



GOLŠĀ'ĪĀN, 'ABBĀSQOLI

GOLŠĀ'ĪĀN, 'ABBĀSQOLI (b. 1281 Š./1902; d. 1369 Š./1990; [Figure 1](#)), civil servant, minister in various cabinets, and governor-general of major provinces in the Pahlavi period. He was born in Tehran into a family connected to the Qajars through blood and service. On the paternal side he was a descendant of the crown prince 'Abbās Mirzā (q.v.), and his mother was the daughter of the chief telegraph operator at the Qajar court. 'Abbāsqoli was the fifth child in a family of seven children and was only five when his father died. There was, as a consequence, a sharp decline in the family's financial fortunes. In his own words, much of his "childhood and youth were spent in misery and poverty" (Golšā'iān, p. 1161).

After private schooling at home, Golšā'iān studied at the French-run Alliance Française and at the Dār al-fonun (q.v.; Golšā'iān, pp. 31-33). In 1920, he enrolled in the new law school created by the Ministry of Justice ('Adliya). After completing the required courses in two years, he was employed at the same ministry. There, he soon became a protégé of 'Ali-Akbar Dāvar (q.v.). Another strong early influence on him was Ġolām-Ḥosayn Darviš Khan (q.v.), who taught him to play the *tār* and who became, in Golšā'iān's own words, "like a real father" to him (Golšā'iān, p. 332). It was at Darviš Khan's behest that in 1924 Golšā'iān joined Anjoman-e oḳowwat (q.v.), a Sufi association. In his retirement he found much solace in music and advocated the promotion of authentic classical Persian music (Šāne'i, p. 311).

Golšā'iān rose rapidly in the ranks of the new secular bureaucracy in the 1920s, mainly due to his own disciplined hard work and the backing of Dāvar,



who is described at length and with great affection in Golšā'īān's own memoirs. At the Ministry of Justice, Golšā'īān first served as a judge and then as Tehran's chief prosecutor. It was in that capacity that he handled the case of the murder of 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Teymurtāš in prison and wrote the official report on his death. After a while, Dāvar arranged for his transfer to the Ministry of Finance, where he became the acting minister in May 1941. His early success in the job ensured that his temporary appointment was soon made permanent. In the following decades, he headed the Ministry of Finance (Wezārat-e dārā'i), the Ministry of Commerce and National Economy (Wezārat-e bāzargāni wa eqtešād-e melli), and the Ministry of Justice (Wezārat-e dād-gostari). He also served as mayor of Tehran and governor of the provinces of Khorasan, Fārs, and Azarbaijan. He was chosen as a royal appointee to the Senate (*senātor-e entešābi*) from Tehran by the shah from 1957 to 1961. He retired from public life in 1961.

Golšā'īān was in the cabinet during the occupation of Persia by the Allies. In the short interregnum, with Rezā Shah on the way to exile and his young son not yet established in power, the cabinet, and Golšā'īān as an influential member of it, played a crucial role in facilitating a more or less peaceful transition of power. His first-hand account of these developments and his descriptions of behind-the-scene negotiations between the Persian government of Moḥammad-'Ali Foruḡi (q.v.) and the British and Soviet embassies form an important part of his memoirs.

It was as minister of finance that he signed, on behalf of the Persian government, an agreement which was to haunt him for the rest of his life. With the rise of nationalism in post-war Persia, the controversial 1933 oil agreement between Persia and Britain became the subject of renewed debate. The Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (see [ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY](#)) sent Neville Gass in 1948 and again in 1949 to renegotiate the terms of that deal. The terms that were eventually agreed upon, on 17 July 1949, became known as the Gass-Golšā'īān Agreement or Supplemental Oil Agreement (Lāyeḡa-ye elḡāqi-e naft). According to Golšā'īān, it would have raised the Persian share of the royalties to its highest level ever. Other sources had estimated that the Persian share would have risen from twenty-two cents to thirty-three cents a barrel, and that had the agreement been ratified an additional revenue of 49 million would have been gained by Persia through 1951 (United States Department of State, pp. 496-97). The chairman of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, William Fraser, reputedly a tough negotiator, claimed at the time



that the Supplemental Agreement was the best deal hitherto offered to any Middle Eastern country. But many of the Persian officials did not share this view. A special twenty-man commission of the Majles, chaired by Moḥammad Moṣaddeq and empowered with the supervision of all oil negotiations, voted on 25 November 1950 to reject the Gass-Golšā'iān Agreement (Mowahḥed, pp. 75-113). The press coverage of its deliberations, as well as the claims by its detractors, made the agreement go down in history as an act of infamy and Golšā'iān's role as a betrayal of national interests. He was, on the other hand, firmly convinced that the agreement was a prudent patriotic act even more beneficial to Persia than Moṣaddeq's move to nationalize Persian oil (Golšā'iān, pp. 799-810).

Towards the end of this first period, in 1949, there were rumors that Golšā'iān would become the next prime minister. In his own mind, his unwillingness to heed the demands of the British government, particularly in the case of determining the rate of exchange between the pound sterling and the Persian rial when he was a finance minister, was the decisive factor in preventing him from attaining this office.

The second phase of Golšā'iān's political life covered the 1950s and brought wide oscillations in his career. By the mid-1950s, he was back as a minister of justice. Towards the end of the decade, there were again rumors of his imminent appointment as prime minister. He himself claimed that his acceptance speech had already been approved by the shah. The appointment never materialized. This time, it was his unwillingness to promise full cooperation to the Americans that he thought had barred his way to the post (Golšā'iān, pp. 822-23).

In the third and last stage of his career, he retired from all governmental jobs, except for membership of the board of directors of the National Bank (*Bānk-e melli-e Irān*). He practiced law and occasionally arbitrated in judicial cases. It was at this stage that he grew increasingly disillusioned with the shah and his leadership. Golšā'iān's memoirs contain some sharp comments on the character of Moḥammad-Rezā Shah, depicting him as weak, vacillating, and prone to gossip and sycophancy (pp. 1131-33). He also had strong words of admonition for the Islamic Revolution and lamented the bloody work of the revolutionary tribunals.

Character and writings. Golšā'iān was a hard-working man, taciturn and honest. There was a quality of intractability about him that could have easily



been the result of his early training and work as a judge. The sudden poverty of his childhood had left him an embittered man, creating in him “a deep sense of cynicism towards everything and everybody” (Golšā'īān, p. 35). He was nevertheless loyal to his friends and mentors. In the last years of his life, the tragic loss of his daughter in 1974, as well as the hardships that came later with the rise of the Islamic Revolution, induced a state of despondent melancholy. “Every day and night,” he wrote late in his memoir of those years, “I pray to God to bring about my speedy death and end my agonies” (Golšā'īān, p. 1176). His memoirs, an agonizingly uneven and repetitive narrative, contain nuggets of insight and information hidden amongst voluminous digressions.

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