



GERMANY I. GERMAN-PERSIAN DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

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Around 1555 a man coming from Italy, who called himself the son of the “king of Persia,” turned up at the University of Wittenberg. It has been impossible, however, to establish the identity of this person because a letter of credence on behalf of the Persian written by Philipp Melanchthon is our only related source. The famous Renaissance humanist, who sent the foreigner back home, called upon all Christians to protect him on his way, especially as he was a Persian. Apart from referring to the biblical merits of Persians, Melanchthon stressed the fact that it was only thanks to Persia that the Ottoman expansion into Europe had come to a temporary stop (Brentjes). This episode clearly shows that the Holy Roman Empire had recognized very early the great power that was rising in the East as a possible ally against the Ottomans.

The first official contact between the Safavid court and the Empire was initiated by Shah Esmāʿīl I (907-30/1501-24; q.v.), who in 1523 sent a letter in Latin to Charles V exploring the possibility of coordinated military operations against the Ottomans. In 1529, Charles sent an envoy, Johann Balbi, to Persia



with a letter addressed to Shah Esmā'īl, who, however, had been dead for five years (Hinz, 1934, p. 37; Falsafī, IV, pp. 281-83).

After the war between the Habsburgs and the Ottomans had broken out again in 1593 (Nieder Korn, 1993, pp. 49-70), Rudolf II, the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, sought an alliance with Shah 'Abbās I. After other European powers had also contacted 'Abbās I, he sent a legation to Europe in 1598, which was received by Rudolf II in Prague (7 October 1600). The Persians agreed to an alliance, but still insisted that none of the allies should make peace separately with the Ottomans. Thus, in August 1602, the emperor sent out his own legation, of which, however, only one member, the Saxon noble Tectander von der Jabel, finally reached the Safavid court in 1603 (Hinz, 1935, p. 408).

Meanwhile a second envoy, Zaynal Khan Šāmlū, had reached Rudolf II (20 July 1604). He handed Rudolf a letter from Shah 'Abbās I, who by that time had already conquered the Caucasus, Azarbaijan, and Iraq, and was now urging his European ally to continue the war against their common enemy with determination (Falsafī, IV, pp. 284-89).

In mid-December 1604, a third Persian envoy, Mahdīqolī Khan Šāmlū, who had been accompanied by the returning Tectander, arrived in Prague. Rudolf II also sent a new mission to Persia in early 1606, which, albeit reduced to a few members, arrived at Shah 'Abbās I's encampment in Ardabīl in October 1609 (Hinz, 1935, pp. 408-9). Almost simultaneously another Persian envoy, 'Alīqolī Beg, reached the emperor, who, however, had meanwhile made peace with the Ottoman sultan (Treaty of Zsitva-Torok, 1606). This "treason" kept the Safavids from further common actions with the empire (Ghaffari, 1958, p. 11).

It was mainly for economic reasons that, in October 1635, Duke Friedrich II of Holstein-Gottorp sent off a legation to the Safavid court. The duke was hoping to profit substantially by the import of goods from the Middle East, which were supposed to be transported to Europe overland via Russia. The Holstein legation stayed over a year in Isfahan. It returned home to Gottorp on 8 August 1639, carrying many gifts from the shah and accompanied by a Persian legation under Emāmqolī Solṭān. However, as the Persian envoy was not entitled to enter into any negotiations (he left on 22 September 1639), the mission's aims finally failed to be achieved (Beck, pp. 60-67; Haberland, pp. 18-21).



During the following period German travelers kept turning up in Persia from time to time (Gabriel, pp. 109-200 with references to the numerous travel accounts). Their travelogues, particularly those of Engelbert Kaempfer (Hinz, 1977, pp. 6-18) and Carsten Niebuhr (Scuria, pp. 243-49), contain significant information, but it was not until the middle of the 19th century that diplomatic relations were established again.

Following Austria, which had begun to take more interest in Persia since the 1850s, the states of the German Customs Union signed a treaty of commerce and friendship with Persia (25 June 1857; Martin, p. 20). The treaty provided for the establishment of consulates in Tehran, Tabriz, and Būšehr, which were to be entrusted with jurisdiction over German subjects (a system of capitulations). In addition, the treaty contained clauses designated to encourage the development of trade relations. While a first mission of reconnaissance undertaken in this respect by the Prussian envoy Otto Blau in the summer of 1857 showed optimism (Blau, *passim*), the first Royal Prussian Legation acting in Persia from April 1860 to April 1861 (Brugsch, *passim*) was clearly pessimistic. The Prussian envoys emphasized the economic insignificance of the Persian market and pointed to its remoteness as well as the political supremacy of Persia's two neighboring great powers, namely Russia and the Ottoman Empire. Prussian-Persian relations thus experienced no intensification in the following years. In 1869-70 the Persian ambassador and the representative of the North German Confederation entered into negotiations in Constantinople about amending the 1857 treaty, which finally failed as the Persians aimed at the restriction of the capitulations in any new agreement (Rezai, pp. 18-19).

1871-1914

Bismarck's chancellorship and the era of the "free hand" (1871-1906). The establishment of diplomatic relations between the newly founded German Empire and Persia is due to the German-Persian treaty of friendship, navigation, and commerce signed in May 1873. It was ratified on the occasion of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's state visit to Berlin (31 May-8 June 1873). Persia had taken the initiative as Russia, because of the granting of the Reuter Concession, had put pressure on the shah, which the latter tried to compensate by seeking German mediation. The most important item on foreign policy in the 1873 treaty was Article XVIII, which declared amongst other things that if "Persia



becomes involved in a dispute with another power, the German Government declares itself ready to use, at the request of the Shah's Government, its good offices to aid in adjusting the dispute" (Martin, p. 22).

Despite this promising start, the Persian expectations were left unfulfilled for the time being because Persia's interest in an intensification of the relations did not tally with Bismarck's declared continental bias and his interest in good relations with Russia. Even the signing of the Double Alliance (October 1879) did not change this attitude, as was made clear to the Persians in 1880 when Germany and Austria refused their request for a formal Austro-German guarantee of Persian neutrality (Martin, pp. 28-30).

In the spring of 1885, Germany finally established a permanent legation in Tehran, but the German government, which had been entreated by a Persian special mission (Mohsen Khan) in 1885, refused to send administrative experts, military advisers, and German settlers to Persia on an official basis. Nevertheless, two retired Prussian generals went to Persia, not in an official mission but as private individuals, to serve as military instructors (Martin, pp. 30-33).

Bismarck, who significantly enough had stayed away from Berlin during the second state visit of Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah (5-13 June 1889), also constantly rejected British offers for joint German-British ventures in Persia (e.g., in late 1885 or in June 1888; Martin, pp. 33-37).

Even after Bismarck's dismissal, it took until the spring of 1898 for German-Persian relations to be given a new impetus. In May 1898, the Persian government turned to Germany with a spectacular request for a loan of 25 million marks. In order to make it more attractive for Germany to grant the loan, Persia also offered Germany the option on a concession to build a railway from Tehran to Kāneqīn. As Russia protested violently against these plans, the German government declined any official commitment but referred Persia to private German enterprises and banks, which, however, showed little interest. Thus, in 1900, Persia was obliged to turn again to Russia (Martin, pp. 69-75).

British offers to counter the increasing Russian influence by joint ventures (e.g., railway construction or loans) were again rejected by the Germans in mid-1899 and in 1900. Due to the apparently irreconcilable enmity between the "Russian bear" and the "British whale," the German government believed



in having a “free hand” and therefore showed no eagerness to get more involved in the seemingly “natural” spheres of Russian-British conflict, let alone, as Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow pointedly put it, to “pull England’s chestnuts out of the fire” in Persia (Martin, p. 80).

On the eve of the second visit to Europe by Moẓaffar-al-Dīn Shah in 1902, which was to include a trip to Berlin, Wilhelm II, who was determined not to receive the shah, stressed in categorical terms his lack of interest in Persia, with which Germany had “absolutely nothing to do” (Martin, p. 87). This attitude of the imperial government not only incurred the indignation of some interested economic circles, but was also criticized in the writings of the influential ideological protagonists of Germany’s world-wide expansion, who wanted Persia to be included in an aggressive German Middle East policy. German-Persian relations remained, however, on an insignificantly low level until the beginning of 1906.

Intensification of relations (1906–11). After Germany’s sobering diplomatic defeat at the Algeciras Conference (1906), which gave France and Spain substantial influence in Morocco, it became obvious that the concept of the “free hand” was more than questionable. The slightly increasing German engagement in Persian affairs from 1906 onwards is to be seen in this light, but it was itself once more the result of a Persian initiative.

When in late 1905 a frontier dispute with the Ottoman Empire escalated, Persia turned to Germany for mediation, referring to Article XVIII of the 1873 treaty (Martin, p. 94). After some hesitation, Germany started helping Persia in August 1906 by putting diplomatic pressure on the Ottomans. Initially the Ottomans disregarded Berlin’s admonitions, but after Germany had agreed with Russia on defining their respective Middle Eastern interests (see below) German influence weighed enough to force the Ottomans to give way. The conflict ended on 28 Du’l-qa’da 1329/21 December 1911 with a preliminary agreement on a new Persian-Ottoman boundary treaty (Martin, p. 106).

In late 1905, Persia once again turned to Germany out of commercial interest. In connection with the opening of the Persian Gulf service of the Hamburg-Amerika shipping line, the Persian government announced that Germany might be granted other economic concessions, especially those relevant to the establishment of a bank, should it ask for them. The German foreign ministry took up the idea after Persia had renewed its interest in the spring of 1906. The Deutsche Orientbank (DOB) was to carry out the project. When these plans,



which up to then had been kept secret, were announced in September 1906, a storm of protest broke out in Britain and France and especially in Russia. It blew up again in April 1907, when the DOB sent one of its experts to Persia. His report on the project's feasibility, however, turned out to be so negative that the DOB, much to the disappointment of the foreign ministry, dropped its plans (6 June 1907) even before the Majles had officially granted the controversial concession to Germany with a limited term of two years (14 July 1907). Thus the concession expired unused in July 1909, even though the foreign ministry had repeatedly exhorted the DOB to take advantage of it. In late 1909, it seemed that the bank project might at last be realized, though under modified circumstances. When Persia once again turned to Germany with a request for a considerable loan (400,000 British pounds), the Deutsche Bank was to stand creditor and therefore also considered opening a branch in Tehran. Yet this time it was the German foreign ministry that held back (Martin, pp. 106-36).

The Potsdam Agreement and its consequences (1911-14). At the beginning of 1910, Britain and Russia were putting Persia under pressure by a joint loan offer accompanied by humiliating conditions, against which Germany protested vehemently. While Britain ignored the protests, Russia signaled her willingness to Germany to renew negotiations about their respective interests in the Middle East, which had come to a standstill soon after the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 (q.v.). In view of the renewal of the negotiations in the spring of 1910, the German foreign ministry dropped the project of a German bank. The Potsdam meeting of the emperors (10 October 1910) finally smoothed the way to a Russo-German agreement (19 August 1911). In this so-called Potsdam Agreement, Germany recognized Russian supremacy in northern Persia, declaring it would not seek concessions in that region. In return, Russia declared that it would not oppose the construction of the Baghdad Railway. Furthermore, Russia agreed to build a railway from Tehran to Kāneqīn, to be connected there to a branch of the Baghdad Railway. Once established, German goods passing over this direct rail connection between Berlin and Tehran would not be subject to differential tariffs or other limitations (Martin, pp. 136-94).

Persia, which had hoped to use Germany to counterbalance the steadily increasing influence of Russia and Britain, was made painfully aware of what the agreement meant for those expectations when German diplomacy remained distressingly passive in face of the harsh measures of coercion taken



by Russia against Persia in December 1911 (e.g. the ultimatum leading to the dismissal of the American financial advisor Morgan W. Shuster, the occupation of parts of Azarbaijan and Khorasan, and the bombardment of the shrine of Imam Reżā in Mašhad; see Martin, pp. 194-96). Germany's passivity was maintained more or less up to the outbreak of World War I, despite the fact that from early 1914 onwards German diplomats and tradesmen in Persia had been questioning the value for Germany of the Potsdam Agreement in view of the rigorous semi-colonial conduct of the Russians.

WORLD WAR I

Shortly after the Ottoman Empire entered the war, Persia declared its neutrality on 12 Du'l-ḥejja 1332/1 November 1914 (Sepehr, p. 89; Olson, pp. 29-30, 39-44). In public opinion, however, Germany enjoyed a special sympathy. Taking up an Ottoman initiative in summer 1914, German officials had drawn up plans to win over the Afghan amir for an attack on India. These plans resulted in a German military mission led by Oskar Ritter von Niedermayer, which was dispatched to Kabul in September 1914. It was followed in the spring of 1915 by a small diplomatic mission under Werner Otto von Hentig. Initially, the two missions were merely to transit Persia quickly. Once there, however, some mission members became involved in relatively successful activities against the Allies in several Persian cities. Isfahan, Kermānšāh, Yazd, Hamadān, and Kermān were in the hands of pro-German groups by autumn 1915 (Gehrke, I, pp. 21-26, 38-42, 71-75, 99-122, 131-48, 158-61, 220-29; Vogel, *passim*; Hauner, p. 139; Bast, 1997, pp. 45-78). In southwest Persia, local khans, encouraged by the pre-war German consul in Būšehr, Wilhelm Wassmuss, threatened the British positions, while German agents operating from bases in Mesopotamia (Captain Klein's unit) attacked British oil installations in Kūzestān (Gehrke, I, pp. 27-28, 56-57, 91-94 [on Captain Klein] and pp. 76-77, 124-30, 156-58 [on Wassmuss]).

With these events taking place in Persia, the German government, which was also pressed by several of its political and military officials, endeavored to establish a formal alliance with Persia in the autumn of 1915. The Persian government, however, tried to play for time because the Persian politicians did not wish to commit themselves to one side too soon (Gehrke, I, pp. 196-99, 201-4; Bast, 1997, pp. 87-96). At the same time, the German foreign ministry initiated the establishment of an exile committee in Berlin (the Komīta-ye



melliūn-e Īrān o Ālmān), led by Sayyed Ḥasan Taqīzāda, which, generously financed by the Germans, organized pro-German propaganda and anti-Allied activities. It also published the Persian journal *Kāva* (Taqīzāda, pp. 181-86; Sepehr, pp. 55-57).

At the beginning of November 1915 the situation grew more tense. When Russian troops marched on Tehran, the pro-German factions started to flee the city, first for Šāh ‘Abd-al-‘Azīm (q.v.) and then for Qom. On 15 November 1915 the representatives of the Central Powers followed. They assumed that the shah and his government would join them and transfer the capital to Isfahan. Aḥmad Shah had indeed issued orders to that effect. The representatives of the Allies were nevertheless able to persuade the monarch to stay (Gehrke, I, pp. 200-207; Bast, 1997, pp. 96-101). By the spring of 1916, the allied forces, advancing from the north and the south, had managed to wipe out all the German positions in the provinces. Only a few agents, notably Wassmuss, were still holding out in the country.

After their victory at Kūt-al-‘Amāra (26 Jomādā II 1334/30 April 1916), the Ottomans were able to occupy parts of western Persia in the early summer of 1916. As a result of some efforts of consolidation already undertaken in Qom and Kermānšāh in late 1915-early 1916 various anti-Allied groups established a provisional (counter-)government in the occupied territories in July 1916. It was headed by Neẓām-al-Salṭana, who had already signed a secret alliance with Germany in December 1915 (Gehrke, I, pp. 216-17, II, pp. 334-35 [document D18]; on the genesis and the activity of the provisional government see Lustig, *passim* and Nasserī, *passim*). By late 1916, however, he was leaning more and more on Ottoman military officials, thereby snubbing the German diplomatic and military representatives accredited to his government. He established a somewhat authoritarian regime in the occupied zone, which lasted until a new Russian advance in the spring of 1917 annihilated once again all ambitions of the Central Powers in Persia (Gehrke, I, pp. 305-309; Bahār, pp. 17-22).

Nevertheless, the Russian Revolution of November 1917 dramatically changed the balance of power in the region. Thus in January 1918, the German chargé d’affaires, Rudolf Sommer, who had stayed behind in Tehran in 1915, could reopen the German legation. The new strategic situation, however, did not lead to decisive new German activities in Persia. One has to conclude that, despite partial successes, Germany’s World War I policy in Persia as a whole systematically suffered from a lack of coherence as well as from persistent



conflicts with its Ottoman ally.

1918-1945

Cautious revival (1918-26). Germany's defeat in the war marked a considerable low in its political and economic role in Persia. Great Britain tried to cement this situation by urging the Persian government to ban a number of Germans from entering Persia on the grounds of their participation in anti-Allied activity. Furthermore, Persia had tried, albeit in vain, to claim reparations from Germany (see the memorandum submitted by the Persian government to the Peace Conference on 14 February 1919 under the title "Requête adressée par le Gouvernement Persan à la Conférence des Préliminaires de Paix à Paris afin d'être admis à y participer," in the Archives of the French Foreign Ministry, série Paix, sans sous-série, microfilm no. 1597, fol. 17, and a second memorandum containing a detailed list of the Persian demands submitted to the Peace Conference on 23 March 1919 under the title "Revendications de la Perse devant la Conférence des Préliminaires de Paix à Paris," loc. cit., fol. 16). Nevertheless, interested circles in Germany strove to revive relations with Persia quickly, an aim also advocated by the Deutsch-Persische Gesellschaft that had been founded on 11 January 1918.

Bypassing the initially strong British opposition, German-Persian commercial relations were revived via a number of German-Russian joint ventures (e.g., Rustransit), which has to be seen in the context of Germany's endeavor to overcome the limitations of its own diplomatic scope by co-operating with the similarly limited Soviet Union (e.g., agreement of Rapallo, 16 April 1922, whereby both parties renounced claims to war indemnities; see, e.g., Linke).

After the improvement of Germany's relations with the Western powers following the signing of the Locarno treaties on 1 December 1925, however, British opposition could be overcome. The new German minister to Tehran, Graf Friedrich Werner von der Schulenburg (1923-31), managed to establish good and trustful relations with both the British and the Soviets.

Germany as Teymūrtāš's third power (1926-34). The unobtrusive revival of German engagement in Persia, carried out in relative harmony with Britain and the Soviet-Union, led Persian diplomats to attribute once again a special role to Germany in their thinking. The mastermind of Persia's foreign policy



during that period, Reżā Shah's minister of court, 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Teymūrtāš, counted on Germany as a mediator in his negotiations with Britain and Russia in view of a more independent position for Persia. Thus the negotiations with Germany, which culminated in a new German-Persian friendship treaty (17 February 1929, followed by an agreement on patent and brand protection on 24 February 1930), served as a kind of model for similar negotiations with Britain, which led to a new quality in Perso-British relations (e.g., the abolition of capitulations). At the same time, it was thanks to German mediation that a trade conflict between Persia and the Soviet Union, which had broken out in the spring of 1926, could be resolved. The services of Germany, a "neutral" third power that was on good terms with both Britain and the Soviet Union, also helped Persia to overcome the joint British-Soviet opposition to the Trans-Iranian Railway project, in the realization of which German firms would play a key role (Hirschfeld, pp. 21-64).

While Germany did not cease to emphasize her complete disinterest in gaining political influence, her economic role in Persia grew steadily up to 1930. In April 1928, the Persian government placed a large number of very substantial orders with various leading German firms (Siemens, Ferrostaal), and German banks were to grant an important loan to Persia (40 million *reichmarks*). In July of the same year the German firm Julius Berger, which acted as general contractor for mostly German and American firms, was commissioned to build the first section of the northern part of the Transiranian Railway. As early as in November 1927, Junkers opened the first Persian domestic air network (Hirschfeld, p. 79; Maḥbūbī Ardakānī, *Mo'assasāt II*, pp. 274-75, 340-52). German advisors held leading positions within the financial administration. Kurt Lindenblatt was employed as the head of the newly-founded National Bank of Persia (*Bānk-e mellī-e Īrān*; see BANKING IN IRAN i), which officially began to operate on 17 Šahrīvar 1307 Š./8 September 1928, while another German expert, Otto Schniewind, worked as a senior foreign advisor in the Ministry of Finance (Maḥbūbī Ardakānī, *Mo'assasāt II*, pp. 11-12, 114-15).

The outbreak of the Great Depression in 1929 brought a temporary decline of economic activity, which led to the abolition of the loan project and the cancellation of a part of Persia's important orders, but in the spring of 1930 German firms were again contracted for various large projects (especially textile and sugar plants). The supervision of the whole program of industrialization became the responsibility of the German head of the *Bānk-e mellī-e Īrān*. In its most spectacular success, the Bank-e mellī took over the



monopoly to issue bank notes from the British Imperial Bank of Persia (Bānk-e šāhī) in May 1930 (see ESKENĀS).

This climax of Germany's economic influence in Persia was at the same time the starting point of its ensuing rapid decline. The diplomatic tug of war over the bank note monopoly gave rise to the indignation of the two major powers, especially the Soviet Union, which started to view the rise of Germany's economic importance with increasing mistrust and anger. Teymūrtāš, who not only misjudged the diplomatic balance of power in the region but also the degree of Germany's willingness to support him, believed that Persian diplomacy could take advantage of this situation. Thus, instead of continuing to use prudently the diplomacy of a third power, whose significance lay in its economic strength and its good relations with both Britain and the Soviet Union, Teymūrtāš hoped to be able to increase Persia's diplomatic options by playing off Germany against the other powers. Having previously improved relations with the Soviet Union through a number of concessions, Teymūrtāš tried to employ that pattern at the end of 1931, when he provoked a test of strength with Britain over the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, a loan project, and Persia's sovereignty rights in the Persian Gulf (Hirschfeld, pp. 101-34 for the general decline of Germany's role, and pp. 119-23 for Teymūrtāš's trial of strength with the British).

Already at the beginning of 1931 the activities of Persian opposition circles in Germany, especially the publication of the socialist-inspired journal *Peykār*, had provoked diplomatic differences with Germany. Finally even the accreditation of the new German minister to Tehran, Wipert von Blücher (1931-35), was put at risk when, at the height of the *Peykār* crisis, the *Münchener Illustrierte Presse* published a sensational article (31 October 1931) that ridiculed Reżā Shah (Blücher, pp. 165-74; Hedāyat, pp. 498-99). A temporary improvement took place in the spring of 1932, after the publisher of *Peykār* had been expelled and his German supporters stood trial under the terms of a special adjustment of German law (the *Lex Peykar*; see Mahrad, 1979, pp. 340-60). Although this ease of tension was followed by a number of new lucrative orders placed with German firms, Germany was not willing to back diplomatically and financially Teymūrtāš's schemes against the British. This became quite clear when, in the autumn of 1932, Teymūrtāš tried to implement his diplomatic strategy through one last dramatic act. After having asked Britain to remove its battleship from the port of Hangām in September 1932, the Persian government finally cancelled the concession of the Anglo-



Persian Oil Company (q.v.) on 6 Āḍar 1311 Š./27 November 1932. Teymūrtāš hoped that the combination of these bold measures with the apparently friendly policies towards both Germany and the Soviet Union would eventually compel the British to make concessions. It is possible that the failure of this policy played a role in his sudden dismissal by Reżā Shah on 24 December 1932, although there are also other explanations for that move. In any case, whatever might have been the reason behind the shah's decision, Teymūrtāš's fall from grace was followed by a rapid deterioration in the political as well as the economic relations between Persia and Germany (Hirschfeld, pp. 135-41; Rezun, 1981, pp. 225 ff.; on the fall of Teymūrtāš, see also Taqīzāda, pp. 225 ff.).

Already in April 1932 Junkershad been forced to discontinue its air services. After Lindenblatt had been charged with dishonesty, he was dismissed from office and brought to trial at the end of 1933 (Golšā'īān, I, pp. 247-48; Hedāyat, pp. 497-98; Maḥbūbī Ardakānī, *Mo'assasāt* II, pp. 116-17). Horschitz-Horst, the new German head of the bank, was never able to assume the same influence as his predecessor. The Julius Berger firm was ostensibly snubbed when Persia commissioned Berger's Scandinavian competitor Kampsax to act as general contractor for the construction of the second part of the northern section of the Trans-Iranian Railway (Hedāyat, pp. 509-10).

The German lobbyist Thomas Brown, who had negotiated the substantial package of orders and the loan project in 1928, had to return home empty-handed from a mission undertaken in January 1934. Persia was now attempting to employ a multi-power concept for her industrialization program, counting on Italy as well as on smaller industrial nations such as Czechoslovakia, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden. Apart from the decline in economic relations, political relations with Germany also deteriorated further. In early 1933, another defamatory article in the German press enraged Reżā Shah again. Also, after the National Socialist takeover, there were occasional racist attacks on Persian nationals in Germany (Hirschfeld, pp. 145-41). Thus by the beginning of 1934 German-Persian relations had reached a nadir.

New revival: Germany as Persia's most important economic partner (1934-41). Adolf Hitler apparently had no special plans concerning Persia (Glaesner, pp. 408, 410; Fleury, pp. 69-73, 77-87). Nevertheless, the initiatives taken by certain leading National Socialists, who had been in contact with interested economic circles, played an important role in a new revival of German-Persian relations. In a programmatic memorandum (Fleury, pp. 75-77), Alfred Rosenberg, the



head of the National Socialist Party's Foreign Affairs Department, developed his plans for a German sphere of influence stretching over the Balkans, Turkey, and Persia up to the frontiers of India (12 May 1934). The Ministry of Propaganda (Reichsministerium für Propaganda und Volksaufklärung) had meanwhile commissioned a number of experts on oriental questions to define the future tasks of German propaganda in the Middle East including Persia (April 1934: memorandum "Raumpolitik-Kulturpolitik"; see Fleury, pp. 57-61).

The influence of these dilettantes in foreign policy on Hitler, with whom the final decision rested, may have been minimal, yet in view of Hitler's general indifference towards Middle East affairs the impetus their activities gave was of some consequence for German-Persian relations. These initiatives indeed induced the foreign ministry to reflect anew on a more active German policy towards Persia, as the professional diplomats considered the self-appointed experts of the different party institutions to be disagreeable competitors. After some initial resistance on the part of economic experts had been overcome, from late 1934 onwards the German government took measures to revive relations with Persia, which culminated in an important agreement signed in March 1935. In the same year, apparently at the suggestion of Persian diplomats posted in Berlin, Reżā Shah ordered that, from March 20 onwards, the country be called Iran instead of Persia in all international communications (Hirschfeld, p. 305; Şadīq, II, pp. 236-37).

Thanks to the agreement, Germany's role in the Persian economy again grew in importance. The visit to Persia in November 1936 of Hjalmar Schacht, head of the Reichsbank and minister of economy, reinforced this development. A series of important commissions was again given to big German firms (Demag, Ferrostaal). German firms were also to participate in a new mining project near Anārak. Even the revival of the canceled loan plans of April 1928 was considered (Hirschfeld, pp. 167-74). In April 1937, Lufthansa was authorized to include Tehran and Mašhad in its network (Rezūn, 1982, pp. 24, 26). Later in 1937, however, the growth of commercial relations slowed down slightly, while political relations were given a new impetus by the official visit to Berlin of the speaker of the Majles, Ḥasan Moḥtašem-al-Saltāna Esfandiārī (June 1937; q.v.), who had an audience with Adolf Hitler, and the visit to Persia of Reich Youth Leader Baldur von Schirach (December 1937), who reportedly carried a message from Hitler to Reżā Shah inviting him to visit Germany. The Germans also funded the publication of the nationalist paper *Īrān-e bāstān* by 'Abd-al-Raḥmān Sayf Āzād, who had previously worked for them (Rezūn, 1982,



pp. 12-13 and nn. 24, 28; Mehrad, 1983).

Nevertheless, Reżā Shah had tried to demonstrate expressly his continued “equidistance” from all foreign powers and therefore ostensibly persecuted allegedly National Socialist circles in Tehran. In addition, a number of persecuted intellectuals who had fled Germany found (temporary) refuge in Persia. In order to underline the concept of equidistance Persia was even prepared to accept a rollback of the promising commercial relations with Germany: in 1937, the Persians, much to the disgust of the Germans, once again placed substantial orders for arms with Czech rather than German firms (Hirschfeld, p. 183).

Despite these efforts, the growing commercial relations with Germany and the allegedly increasing Persian orientation towards Germany provoked Soviet indignation in 1937, which led to a serious Soviet-Persian crisis. Persia finally had to submit to Soviet pressure by taking some anti-German measures in the spring of 1938, which seriously hampered the progress of the commercial relations, because Germany reacted by drastically raising the prices for goods covered under the 1935 agreement. At the end of 1938, Persia was therefore forced to seek another arrangement with Germany. Protracted negotiations led to a new agreement (4 January 1939) and commercial relations started immediately to improve again. After the annexation of Bohemia and Moravia (spring 1939), Germany’s economic preponderance in Persia increased even further when she took over the orders that had been granted to Czech firms (Hirschfeld, pp. 200-202).

In that context, Persia initially welcomed the German-Soviet pact of August 1939, as it seemed not only to put an end to the obstructive attitude of the main opponent thus far to the flourishing German-Persian commercial relations, but also because it gave rise to the hope that Soviet transit would soon be opened for German-Persian trade. Yet by the end of 1939 no German goods had yet reached Persia via the Soviet transit routes. Radio Moscow increased its verbal attacks on Persia and Germany and turned down a Persian request for arms. Thus the satisfaction Persia had felt in view of the presumed German-Soviet alliance began to give way to a fear that Germany might have delivered Persia into the hands of her alleged Soviet ally and that Persia might be the target of a German approved Soviet attack at the latest in the spring of 1940. This assessment caused the Persian general staff at the end of January 1940 to suggest that Britain attack the presumed German-Soviet alliance in the Middle East by means of a joint preventive air-strike against the



Baku oil-installations. Britain turned down that offer, and the United States refused a Persian request for the delivery of military aircraft (Hirschfeld, pp. 228-37; Wanner, p. 135). Without British backing, and once again without hope for American support, Persia was forced to demonstrate her goodwill towards both the Soviet Union and the presumed Soviet ally, Germany.

Persian diplomats, however, believed the country's fate to be sealed definitively when Vyacheslav Molotov and Joachim von Ribbentrop met in Berlin at the end of November 1940. In his proposition of an alliance, Ribbentrop had indeed offered Persia, as well as other parts of the world, to the Soviet Union as an inducement. Nevertheless, the Soviet Union had turned down the proposal, and Hitler subsequently ordered the preparation of an attack on the Soviet Union (Operation Barbarossa). The Persians, however, who had no way of knowing about the results of the Molotov-von Ribbentrop meeting, were almost hourly expecting a Soviet invasion and sought salvation by vociferously emphasizing Persia's neutrality, while at the same time discreetly approaching the British. Persia accompanied this precautionary approach by a series of more or less superficial, yet publicly appealing, anti-Soviet/German measures (e.g., refusing to issue visas to a number of German nationals, expelling some German and Soviet citizens on the charge of espionage, banning the screening of the German propaganda film "Victory in the West," and categorically rejecting the German demands to support the anti-British rebellion in southern Iraq), which slightly clouded German-Persian relations in the spring of 1941 (Hirschfeld, pp. 260-66. esp. pp. 260, and 263 on the overtures to Britain; see also Wanner, p. 136). The German attack on the Soviet Union (22 June 1941) was enthusiastically welcomed by Persia, presumably freeing the country from the sword of Damocles of a Soviet invasion (see, e.g., Golšā'īān, I, p. 416). As a result of the new power configuration, German-Persian relations improved substantially once again. It did not take long, however, for Persia to be stripped of its illusions. Persia's admittedly intensive relations with Germany, including the economic ones, scarcely represented a real danger to the allies, yet for the British-Soviet alliance they served as a perfect pretext to justify the occupation of the country.

It is true that since mid-June 1941 there had been German plans which aimed at India via Persia, to be carried out after a successful completion of Operation Barbarossa. The reconnaissance missions to prepare for the realization of those plans were scheduled for no earlier than the end of August 1941.



Therefore, when a first joint Soviet-British request asked Persia to expel all German nationals immediately (28 Tīr 1320 Š./19 July 1941), the Germans in Persia, 690 individuals according to the Persian government (Šadīq, III, pp. 12-13), were not yet posing a real threat to the Allies. A number of Germans were indeed involved in intelligence and propaganda, but they were working for rival German institutions, which often enough pursued diverging or even contrary aims. Thus it is impossible to speak of a systematic development of a large-scale German espionage and subversion network in Persia (Wanner, pp. 135-36, based on Soviet authors). Furthermore, there has been no proof up to now of the presumed German preparations for an anti-Allied coup d'état by leading officers close to the crown prince (Azghandi, pp. 208-9).

On 29 July 1941, Reżā Shah rejected the Allied request to expel the Germans. In view of the uncertainty as to the outcome of the war, the Shah did not want to break with Germany. Furthermore, he assumed that the Soviets would be so tied up on their western front by the German invasion that they would not be able to carry out a military action against Persia. The German strategists shared Reżā Shah's misjudgment; they believed that a Soviet military operation against Persia was impossible before October 1941 and encouraged Reżā Shah (personal message of Hitler on 18 August 1941), who had not modified his unyielding attitude even after the Allies had unequivocally renewed their request on 16 August 1941 (Glaesner, p. 411; Wanner, p. 137). Reżā Šāh realized too late the seriousness of the situation. Hope for a mediation by the United States proved once again in vain, because the Anglo-Soviet measures had already been co-ordinated with the Americans at the Atlantic Conference (9-12 August 1941; Golšā'īān, I, pp. 453-61, 463-75, 478-81, 507-8; Wilber, pp. 189-208). On 23 August 1941, Persia ordered all Germans to leave the country, but it was much too late to prevent the Anglo-Soviet invasion (3 Šahrivar 1320 Š./25 August 1941).

After the Allies had completed their occupation of the country, they forced Persia to break off diplomatic relations with Germany. Four days before the legation and the majority of the German community could leave the country (17 September 1941) the German minister in Tehran had been forced to hand over to the Allies 241 able-bodied German men to be interned.

September 1941-May 1945. On 29 January 1942, Persia signed a treaty of alliance with Britain and the Soviet Union, which was intended to legitimize the Allied occupation. It was, however, not until 9 September 1943 that Persia declared war on Germany. In-between there were still informal German-



Persian contacts through Persian diplomats in Switzerland (Madani, pp. 487, 491-95).

After the initial German plans of June 1941 had become obsolete, the German military command planned to instigate an anti-Allied revolt in the country in order to disrupt or, in the best case, to cut off supplies to the Soviet Union passing through Persia. In accordance with these plans, German agents worked successfully with the Qašqā'īs in southwest Persia, but their revolt ended in the spring of 1944 with an arrangement they made with the central government. Some Persian exile groups also co-operated with different German services or pretended to be able to carry out anti-Allied operations in Persia. Most of these activities, however, failed due to a lack of co-ordination and the rivalry existing between the various German intelligence, military, and political authorities.

1945-1998

Western zones and the Federal Republic of Germany. After the end of the war, West German-Persian commercial relations recovered quickly. Already on 1 June 1949, Persia and the allied military administration of the Western zones signed a new trade and clearing agreement on behalf of the Germans. On 2 October 1950, a trade agreement between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and Persia followed. A clearing agreement completed the arrangement on 3 June 1952. The result was once again a notable increase of German exports to Persia, albeit on a rather modest scale. The increasing trade paved the way for the re-establishment of diplomatic relations in October 1953. On 4 November 1954, the mutual relations reached a new dimension with the formal renewal of the pre-war treaties and the signing of an agreement on economic-technical co-operation. The revival of the mutual relations culminated in the visit of the shah to Germany at the end of February 1955 (Ansari, pp. 36-42; Mahrads, 1985, *passim*).

Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's visit to Tehran (March-April 1957) was greeted with some reserve by some of the Western powers, especially France. There had been rumors that Germany might go into a large-scale exploitation of newly discovered and supposedly extremely rich oil fields just south of Tehran, a perspective which was anxiously perceived in the West as the recurrence of an allegedly insatiable German *Drang nach Osten*. Therefore the



German government played down this aspect of the visit; the rather vague oil plans were soon dropped. As a result of Adenauer's visit, Persia and the FRG agreed on the completely free exchange of goods without any further enabling regulations (31 March 1957), which led to a new growth of German exports to Persia.

In February 1962, the Persian prime minister 'Alī Amīnī paid an official visit to Germany, during which he sought contact with the industrialists of North Rhine-Westphalia after the signing of a complex agreement on capital aid on 15 August 1961 had given a further impetus to the development of commercial relations (Ansari, p. 61). Federal President Heinrich Lübke's state visit to Persia in October 1963 must be viewed in the context of a series of pointed visits by the heads of important Western states following the launching on 6 Bahman 1342/26 January 1963 of Moḥammad-Rezā Shah's ambitious program of modernization, known as the White Revolution (*Enqelāb-e safīd*).

In mid-May 1965 West Germany's close contacts with Israel severely damaged its relations with the Arab world; thus, Persia's political significance as an important partner of West Germany in the Middle East grew substantially. Co-operation now started to stretch into the military field, and after the question of Persian debts to German firms dating back to the pre-war era were resolved by protracted negotiations (summer 1963), Persia and West Germany signed a new agreement on 11 November 1965 regarding the promotion of investments (Poller, p. 17). The second state visit of the shah to West Germany (May-June 1967) illustrated perfectly the intensification of the bilateral relations.

In the first years of the government of the social-democratic-liberal coalition (1969-82), economic relations in particular developed rapidly (amount of German exports to Persia in 1972: 1,300,000,000 DM, 1976: 5,700,000,000 DM; Poller, p. 36). After the first oil crisis (1973), Persia started seriously to consider alternatives to oil exports and therefore sought more West German direct investments and technology transfer, as well as German mediation concerning Persia's problematic commercial relations with the European Economic Community (Poller, p. 38). In this context, political relations remained excellent, even though Hans-Dietrich Genscher, the foreign minister from 1974 to 1992, claims to have deliberately exercised a certain reserve vis-à-vis Persia as he had been conscious of the fragility of the shah's regime (Genscher, p. 409). Whether that is true or not, it is a fact that after the Revolution of 1978-79, Genscher, who had never visited Persia as foreign minister when the shah was in power, contributed to the maintenance of relatively good mutual



relations. In September 1980, a Persian-American compromise to end the hostage crisis, mediated by West Germany at the request of the Persians, failed only at the very last minute, although all details had already been settled (Genscher, pp. 409-13). Furthermore, due to the relatively good relations between West Germany and Persia in that period, which are also illustrated by the frequent meetings of their respective foreign ministers, West Germany, a non-permanent member of the United Nations' Security Council in 1987, played a significant part in the arrangement of the cease-fire between Persia and Iraq in July 1988 (Genscher, pp. 547-49). After the Persian Gulf War of 1991, Germany provided Persia with logistical support in coping with the stream of Kurdish refugees from Iraq. A series of visits to Tehran by several German ministers in 1991 and 1992 contributed to the intensification of relations.

The cultivation of the so called "critical dialogue" with Persia, a policy which more than once incurred the displeasure of the United States, bore fruit in regard to humanitarian issues (e.g., the Persian mediation in the freeing of German hostages in Lebanon in 1987 and 1992). It had also a positive effect on German exports to Persia, which, however, suffered a bigger setback due to the depression of the Persian economy after 1993 (*Nahostjahrbuch*, 1993, pp. 13-14). Nevertheless Germany's relatively good relations with the Islamic Republic have been overshadowed from time to time by crises resulting from the particular orientation of the latter's political system. Thus, for example, in February 1987 Persia closed the Goethe Institute (Anjoman-e rawābeṭ-e farhangī-e Īrān o Ālmān) in Tehran and suspended the cultural agreement because of a satire of Ayatollah Khomeynī that had appeared on German television. Another crisis arose over Khomeynī's *fatwā* (q.v.) against the British author Salman Rushdie in 1989. Another crisis of this kind (April 1997-November 1997), which once more caused a common European reaction within the framework of the European Union, resulted from the accusation of "state terrorism" against the leading politicians of the Islamic Republic in the verdict of a Berlin court in connection with the assassination of four Kurdish politicians in exile in Berlin on 17 September 1992 (*Nahost-Jahrbuch*, 1993, pp. 13-14).

THE GDR AND PERSIA, 1972-90

German Democratic Republic (East Germany). The establishment of diplomatic



relations between Persia and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) at the beginning of 1973 occurred in the context of the world-wide diplomatic recognition of the GDR, which started after the two German states had signed the so-called *Grundlagenvertrag* (basic treaty) in 1972. The GDR's interest in establishing diplomatic relations with Persia derived from its goal of gaining diplomatic recognition by as many states as possible in order to counteract the West German claim to sole representation. Persia, in contrast, was striving to gain profile as an important, independent, regional power hoping for good relations with the Soviet Union and the whole Eastern bloc. Because of their mutual political interests, Persia and the GDR were able to bridge the delicate matter of the fact that GDR had provided a haven for the members of the banned communist party of Persia (Tūda). Furthermore, the GDR withdrew its support for the Iraqi position concerning the frontier on the Arvandrud /Šaṭṭ-al-ʿArab, which dated from the late 1960s when the GDR had been courting Iraq.

In March 1975, Persia and the GDR signed a trade agreement and established a joint economic commission, which met regularly at the ministerial level. The rivalry between the two German states offered Persia a particularly attractive opportunity to exercise pressure on her Western trade partners by threatening to turn to Eastern bloc countries in case the Westerners were unwilling to co-operate. The Soviet-built steelworks in Isfahan, which had been constructed completely with GDR equipment, proved the relevance of such alternatives. Generally, especially on the part of the GDR, which was eager for visible successes in foreign policy, political considerations determined mutual relations in this period. Thus, in November 1975, the GDR's prime minister, Horst Sindermann, paid an official visit to his Persian counterpart Amīr ʿAbbās Hoveydā. The two states signed a cultural agreement and another on scientific-technical co-operation. Moreover, Sindermann delivered an invitation for the shah to visit the GDR. Nevertheless, at the end of February 1978, left-wing opposition Persian exiles, who had come over from West Berlin, occupied and devastated the Persian embassy in East Berlin. This incident caused a severe diplomatic crisis. In a special mission to Tehran at the beginning of April 1978, the GDR's foreign minister, however, managed to settle the crisis, and the shah's visit to the GDR was scheduled for the autumn of the same year (information furnished by W. Konschel in an interview on 18 February 1999).

In the summer of 1978, however, the Persian domestic situation was in turmoil



and the officials of the GDR were becoming doubtful whether the shah's visit would still be appropriate. In late summer, after the GDR had sent the deputy prime minister to Persia in order to clarify the situation, the shah canceled the planned visit, to the great relief of GDR officials. After February 1979, the fact that the shah's visit had not taken place indeed had a positive effect on the GDR's standing with the new Persian government.

At least up to 1987 (that is, long after the suppression of the Tūda party by the new regime in 1983), the GDR's official statements continued to praise the "anti-monarchical" and above all "anti-imperialistic" people's revolution in Persia, yet it was considered an incomplete revolution because it had failed to overcome the capitalist system (e.g., Fürtig, 1987, p. 156). The official comments also continued to express the hope that revolutionary Persia would join a world-wide coalition struggling to "overcome underdevelopment and to work for social progress" (Barthel, 1987, p. 476)

Nevertheless, the hopes for a large-scale expansion of trade played a far more important role in the consideration of the GDR's foreign policy-makers than ideological considerations. The visit to the GDR by Persia's deputy prime minister, 'Abd-Allāh Jāfer-'Alī (Ja'far-'Alī) Jāsebī in February 1982 and his negotiations with the GDR's chief economic administrator, Günter Mittag, must be seen in this context. The most important result of these talks was a clearing agreement (18 March 1982) based on the Persian rial (information furnished by W. Konschel in an interview on 18 February 1999).

GDR firms delivered, among other items, military lorries and transformers, and they modernized the Isfahan steel works. In exchange, the GDR was able to purchase oil at fixed rial-prices. The GDR then proceeded to resell this oil to countries like Yemen or Pakistan at world market prices in order to obtain desperately needed hard currency (ibid.). The clearing agreement led to a series of mutual visits of ministers in the following years as well as to the revival of the joint economic commission in December 1982.

The visit of Persia's prime minister Mīr Ḥosayn Mūsāwī to the GDR (October 1986) was a visible highlight in mutual relations. Mūsāwī held talks with the GDR's leaders, particularly in regard to expanding trade relations. Yet economic relations failed to achieve any substantial, sustainable expansion. After the promising start at the beginning of the 1980s and until its own demise in 1990, the GDR failed to acquire the large-scale trade relations with Persia for which it had hoped and which had once seemed to be attainable.



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