



## EP'REM KHAN

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**EP'REM KHAN** (Pers. Yeprem/Efrem; 1868-1912), Armenian revolutionary and important military leader of the Constitutional Revolution (q.v.) (Figure 1). Ep'rem Dawt'ean (Asribēkean) was born of an Armenian family in Barsum village (Ganja province) in the Russian Caucasus. As a youth, he participated in Armenian nationalist groups and partisan activities in the Ottoman empire. He was arrested by Russian Cossacks in September 1890 while he was trying to cross the Russo-Ottoman frontier as a member of the Kukunean expedition. This guerilla force, composed of several hundred Armenian fighters, intended to instigate European intervention in favor of reforms for Ottoman Armenians by formenting disturbances. After spending several years in prison, Ep'rem was exiled to Siberia in 1892, but he managed to escaped to Tabrīz in October 1896 (Melik', pp. 15-16; Movsisean, 1972; Varandean, I, pp. 76-77).

Ep'rem began working full-time for the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), an Armenian nationalist and socialist political party whose activity in Persia was primarily directed against the Ottoman regime (see DAŠNAK). Ep'rem smuggled guns from the Caucasus, which often were later introduced into Ottoman territory; politically organized Armenians in Tabrīz and Qarādāg and taught in the Armenian schools of the village Aḡāgān in Qarādāg. In August 1897 Ep'rem participated in an ARF punitive raid across the border against the Ottoman Kurdish Mazrik tribe, which had recently conducted a massacre of Armenians. Ottoman pressure on the Persian government to punish the Armenians involved led Ep'rem to take a refuge briefly in the Caucasus. In 1902, several years after his return to Persia, he married. He



worked in road construction and then bought a brick factory in the Persian town of Rašt (Amurean, 1950, pp. 91, 97-100, 103-8; Ēlmar, pp. 205-16; Varandean, I, pp. 177-89).

By 1906, Ep'rem was a proponent of ARF participation in the Persian constitutional movement, which the party formally accepted in February 1907 (Ēlmar, p. 113; Amurean, 1950, p. 55). Moḥammad-'Alī Shah's efforts to suppress the movement, especially the bombardment of the Persian parliament by Cossacks on 23 June 1908 and the disbanding of the Rašt *anjoman*, led Ep'rem, during the summer of 1908 when he was visiting Baku, to obtain arms and prepare for revolutionary activity. He helped establish the Sattār Committee (named after the revolutionary leader Sattār Khan), composed of Persians and Armenians, in Rašt; but, unhappy with its social democratic leanings, he founded in Anzalī Komīta-ye barq, which was more revolutionary in nature (Yeprem, pp. 23-25; Taqīzāda, p. 123; Faḵrā'ī, pp. 113-15; Amurean, 1950, pp. 109-11; Amurean, 1976-79, pp. 20-24; Ēlmar, pp. 218-24; Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, p. 8; Rā'īn, p. 64; Hayrik, p. 27).

Ep'rem was one of the leaders of the coalition of constitutionalist Armenians, Georgians, and Persians which occupied Rašt on 27 Moḥarram 1327/8 February 1909. Ep'rem and a small force then occupied Anzalī (Yeprem, pp. 26-27; Ēlmar, pp. 227-28, 232-34; Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, p. 10; Hayrik, pp. 27-28; Malekzāda, 3rd ed., p. 1070; Faḵrā'ī, pp. 119-20; Amurean, 1976, pp. 25-27).

A commission of war to coordinate the fighting was created, with Ep'rem a member (Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, p. 12; Malekzāda, 3rd ed., p. 1073). Ep'rem proceeded towards Qazvīn with Armenian and Georgian fighters, and after various battles along the way, they took the city on 14 Rabī' II/5 May. A few days later, a powerful landowner, Moḥammad-Walī Khan Sepahdār Tonokābonī came from Rašt, where the revolutionaries had made him governor-general of Gīlān, to join the fighters as their titular leader (Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, p. 24; Yeprem, pp. 27-33; Hayrik, pp. 28-30; Tēr Daniēlean, Nov. 1924, pp. 65-67).

Ep'rem then took the initiative in organizing an expedition on Tehran, and his group formed the advance guard. A few days after its unsuccessful attempt to take Šāhābād on 4-5 July, Sepahdār and 'Alī-Qolī Khan Sardār As'ad Baḳtīārī (q.v.) with his Baḳtīārī cavalry joined their forces with Ep'rem's. After fighting in nearby villages, Tehran was entered on 24 Jomādā II/13 July and quickly pacified (Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, pp. 33-34, 51-58; Shuster, xlvi; Browne, *Persian*



*Revolution*, pp. 438-40; Malekzāda, 3rd. ed., pp. 1162-234; Yeprem, pp. 40-58; Varandean, II, pp. 84-85; Hayrik, pp. 31-35; Tēr Daniēlean, November 1924, pp. 69-72; Melik' Andrēasean, I, II).

Ep'rem was accorded the right to participate in the discussions and vote in the temporary Majles-e 'ālī (Supreme Assembly), which deposed Moḥammad-'Alī Shah in favor of his son and formed a new government. He was appointed chief of police for the city on 12 Rajab 1327/30 July 1909 by the latter body, and proceeded to restore order in Tehran (Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, p. 62; Malekzāda, 3rd. ed., p. 1247; Yeprem, p. 60; Hayrik, p. 36). He reorganized the police force and formed a gendarmerie, introducing European uniforms and training. These reforms were paid through a new tax on alcoholic beverages, opium, and tobacco. By the fall of 1910, Ep'rem was appointed chief of police for all Persia (Ēlmar, 290-93; Varandean, II, pp. 85-86; Tēr Daniēlean, March 1925, pp. 108, 110; Rā'īn, pp. 249, 265-67, 282-84; Faḵrā'ī, p. 258)

Ep'rem led a number of successful military campaigns against opponents of the constitutional regime. The devotion and respect of his men was so great that both Armenians and Persians called him "father." On 2 Du'l-Qa'da 1327/15 November 1909 the combined forces of Ep'rem and Ja'far-Qolī Khan Baḳtīārī (q.v.), son of 'Alī-Qolī Khan Sardār As'ad, defeated Mollā Qorbān-'Alī in Zanjān. In December and January it defeated the forces of Raḥīm Khan Čalabīānlū and the other Khans of Qarādāg. In March 1910 Ep'rem persuaded Bāqer Khan and Sattār Khan to leave Tabrīz in order to avoid complications with Russian occupiers. In April, Ep'rem and the state troops defeated the Šāhsevan tribes (Ēlmar, 296-343; Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, pp. 74-75, 102-12, 115-17; Malekzāda, 3rd. ed., pp. 1307-9, 1315-16; Tēr Daniēlean, December 1924, pp. 68-77, January 1925, pp. 131-37, February 1925, pp. 89-94; Shuster, pp. lii).

When the ex-shah landed on Persian soil on 17 July 1911, the most powerful of three armies sent against him was led by Ep'rem, with a core of 200 Armenian fighters, to Khorasan. A group the latter sent behind Moḥammad-'Alī's forces in Māzandarān defeated them near Āmol. Ep'rem, with the help of Sardār Bahādor and Sardār Moḥtašam, won the crucial victory near Emāmz'āda Ja'far on 11 Ramažan 1329/5 September 1911 against 'Alī Khan Aršad-al-Dawla, the ex-Shah's best general, who was marching on Tehran. The next day Aršad-al-Dawla was executed on orders from Tehran (Kasrawī, *Aḍarbāyjān*, pp. 168-69, 171-86; Malekzāda, 3rd. ed., pp. 1407, 1427-32; Tēr Daniēlean, March 1925, pp. 110-12; "Parskastan," February 1912, pp. 26-27).



The Shah's younger brother, Sālār-al-Dawla, was decisively defeated at the end of September 1911 at Sāva and Bāḡ-e Šāh southeast of Tehran by Ep'rem's gendarmes, Armenian volunteers, and the Baḡtīārīs (Ēlmar, 480-93; Kasrawī, *Aḡarbāyjān*, pp. 192-93; Malekzāda, 3rd. ed., pp. 1436-42, 1315-16; Tēr Daniēlean, March 1925, pp. 112-16; "Parskastan," April 1912, pp. 84-87). As a reward, the government presented Ep'rem with a gem-studded sword, a pension, and the title of Sardār (Shuster, p. 135; Kasrawī, *Aḡarbāyjān*, p. 186; Malekzāda, 3rd ed., p. 1438; Ēlmar, pp. 538-40).

A second expedition in 1912 was directed against the forces of the ex-Shah in the Šāhrūd and Dām'ḡān region, and Sālār-al-Dawla in the Kermānšāh area. Three groups of fighters were sent out against the ex-shah by Ep'rem forced the latter to leave Persia. However, on 2 Jomādā II 1330/19 May 1912, during a successful battle against Sālār-al-Dawla's forces, Ep'rem was killed while trying to rescue the body of a comrade (Ēlmar, pp. 522-35; Kasrawī, *Aḡarbāyjān*, p. 518; Malekzāda, 3rd. ed., pp. 1480, 1518-21; Tēr Daniēlean, April 1925, pp. 89-93).

Ep'rem uneasily reconciled his revolutionary beliefs with his position as police chief, resigning and returning to office several times. Many, including ARF members, criticized him for following government orders, particularly on the following occasions: He helped organize the disarming of disaffected, disorderly former constitutionalist fighters, including Sattār Khan and Bāḡer Khan, on 7 August 1910 in Atābak-e A'zam Park, which led to a number of casualties. On 24 December 1911, Ep'rem shut down the parliament in order to comply with a Russian ultimatum, and this marked the close of Persia's Constitutional Revolution (Kasrawī, *Aḡarbāyjān*, pp. 134-35, 256-58, 481, 492, 516-17; Malekzāda, 3rd. ed., pp. 1345-51, 1473-77, 1392; Ēlmar, pp. 504-7, 558-68; Shuster, pp. 200, 215; Amurean, 1976, pp. 167-71; Rā'in, pp. 343-72; Tēr Daniēlean, March 1925, pp. 108-10).

Ep'rem is generally evaluated positively as a leading figure in the Constitutional Revolution by historians favorable towards the latter, like Kasrawī, and disparaged by critics like Šafā'ī (Faḡrā'ī, pp. 258-60). Some Islamic Republic textbooks incorrectly ascribe to him membership in the court condemning Shaikh Faḡl-Allāh Nūrī to death (Abrahamian, 1993, p. 96).



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