



ARFAʾ, ḤASAN

ARFAʾ, ḤASAN, Iranian general, born in Tiflis in 1895, the eldest son of the veteran diplomat Prince Reżā Arfaʾ (Arfaʾ-al-dawla); his mother was half-English, half-Russian. He was educated in France before joining the Istanbul Military Academy in 1912. On his arrival in Iran in early 1914 he opted not for the diplomatic corps, as his father had wished, but for a military career. He was out of Iran during the First World War, but returned soon after to join the gendarmerie and later the newly-formed army. During 1923-24 Arfaʾ met and married an English ballerina, and in 1926 was briefly appointed Military Attaché in London. After two years at the French Staff College, he commanded various regiments, acted as Commandant of the Military Academy, worked in the Army Inspectorate and accompanied Reżā Shah on his state visit to Turkey in 1934. In 1936 he became the Inspector General of Cavalry and Armored Forces, and in 1939 was promoted to brigadier general. In the post-1941 period, Arfaʾ continued to assume various important military posts, gaining further promotion, and eventually becoming the Chief of Staff in December 1944. According to his own account, pro-British forces in the country had urged the replacement of his predecessor, General Razmārā. (Arfaʾ, *Under Five Shahs*, p. 330). He remained Chief of Staff until February, 1946. Two months later he was arrested on the orders of the Prime Minister, Aḥmad Qawām, accused of having provided arms for the opponents of the Democrats of Azarbaijan. Although released in November, 1946, his military career had practically come to an end.

Arfaʾs rivalry with Razmārā constituted one of the main features of the



politics of the army's command structure in the post-1941 period. Arfa' had a predilection for forming cliques and "parties" inside and outside the army; he was intensely anti-leftist, enjoyed close relations with the British—which he prudently tried to play down—and was a keen royal nationalist. An assessment of him by the British Military Attaché, written on January 14th, 1945, (FO 371, Eastern, *Persia*, 45446), recognizes his ardent nationalist sentiments, and the fact that he was quick to see insults to Iran, infringements of its independence, and interference by foreigners—whether real or imagined—while portraying him as "a difficult man," highly suspicious, and contemptuous of some of his colleagues and superiors. Arfa' initially appeared to have some sympathy for the Moṣaddeq-led National Front, which was, inter alia, staunchly opposed to Razmārā. His inclusion as Minister of Roads and Communications in the short-lived cabinet of Ḥosayn 'Alā' (20 March-28 April 1950) was regarded as a non-provocative move vis-à-vis the National Front. His attitude to Moṣaddeq's government, however, was never favorable, and he actively sided with Zāhedī in the coup of August, 1953. In 1958 he was appointed ambassador to Turkey and in late 1961 to Pakistan. He returned to Iran in December, 1962, retiring to his long-established dairy farm in Lārak, a suburb of Tehran. He died in 1983 in Monte Carlo.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Report on Personalities in Persia, 1940, PRO: FO 371, Eastern, Persia, 24582; FO 371, 1945, Eastern, *Persia*, 45446.

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