



ANJOMAN-E EYĀLĀTI-E TABRIZ

ANJOMAN-EEYĀLĀTI-E TABRIZ. The provincial council (*anjoman*) of Tabriz was organized during the early phase of the Constitutional Revolution, in 1324/1906. Tabriz watched the unfolding of the events of Tehran, which led to the granting of the Constitution by Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah on 14 Jomādā II 1324/5 August 1906; but as he hesitated to sign the electoral law, Tabriz took the initiative (Kasrawi, *Mašruṭa* 3, pp. 152, 155). Led by orators, merchants and the 'olamā, Tabrizis took sanctuary (*bast*) in the British Consulate in Ša'bān 1324/October 1906, until the shah relented and telegraphed the Crown Prince Moḥammad 'Ali Mirzā to begin the elections. As people came out of the sanctuary in Tabriz, 20 amongst them decided to organize an anjoman, to watch over the Majles (*ibid.*, pp. 165, 467). Later similar anjomans were organized in other provincial towns.

According to clause 9 of the Electoral laws (*Neẓām-nāma-ye entekābāt*), elections were to be organized and supervised by special anjomans, composed of representatives of the six classes of people who could sit in the Majles. In Tabriz these members sat with the original members of the Anjoman, giving it a dual role from the beginning, not often distinguishable, so that after the completion of the elections, Moḥammad 'Ali Mirzā asked it to disband, but it refused to comply (*ibid.*, p. 174). In close touch with the development of the Anjoman, was the organization by some of its radical members, of another groups calling itself the Markaz-e Ġaybi, or the invisible center (*ibid.*, p. 167).



Its members 12 in number, were led by a merchant, ‘Ali Karbalā’i, better known as ‘Ali Mosio (ibid., p. 175). They organized a group of *mojāheds*, or fighters for Islam. Aḥmad Kasrawi, the best authority on the events of Tabriz, is vague as to the actual connections of these groups (ibid., p. 194), but emphasizes the important role this center played in the Anjoman. The invocation of a holy war, *jehād*, was in no doubt chosen to give a religious connotation to their actions so that the more moderate members especially the ‘*olamā* could associate with. A number of these *mojāheds* were social democrats, also called *Ejtemā’iyun-e ‘Āmmiyun* (Ettehadieh, 1983, p. 69). They were organized and in touch with the social democrats of Baku, and had translated their program. Kasrawi mentions this connection, and points out to the conflicts arising from this duality, especially with regard to their relationship with certain ‘*olamā* (Kasrawi, *Mašruṭa* 3, pp. 171, 391-405). According to him, many people did not realize this distinction and followed the Anjoman without understanding (ibid., pp. 194-95).

The Anjoman of Tabriz, called itself variously *Anjoman-e Melli*, or national anjoman, or *Majles-e Melli*, or national assembly, or even the *Anjoman-e Moqaddas*, or holy anjoman. The Majles in Tehran was referred to as the *Dār al-šurā* or house of consultation. The Anjoman began to assume responsibility for the affairs of Tabriz, encouraging the organization of similar anjomans in other major towns of Azarbaijan and the Anjoman of Azarbaijan in Tehran, and propagating the meaning of constitutionalism. It also trained and armed a local militia (*Ruz-nāma-ye Anjoman*, passim, and *Vijuya*, p. 18).

A month after the Anjoman was organized, it began to publish a newspaper, variously called *Jarida-ye Melli*, or *Ruz-nāma-ye Melli*, national newspaper, or simply *Anjoman* (Rafi’i, p. 88). This newspaper became the official organ of the Anjoman, and was published on and off for three years (Şadr Hāšemi, pp. 286-88). Many of its articles were written by members of the Anjoman, and it acquired a wide circulation (Rafi’i, p. 116). Some of the articles signed by “a group” seem to have been prepared in special sessions of the Anjoman (Rafi’i, p. 145). As the newspaper *Majles* published the proceedings of the Majles in Tehran the *Anjoman* published those of the Anjoman of Tabriz, and it is the best source for the study of that body. It deals with questions of its leadership, and membership, its internal policies and events of Azarbaijan, and the country as a whole.

Upon the accession of Moḥammad ‘Ali Shah, on the 4 Du’l-hejja 1324/19 January 1907, the Anjoman of Tabriz which never trusted him, pressed the



Majles and the government to oblige him to declare his allegiance to the Constitution. It also demanded the dismissal of Naus the unpopular Minister of Customs, and the limitation of the number of ministers to eight, and the law promulgating the provincial anjomans or Anjomanhā-ye eyālāti wa welāyati. The agitation spread to Tehran and when the deputies of Azarbaijan (Mojtahedi, *passim*), reached the capital, the shah accepted these demands.

About three months later, the Anjoman began to agitate for the promulgation of the Supplementary Constitutional Laws, as the Constitutional laws had proved inadequate. The *bāzārs* were closed, demonstrations were organized, and the deputies, especially those of Azarbaijan, were prevailed upon to press the government which was procrastinating, for the issue was complicated by the opposition of some of the 'olamā, chief amongst whom was Shaikh Fażl-Allāh Nuri. Widespread rebellion momentarily distracted the revolutionaries, but the shah and Amin-al-Solṭān the prime minister took the blame. Amin-al-Solṭān was shot on 21 Rajab 1325/30 August 1907, by 'Abbās Āqā Mojāhed, a member of an anjoman similar to the Markaz-e Ġaybi (Ettehadieh, 1983, p. 156). This act frightened the shah who ratified the Supplementary Constitutional Laws in Šabān 1325/September 1907.

The decree promulgating the provincial anjomans had been issued in Rabi' II 1325/May 1907. Now according to the Supplementary Constitutional Laws, clauses 21, 29, 91-93, the existence of provincial anjomans was guaranteed by law (*Mošawwabāt*, pp. 15-33, 64-84). Provincial anjomans were accorded a large amount of financial and administrative autonomy, and control over the governors. One writer believes that the aim was the organization of a federal system of government (Demorgny, p. 71). The Anjoman's insistence on the formation of provincial anjomans, would suggest the influence of Baku, for it must not be forgotten that during the 1906 Russian Revolution, attempts had been made to set up similar Soviets in Russia (Ettehadieh, 1983, p. 156). The Anjoman of Tabriz now acted as a national as well as a provincial anjoman, and called itself Anjoman-e Eyālāti-e Aḏārbāyjān (or Tabriz). Kasrawi writing years later, named it by this name after the law was promulgated.

But the Anjoman had acted as an assembly even before this law was enacted, so that the Majles in Tehran complained, and the Anjoman found it necessary to deny any ulterior motives (*Ruz-nāma-ye Anjoman*, no. 41, p. 1). However, Kasrawi points out there were rumors that Azarbaijan wished to secede (Kasrawi, *Mašruṭa*, p. 390). After a temporary lull in the relationship of the shah and the Majles, the situation deteriorated, and the shah became a target



of criticism. An attempt at a coup d'état by the shah and his supporters failed in Du'l-qa'da 1325/December 1907. Thereupon the Anjoman of Tabriz declared the shah had forfeited his throne. The attacks on him increased and became more virulent (Šarif-e Kāšāni, p. 150). At last in Moḥarram 1326/February 1908, a bomb thrown at the motorcar of the shah undermined all chances of a compromise. As the news of the bombardment of the Majles reached Tabriz, in Jomāda II 1326/July 1908, the city and the Anjoman were split (Jurābči, p. 5) as the shah too had his own supporters who were organized in the Anjoman-e Eslāmi-ya. The Anjoman, however, reorganized under a new leadership, and the publication of the newspaper was started anew, and it now acted as a sovereign body (*Times*, p. 64), dispensing justice, corresponding with the emigres abroad, conducting negotiations with 'Ayn-al-Dawla, the Commander of the forces sent against Tabriz by the shah. It also kept in touch with the Consuls of Russia and Britain. The correspondent of the *Times*, reported that the Anjoman was confident, that 15,000 men were under arms, and that their expenses were 200 pounds, all paid by donations (*Times*, pp. 85, 96-97).

The military forces of the Anjoman led by two militant leaders, Bāqer Khan and Sattār Khan, and strengthened by revolutionaries from the Caucasus, put up a successful fight against 'Ayn-al-Dawla who was defeated after severe fighting and retreated outside the city, thus cutting the supply line of Tabriz. By the spring thousands were starving (*Times*, pp. 148-49; Jurābči, pp. 22, 36-37) and there was fear of Russian interference as it was claimed the foreign community's safety was in jeopardy. The Anjoman appointed some members, including the moderate Taqat-al-Eslām to negotiate with 'Ayn-al-Dawla (Fathī, p. 430). The shah's terms were the surrender of Tabriz, but the Anjoman insisted on the restitution of the Majles, and the Constitution. But a last minute appeal to the shah failed to be effective in time. Russian troops entered Tabriz on 7 Rabi' II 1327/28 April 1909. The rising of Tabriz was at an end, but the Anjoman kept vigilant as the revolution spread (Afšār, p. 41). The shah abdicated in favor of his son a minor, Aḥmad Mirzā on 7 Jomāda II 1327/26 June 1909, when the forces of the Mojāhedīn and the Baḳtiāris reached Tehran.

Before the end of the Revolution, when the Anjoman of Tabriz was negotiating the reopening of the Majles with shah, it had been empowered by other anjomans to revise the electoral laws with the authorities of Tehran (Ettehadiyeh, 1362 Š., p. 189). The result was to give Azarbaijan great preponderance over other provinces. Twenty seats were assigned to it instead



of the 12 it had before, whilst Tehran was assigned 12, instead of 60. In Tehran the heyday of the anjomans was over. They had done much to stir the public, often exacerbating the relationship with the shah, to the detriment of the Majles they wished to protect. Now political parties replaced them, the most important one being the **Democrat party**, which descended from the Ejtemā'iyun-e 'Ammiyun, but was more moderate (Ettehadiyeh, 1983, pp. 190, 200). 12 out of the 27 members of this party were the deputies of Azarbaijan. But the Anjoman of Tabriz survived, no doubt because of the *esprit de corps* of its members, and because its existence was guaranteed by the law.

The Russian forces referred to derisively as the “guests,” left little room for the Anjoman to act as freely as before. It tried to protect the people, but it had little authority, its membership was composed of two parties which occasioned the same kind of friction as before (Fathi, pp. 496, 499, 518; Farmānfarmā, 1987, p. 73). One member mentions the reason for the Anjoman's weakness was its lack of executive power (Farmānfarmā, 1984, p. 250). There are many references to its activities such as collecting taxes, or cutting the salaries of the Royal Princes (Farmānfarmā, 1983, p. 13; 1987, p. 242), and reports of its clash with Mokber-al-Salṭana, the governor, which led to his resignation (Hedāyat, p. 22). In October 1911, elections were held for its leadership, and it was reported that 3,000 people had voted for the candidate of the Democrats (Afšār, p. 276).

The Anjoman regained some of its leading role by heading the opposition to the ex-shah's return and bid for the throne (Kasrawi, *Mašruṭa*, p. 228). It also headed the country in asking that the Majles prolong its present sessions as the Russian menace was growing, and the Second Majles was reaching the end of its term. In Du'l-qa'da 1329/October 1911, the Russians presented an ultimatum to the government to dismiss the treasurer general Morgan Shuster, who disregarded the tenets of the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention (Schuster, *passim*), and also not to employ foreign advisors without their approval. The Democrats in opposition to the government, led the Majles in rejecting the ultimatum. The Anjoman of Tabriz supported the Democrats and the Majles. But all negotiations failed and the Russians advanced towards Tehran. The government closed the Majles having obliged the deputies to elect a committee to negotiate with the Russians. Demonstrations were organized, even women marched against the policy of the government, but it was useless, for the political parties had no access to the people as the anjomans once had.

Tabriz was different. There, the Anjoman led the uprising, this time against the Russians (Kasrawi, *Ādarbāyjan*, pp. 261-336; Amirḳizi, pp. 256, 293), but the



resistance lasted only five days. The Russians executed nine members of the Anjoman, including Taqat-al-Eslām, others fled. More executions followed, and at last Tabriz was totally subjugated (Browne, p. 82). Henceforth, there are few references to the Anjoman. Once after the First World War, a list of damages inflicted by the belligerents was prepared by the *Anjoman-e Ayalati*, for the government wanted to claim reparations through the League of Nations (Nezām Mafi, p. 48, and Ettehadieh, 1974, pp. 1-2). Once again, in 1336/1917, a local Democrat, Sheikh Moḥammad Kiyābani rebelled in Tabriz, and demanded the restitution of the provincial anjomans (Āzari, p. 148). But the Anjoman of Tabriz as we have known it, ended with the demise of the Second Majles. It had won remarkable fame by its resistance to the Shah in defense of the Constitution, and its name will always be associated with the valiancy of its members, the people of Tabriz.

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