

# POLITICS, POLEMICS AND PEDAGOGS

*A study of United States technical assistance in education to Iran, including negotiations, political considerations in Iran and the United States, programming, methods, problems, results, and evaluation*

by

Clarence Hendershot

VANTAGE PRESS

New York Washington Atlanta Hollywood

academic and rigid. Each grade had a single textbook covering all courses which the children were expected to memorize before passing on to the next grade. Teaching aids and supplemental materials were not part of the program.

It was estimated that two-thirds of the approximately 12,000 elementary school teachers had only elementary school training. The majority of those who were "trained" had taken a two-year course beyond the ninth grade, or had simply graduated from high school. Coeducation was not allowed except in the rural elementary schools where the numbers were small and few girls attended since custom did not favor education for girls. Consequently, illiteracy among village women was almost total. The literacy rate nationwide was estimated at 10 per cent. The great majority of the teachers were men.

The principal point of weakness in the educational system, observed the Overseas Consultants, was not in these observable facts, but in "its educational philosophy." It was a copy of the French system of an earlier generation and was designed to "produce a distinguished intellectual elite and to establish an instrument by which the thoughts and actions of the common people might be efficiently manipulated." The result of this philosophy was the evolution of "a core of indispensable knowledge which it was thought all citizens should possess" which was then imposed on all as the curriculum "with little or no allowance for originality or modifications to meet local requirements."<sup>2</sup>

A highly centralized administrative system logically followed.

The central Ministry controls virtually every function—finance, construction, supervision, the preparation and appointment of teachers, the examination of students, the curricula, textbooks, methods used in teaching, even the minutia of such things as library practice—with an absolute and complete authority.<sup>3</sup>

There were other factors which further complicated the problem for the newly arrived educators. The Americans had not been invited by the Ministry of Education, but by the