

# Noble in Reason, Infinite in Faculty Eighty Six Years Young, Going Strong

A metaphysical who thinks with his heart and feels with his mind

*“Statesman, yet friend to truth: of soul sincere  
In action faithful, and in honour clear;  
Who broke no promise, serv’d no private end,  
Who gained no title, and who lost no friend.  
Ennobled by himself, by all approved,  
And praised, unenvied, by the Muse he loved.”*

Alexander Pope (1688-1744)  
to his friend Joseph Addison Epistle V:  
Essay on Man 1715

When the editors asked me to write a few words on Ardeshir Zahedi on the occasion of his eighty sixth birthday, I wondered what I could say about this exceptional personality that has not already been said. One may easily surf on the web and find his way through tons of material and official documents on his life and achievements. Writers, and they are not few, have reviewed a thousand years of family history and the roots of ancestors who, like him and his father, were amongst the makers of our history and at the origin of some of the glories of this illustrious nation.

Though on his devotion to fam-

ily and friends, his gratitude to his noble father, his loyalty to his king and father in law, his eternal respect for his former wife, Princess Shahnaz and his fatherly love and affections for his only daughter, Princess Mahnaz much remain to be said, - here again, and often in between the lines of volumes of his writings and Memoirs, traces of his genuine, unconfined and often uncontrolled emotions are clearly visible. His heart is spacious and generous, pure as his Morning Prayers, a quality that made him one the most popular - certainly the most mediatic- Ambassador in London

and Washington and a darling of the people of Montreux where he has been living since the political changes in our country. In his perdurable feelings for Iran, its glorious history, its noble people, its last king and his father, family and friends there is a consensus: there has never been a compromise. These affections are extended to all environment and embrace the birds and the beasts, the flowers and trees, all that smack of life.

Ardeshir has wine and dined with all the great leaders of his



time for more than half a century in diplomatic career and used his influence and connections in the service of his country. But it is in the company of men of learning and the younger generation that he feels the most happily relaxed, for he considers them the makers of our future. He wants to share their dreams, for he is young at heart with regard towards a hopefully better world where love and understanding will replace hatred

and divisions, where the youth will live their full life and not fade like flowers in the fields, where men will live and pray together and not kill and destroy in the name of the same God. He wants a world that progresses

forward towards light and not backward falling into the shadow of sin, greed and arrogance. He

wants a world in which gold does not become God and men are not blinded by its glitter. "I find it stimulating to be with the young people; I always encounter a mingling of idealism and optimism with a healthy scepticism

which is reassuring for the future and necessary for a keen perspective of human events," he once

said in his Commencement Speech to the Kent State University students.

Ardeshir certainly has many good friends all around the world with whom he regularly communicates, answers their phones directly and their letters almost the same day and in between he hastes to help if any-

one in need. But he also has had, and still has, many enemies mostly amongst political hypocrites, those made insensitive by opportunities and corrupted by power. That is why he had difficulties with many of the the parasites in





and around the royal family or in governments. "The fault is not in our stars but in ourselves. Had we but loved our country better, were we true to ourselves and to each other and to our king; if we could only boast less and do more, if we had learnt humility from our religion and our great ancestors we would never have been in the present situation." He believes in what he says, insists, advocates and reiterates the urgent need for a moral reformation, a spiritual revival and a return to the traditional human values.

Zahedi is a man of extraordinary courage, never hesitating to raise his voice or show his anger when things go wrong. His violent reactions to the treatment of the university students by the po-

lice, the government mistake in raising the price of domestic oil and bus fares, corruption bribery and abuse of power; his fury at the British over Bahrain and the



"Persian" Gulf, and at some of the leaders of the Arab world, whenever they failed to recognise the rights of Iran in the region and show due respect, still remain amongst the popular sto-

ries for the press.

During his diplomatic career, Ardeshir Zahedi took active and decisive part in discussions be-

tween the Arabs and Israelis after the 1967 war, the initiation of the famous Islamic Summit in Rabat, the peace negotiations between Pakistan and India, and Afghanistan and Pakistan. But above all he played the key role in the release of 165 hostages at

B'nai B'rith

in 1977 bringing the first major terrorist attack in USA to a peaceful end by risking his life and sacrificing his rest. He is known, and several times rewarded by the world organizations, as an



architect of peace and a major authority in settling global issues through negotiations: "Days of Gunboat Diplomacy are Over" he shouted at the UN General Assembly referring to the American aggression in Vietnam and Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories.

When invited to become Foreign Minister, he tried to convince the Shah to change his mind. The rumours had provoked a series of reactions in the media. Critics called him a man of passion, one who cannot curb his choler, emotionally fragile; a man always in a haste and hurry, little control on his language, unpredictable in reactions.....

This may be close to a fair assessment of Ardeshir's character. I can also label him as a "metaphysical", one who thinks with his heart or feels with his mind. This association of sensibilities, however, is a prominent feature of his character, and he is what he is and we like him as he is.

In bilateral talks over the future of the Persian Gulf, the British were much relieved if they were informed that Ardeshir would not

be able to attend the meeting and is sending one of his assistants. And yet his empathy, his genuine desire to solve the problems and reconcile the people and the nations guaranteed the success of his diplomacy. He modernised our diplomatic institutions, made friends out of our traditional foes and with the support of the Shah became the co-architect of an independent and balanced foreign policy. Iran was then at the height of its international influence and prestige, trusted by the East, needed by the West and respected and listened to by the neighbours. Ardeshir's office in Ministry of Foreign Affairs, his family residence in Hesarak and certainly the Shah's palace soon became the rendez-vous of leaders of the world where many of the sensible global issues were discussed and settled.

Ardeshir has an astonishing memory, he forgets nothing and is attentive to the smallest details. The Memoirs he has started to publish are entirely dictated from that fertile memory. His sense of humour, but also satire is unsurpassed- much to the delight of his friends and fear of the foes. He is generous with his time, his mon-

ey and above all with his affections. He is described by his colleagues as impetuous, energetic and outspoken; but he impresses others by his knowledge, his sincerity, profound attachments to human values and certainly indefatigable liveliness.

The ambassador is perhaps the most highly decorated diplomat in the world; has received the highest national distinctions and been awarded honorary Doctoral Degrees of Law and Humanities from some of the greatest universities; in 1976 the KAPPA Sigma Fraternity chose him as 'Man of the Year'.

He has been named "ambassador of peace and reconciliation, a man of vision, wisdom, with passion to serve and to be a builder, negotiator, leader with tireless commitment to public service, ...."

Just to quote a few tributes from June, 2014 European University Board of Trustees Resolution.

Even more beautifully true or truly beautiful is when his only descendent, his beloved Princess Mahnaz addresses him as "My unique and loveliest Daddy in the world."