

# THE IRANIAN MASSES AS A SOURCE OF SOCIAL CHANGE: THE REIGN OF MOHAMMAD MOSADDEGH

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## Abstract

*The crowd has played and continues to play a very important role in Iranian politics at critical moments . This article looks at its role in the mid 20th century, especially during the times of rule of Reza Shah (1925-1941) and Mohammad Mosaddegh (1951-1953). The article reviews European thought about the masses, with special emphasis on the ideas of Bulgaria-born Nobel Laureate in Literature Elias Canetti. Canetti believed that the crowd was not always irrational, evil forces, but sometimes played a positive historical role: when it demanded and enacted social change. It is exactly what happened during the times of Mosaddegh. A look at these times is made through excerpts from the Iranian novel Neighbors by Ahmad Mahmoud, through a look at the press of that time and Ervand Abrahamian's historical writing.*

**Keywords:** masses, Elias Canetti, Mohammad Mosaddeq, protests, neighbors, Ahmad Mahmoud.

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## Introduction

The development of industrial society in the 1920s and the democratization of politics led to an increasing role of the masses<sup>1</sup>. The inter-war period in Europe is one in which populist leaders rose in countries where fascist or national socialist ideology took hold. This rise of the masses generally provoked fears and discontent in European intellectuals who had a consistent tendency in the 20th century to be negative. Fascist dictatorships had a cult of personality associated with depersonalization, and also with aggression.

However, attitudes towards the masses can also be ambivalent. This is what is seen in Elias Canetti's famous work "Crowds and Power". Canetti is faithful to the European bourgeois tradition and also has his reservations about the irrationality of the masses. But in his typology of the crowd he also outlines some types that play a positive role. It is not the crowd per se, but its nature and function that allow one to evaluate the phenomenon.

One type of mass that Canetti clearly views positively is the so-called "the crowd in change." These are masses of people who emerge in times of social change to correct the long and painful dominance of a particular political force or tendency. These masses seek to restore the disturbed balance. They give power to people who have long been subjugated. And in this sense these masses play a positive, humanistic role.

This article seeks to demonstrate that it was precisely such masses that emerged in Iran during the reign of Mohammad Mossadegh, the Iranian prime minister between 1951 and 1953, who dared to nationalize the oil industry, which was by then in the hands of Britain. Mosaddegh established himself on the historical stage in conflict with the royal court and in the context of relative liberalisation in the period following the fall of the regime of Reza Shah in 1941. Sensing that the masses were on his

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<sup>1</sup> Also see Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Naissance de la nation en Europe. Théories classiques et théorisations constructivistes*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 2010.

side, Mosaddegh used them cleverly to assert his political line to the detriment of the Shah who was seen as a puppet of the British. But in addition to defending his interests the masses are indirectly seeking to promote the economic interests of Iran's national elites, to overcome the country's subordinate position internationally (expressed in the fact that the oil industry is in foreign hands), and to make Iran more of a subject in international relations.

In order to analyze the kind of masses operating in Iran under Mosaddegh, I will use historical and literary sources, including Ahmad Mahmoud's novel *Neighbors*, which is dedicated to this period. Based on desk research (and the research approach of close reading), I will illustrate the properties of crowds during the time of Mohammad Mosaddegh. And these properties will be juxtaposed with Elias Canetti's understandings of "the crowd in change" and of crowds in general so as to highlight the positive role of the masses in Iran as the country and its people attempt to realize progressive change.

This study will use European ideas to understand a country that is geographically not European, but which has been heavily influenced by European thought and which has endured a strong Western influence throughout the twentieth century. Understanding the specific role of the masses in Iran can help to understand politics in other regions that have historically been peripheral to the center of knowledge that is Europe.

### **A review of the literature**

The role of street protest in the past half-century is a huge topic to which a short article can't do adequate justice – and I will reference only the basic texts. One of the earliest scholars of the masses, the Frenchman Gustave Le Bon, described the modern era in which democratization was underway and the people's influence in politics was growing as the era of the masses:

"The modern era is part of the critical moments during which thinking undergoes changes.

Underlying this change are two main factors. The first is the destruction of the religious, political and social views from which all the elements of our civilization derive. The second factor is the creation of completely different and new conditions of existence and thinking, achieved as a result of modern scientific and technical discoveries.

The ideas of the past, though almost destroyed, still retain their power, while those which are to replace them are still in the making; hence the modern age is a period of transition and disorder.

It would be difficult to predict what might emerge from this undeniably chaotic period. On what fundamental ideas will tomorrow's societies be built, which will follow our modernity? At the moment we could not yet say. However, we can predict from now on that in their future organization they will have to reckon with a new force, the sole power of the modern age: the power of the crowds. On the ruins of so many ideas which were once accepted as unquestionable and are now declining more and more, and of so many different governments which the revolutions have destroyed, a new power is rising which is destined to melt away all other forces. Our obsolete notions are being shaken more and more and are disappearing, and the old supports of societies are collapsing one after the other, while the power of the masses remains the only force which no one threatens with anything and whose influence is constantly increasing. The age into which we are entering will indeed be the AGE OF THE MOVES."

Le Bon remains in history as a prophet of the rise of National Socialism insofar as he regards the mobs as irrational and always in need of a leader/führer. According to Le Bon, mobs are characterized by subservience to a common idea, a sense of invincibility, loss of sense of responsibility, intolerance, susceptibility to suggestion, predisposition to impulsive action, blind following of leaders, and lack of rational reflection on their behavior.

In his book "Mass Psychology and the Analysis of the Self" Sigmund Freud acknowledges Le Bon's understanding of the irrationality of masses, their higher level of suggestibility, the contagion that masses have on the individuals who are part of them, the great extent to which individuals lose their individuality in masses. Freud, however, reads Le Bon critically and recognizes that masses could have positive manifestations as well:

"Le Bon himself is prepared to admit that the morality of the mass may under certain circumstances be higher than that of the individuals who constitute it, and that only collective units are capable of a high degree of selflessness and devotion"<sup>2</sup>

"Self-interest is very rarely a powerful motive for crowds, whereas it is almost exclusively the motive for the behavior of the isolated individual."<sup>3</sup>

Freud found other interpretations for the masses - for example, that "in fact society alone determines the standards of morality for the individual, while the individual as a rule somehow falls short of these high demands. Or that in exceptional circumstances the phenomenon of enthusiasm will manifest itself in the collective, which in the past has made possible the most magnificent mass achievements"<sup>4</sup>.

Freud then gives the example of William McDougall's book 1920 "The Group Mind" who divides the masses into the unorganized (which fit Le Bon's understanding of irrationality and impulsivity) and the highly organized. The latter have permanence in their existence as masses, they have a definite conception of "the nature, function, achievements and aspirations of the mass which exist in the individual member so that an emotional relationship with the mass as a whole arises", they enter into competition with other similar masses, they have traditions, customs and institutions which maintain the relationships between members and there is a structure which is expressed in the specialization and differentiation of individual members and their role in the mass.

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<sup>2</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Mass Psychology and Other Writings*, London: Penguin, 2004, p. 80.

<sup>3</sup> Gustave Le Bon, *Psychology of Crowds*, London: Sparkling Books, 2009, p. 44.

<sup>4</sup> Sigmund Freud, *op. cit.* p. 80

According to McDougall, when these conditions are met the psychological imperfections of masses disappear. Freud's comment is that through organization, the masses gain the properties they lack, which the individual alone possesses - permanence, self-awareness, traditions, habits, special work, and a place to occupy so as to remain individualized<sup>5</sup>.

Freud himself draws a distinction between the perishable masses of Le Bon and the masses of, for example, the French Revolution, the so-called revolutionary masses, which are persistent and obviously change history<sup>6</sup>.

It is the idea of revolutionary masses that is also found in Elias Canetti. One of the types of masses he discusses is the so-called "crowds in change". This type of masses emerge during times of significant social change. For a long time certain classes or forces have held power and have stuck their "stings" into subordinate social strata. The emergence of masses in change means that the subordinated people want to get rid of their stings. They seek social change and restoration of the disturbed balance. These people have sensed a sudden opportunity to wield power by resisting their oppressors<sup>7</sup>.

*"Change implies a stratified society. The distinction of certain classes, one of which has more rights than the others, must have existed for some time, must have been felt in the daily life of the people for a long time, before the need for change arose. The superior group had the right to issue strict orders to the inferior, either because it had come as a conqueror into the country and had imposed itself upon its inhabitants, or because the stratification was the result of internal processes"*<sup>8</sup>

Canetti explains that mass in change is a process "that encompasses a whole society, and even if there is success at the beginning, it still ends

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 82.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

<sup>7</sup> Ibrahim, Syed, *Portrayal of the Crowds in the Works of Elias Canetti*, Sankt Ingbert: Röhrig Universitätsverlag, 2016, pp. 112-113.

<sup>8</sup> Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, Pleven: Lege Artis, 2018, p. 58. Also see Sergiu Mișcoiu, *Naissance de la nation en Europe*, Paris: L'Harmattan, 2010, pp. 80-84.

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very slowly and with difficulty. As rapidly as the processes take place in the huddled mass that is on the surface, so slowly, with many convulsions, does the change take place in depth"<sup>9</sup>.

Canetti's attitude to the masses is obviously ambivalent. In his classification of masses, he also describes masses that are aggressive, uncontrollable, irrational. And he, like other writers, recognizes that through the crowd the individual succeeds in realizing something that he himself cannot. However, Canetti sees in the different types of crowds a specificity, an individuality, a logic of existence. And sometimes this logic could play a positive role in social relations. The "change" he describes in the above quote is just that - the empowerment of unprivileged people to allow a gradual, slow and painful evolution of society.

The masses in change show that society is not forever stagnant and roles within it are not eternal, just as life is about dynamism and evolution. And if the society is particularly stratified, if the divisions within it are too strict and painful, the courage for change in the subordinate social group can only come about by way of the realization of their collective interest. Individually, each has accumulated many "stings" from the dominant forces. But in the aggregate, these underprivileged people can gain the courage to claim that they too have dignity and deserve recognition.

### **The historical context in Iran in the 1950s**

The importance of the masses in Iranian and Middle Eastern politics is substantial and has been the subject of a number of studies. Suffice it to recall that the Arab Spring in Egypt in 2011 was a series of leaderless mass protests that demanded the resignation of the Egyptian president and change, just as Canetti describes the crowds of change. As for Iran during the Pahlavi dynasty, the masses and especially the masses in Tehran were an important political factor throughout the monarchical period in the twentieth century.

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 60.

"In the early years after the 1921 coup (Reza Shah comes to power following a turmoil in the first of the 20s, when he seizes power coming from the military circles), the Tehran crowd was an active political force in the life of the capital, with popular protests taking place over a myriad of petty and local grievances, as well as over issues of broader nationalist and religious significance. But it was in the political and constitutional battles of 1924-1925 that the Tehran crowd became a factor of central, and sometimes decisive, importance. The struggle for and against the republic, for example, was not decided in the Majlis, nor in the madrasas of Qom, but in the streets of the capital. Although the Majlis, the deputies, actually made the decision not to introduce the changes, they did so only because the pressure from below was stronger than that from above. The actual political victory belongs to the anti-republican Tehran crowd and acting in defence of the constitution.

Again, the mob, but this time probably stimulated by the regime... created the political conditions that allowed Reza Khan to declare martial law and thus finally crush the ability of his critics to use the weapon of popular protest on their own. The bread riots of 1925 proved to Reza Khan the necessity of going beyond Tehran to use the provincial mobs, especially those in Tabriz, to force the capital, both the population and the national political institutions, to accept the change of dynasty.

In the first half of the 1920s, both the regime and its opponents repeatedly appealed to the "street" in Tehran and tried to push through or oppose political and constitutional changes based on popular unrest. Reza Khan, relying on the army and a certain amount of support from the elite, and occasionally resorting to intimidation, initially largely avoided direct populist appeals. In 1924-1925, however, he and his henchmen were in the capital, imitated by the military authorities in the provinces, who repeatedly attempted to provoke and use popular unrest to give the



appearance of legitimacy to their actions, intimidate their opponents, and push through dubious legislation"<sup>10</sup>.

Cronin also describes the symbiosis between the press, political interests, and the impact on the poor, whose literacy level grew in the twentieth century. There is also the practice of so-called *shabnamehs* (literally "night papers"), which are printed anonymously and aim to sway public opinion in a particular direction.

After Reza Shah took power he introduced censorship and over time consolidated his power even further, turning it into a dictatorship. Resistance to this dictatorship is the subject of the novel *Her Eyes* by Bozorg Alavi, which vividly shows how social change in Iran at the time could not be achieved in a more open and transparent way, but inevitably had to use conspiracy, and that conspiracy implies a high level of organisation.

The invasion of Britain in the south and the Soviet Union in the north in 1941 led to the fall of Reza Shah's regime, after which the political game in the country changed. Britain held the refinery at Abadan (a small port in southwest Iran on the banks of the Karun River (Shatt al-Arab). The Communist Tudeh Party, which in time showed its loyalty to the Soviet Union, set up syndicates to strengthen its influence in the Abadan area in particular. In the meantime, a period of relative liberalisation reigned in politics, in which anti-colonial sentiment in the country was growing. The popular perception is that the British put the Pahlavi dynasty in power. In an attempt to channel hopes for change in Iranian politics, the figure of Mohammad Mosaddegh, a Swiss-educated Iranian aristocrat who became prime minister between 1951 and 1953, emerged.

Mosaddegh relied on the National Front party and rally democracy. In one of his conflicts with the Shah, Mosaddegh resigned, but instant mass protests left the monarch with no choice but to once again cede power to

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<sup>10</sup> Stephanie Cronin, "Popular Protest, Disorder, and Riot in Iran: The Tehran Crowd and the Rise of Riza Khan, 1921-1925", *International Review of Social History*, vol. 50, part 2, 2005, pp. 199-200.

his opponent. The emphasis that Mosaddegh placed in his political actions on relations with the people and the masses is also noted by the historian Ervand Abrahamian:

"Mosaddegh's election in May 1951 shifted the focus of attention from the Majles to the prime minister and the streets, which remained the main source of strength for the National Front. As the royalist newspaper *Etelaat* complained that Mosaddegh constantly resorted to street demonstrations to put pressure on the opposition and thus 'bring the Nath Party under his influence.' Similarly, Jamal Emami protested from the Majles rostrum:

"State politics has become street politics. It appears that this country has nothing better to do than hold street meetings. Now we have assemblies here, there and everywhere. Meetings about this, that and the other. Meetings for students, high school students, seven-year-olds and even six-year-olds. I am tired of street meetings".

Is our Prime Minister a statesman or a leader of the Mafia? What type of prime minister says, "I will talk to the people" whenever he is faced with a political issue? I have always thought this man unfit for high office. But I never imagined, even in my worst nightmares, that a seventy year old man would turn into a rebel. A man who constantly surrounds the Majles with thugs is nothing less than a public menace."<sup>11</sup>

Last but not least, the "masses" have received a positive treatment in the post-World War II Iranian political system for another reason. The Communist Party, founded in 1941, is called "Tudeh," which translated means mass. Although the Tudeh is widely regarded as pro-Soviet, while Mosaddegh is more representative of the Iranian national bourgeoisie, his rule and his struggle for the nationalization of the oil industry had the support of the communists.

The implication of the creators of Tudeh is that the people, the masses, are on the side of the progressive forces. This is also evident in the

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<sup>11</sup> Mostafa Fateh, *Panjah Saleh-i Naft-i Iran (Fifty Years of Iranian Oil)*, Tehran: Chehr Press, 1956, p. 560.

proletarian literature characteristic of the monarchist period, the tone for which was set during the First Iranian Writers' Congress, organized with the support of the Iranian-Soviet Cultural Centre in 1946. An example in this regard is the novel *Neighbors* by the socialist realist Ahmad Mahmoud, which is set during the reign of Mosaddegh and afterwards.

### **The masses in the novel *Neighbours***

*Neighbours* is a Bildungsroman, telling the coming of age of a young man from the oil refinery area of Abadan. He becomes involved with communist activists who begin using him to distribute newspapers and agitational materials. The agitation was going on at the time of Mosaddegh's struggle to nationalize the oil industry. But the security organs clearly had opposing interests to those of the Marxists. The young man was captured, tortured into confessing who his co-conspirators were, and then sentenced to prison. The period in which he is imprisoned is a school for him. But early in his initiation into the communist struggle, young Khaled witnessed rallies, gatherings of the "masses" in Abadan. It is these moments in the novel that are worth analyzing through the lens of mass theory, both to understand the merits of Canetti's theory of "masses in change" and the nature of events in Iran at the time. It seems that after Iran's underprivileged citizens had long endured the "stings" of their masters, they saw in Mosaddegh's time a historic chance to redress the balance of society and bring about social change.

*"Some of the streetlights on Hokumati Street are not working. This is the first time I see this happening. Young people stand in groups under the street poles. As they pass, I catch some of their words.*

*"This is called historical determinism."*

*From the way they look, it is obvious they are high school students.*

*"What 'historical determinism', my dear friend? They are behind all this chaos."*

*I'm slowing my pace.*

*"This policy is outdated. Gone are the days when we could be fooled into thinking this was a British policy. Now everyone is on their guard. The world has changed now."*

*One of them clears his throat and reads in a solemn tone, 'From Indonesia to Andalusia, the banner of bloody retribution is flying...'"<sup>12</sup>*

The protagonist clearly witnesses the zeitgeist - the rise of Marxism across the world after the end of World War II leads to a desire for 'retribution' which is clothed in the spirit of historical determinism i.e. predestination and inevitability. And at the same time, one can see the characteristic skepticism of Iranians and peoples of the periphery in general, who have been lied to and deceived for too long with promises of change, and this has made them skeptical of any attempts at something new. The imagery is remarkable too - how groups discussing politics a little more freely gather under the dysfunctional street poles, apparently to make them harder to identify. This is indicative of the fear their groups have of law enforcement.

The protagonist walks past the Hokumati building and sees that the newspaper vendors are becoming more numerous. These are newspapers that are sold at night - the aforementioned "shabnamehs" that are published anonymously. "Some of the sellers look like anything but newspaper sellers," Khaled commented, precisely to suggest that some sort of conspiracy is afoot. As he passes the Hokumati building, he overhears another conversation of high school students:

*"The exploiters and colonialists always dig their own graves with their own hands"*

*"You just go along and buy into these pompous phrases, but in the end you'll see that the world will be exactly the same as it always was"*

*"Pompous words, you know? Man, history has proven it."*

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<sup>12</sup> Ahmad Mahmoud, *Neighbours*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013, pp. 137-138

*"Okay, history has proven it, I admit it. But tell me, if the nationalization of oil in this country is inevitable according to history, why does it have to happen only in the South?"*

*Khaled slowed his pace to hear better.*

*"He wouldn't say that if he had a Marxist worldview"*

*The voices amplify.*

*"What do you mean? Why shouldn't oil be nationalized in the north as well? What does that have to do with a Marxist worldview?"*

The conversation concerns the political issue of Stalin's desire to obtain oil concessions in the Iranian north, which the Soviet Union temporarily occupied in the 1940s. Iranian society is obviously very divided and it is only in some small groups and on the street that people have the strength to discuss political issues. Obviously the Soviet Union has an interest in pushing back British influence in the south of the country around the Abadan refinery. But there are also critical voices of people who do not want to replace one dependency with another, to be proxies for one another.

A little later, the protagonist finds himself at a real rally.

*"The statue square fills with people. From all the surrounding streets, groups gather in the square. It's sunny. The more people cluster in the statue square, the faster the shopkeepers start closing their shops. They already know how to respond to such situations. If people bunch up like this and start clashing on the corner of the square, windows are likely to be broken.*

*Access to the White Bridge is blocked. The crowd has stopped traffic. People are blowing their car horns. There is a lot of traffic in the square. I see Shafak elbowing his way through the crowd to the entrance of the White Bridge. Behind him is a well-built, muscular worker holding a megaphone. The sound from the megaphone is amplified. Shafak speaks, "Friends, give way to the passing cars!"*

*A wave passes through the crowd at the entrance to the bridge.*

*"Friends, don't give them reasons (for their actions - apparently to interfere with the protest - ed.)"*

*People disperse from the square. Traffic slowly advances on the bridge towards Pahlavi Street. The sound of horns can still be heard here and there. Suddenly banners with slogans appear and rise above the crowd. South of the square, people give way to a large truck. It enters the middle of the square. In it is a large table, opposite which is a microphone with a long handle.*

*Unexpectedly, a middle-aged man of reddish stature jumps onto the table. Two other men pop up beside him and stand on either side of him. The middle-aged man shouts slogans. The words fly from his big mouth to the speaker. The horns are no longer audible. Even the cars have stopped on the bridge and are not moving. The middle-aged man wears an azure shirt. His hair is soft. His long hair falls over his face as he chants slogans and waves his arms.*

*There are all sorts of people in the square, all mixed up. In blue are the company employees. The railway employees are in their sunburnt faces and have muscular bodies. The textile workers have pale skin. High school students,, office workers, market traders, women, old and young.*

*The middle-aged man speaks. The subject is oil and colonialists.*

*"We want the hands of the compradors off the oil industry of our country."  
Thousands of voices rise and shout:*

*"Yes."*

*"We want bread instead of cannons"*

*"Yes"*

*I stand on the iron fence surrounding the square. Colourful banners are waving in the air. Hands become fists and rise above heads.*

*"Don't let the oil salesmen use our national treasure!"*

*"Yes."*

*Suddenly the sound of gunfire is heard. After the first sound of a bullet shot into the air, a second and third follow. The crowd disperses. The posters fall. For a moment the sky is filled with colorful pamphlets. I jump down.*

*The crowd flees to the streets. From the north street a group of policemen, batons in hand, comes towards the square. The square begins to empty. I feel trapped...*

*Everyone is running away. Some fall to the ground. Others help them up. I run with the crowd. At the end of a side street, I feel my ankle sprain. I fall sideways. Two people grab my arms and help me to stand. Then they run away."*

If we follow Canetti's typology, this quote testifies to a mass in change that becomes a mass in flight.

A mass in change because the people in the statue square have for too long endured what they call comprador elites, plundering national resources, have for too long served foreign masters according to their own understandings. This subservience has stuck a "sting" in them (in Canetti's words) and they are looking for ways to free themselves. This is done through a spirit of struggle evidenced by the raised fists.

The message 'bread instead of cannons' is also telling. The top is the great symbol of colonialism, rendered literarily by Sadegh Hedayat in his novel *The Pearl Cannon*. The cannon is a symbol of the technology that led to the subjugation of Third World peoples by Europeans. The cannon is also a phallic symbol. The multitude does not want war, does not want domination. It wants a decent life.

The author's description shows that in this crowd are the workers, the people of the people, the masses. Through protest they become aware of themselves as a political force and a community. And this is the beginning of a continuing process of redressing the balance that Canetti talks about when he describes the masses in change.

In the next moment, the mass becomes a mass in flight. There is a threat to it. Everything flees, everything is dragged away. The square quickly empties. The protagonist runs with the stream of people frantically and even gets injured. In the next moment, he is aware of himself outside

the crowd that is dispersing. He has had a kind of baptism of battle - he has felt himself part of the zeitgeist, demanding change, and now he is alone with himself again, transformed.

## **Conclusion**

The picture of the crowds and of resistance described by Ahmad Mahmoud in *Neighbors* captures perfectly the spirit of the times - of a rallying 'democracy', of an increased role for the masses in the struggle both between the Great Powers and within Iran itself to achieve its greater independence in international relations. These are masses that are on their way to becoming bolder, to becoming revolutionary. But they have only recently been together and, as can be seen, at least partly have doubts about whether the cause is genuine. Either way, the masses are creating the conditions for the Iranians of monarchical times to state their demands for change, to become aware of themselves as a political community, to claim their political interests.

In attempting to understand the role of the masses in world history and in the specific period in Iran, we have as an ally the European conceptualization of this phenomenon. And while in Europe the masses are often seen as irrational and dangerous, in Iran since Mosaddegh we seem to see masses playing a progressive social role, fully in the spirit of Canetti's "masses in change." Society cannot stagnate in timelessness. World history is constantly moving forward. And sometimes historical windows arise that allow for change.

It is also obvious that this change is well orchestrated, as the young protagonist observes. Work is being done systematically to channel the natural desire of the mass Iranian for change and justice in a direction or directions that are advantageous to one power or another. In this respect, the novel shows that Iranians have critical thought and sense that there may be some manipulation behind the organization that is unfolding. But it



also rests on the natural need of a horde with 'stings' stuck in them, to rid themselves of them.

The 1953 US-British coup among the Mosaddegh cut across these efforts to "change" the Iranian masses. The Tudeh Party and Mosaddegh supporters became persecuted. Censorship intensified. Iran proved too important to the West at the time to allow its drift towards greater independence.

The coup acted as a traumatic event. It meant new "stings" for the underprivileged Iranians, for Iranian workers and lower classes. In this difficult situation, Iranian intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s acted in opposition to their class interests. By producing socially engaged literature, these writers charted a way forward for their people to overcome the trauma of the premature interruption of the masses' struggle for change. It is this socially engaged literature that in time creates the conditions for Iranians to once again develop militancy and demand something more from their rulers. But the origins of the guerrilla struggle in the 1970s, culminating in the Islamic Revolution of 1979, must be sought in the time of Mosaddegh and the coup against him. And they are times in which the masses in Iran are in the process of change, masses that Elias Canetti viewed positively because they are masses with a sense of justice, restoring justice. And the East has a special relationship not so much with truth as with justice, with a sense of measure and fairness that allows life to flow.

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