Late Imperial Russia’s multifaceted presence in Persia retains many fascinating life-stories of its actors, who quite often exerted crucial influence on the course of the very history of Russian-Iranian relations of the time. Russian ‘peaceful penetration’ into Persia designed by ministers Witte and Kuropatkin was secured by the activities within mainly four domains of Russian state influence in Persia: the military, diplomatic service, academic scholarship and Russian Orthodox Church missionary activities. Each of these domains had its own institutionally developed Persian Studies, the representatives of which, consciously or unwittingly, exploited the power/knowledge nexus to the limit, hence were at the spearhead of Russian influence in Persia. However, among them there was a personage who can be ascribed to neither of the above-mentioned domains, although he was in the thick of the political and military intelligence activities of Imperial Russia in early twentieth-century Persia. Seraia Markovich (Ben Mordehai) Shapshal (1873-1961) was a Russian citizen who graduated from the Karaite secondary school in the Crimean city of Simferopol and then from the St. Petersburg Faculty of Oriental Languages but failed to find a job in Russia. He arrived in Persia, as he put it himself later, on his own in 1901 with a single reference letter in his pocket which had been given to him by his university teacher, Professor Valentin Zhukovskii. He finally found his way to the highest layers of the Qajar court, significantly influencing Persian internal and external affairs, first, as a private tutor of the Crown Prince, Mohammad-Ali, and then, when the latter became the Shah of Persia, as his Court Minister and most intimate counsellor. Being, behind his back, called ‘Bloody Shapshal’ for his ruthlessness towards Iranian revolutionaries, he was also branded by Edward G. Browne as a ‘Russian spy’; however, Shapshal’s Russian contemporaries – both ‘pure’ diplomats and intelligence officers – would treat him with ultimate prudence, if not suspicion, quite often pointing out that Russkoe Delo (The Russian Cause) never was his priority. Drawing on unpublished archival documents, the writings of his contemporaries and the scarce scholarship on him, the paper analyses Shapshal’s activities during the period 1894-1917 and identifies his true persona and place within the context of Russian-Iranian relationships of the time. The analysis is informed by the conceptualisation of the interplay of power/knowledge relations within human societies.