

ABDULLAH ENTEZAM

Sir Dennis Wright writes in London Times:

Abdullah Entezam who died last month in Tehran, aged 87, was Iranian Minister for Foreign Affairs from 1953-56 and Managing Director of the National Iranian oil Co. from 1957-63.

As Foreign Minister in General Zahedi's government after the fall of Dr. Mossadegh in August 1953, Entezam played a key role in the delicate negotiations that led to the resumption of diplomatic relations between Britain and Iran, broken in October 1952, as a result of Mossadegh's nationalization of the Anglo-Iranian (now BP) Oil CO's vast oil interests. The Shah wanted an oil agreement first, then diplomatic relations, while HMG insisted on (and obtained) the reverse order.

Subsequently Entezam played an equally important and helpful part in the difficult negotiations that led to the 1954 oil agreement under which an international consortium of British, American, Dutch and French oil interests replaced what he had previously been an exclusive British interest.

Born and educated in Tehran, Entezam joined the Iranian Ministry for Foreign Affairs in 1919 and served in Washington, Prague, Berne and West Germany. After the Shah's dismissal of Zahedi as Prime Minister in April 1955, Entezam remained for a time as Foreign Minister under Hossein Ala but was unhappy about the Shah's decision to join the Baghdad Pact (October 1955) and, with the Shah increasingly acting as his own Foreign Minister, lost heart in his work.

In 1957 he was made Managing Director of the National Iranian oil Co., a key appointment where his negotiating ability, manifest integrity and warm personality were held in high regard by the members of the oil consortium. However Entezam's public career was brought to an abrupt end in 1963 when the Shah summarily dismissed him along with Hossein Ala who was then Minister of Court- for daring to suggest that the Shah should moderate the pace of his reform programme..

Thereafter the Shah chose to ignore Entezam entirely until 15 years later when, faced with the revolutionary crisis of 1978, he looked in desperation for help from men such as Entezam who were untainted by corruption and association with the Court. In the summer of that year he summoned Entezam back from London in an unsuccessful attempt to persuade him to form or take part in a government acceptable to his people. But it was too late and Entezam was too old.

Entezam was a man of charm, modesty and considerable ability. He spoke excellent English, French and German; he was Sufi and leader of one the dervish groups in Tehran; apart from his religion he derived much happiness and satisfaction from his engineering workshop where, after his dismissal by the Shah, he spent much time tinkering with inventions.

He shunned high society and lacked ambition but had a great capacity for friendship and was respected by all who knew him. The Shah would never have lost his throne had he listened to and made full use of such men as Abdullah Entezam.