



Opinion

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The Notes of the Persian Shah's Tutor 1907-1914



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Opinion

"The Notes of the Persian Shah's Tutor", preserved at the Archives of the K Kekelidze Institute of manuscripts, in Tbilisi, were written by the former Russian Intelligence officer, Staff-Captain Konstantin Nikolaevich Smirnov (1878-1937), who was assigned by the Russian Ministry of War, in 1907 to occupy the post of a tutor for the Qajar Crown Prince Soltan Ahmad Mirza (since 1909 the Shah of Iran) in Tehran.

During his tenure in Tehran (1907-1914), Smirnov was at the disposal of the Russian Envoy (NG Hartwig, afterwards SA Poklevski-Kozell and IYa Korostovetz) who was his immediate superior. Thanks to his service at the palace of Mohammad Ali Shah (1907-1909) and afterwards of Soltan Ahmad Shah (1909-1925), he was well aware of the internal life of Qajars' Court, the Constitutional movement, Russian Imperial policy in Iran, as well as of Anglo-Russian controversial relations in that country.

The Smirnov's "Notes" are one of the best unpublished Russian primary sources on the Russian-Iranian relations during 1907-1914. It contains a rare and objectively displayed material which sheds light on the characteristic features of the Russian policy in Iran before and after the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. The "Notes" provide us with many previously unknown and rare information, and facts which one couldn't find in any kind of an official document dated by that period.

The "Notes" have an Introduction, containing description of the life and activities of KN Smirnov, as well as studying of his personal archives and "The Notes of the Persian Shah's Tutor" particularly, prepared and edited by us, and published in Russian, in 2002, in Israel. "The Notes" are supplied by the "Appendix", which contains many unknown and unpublished interesting documents, such as memorandums and reports, translation of the Persian official notes, official testimonials of the Crown Prince and other Qajar princes, annual and secret reports

written by Smirnov and destined for the Russian Diplomatic Mission in Tehran. Deserve our attention a copy of the telegram of the Russian Tsar Nicolai II delivered to Mohammad Ali Shah, the hand-written letters of Mohammad Ali Shah to Captain Smirnov, composed in Persian, the original letters of Vladimir Minorsky, afterwards a famous Russian Orientalist, addressed to K.Smirnov and so forth. It should be mentioned that the "Appendix" includes a very significant private letter of the Russian Envoy in Iran NG Hartwig to Smirnov. The editor found this letter during his study of the Smirnov's personal archives. The book is illustrated by a number of unique and unpublished photos, such as of the Staff of the Russian Diplomatic Mission in 1907, the photo of the Commander of the Expeditionary Cavalry Corps in Iran, General NN Baratov and the Staff-Captain Smirnov in Tehran, in 1916, extracted by the editor from the Smirnov's personal archives.

There couldn't be any doubt that "The Notes of the Persian Shah's Tutor" are one of the most invaluable sources to study the problems of social and political history of Qajar Iran, and Russian-Iranian, as well as Anglo-Russian relations in Iran in the abovementioned period. "The Notes" also contain interesting information about the policy of Britain, Germany and Turkey in Iran, and many facts about various Iranian political figures, courtiers, as well as the activities of the leaders of the Constitutional movement, such as Sattar Khan and Bagir Khan, Ephrem Khan, Caucasian revolutionaries and well-known F Panov. Also deserves our attention the information about the notorious SM Shapshal and other supporters of Mohammad Ali Shah's regime.

The presented "Notes" would be useful for the researchers, engaged in the field of Iranian Studies, Middle Eastern History, Russian and Slavic Studies, the history of the Russian diplomacy in Iran, as well as for the students as an auxiliary archival source and would be also interesting, I hope, for the readers.



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