



## ESKANDARĪ, SOLAYMĀN (MOḤSEN) MĪRZĀ

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**ESKANDARĪ, SOLAYMĀN (MOḤSEN) MĪRZĀ**, constitutionalist, civil servant, statesman, and socialist leader (b. ca. 1254 Š./1875, d. 1322 Š./1944, [Figure 1](#)). Born to a Qajar family Solaymān Mīrzā came into prominence after his brother Yaḥyā Mīrzā died of wounds suffered during the bombardment of the Majles by Moḥammad-‘Alī Shah in June 1908 (Hoare, p. 141; see CONSTITUTION ii). Up until then he had worked as a civil servant in the Police Department and Customs Office and as a journalist editing *Hoqūq*. Solaymān Mīrzā soon became the leading spokesman for the Ferqa-ye demokrāt-e Īrān in the Second Majles (1909-11; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 112-13; Chaqueri, *Asnād* XIX, pp. 113-20; *Īrān-e Now*, 8 and 20 March 1911). This position went to him after Taqīzāda’s forced departure from the country. His active spokespersonship for the Ferqa-ye demokrāt and unrelenting opposition to the British to the end of his life earned him the epithet “the garrulous prince” (Avery, p. 164). He was arrested and exiled to Qom upon the disbanding of the Second Majles in December 1911 but was soon released and received an appointment in the Ministry of the Interior (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 112-13). He was elected from Isfahan to the Third Majles. After the outbreak of World War I, he joined the pro-German party and the “national government” at Kermānšāh and headed the National Defense Committee (Komīta-ye defā‘-e mellī; Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* III, p. 333). Upon the fall of Baghdad to the British, he moved to stay with the Sanjābī tribe. He was forcibly seized on charges of espionage in 1917 by British forces and exiled in 1918 to India. The Jangalī revolutionaries under



Mīrzā Kūček Khan arrested several British officials in Gilān and conditioned their release upon the liberation of Solaymān Mīrzā Eskandarī (Hoare, p. 142; Chaqueri, 1995, pp. 86-87).

Upon his return to Persia in 1921, he founded a new political party called *Ejtemā'iyūn* (Socialists) whose membership, though mainly composed of the elite, extended to a limited number of unionized “laborers” and government employees (Chaqueri, ed., *Asnād* IX, pp. 30-37; “Ejtemā'iyūn Party in Tehran” in idem, ed., *Challenging the Establishment I*; PRO, F.O. 317/9027). He was reelected to the Fourth and the Fifth Majleses. As deputy, he vehemently opposed Moḥammad Moṣaddeq (q.v.), a distant cousin of his, who briefly served as minister of finance and also of foreign affairs as well as deputy in the Majles between 1922 and 1927. Solaymān Mīrzā, who was seen as a friend of Reżā Khan Sardār-e Sepah, the future Reżā Shah (Archives Françaises, file 18, p. 136), kept in close touch with the Soviet Legation in Tehran. His appointment as Minister of Education (Wazīr-e ma'āref) in the first cabinet of Sardār-e Sepah in October 1923 (ibid., p. 108; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 112-13, Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* IV, p. 303; Makkī, II, p. 427) may have been effected under Soviet encouragement (Hoare, p. 141). Under Soviet influence, in fall 1925 he also voted for the abolition of the Qajar dynasty and the transfer of power to Reżā Khan Sardār-e Sepah (Gurko-Kriazhin, p. 33; Rastegār, p. 769).

In the Fifth Majles, he led the Socialist faction (Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* IV, p. 312). As such, he was invited to represent the Socialist party at the conference of the “League against Imperialism,” held in Brussels in February 1927. He failed to attend it because of passport difficulties. However, he was present at that organization’s council meeting in December of the same year. He traveled to Brussels after having attended, in November 1927, as official guest of the Soviet government, the tenth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution in Moscow (Chaqueri, *Asnād* VI, pp. 139-41; idem, *Victims*, chap. 8; Hoare, p. 141). During this trip to Europe, he met the young Persian communist Mortaḏā 'Alawī, who led the anti-Pahlavi campaign from 1930 to 1932, in Berlin and Marcel Cachin, the French communist leader, in Paris (Eskandarī, 1986, p. 252; idem, 1987, I, p. 11). On his way back to Persia he again stopped in Moscow and met with Soviet Foreign Ministry officials—Chicherin, Karakhan, Rothstein, and Lezhava (*Izvestia*, 19 January 1928; Archives Françaises, file 38, p. 177). The Soviet daily particularly noted Eskandarī’s anti-British positions at the Brussels’ meeting.



Upon his return to Persia from Europe, Solaymān Mīrzā was excluded by the regime from politics. He resumed political activity after the abdication of Reżā Shah when he presided over the foundation of the Tudeh party, which was to be, according to a Comintern plan proposed in December 1941 by G. Dimitrov to Joseph Stalin, a “mass, democratic” organization, with a communist nucleus guiding it. As an old, moderate democrat with wide societal connections, Solaymān Mīrzā was seen by the Soviets as “honest,” “prudent,” “popular among the intellectuals, government employees, and the urban petty bourgeoisie,” and particularly “friendly and cooperative” toward the USSR. He was thus evaluated as best suited to lead the Tudeh party. He was especially looked upon in a positive light for his endeavors to seek the “advice” of the Soviet Embassy at Tehran (Plishevskii’s “Report,” dated 11 September 1944, in Chaqueri, *Victims*, chap. 13).

In September 1941 Solaymān Mīrzā met with the Soviet army personnel occupying Persia to discuss the new situation in the country and the foundation of a new party. He told a Soviet Red Army officer that, because of the unshaken power of the Pahlavi regime after the departure of Reżā Shah, “it is absolutely clear that we, the free-thinking people, would not be able to do anything without your help. . .this historical moment we live must now be used for the improvement of the situation in Persia.” The Soviet officer replied that the situation was “most suitable for the creation of the needed party [Tudeh] and that help would be granted if his [Solaymān Mīrzā’s] work were not contrary to our interests.” (“Report of conversation with Solaymān Mīrzā,” dated 9 November 1941 in Chaqueri, *Victims*, chap. 13). Such contacts between Solaymān Mīrzā and the Soviets continued on a regular basis, according to available records, at least for another year (*ibid.*). Solaymān Mīrzā died on 17 Dey 1322 Š./7 January 1944 and was buried in Emānzāda ‘Abd-Allāh, a shrine in a suburb of Tehran.

His interest in social justice and egalitarianism was more rooted in Islam than in any influence by European thinkers of the Enlightenment or European socialism. He was a devout Muslim and made the customary pilgrimage of the pious to Mecca. His attachment to Islam was to the point that he opposed women’s membership in the Tudeh party (Ṭabarī, p. 45). Tudeh tributes, such as that by Z. Qīāmī, exaggerate the importance of Solaymān Mīrzā in Persian politics, just as British accounts underrate him (Hoare, p. 141).



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