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The Shah's Iran_Rise and Fall: Conversations with an Insider

Abdolreza Ansari

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A chance encounter diverted Abdolreza Ansari from completing his doctorate in the US, and set him on a professional journey which mirrored the prolific rise and the precipitous fall of the regime of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi of Iran.

Ansari's government career took off when he became Iran's Treasurer General at the age of 32. In this role he restructured the fiscal management of the country and revamped its social security system. He was appointed Minister of Labour and Social Affairs at 34, where he created the Workers' Welfare Bank to support the labour force of the country. As Iran was about to enter a period of rapid development, Ansari was called upon to take charge of the largest development project of the time, the construction of the Dez Dam in the oil-rich province of Khuzestan. Subsequently, Ansari was appointed to the all-important role of Minister of Interior where he conducted national parliamentary and city council elections in a single day for the first time in Iran's history. His plan for the urban rehabilitation of towns and population centres continues to be the basis for municipal governance to this day.

Ansari was later hand-picked by the Shah to manage the many charitable organizations headed by the monarch's twin sister, Princess Ashraf Pahlavi. He was appointed Managing Director of the Imperial Organisation for Social Services, a role which placed him at the centre of power and gave him extraordinary insights into the Iranian political scene of that era. When the Iranian government began preparations for the commemoration of Iran's 2500 years of continued monarchical rule, he was appointed deputy head of the celebration's organising committee. Prior to the 1979 Revolution, he initiated, introduced and implemented the programmes of Protection of Families and the National Movement for Philanthropy.

Ansari's proximity to the Iranian royal court, his encounters with a multitude of well-known personalities and his perceptions of the political culture in 1970s Tehran make this book an important historical source and a fascinating portrayal of the inner workings of the Shah's Iran.

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