

Washington merry-go-round

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With LES WHITTEN

WASHINGTON — The Central Intelligence Agency has compiled a disturbing psychological profile of the shah of Iran, whom the United States is building up to be the guardian of its interests in the Persian Gulf.

This secret study portrays the shah as a brilliant but dangerous megalomaniac, who is likely to pursue his own aims in disregard of U.S. interests.

Already, he has pushed harder than any other oil potentate for stratospheric oil prices. Yet Secretary of State Henry Kissinger has overlooked the economic damage this has caused and has courted him obsequiously.

With huge arms shipments and technical aid, the United States is helping the shah transform Iran into a world power. The purpose is to assure that the fabulous oil fields of the Persian Gulf remain under friendly domination.

Yet the psychological study suggests that the shah is an uncertain ally. His dreams of glory, apparently, exceed his ability to finance them. When his oil revenues run out, in an estimated two decades, he might use his news military power to seize some neighboring fields.

All of this is strongly implied in the CIA profile, which traces the shah's psychological problems to three sources: 1. an overbearing father; 2. the humiliation of serving at first as a puppet ruler; and 3. his inability for years to produce a male heir to the Peacock Throne.

The shah's father, Reza Shah, began his career as an illiterate soldier and battered his way to the throne. Possessed of an explosive Cossack temperament, he was known to slay dogs that dared bark in his presence, to hurl offending subordinates bodily through windows and to string up enemies by their heels and kick in their teeth.

He had little patience with his son, a sickly lad given to daydreaming. One time, the old man came upon the boy standing beside a palace pool. The father asked the boy what he was doing. "Thinking," replied Shah Jr. — whereupon the senior shah uttered a roaring curse and booted his heir into the pool.

In contrast, a twin sister, Princess Ashraf, is a forceful, aggressive, vivacious woman quick to slap the face of anyone who displeases her. "It's too bad she was not the boy," the old shah used to muse.

During World War II, the elder shah demonstrated an unfortunate preference for the Nazis. This encouraged the British and Russians to occupy Iran in 1941. They deposed Reza Shah and deposited his 21-year-old son on the throne.

For the next 12 years, the young shah was no more than a figurehead. His

ministers, fearing permanent occupation by the British and Russians, invited in the Americans. U.S. officials temporarily ran the country while the shah spent his days riding horses, flying planes, speeding around in fast cars and chasing women.

But on the throne, he was a weak, retiring personality. When his appendix was removed in the early 1950s, Westerners in Tehran joked that "now the shah has no guts at all."

The shah, according to the CIA profile, never got over his lack of royal lineage and the ignominy of being a puppet monarch. His resentment toward the West gradually hardened into a bitter determination to "show them."

But he was still a weakling in the early 1950s as Premier Mohammed Mossadeq drew in power and began leading Iran on a leftward course. The shah ducked out on the showdown and chartered a plane for Rome. While he was safely ensconced in the Excelsior Hotel, the CIA rescued his throne.

The news was brought to him, according to an eyewitness account, while he was dining at the Excelsior. The shah turned pale and looked as if he would faint. "In that case," he finally murmured, "the empress and I will go home as quickly as possible." He returned 12 pounds lighter, with prematurely gray hair.

Another problem that plagued the shah for two decades was his failure to produce a son. His first marriage, to Princess Fawzia, sister of Egypt's King Farouk, was unhappy. Born into luxury, she became bored with the provincial city of Tehran and longed for the swinging social soirees of Cairo.

When no son was born, according to the CIA profile, Fawzia ridiculed and humiliated the shah by accusing him of impotence. He divorced her in 1948, after nine years of marriage.

Queen Soraya, wife No. 2, tried for seven years to produce an heir for the shah. The couple finally checked into New York's Presbyterian Medical Center for examination. They were pronounced healthy. Still no son came. In 1958, they were divorced.

The shah's long search for a son ended after he married Farah Diba, daughter of a wealthy Iranian. She gave him an heir, Crown Prince Reza.

CIA psychologists believe that all these elements — his cruel father, his years as a pawn of the West, his undistinguished lineage, his fear of impotence — contributed to an enormous inferiority complex.

Now this insecure man, showered with oil billions and bolstered by the United States, is determined to show the world, the psychologists suggest.