



DOLGORUKOV MEMOIRS

DOLGORUKOV MEMOIRS, document published under the title *E'terāfāt-e sīāsī yā yāddāsthā-ye Kenyāz Dolqorūkī* (Political confessions or memoirs of Prince Dolgorukov) in the historical portion of the “Khorasan yearbook,” issued in Mašhad in 1322 Š./1943. A new edition was published in Tehran the following year, and there have been many others since. According to these memoirs, the Russian Dimitri Dolgorukov came to Persia in the 1830s, converted to Islam, learned Persian and Arabic, and even studied at Karbalā'; he then repudiated Islam, instigated the **Bāb** to put forward his claims, and subsequently assisted **Bahā'-Allāh** in Baghdad and later in Edirne and 'Akka.

A simple reading of the text of this work reveals it immediately to be a clumsy forgery, and it was denounced as such by reputable Persian academics like 'Abbās Eqbāl (*Yādgār* 5/8-9, 1328 Š./1949, p. 148) and Mojtabā Mīnovī (*Rāhnemā-ye ketāb* 6/1-2, 1342 Š./1963, p. 22). Even Sayyed Aḥmad Kasrawī, in his anti-Bahai work *Bahā'īgarī* (pp. 79-80), acknowledged that the memoirs are fraudulent. No original manuscript has ever been produced, and the work is riddled with errors and contradictions showing that its author was poorly informed about Babi and Bahai history and even about the names of Russian czars. Dimitri Ivanovich Dolgorukov was in fact a high-ranking diplomat, and at the very time that he was supposedly in Persia and conspiring with the Bāb, he was actually serving successively in the Hague, Naples, and Istanbul. Furthermore, in 1939 the Russian scholar Mikhail Ivanov published all the dispatches relating to the Babi movement that he had found in the archives of the Soviet foreign ministry (appendix), about six years before the “memoirs”



appeared. From these documents it is clear that, far from having been interested in the Babi movement, Dolgorukov had largely ignored it until 1848, when, as Russian minister to Tehran, he had requested the Persian government to remove the Báb from Mākū near the Russian border, for fear that he might stir up discontent among the Russian Muslims (Momen, pp. 72-73).

Despite all this evidence, these spurious memoirs have acquired a life of their own because of their usefulness in polemics against the Bahais. They are regularly cited in anti-Bahai literature disseminated by the Persian government and have even been translated into Arabic (as *Moḏākarāt Dālkorūkī*, Beirut, n.d.).

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