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# FARROḴĪ YAZDĪ

**FARROḴĪ YAZDĪ, MOḤAMMAD**, (1889-1939), journalist and poet and an early advocate of socialist revolution in Persia. Farroḵī was born in Yazd, and began writing poetry while still attending a British missionary school there. Many details of his life are wrapped in anecdotes possibly made up for adulatory purposes, and towards the end of his life he himself seems to have taken delight in self-glorification. According to one well known story, on the occasion of the Persian new year celebration in 1908, he recited a poem demanding an end to the injustices of Moḥammad-ʿAlī Shah. The poem so shocked the officials gathered at the assembly that Żayḡam al-Dawla Qašqāʾī, governor of Yazd, supposedly ordered Farroḵī to be imprisoned and his lips sewn together with thread and needle (*Dīvān*, pp. 14-16). This dramatic story has since become a defining feature of Farroḵī's life and emblematic of the suppression of poetic expression in modern Persia. In fact, it may have had no basis in reality (ʿAlawī, cited in Raḥīmī, p. 69).

While still in Yazd, Farroḵī took a variety of menial jobs, including work in a textile factory and at a bakery; but by 1910, he had moved to Tehran where he began to write for various radical periodicals such as *Azādī* (q.v.). During the presence of Russian forces in Persia (1914-18) and particularly after the Bolshevik Revolution of l917, Farroḵī was an advocate of a socialist revolution for Persia. Biographers have traced his subsequent wanderings through western Persia, the Caucasus, and Iraq, where he was harassed by the British army, and his return to Persia, when he was briefly taken into Russian custody on suspicion of working for the British (*Dīvān*, p. 20; Raḥīmī, p. 154; Gheissari,

p. 37). He was also briefly jailed for his opposition to the Anglo-Persian Agreement of 1919 (q.v.).

In 1921 Farroḵī joined the Ferqa-ye ejtemāʿīyūn ("Socialist party") founded by Solaymān Mīrzā Eskandarī (q.v.; Abrahamian, p. 127). In the same year he founded the newspaper *Táūfān*, published twice a week in the first year, and three times a week subsequently (Ṣadr Hāšemī, *Jarāʾed o majallāt* III, pp. 168-84, no. 781). In spite of frequent harassment by the government, *Ṭūfān* lasted longer than any other leftist newspaper in Persia to date; the final issue came out in April 1928. Although it was suppressed repeatedly, Farroḵī always found a way around the censorship. Every time *Ṭūfān* was banned, he would publish his increasingly incendiary articles in a newspaper bearing a different name. Thus, such Tehran newspapers as *Peykār*, *Qīām,* and *Setāra-ye Šarq*, were all in a way substitutes for *Ṭūfān* (Ṣadr Hāšemī, *Jarāʾed o majallāt* III, no. 781, p. 169, Gheissari, pp. 46-7).

Toward the end of *Tṟūfān*'s publication, Farroḵī took over the publication of *Ṭūfān-e haftegī*, a weekly cultural journal founded in 1928 by Faḵr-al-Dīn Šādmān, and devoted to cultural and historical topics (Ṣadr Hāšemī, *Jarāʾed o majallāt* III, no. 782, pp. 184-86). Many prominent intellectuals of the period, including ʿAbdol-Raḥīm Ḵalḵālī, Moḥammad-Taqī Bahār (q.v.), and Aḥmad Kasrawī, were among its contributors. It also regularly featured Persian translation from Russian literature.

In 1927 the Soviet government invited him to attend the 10th anniversary celebrations of the October Revolution in Moscow. The following year, he was elected to the Seventh Majles from his native Yazd, and together with Maḥmūd-Reżā Tolūʿ, a deputy from Lāhījān, became the only members opposed to the new regime instituted by Reżā Shah (*Dīvān,* 57; Gheissari, pp. 39-40). At the end of the parliamentary term, fearing for his own safety, Farroḵī paid a second brief visit to Moscow, and eventually ended up in Berlin, where the remnants of Socialist party activists had sought refuge. Here, as the intellectual opposition to Reżā Shah began to regroup, a Persian bi-weekly called *Paykār* was established. Ṣadr Hāšemī, quoting from a newspaper report, relates an account of it whereby an Austrian named Webber (apparently Carl Wehner, of German nationality, see Chaqueri, ed. XXII, pp. 237), and Mortażā ʿAlawī, a well-known Persian dissident, are named as its owner and manager (Ṣadr Hāšemī, *Jarāʾed o majallāt* II, No. 357, pp. 90-91). In 1931, Farroḵī may have been put in charge of this opposition journal, although this as well Farroḵī's role in subsequent events remains controversial. As the journal

began to find its way to Persia, the Persian government instructed its officials in Berlin to take legal action to ban the magazine's publication. Farroḵī and his supporters were initially successful in the ensuing trial and managed to exploit the occasion for propaganda purposes against the Persian government.

Anxious to improve its relations with European governments, and with Germany in particular, the government sent court minister ʿAbd-al-Ḥosayn Teymūrtāš to Germany. He eventually persuaded the authorities there to close down *Paykār* (Abrahamian, p. 154) and, having already in the past interceded with Reżā Shah on Farroḵī's behalf, reportedly met Farroḵī again, and according to Makkī (*Dīvān*, p. 59), assured him emphatically on behalf of the shah that it would be safe for him to return to Persia.

Farroḵī went back to Persia sometime in 1932 and, for almost two years, lived the life of a free man. Finding himself, however, in a parlous financial state, he strove in vain to put his affairs in some order. In the meantime, he continued to write and circulate poems in praise of freedom and critical of the shah and his increasingly dictatorial policies. Eventually, the police authorities either instigated a civil suit or exploited an existing one in order to arrest him. In 1934 a man referred to in surviving reports only as "Reżā the Paper-Seller" brought a civil suit against Farroḵī for failing to repay a loan. Later, more serious charges were added to the bill of indictment. In 1935 Farroḵī was tried on the charge of "showing disrespect to the person of the monarch," (*Dīvān*, p. 64), and was finally sentenced to three years in jail. There are numerous stories about Farroḵī's last years in prison. In 1937 his association with the recently arrested Group of Fifty-three (q.v.) may have given him fresh courage. He is said to have defied his jailers repeatedly, spread his poems among fellow prisoners and denounced the shah openly (Ḵāmeʾī, p. 214). Eventually, Farroḵī died or was murdered in the prison hospital on 18 October 1939, at the age of fifty. Officially, malaria and nephritis were listed as the causes of his death, although it was widely believed that he was murdered by having air injected into his veins (Gheissari, p. 43).

Farroḵī was a spontaneous poet and a revolutionary molded by the ideals of the Persian Constitutional movement, and caught by the crosscurrents of Persian politics in its aftermath. It was his innate faith in the cause of liberty for Persia, rather than his grasp of history, sociology, or political science, that led him to socialism. He thus typifies a generation of Persian radicals for whom socialism and patriotism were inseparable. However, he was not a dreamer either; his patriotism was tempered by pragmatic, day to day

problems and decisions. As a poet, he was well anchored in the classical tradition and remained unaware of the aesthetic changes that were taking place in Persian literature. His *Dīvān* shows a firm allegiance to the classical genres of Persian poetry.

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