

Harry Gracey Persian Letter No. 3

If Tehran is all one has seen of Iran, upon viewing Isfahan one gasps, "Well, this is more like it!" Certainly Isfahan is what history and art prepare one to expect of Persia. From the much photographed Minaret and Dome of the Chahar-bagh Mosque to the beautiful tile, mosaics and carvings of the new Herati School, *this* is what one feels Persia should be. The picturesque and enormous Maidan -e- Shah (Imperial Square) in the heart of the city is 512 meters long and 160 meters wide. Re-built in 1611. A.D., its origin goes back to Tamerlane. Sitting high on the Ali Qapu, Shah Abbas, King of kings watched polo games and tournaments over 300 years ago, and awarded the Golden Cup to the winners. Now the area is filled with reflecting pools, gardens and fountains with the lovely and majestic Shah Mosque at the end of the vista, and the Bazaar Portal and the Sheikh Lutfullah Mosque along the two sides. Everything is as described long ago in "Hajji Baba of Isfahan," everything from politics to menus.

We can be of service to Iranians only when we truly understand how and why they are as they are. To spread modern skills and methods as a coating over their culture and customs without establishing a sound foundation of changed attitudes is to court certain failure.

We are in hopes that some of the seeds we have carefully planted and diligently cultivated in the minds of our Iranian colleagues will have put down sturdy roots and will send up green

shoots. It is not strange to find a paucity of trained leaders in a society where, not too long ago, to show your head too far above the crowd was to lose it. The seeming non-existence of enlightened leadership talent was disconcerting until we realized, after months of digging, that there existed a rich lode of talents that needed only patient exploration and development. Iran's ambitious program of social and economic progress can be implemented by Iranian Leadership. The gold is here; it needs mining and refining.

A conversation recently with Prime Minister Eqbal assured us that the High Level Manpower Program is on the right track and that Iran's top people are conscious of and have a strong concern for the training and developing of managers and executives to guide the innumerable new projects. A booklet on this subject under the co-authorship of Harry F. Gracey and Senator E. Khajeh-Nouri has been distributed, at their request to Ministries, Municipalities, oil industries, private enterprises and Universities, to the extent of some 2500 copies, (financed by us—backing our theories with cash). It is in Persian and English and its impact is such that a series of six more such booklets, accompanied by seminars and conferences, have been requested on topics suggested by the varied ministries and organizations.

Seminars, in Plan Organization, with face to face discussion and planning have been going on for several months

and will continue. A talk,—“Effective Communications—Key to Human Progress,” was delivered to potential executives at Iran-American Society. It was well received and the full text reprinted in the Tehran Journal Newspaper. This has resulted in telephoned and written requests for more of the same. We shall really regret leaving in September knowing, as we do, that a year or two more of expanded and concentrated effort would make all the difference between lasting and ephemeral results.

The booklet referred to above, and in “Letter” No. 2 was an outgrowth of a group of Iranians and American advisors who meet voluntarily to discuss social and economic issues and their solutions. The title is “The Vital Importance of Leaders and Executives for the Future of Iran.” At the moment some hundred copies are still on hand. (Happy to send you one if you are interested.) Iranian concern for High Level Manpower does not come a moment too soon if the nation is to hold on to its potential executives. In a survey just made of such men—32 Ph.D.’s, 25 with Master’s degrees, and 55 with Bachelor’s, in every field from Astro-Physics to Sociology, it was revealed that less than 50% were even partially satisfied with the utilization of their skills and “know-how.” Among the most highly trained was an experienced (in U.S.A.) construction engineer whose talents should be employed on one of the many, many projects now in process here. Instead—he is marooned behind a desk scheduling the cars assigned to department heads and counting noses for the weekly payroll issuance. Another, a trained school administrator, is being used as a sort of

senior office boy, chasing from bureau to bureau collecting statistics promptly filed in cold storage. As a school head in the Provinces (desperately needed) he can start at \$38.70 a month. A friend is urging him to take a job as chauffeur for a foreign banking advisor at double this. We can put our finger on ten fully trained Iranian engineers who are cooling their heels in non-productive jobs while Iran imports foreign engineers by the dozen. Educated abroad, at expense and sacrifice, these men come home to find, all too often, that they have lost their “seniority” in the scheme of things (the ancient tradition of posts filled by patronage regardless of qualifications). Young men eager to use their skills and talents in their homeland become frustrated in an atmosphere of “Fardah, in-shallah.” (Tomorrow, God willing). They emigrate. Perhaps we should bring the education here, then send the most promising abroad for additional training after they have worked a few years and sent down roots.

When the bill to increase appropriations for educating Iranians abroad was up before the Majlis (Lower house), one of the members orated for the permitted thirty minutes (no filibusters here!) and concluded his negative argument with the ringing words, “We send our young men to America for an education and what do they come back with? American wives!” We are still wondering just what interpretation to put on the thundering applause!

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