



HAAS, WILLIAM S.

HAAS, WILLIAM S. (also Wilhelm, Willy; b. Nuremberg, Germany, 13 July 1883; d. New York, 3 January 1956), German-born Iranist, advisor to the Iranian ministry of education and a pioneer of Iranian studies in the United States. Haas studied in Munich, Berlin, and Vienna, receiving his Dr. Phil. from the University of Munich in 1910, with a dissertation entitled *Über Echtheit und Unechtheit von Gefühlen* (Behn, II, p. 2).

Before World War I Haas traveled in the Middle East, and during the war he worked at the Bureau of Islamic and Indian Affairs at the German Foreign Office in Berlin (Obituary in *New York Times*, 4 January 1956). This was the same office that had recruited Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizādeh at that time to organize propaganda efforts in support of the Ottoman-German Alliance (Taqizādeh, pp. 181-88, 480-84; see [KĀVA](#)). Years after the war, when Haas fled Hitler's Germany to find succor in Iran, he may have benefited from Taqizādeh's advocacy in finding employment with the Iranian government. Be that as it may, Haas served as an advisor (*mostašār*) to the Iranian Ministry of Education, 1934-39. He may have offered courses on Western philosophy at the Teacher's Training College (*Dānešsarā-ye 'āli*; see [EDUCATION xviii. TEACHERS'-TRAINING SCHOOLS](#)) and at the newly founded [Faculty of Letters and Humanities](#) at the University of Tehran.

With the outbreak of World War II, Haas migrated to the United States and became a naturalized citizen. For a year he taught at the University of Denver (1941-42). Then, from 1943 to 1948 he participated in teaching area studies courses to military servicemen and intelligence agents at the School for



Iranian Studies that had been established in affiliation with the [Asia Institute](#) in New York City. Meanwhile, Haas also prepared reports and analyses on Iran and Morocco for the Office of Special Services and the Office of War Information (Obituary). His book, *Iran* (first published 1946) was one of the earliest of its kind in English, providing a timely, fair, and information-packed resource on the country. At the reception that President Dwight Eisenhower held in honor of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi's visit to Columbia University on 19 December 1949, Haas was presented as the leading force behind preparing the pedagogical curriculum at the university's soon-to-be-established Center for Iranian Studies ("Columbia"; *Noṭqhā*, p. 92).

Haas was a prolific author, and his experience in teaching philosophy and government at the University of Cologne and the Academy of Political Science in Berlin during the years of the Weimar Republic had nurtured in him a strong proclivity toward making philosophical generalizations. The principal thesis that Haas elaborated, most fully in his posthumously published *The Destiny of the Mind*, was that Western and Eastern mind-structures represent two radically different modes of consciousness. The East-West dichotomy that Haas stressed became a tenacious point of reference in intellectual debates in Iran.

Haas never married. He died of a heart attack in his home, 19 East 86th Street, New York City, and was buried at the Woodlawn cemetery in the Bronx, New York City.

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(Hossein Kamaly)