



FARMĀNFARMĀ, 'ABD-AL-ḤOSAYN MĪRZĀ

FARMĀNFARMĀ, 'ABD-AL-ḤOSAYN MĪRZĀ (b. Tehran, 1274/1858; d. Tehran, 1318 Š./1939; [Plate I](#)), Qajar prince-governor, military commander, skillful politician, head of various ministries, and prime minister. He was the second son of the prince-governor Fīrūz Mīrzā Noṣrat-al-Dawla Farmānfarmā (q.v.), himself the sixteenth son of the crown prince 'Abbās Mīrzā by a Qajar princess (Homā Kānom, a granddaughter of Fath-'Alī Shah). After receiving a traditional education at home, 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrzā “was educated as an officer and received a fair military training in the Austrian Corps which he joined in 1880” (Churchill, p. 23). After the death of his father in 1303/1885, 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrzā assumed his father's former title of Noṣrat-al-Dawla. In 1891, as commander of the Azarbaijan troops, he received the title Sālār(-e) Laškar, and in 1892 he received the title Farmānfarmā upon his elder brother's death. In 1303/1885 he married 'Ezzat-al-Dawla, daughter of the crown prince Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrzā. She bore him six sons, four of whom reached maturity, including Fīrūz Mīrzā Noṣrat-al-Dawla (q.v.). He later contracted marriages with seven other women. He had a total of thirty-six children (twenty-four sons and twelve daughters, of whom thirty-two survived him (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 247-50, III, pp. 110-14; Farman Farmaian, pp. x-xi, 8, 38; Moṣaddeq, p. 86).

'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrzā's political career may be divided into three phases: first, the incipient period (1303-13/1885-96), when he assumed several provincial



positions under the crown prince Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrẓā; second, the period of political fortune and prosperity, from the accession of Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah in 1313/1896 to the coup of 1299/1921; and third, the period of political demise and relative hardship from 1921 until his death in 1939.

First phase (1885-96). 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrẓā began his political and administrative career in 1885 when he married the crown prince Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrẓā's daughter and was appointed as his treasurer in Tabrīz. He was also supported in the harem of the crown prince by his sister Ḥāẓrat-e 'Olyā, Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrẓā's favorite wife. In 1309/1891 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrẓā was appointed as commander of the troops of Azarbaijan. In the same year, his elder brother Solṭān 'Abd-al-Ḥamīd Mīrẓā Nāṣer-al-Dawla Farmānfarmā died, and 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrẓā inherited his commission as the governor (*wālī*) of Kermān (Wazīrī Kermānī, pp. 412-14; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 248-50; Churchill, p. 23).

Farmānfarmā's relations with the British started during his tenure as governor-general in Kermān (1309-11/1891-93 and 1312-14/1894-96). The British Consul in Kermān, Percy M. Sykes (later Sir Percy Sykes) bragged of an exceptionally warm and friendly relationship with Farmānfarmā. Sykes also reported that through Farmānfarmā and his influence a number of outstanding Anglo-Persian legal disputes as well as the demarcation of the Persian-Baluch frontier with British India were speedily and satisfactorily settled (Public Record Office, FO 65/1539, Sykes to Durand, 20 November 1896). By the time he left Kermān to join Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah's court in Tehran, the British considered Farmānfarmā one of their "two best friends in Persia" (Public Record Office, FO 65/1529, Picot's Persian News Diary, 23 November 1896).

Second phase (1896-1925). Farmānfarmā's road to political power and fortune began in 1313/1896 when his second cousin, father-in-law, and brother-in-law, the sickly forty-three year old Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Mīrẓā was crowned shah of Persia (1313-24/1896-1907). Leading the entourage of the new shah from Tabrīz (the so-called Tabrīzī faction), Farmānfarmā emerged as a formidable contender for power, opposing Mīrẓā 'Alī-Aṣḡar Khan Amīn-al-Solṭān (see ATĀBAK-E A'ZAM), Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's powerful grand vizier, who had overseen a smooth transition of power to the new monarch and who was serving as the latter's first grand vizier. Farmānfarmā's opposition was instrumental in bringing about Amīn-al-Solṭān's fall on 17 Jomādā 1314/23 November 1896 (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 250-51, 411-12, IV, p. 120; Churchill, p.



23; Farmanfarmaian, p. 54; Hedāyat, pp. 97-99).

Following the fall of Amīn-al-Solṭān, Farmānfarmā, who was appointed commander-in-chief of the army and minister of war, took over the government as a self-appointed premier and emerged as the real power behind the throne. In the words of Eḥtešām-al-Salṭana (pp. 258, 266) “he acted as the true sovereign.” This led to the formation of a coalition against him which paved the way for the premiership of Mīrzā 'Alī Khan Amīn-al-Dawla (q.v.) in Šawwāl 1314/March 1897. Farmānfarmā's influence in government affairs, however, continued until Rabī' I 1315/September 1897 when Amīn-al-Dawla persuaded the shah to dismiss Farmānfarmā and later to send him to Fārs as governor general (Mostawfī, *Šarḥ-e zendagānī* ii, pp. 10-12; Hedāyat, pp. 100-101; Ādamīyat, 1984, p. 109; Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* I, pp. 173-74). Shortly after 'Alī-Ašḡar Khan Amīn-al-Solṭān was reappointed prime minister on 25 Šafar 1316/14 July 1898, Farmānfarmā was recalled to Tehran and sent into exile. Farmānfarmā's exile represented a great victory for his powerful political enemies (Churchill, p. 23; Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 251; Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* I, p. 210).

Farmānfarmā's exile lasted four years, beginning in Egypt but mostly spent in Baghdad in Ottoman Mesopotamia. He was permitted to return to Persia after the fall of Amīn-al-Solṭān in 1321/1903. Later in the same year he was appointed governor of Kermānšāh, and in 1322/1904 Borūjerd and Lorestān were added to his domain. In 1324/1906 Farmānfarmā was sent to Kermān as governor for the second time.

At that time constitutionalist sentiments were sweeping Persia (see CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION), and Farmānfarmā, like many of his compatriots among the privileged and landed aristocracy, tried to walk a tightrope between the royalist camp and the constitutionalists (Churchill, p. 23; *Tārīk-e bīdārī*, ed. Sa'īdī Sīrjānī, I, pp. 318-19). Farmānfarmā was summoned to Tehran in Šafar 1325/March 1907 to take the post of minister of justice in the first cabinet formed under the constitutional regime. In Rajab/August of the same year Farmānfarmā, while retaining his post as minister of justice, was appointed governor-general of Azarbaijan and had to deal with an incursion of Kurdish and Ottoman expeditionary forces into Persian territory—an event not all that uncommon for the period. While showing tact and personal courage during the campaign, Farmānfarmā was forced to withdraw due to lack of logistical support. He returned to Tehran at the end of 1326/1908 (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 252; Churchill, p. 23).



In Rabī' II 1327/May 1909, nearly a year after Moḥammad-'Alī Shah's coup and bombardment of the Majles (Jomādā II 1326/July 1908), Farmānfarmā was appointed minister of the interior. Farmānfarmā's tact and pragmatic approach enabled him to weather the storm and in fact be appointed once again minister of justice in the first post-Moḥammad-'Alī Shah government a few days after the deposition of the monarch (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* II, p. 252, III, p. 441; Churchill, p. 23).

Farmānfarmā remained a highly influential and privileged figure throughout the reign of Aḥmad Shah (q.v.; 1327-44/1909-25), the last Qajar monarch, often advising the monarch. A deputy from Arāk in the Second Majles which opened in 1909, he joined the conservative E'tedāliyyūn party and received a number of cabinet appointments, heading the ministries of justice (1327/1909), the interior (1328/1910 and again in 1333/1915), and war (1328/1910). Most governments in this period were short lived, but the cabinet positions remained in the hands of a relatively small group of Qajar politicians (Bahār, I, pp. 8-9; D awlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* III, p. 325; Kadjar, p. 113; Sayfpūr Fāṭēmī, pp. 18, 94, 178, 297).

In 1330/1912 the Majles dispatched Farmānfarmā as commander-in-chief of an army to repel Abu'l-Faṭḥ Mīrzā Sālār-al-Dawla, the third son of Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah, who had laid a claim to the throne and had gathered forces in the western Persian provinces of Kurdistan and Kermānšāh. Both Ep'rem Khan (q.v.) and Reẓā Khan participated in these campaigns, which after some initial setbacks, ended in the defeat of Sālār-al-Dawla (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* I, pp. 48-50; Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yaḥyā* III, p. 210; Kasrawī, pp. 515-38).

During most of the World War I period, Farmānfarmā was closely associated with and heavily subsidized by the British, who at that time had few influential friends in high places in Tehran. Largely as a result of British pressure, Farmānfarmā was appointed minister of the interior in the short-lived governments of 'Ayn-al-Dawla and Mostawfī-al-Molk in 1915 and also prime minister for barely three months (Public Record Office, FO 371/2428, Marling to FO, 7 July 1915; L/PS 10/577, Marling to FO, 17 November 1915; FO 371/2438, Marling to FO, 24 December 1915).

In 1916 hostile and near anarchic conditions in Fārs caused the British to insist that a reluctant shah appoint Farmānfarmā as governor-general of that province (Public Record Office, FO 371/2725, Marling to FO, 10 May 1916). He remained in that capacity for four years, working closely with the British



consul-general and with his old friend Percy Sykes, then commanding the South Persia Rifles with headquarters in Shiraz.

To insure Farmānfarmā's continued support and goodwill, which was regarded as invaluable (Public Record Office, FO 371/2980, Gough to New Delhi, 12 May 1917; L/PS 10/577, Marling to FO, 16 June 1918), the British responded generously to Farmānfarmā's demands for financial support during his various periods in office. The first such payment, made to Farmānfarmā's personal bank account in London, was for £15,000 (no small sum in those days) as compensation for the plundering of his wheat granaries in November 1915 (Public Record Office, L/PS 10/577, FO to Marling, 17 November 1915). When prime minister he received payments from both the British and the Russians (Public Record Office, L/PS 10/577, Marling to FO, 10 January 1916; FO 371/2732, FO minute, 17 February 1916). During his four years in Shiraz the British government, among other payments, contributed 40,000 tomans (£6,500) monthly for the administration of the impoverished province of Fārs; on Farmānfarmā's insistence, 10,000 tomans monthly of that amount was paid directly to him (Public Record Office, L/PS 10/577, Marling to FO, 19 June 1916; FO 371/3878, Cox to FO, 2 December 1918). In 1916, in another indication of the importance of his relationship with the British government at a difficult time, he received the Knight Grand Cross of the Order of St. Michael and St. George from the British government (Ghani, p. 18n).

After the war, when the British position in Persia was quite different, the attitude of at least some British officials towards Farmānfarmā was less enthusiastic. Herman Norman of the British Legation was particularly hostile. When in 1339/1920 Farmānfarmā resigned his post as governor-general of Fārs and left the province (the office being assumed by his nephew Mosâaddeq-al-Salṭana), Norman claimed he did so because his position had become impossible owing to the "intense unpopularity" his cupidity had earned him, threatening an outbreak of popular violence. In a comment as revealing about himself as the object of his criticism, Norman described Farmānfarmā as "rapacious to a degree extraordinary even in a Persian Prince" (Public Record Office, FO 371/4927, Norman to FO, 22 September 1920).

Third phase (1921-39). Immediately after the coup d'état of 1299 Š./1921 (q.v.), Sayyed Žiā'-al-Dīn Ṭabāṭabā'ī arrested and held in custody members of the political elites of all persuasions, partly to head off political opposition and partly to extort money. The victims included Farmānfarmā and two of his



sons, Fīrūz Mīrzā Noṣrat-al-Dawla and 'Abbās Mīrzā Sālār Laškar, much to the embarrassment of British officials who had earlier given them guarantees of their personal security (Bahār I, p. 95, II, pp. 19-20; Ghani, pp. 176-77, 204-6). Reżā Khan soon released Farmānfarmā from custody (Bahār I, p. 72; Nīāzmand, pp. 97-98, 280-81).

Relations between Farmānfarmā's family and the British, whom they saw as supporting Sayyed Żīā' and the coup and thus responsible for the family's suffering, then became very strained. Farmānfarmā was one of the signatories of a manifesto in a Tehran newspaper denouncing Sayyed Żīā' as a British agent (Ghani, pp. 237-38). For its part, the British Legation went so far as to propose that the letter of protection given to Farmānfarmā during the war should be canceled (Public Record Office, FO 371/7802, Bridgeman to FO, 21 October 1921). Although Farmānfarmā eventually made some efforts to mend the relations they produced no results (Ghani, pp. 265-66).

Farmānfarmā also offered several gestures of political support and personal friendship towards Reżā Khan at critical moments in the latter's rise to power. He was vocal in his support for Reżā Khan during the latter's brief attempt at creating a republic in 1343/1924 and celebrated his coronation in 1344/1925. Perhaps uncomfortable that he had once served under Farmānfarmā's command and certainly resentful of his wealth, Reżā Khan did not reciprocate and made several scornful remarks about Farmānfarmā (Behbūdī, pp. 10, 32; Hedāyat, p. 365; Nīāzmand, pp. 388, 455; Ghani, p. 357 n. 17). He also confiscated some of Farmānfarmā's land and property. In 1308 Š./1929 he ordered the arrest of Farmānfarmā's oldest son, the powerful Noṣrat-al-Dawla, at that time the minister of finance, on charges of corruption; he was subsequently tortured and killed in prison in 1317 Š./1938. Crushed by the loss of his son, Farmānfarmā himself died not long after, in 1318 Š./1939, a few days after suffering a stroke (Farman Farmaian, pp. 47, 94, 96-97, 113-16; Fīrūz, p. 37).

An intelligent, skillful, and pragmatic aristocrat, Farmānfarmā managed to sail successfully the stormy sea of Persian politics for several decades while the entire social and political landscape was undergoing dramatic change. Like many Persian politicians of his time, he recognized the importance of power and sought powerful allies, both foreign and domestic, in order to safeguard both his personal interests and what he perceived to be those of the nation (Dawlatābādī, *Ḥayāt-e Yahyā* III, pp. 287, 309; Farmanfarmaian, p. 44).



Farmānfarmā devoted his latter years to supervising his large family and what was left of his fortune. He carefully attended to his children’s education, emphasizing a classical Persian training as well as modern education and foreign languages. This applied to his daughters as well as his sons, and women from his family were among the very first members of the social elite to appear publicly in Western dress after Reżā Shah outlawed the veil in 1313 Š./1935 (Farman Farmaian, pp. 6, 54, 55, 95; Farmanfarmaian, pp. 38, 40). At the same time, Farmānfarmā paid rigid attention to religious matters and was respectful of senior clerics and enjoyed their company. He also channeled much of his personal wealth into philanthropic activities, including funds for construction of the Kawṭariya *qanāt* to provide water for part of Tehran; the Pasteur Institute (see [Plate IIa](#), [Plate IIb](#), [Plate IIc](#)); a wing of the American Hospital in Tehran; and the park, mosque, and water reservoir for the shrine of Shah Ne‘mat-Allāh Wālī in Māhān. His talented and well-educated family, the Farmānfarmā’iāns, continued to play prominent roles in the social, intellectual, and economic affairs of Persia.

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(Cyrus Mir and EIr.)

[Plate I](#). Autographed photograph of 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrzā Farm' 155;nfarmā. Courtesy of H. Farmayan.

[Plate IIa](#), [Plate IIb](#), [Plate IIc](#). Copy of the waqf-nāma by which 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Mīrzā Farmānfarmā conveyed property and other funds for what became the Pasteur Institute in Tehran. Dated 25 Ša 91;bān 1342/31 March 1924. Courtesy of H. Farmayan.