not take it seriously and did nothing about it. He often left me no choice but to interfere directly as in the case of the bus fares and students riots on the campus.

It seems that you also had some disagreement with Hoveyda over the question of Bahrain, its separation from Iran and its future.

In the third volume of my memoirs that deals with the period I served as Foreign Minister, I have spoken in detail about Bahrain. Hoveyda did not have a direct role to play. When all decisions were taken, we had to present a bill to the parliament and get it ratified. Considering the importance of the question I insisted that it should be the Prime Minister himself that presented the bill. We had to show that the Prime Minister and all members of his cabinet were united and defended the bill. He was unwilling and began to search a way to avoid responsibility. Maybe he wanted to remain popular in the public opinion.

Since our discussion is about your relations with Hoveyda and your differences in a number of issues that might throw lights upon the historical events of the time, we shall stick to the principles but I also wanted to ask you, in parenthesis, about the rumours that once you hit Hoveyda in the face. Is it true?

Absolutely not. I never did or thought of doing such a thing. I was sometimes angry, rude or foul spoken but I never hit any one of my colleagues in the face. When I was very angry, I used to call them traitors. With Hoveyda I had several moments of verbal clashes but whoever has said that I hit him is a liar. I would not allow myself. He was the Prime Minister of our country; Neither ethical nor social standards would allow it. Had I done such a thing, they could have sent me to jail. At that time everyone had friends and foes. Clashes were frequent but we are also given to exaggerations. I assure you I never did such a thing and if I ever had done, I would have told you frankly.



A. Abbass Hoveyda

It seems that these disagreements and divergences finally led to your leaving your job as minister in his cabinet after five years.

During that period twice I wrote very harsh letters

to Hoveyda. These letters should be somewhere in the archives of the ministry. They were neither secret nor private letters. They were official and duly registered in the secretariat and bore serial reference numbers. Once there was a diplomatic issue and a matter of protocol that was very important to me. The new ambassador designate of Germany was arriving in Tehran and Hoveyda had gone to the airport personally to welcome him. The German envoy was not officially an ambassador as his credentials were not yet presented to the ministry and he was not introduced to the Shah.

I was angry and wrote a letter to Amir Abbas asking him why he had done such a thing. Then I called him and said you had yourself served in the diplomatic missions and should know about the protocol. He was not happy and said he had known the new ambassador for years and he was a close friend. He had reported the incident to the Shah who had said that I was right and that Hoveyda should



Ardeshir Zahedi

settle the matter directly with me. Hoveyda gave me the Shah's message and asked me to withdraw the letter I had sent. I refused and said it was an official letter registered in the annals. I added that I had not written it as a personal

letter, it was a matter of principal and it was my duty to react and remind.

A second time I wrote an angry letter telling Hoveyda that one of his particular actions was against the law and contrary to the interests of the country. I asked him to read my letter to all members of his cabinet. Once again, he had rushed to see the Shah telling him that I had accused him of treason. The Shah wanted me to take the letter back and destroy it. I refused and said this is not good for the ministry; I added if I am right and you agree with me alright if not, I will resign. I cannot change my mind.

It was the anniversary of the death of my father I went to visit his tomb and when I returned, I saw Mr Moeinian, the head of the Shah's special bureaux, who had a message from his Majesty telling me that I should continue my work at the Ministry. I said this was not the time to talk about such things. Then I went to see the Shah himself and said I had served for five years as his minister but I have had enough and I could not continue like that. That was the end of my mission as the Minister of Foreign affairs.

In a way the Shah supported Hoveyda and kept him as Prime Minister for over 13 years. Didn't this add to Hoveyda's self-confidence and enhance his authority?

This is true. In fact, there were a few who were happy when they heard I had resigned and the Shah had finally accepted. Hoveyda and a few of his ministers, the Israelis and the British. With my departure there was no one to challenge and criticise them. They were free to do whatever they



wanted without any serious opposition or barriers. So, they rejoiced my departure, but honestly, I do not regret for had I continued to stay in the government in the circumstances that I have described I could not have done much and most of my time would have been wasted.

In some of your interviews you have said and on several occasions that the Shah wanted to replace Hoveyda with someone else and you were one of the persons he had in mind. How far was this serious?

There were internal conflicts and rivalries in the cabinet. Some of the ministers were not happy. Once ministers Ansari and Amouzegar came to me and began to complain about the Prime Minister. I told them they should go and speak directly to the Shah and added that I was not a candidate for premiership. Later the same day I was in audience with the Shah. I told him about what I had heard and he said that Hoveyda knows this and is afraid that I might dismiss him.

He added that I should go and prepare myself just in case there is a change of government. I humbly asked him to forget about me. He asked why? I said I was a member of his government and I could not do this unless I resign from the government first. Besides I do not want everybody to think that I had this post simply because of you and thanks to your support. I prefer that you leave it to the parliament. Let them choose and propose three candidates to you for the post of Prime Minister. If I happen to be one the three that has the confidence of the parliament and if am assured of their

support then I will respect their choice and accept your offer. He was not happy to hear this from me.



Why didn't the Shah accept this and decided to keep Hoveyda for several more years?

I have always said that keeping him as Prime Minister for 13 years was a mistake. This is one of the things that did much damage to us. I had already told Hoveyda in all friendship that it was neither in his interest nor that of the country to insist on staying in power for a long time. Staying a long time in power one begins to lose contact with realities, with the people and leads to a kind of dangerous over confidence. I insisted on several occasions that the government should be changed after a reasonable period of time. But the Shah wanted to continue working with Hoveyda and Hoveyda himself had no intention to leave his position.

The day that the President of Czechoslovakia was paying a visit to Iran, the Prime Minister kindly offered to come to the foreign ministry so we could have lunch and then go to the airport together while talking about our work. We had our lunch and then came down to go to the airport. I never used the ministry's car and rode in my own personal vehicle. I sat in the driver's seat and the Prime Minister took the

seat beside me. Ali Khan, the foreign ministry's driver, sat on the back seat. He was a decent and loyal man.

During the time Dr Ali-Gholi Ardalan was minister, he had sustained facial injuries in a car accident. I liked him very much and always took great care of him, lest he felt that his presence was unnecessary.

In any case, we moved from the Foreign ministry to Ghavam-ol-Saltaneh Street and drove up towards Naderi Avenue and the Soviet Embassy in order to turn right and head towards the airport. Suddenly, the Prime Minister started whining about Savak, saying that they were trying to control our activities. They recorded our telephone calls and reported them. Was he really complaining, or did he wish to hint that he was being informed of my comings and goings and my conversations? I don't know. I replied: "So much the better! Let them do it, what difference does it make? We have nothing to hide. Moreover, you are the Prime Minister and Savak is legally under your supervision. You are the only person who has a right, any time, day or night, anywhere in the country, without prior warning, to go into any spot or building belonging to SAVAK and carry out an inspection. You can summon the director of Savak and ask him, 'what are you

doing this for?' Do we have anything that needs hiding? I have no business interfering in His Majesty's private life, but I relate to him even my own revelling and I have no anxiety that my comings and goings and words be reported to him from other channels." We were talking like this for a few minutes.

Hoveyda was sitting in front of the car beside me and we reached the Culture Amphitheatre (Talar Farhang). Amir-Abbas said: "Yes, we should remain in power for twenty years. His Majesty has also said the same thing." Hearing this was like getting an electric shock. I slammed on the breaks and the car jolted so violently that poor Ali Khan was thrown from the back seat and the late Hoveyda's head hit the windscreen. I said: "Dear Amir, I was His Majesty's son-in-law, I could not live more than a few years with my wife. And you are saying I should remain Foreign Minister and you Prime Minister for another twenty years? No, this is not for me. It is neither prudent for me, nor for you or His Majesty that we would grab the office of a minister or prime minister" Hoveyda was very miffed and I became cross.

Not only Hoveyda stayed in his post for thirteen years but at the end he was appointed the minister of the imperial court.

I was not happy about this appointment. Hoveyda went to the court for he had rivalries with Jamshid Amouzegar who replaced him as prime Minister. In appearance they were good friends, shook hands, smiled and spoke of friendship. But Hoveyda was provoking the enemies of Amouzegar and encouraging



them. He kept sending messages to the members of parliament not to vote for Amouzegar. There was a kind of civil war between the Minister of the Imperial Court and the Prime Minister. This did us a lot of damage. If Hoveyda had continued his diplomatic career, he would have been a great ambassador and much more successful.

When in 1978 the country faced a critical situation and was on the verge of a revolution, to restore calm the imperial court decided to arrest a number of personalities including Mr. Hoveyda. What was your reaction to this? Did you have a part to play in this decision? I have seen certain memoirs in which they refer to you being at the origin of the arrest and imprisonment of Mr. Hoveyda.

Not at all. I was Ambassador and in Washington. When they were about to change the Minister of the Imperial Court, I told his majesty it would be better if you send Hoveyda abroad, provide him with the necessary financial means to continue his life. This was not done. I was still in Washington when the Shah appointed General Azhari at the head of a military government. In a telephone conversation the Shah told me they had no choice but to arrest a few of the responsible people in the former governments. I was not of the same opinion and thought it would be a mistake. I believed this would be regarded as a sign of weakness. I did not insist more because my brother-in-law, Dariush Homayoun, a former minister of information was also on the list and I did not want the Shah to think that I was against the idea because my own relative was also concerned and that I wanted to save him. However, since everybody knew that I

had differences with Hoveyda and had criticized his methods of governing, the rumours rapidly spread that I had been at the origin of his arrest.

It is true that I disagreed with Hoveyda on many issues and I disapproved of his continuing as Prime Minister for thirteen



long years, but given the conditions of the country I did not approve of the decision to send him to jail. Meanwhile when I was in Tehran for a few days I thought of going and visiting some of the friends and former colleagues who were in Jamshidieh prison. I thought the Prime Minister Sharif Emami would not be happy about this so I told the Shah about my plan and he said it had nothing to do with the Prime Minister and I was free to go. I first went to the mausoleum of my father and then to the prison where all the dignitaries arrested were lodged. I talked to every one of them, we laughed, joked and all agreed that such measures would not solve the problems the country was facing. If they arrest people, they should be the ones who were at the origin of the real problems and punish them.

Arresting a former prime minister and putting all the blames for the mistakes committed and relating all the

troubles to him could backlash and in the eye of the public have negative effects on the government

When Hoveyda was arrested under the military government of General Azhari, several former Prime Ministers of England sent messages to the

Shah asking for his immediate release. The French who had great sympathy for Hoveyda began to attack the Iranian government and the Shah himself. In the country many of the personalities who had important responsibilities in the past were afraid of their future, they decided to leave the country. They were right in saying if the Shah puts his own Prime Minister and minister of court in jail there is no security for anyone.

You had a pivotal role in coordinating the Shah's departure from the country and then his movements from place to place in the rest of his life. When he was leaving the country wasn't the possibility of taking Hoveyda with him mentioned?

No; the country was in turmoil and it was not right for the Shah to take Hoveyda with him. You have seen that even the countries that had close friendship with Iran had turned their backs on us. Only President Sadat volunteered to

receive the Shah as his guest. I did much to coordinate this. When you are somebody's guest and in the conditions that we lived through, we could not take another guest with us. About the events of those days I have spoken in my memoirs in detail and volume four of the memoirs will soon be ready to be published. I hope that God will support me and give me the energy to finish it.

What was the Shah's reaction to the execution of Hoveyda? Where was the Shah at that time? Was he not in Bahamas?

To be honest with you I cannot remember. I was still Ambassador in Washington moving from place to place. I had already resigned but the Shah wanted me to continue to the last possible moment. I only know that when he heard the news, he was very sad. I do not wish to talk much about the tragic destiny that befell Hoveyda. The way he was executed was cruel and contrary to any law and procedure of justice. Unfortunately, we had a number of people like Ghotb Zadeh and Yazdi who continued to give wrong information to Khomeini. They were themselves agents and spies of America. But this is a long history.

How far would you say Hoveyda had a responsibility in the fall of the Pahlavi regime?

Unfortunately, Hoveyda had much changed during the period he was in power. He was no more the man I knew at the start. With huge financial facilities at his disposal and a secret budget that was subject to no control, he did not much care about anyone. They had buried their heads in the sand. There was no sense or reason



later. I have a clear conscience about my relationship with Mohammad Reza Shah and I consider God to be witnessing what I did for my King.

Azadi: Mr. Zahedi Thank you very much. What you said is like the proverb "You may know by a handful the whole sack." and is true in terms of

the contemporary history of Iran, and we are looking forward to the next volumes of your memoirs.

Zahedi: God willing

After this Interview unfortunately, Mr. Kazemian and Shirvani passed asway.

Corrections

Unfortunately these 2 photos appeared on Azadi No.130 with persian captions. We appologize for this mistake.

Dear readers can see the English captions here.



Mr.Zahedi was serving as Foreign Minister 5 years in Hoveyda administration, but he was the prime minister's main critic



1970- Hoveyda and Zahedi Meeting with the FM. of Morocco.