



GILĀN VIIIA. IN THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION OF 1905-11

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Two classes featured prominently in Gilān as the driving forces of the revolution, and the alliance of these two, the peasantry and the urban petty-bourgeoisie of artisans, shopkeepers, and petty traders, was the hallmark of a radical movement on the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. Peasant participation in the revolutionary coalition of Gilān marked the unique character of the constitutional movement in that province.

Two early twentieth-century foreign residents of Gilān left descriptions of the condition of the peasantry. Hyacinth-Louis Rabino (1877-1950), the British vice-consul in [Rasht](#), published a monumental description of the province in 1917. He hints at the existence of two kinds of agriculturalists. One is the seemingly cunning and prosperous small-holder, who owned land and even employed seasonal agricultural workers. The other is the poor peasant, who leased a mulberry orchard or rice paddy from the landlord and in turn received, theoretically, one-third or less of the crop. Indeed, Gilān's peasants were exceptionally prosperous. Rabino describes them as having many



advantages in the production process compared to peasants in other parts of Iran. Moreover, landowners did not have to invest heavily in agricultural production, nor did they have to provide protection against tribal raids that brought about economic insecurity in other parts of the country. But Rabino also points to an arbitrary system of taxation in which a peasant had to pay an entire elite, from the landlord and his bailiffs to the local and regional governors. Economic prosperity in production, on the one hand, and arbitrary taxation, on the other, made Gilān's peasants revolutionaries (Rabino, 1917, tr., pp. 12-19, 57-58).

The other description of conditions of the peasantry is provided by V. P. Nikitin (1885-1960), the Russian consul who arrived in Gilān in 1912, just after the Constitutional Revolution when Rabino was leaving Rasht. Nikitin has some harsh words for the system of taxation, which placed huge burdens on the peasants. Taxes in this system were comprised of both state and local taxes, often depending on the local governor's individual greed and the amount of money he had paid to secure his office. In addition, governors often used every conceivable excuse to fill their coffers, while bailiffs charged the peasants with personal fees and an additional share for the landlord. Nikitin describes the condition of Gilān's peasantry as one in which peasants were tied up with strong chains, and writes that by the end of the revolution "most farms and villages were deserted and in ruins" (Nikitin, pp. 162-63).

Conditions of the revolution. Both Russian and British reports of the events in Gilān begin their chronicles in early 1907, just about one year after the outbreak of the Constitutional Revolution in Tehran. But they speak of already existing unrest among the peasantry and a growing movement of *anjomans*—radical associations or societies—and revolutionary organizations connected to the Caucasian social democrats. In February 1907, the British embassy reported to the Foreign Office in London that Gilān had a total of more than 15,000 tomans in outstanding taxes, and that they therefore "expected bloodshed." The same report states that the revolutionaries ran two associations, one secret and one public, in Rasht. They were subordinate to directives from the Caucasus (Rabino, 1989, p. 107). The revolutionaries were invariably referred to as *mojāhedin* or *fadā'īān*, but occasionally they were also called Social Democrats, reflecting the immense influence of the Russian Revolution of 1905-07. Since the Russian events had featured Social Democrats, every political party, including the conservatives and even the pan-Islamists, referred to themselves as such.



The secret and later public societies found fresh vigor when the Soviets of the Russian Revolution became well known in Iran as instruments of revolutionary agitation and orchestrated action. The revolutionary associations were also encouraged by the presence of social-democratic organizations and parties of Transcaucasia. In 1905, Japan's defeat of Russia had triggered the outbreak of a revolution that in turn radicalized the Iranians in both direct and indirect ways. After the suppression of the first Russian revolution, the newly appointed Prime Minister Piotr Stolypin (1862-1911) clamped down on the revolutionary organizations, and Russian Transcaucasians came to support the Iranians. They hoped that the Czarist imperial designs on the southern neighbor would fail, thus leading to another revolutionary situation (Dailami, 1992, pp. 53-54).

Indeed, the Transcaucasian Social Democrats radicalized the constitutional revolutionaries, but that radicalization was hardly ideological. Faced with the constitutional government of landlords and an elite which was not at all bourgeois in character, they remained in essence populist subordinates of a bourgeois revolution. The radicalization of the Transcaucasians was, rather, organizational and military. While the *anjomans* merely roused the radical crowd at first, they later formed revolutionary committees that managed to organize the populace. In short, the story of the Constitutional Revolution in Gilān consists of the agitation of Transcaucasian revolutionaries, the *anjomans'* calls to protest, and the clamor of the radical urban crowd roaming the streets. In addition, there were the endeavors of the peasantry, who were also representatives of bourgeois values. The peasants' engagement could ultimately only support a bourgeois revolution.

The radicals of the *anjomans* chose religious names, and they frequently organized religious ceremonies in which even the Transcaucasian revolutionaries participated. Their main activists were small producers, artisans, and petty traders. Although they were called *mojāhedīn*, *fadā'īān*, or even Social Democrats, they were populists of a petty-bourgeois mentality. It was precisely the submission of the Transcaucasian Social Democrats to the bourgeois revolution that secured their place in history unlike their communist heirs, members of the Gilān Soviet Republic between 1920 and 1921 as harmless and loveable national heroes.

The Social Democrats of the Caucasus had no illusions as to the true character of the Iranian Revolution. One example is the testimony of the Transcaucasian member of the Muslim Social Democrat (Ḥemmat) party and historian



Moḥammad Amin Rasulzāda (Mehmed Emin Resulzade; 1884-1954). At that time he worked in Iran as a journalist for Ottoman newspapers, and he Julfa: “As those familiar with trade have open eyes and ears everywhere, Julfa too has a modern and conscious population. They are alien to fanaticism and live their lives without any bounds. Their minds are open, and they are all supporters of the constitution. ... Do not be surprised that in such a dusty and leafless place, in the middle of dark mountains and red earth, such serious and free thinkers can be found. It is because what has gathered them together is trade and industry. It is evident that trade and industry are enemies of ignorance and stupidity” (Resulzade, pp. 139-40).

As manifested by the general trend of the Constitutional Revolution, the true ideological inspiration came, in fact, from the Transcaucasian bourgeois enlightenment. Even the press of the Transcaucasian Social Democrats, who were organized in the Ḥemmat party, had nothing more radical to say. At that time, even the efforts of the Ḥemmatīs were geared toward dragging the local Muslim populace towards modernism and bourgeois awakening.

An interesting aspect of Gilāni politics during the constitutional period is the peasantry’s active participation in a revolution that was originally an urban preoccupation. In order to be heard, peasants had to go to the cities, where they formed their alliance with the radical Social Democrats. They frequently marched to Rasht with their rifles and red flags to express their viewpoints on important political issues (Rabino, 1974b, pp. 19-20). Conversely, radical political forces were involved with the politics of the countryside. The peasants thus united the rural and urban movements, fusing the Constitutional Revolution in Gilān into a single movement, which, precisely because of the involvement of the peasantry as a strong, radical, and well-constituted class, was unique in Iran.

The demands of the peasants at this time were crystallized in their refusal to pay either taxes or dues (Ādamiyat, pp. 67-68). They demanded the legal protection of a constitution to end their legal status as absolute subjects of their landlords and governors. There are numerous examples of the lack of human rights for the peasantry. On one occasion, Rabino noted in his diary that the khan of Ṭāleš had literally sewn together the lips of six peasants because “they had spoken of the Constitution” (Rabino, 1974b, p. 26). The peasants’ political activism can be traced back to early 1907, when around 500 men occupied a mosque in Rasht to oppose rent payments to the landowners (ibid.). In Gilān, the revolutionary *mojāhedīn*, known as Anjoman-e ‘Abbāsi,



defended the rights of peasants. They had extended their activities to the countryside, and they established fourteen branches in the province altogether (Rabino, 1974b, p. 54).

The agrarian movement was led by Raḥim Šišabor and Sayyed Jalāl Šahrāšub, but the names of the local peasant leaders are not known. The Social Democrat Šišabor, who also represented the city guilds in the provincial *anjoman* (*anjoman-e welāyati*), publicly declared that the peasants should not pay tax to the landlords. In Ṭāleš, Šahrāšub led a large-scale rebellion in which thousands of peasants participated (Rabino, 1974b, pp. 54, 30-32) and which forced the local khan to flee (Zāhir-al-Dawla, p. 315). Šahrāšub's conduct was reminiscent of the behavior of legendary bandits like Robin Hood. He forgave the peasants their taxes, married one of the local khan's wives, and proclaimed himself king (Rabino, 1989, p. 17).

Since the landowners were defied in every part of Gilān, they sent a telegram to the parliament in Tehran in which they complained that “the peasants think that the Constitution means being free and not paying rent” (Faḵrā'i, p. 103). Consequently, the provincial *anjoman*, led by an otherwise unknown Ḥāji Mirzā Moḥammad-Rezā, publicly declared that land rents had to be paid (Rabino, 1974b, p. 30) and expelled Šišabor because of his support for the peasants. Later both Šišabor and Šahrāšub were imprisoned, an action that provoked a violent response from the Anjoman-e 'Abbāsi in Rasht (Rabino, 1974b, pp. 31-32).

The provincial *anjoman* was soon identified with the government, and with the help of the local governors it opposed the peasants and the revolutionary movement. In particular, the parliament in Tehran (Ādamiyat, p. 74) authorized that a troop of the Russian-led [Cossack Brigade](#) be dispatched to reinstate the governors and landowners, close down the peasant *anjomans*, and collect the unpaid taxes, dues, and additional compensations for the landlords (Afšār, 1980, pp. 51-53; Rabino, 1974b, pp. 51-52, 58, 65, 72; Zāhir-al-Dawla, pp. 315-16). In response, the peasants marched once again to Rasht with their rifles and red flags, while the Anjoman-e 'Abbāsi demanded expulsion of some leading reactionaries from Gilān, including Ḥāji Mirzā Moḥammad-Rezā. The conflict grew more intense, and Ḥesām-al-Eslām, a member of the parliament, was sent to Gilān to establish order. During a public meeting Ḥesām-al-Eslām was told that “we will not let the landlords oppress the peasants,” and he responded in kind, “the parliament will not let the peasants confiscate the landowners' property.” Later, Šahrāšub sent a



death threat to the governor of Rasht, who retorted, “I will not leave you a hand to kill me with” (Rabino, 1974b, pp. 54-56). Then the parliament sent its final ultimatum, declaring that the government would not give up the country (Rabino, 1974b, p. 107), and most of the countryside was brought under control by force. Afterwards, ‘Ali Khan Qajar Ṣahir-al-Dawla (1864-1924), a reform-oriented statesman, was appointed as the general governor of Gilān.

In Ṣāleš, however, the peasants did not surrender; they intended to keep their land. They took up arms and defeated, disarmed, and expelled a number of expeditionary forces. The newly-appointed general governor Ṣahir-al-Dawla inquired into the situation and reported to Tehran. He recommended that a conciliatory approach should be adopted to facilitate the return of the landowners to Ṣāleš (Ṣahir-al-Dawla, p. 315). The peasant uprising continued until the Russian army entered the province in late 1911 to confront the Constitutional Revolution as a whole. Since the khan of Ṣāleš did not succeed in reclaiming his property, he sold the land to A. M. Khostaria, a Georgian entrepreneur and Russian citizen (*Camb. Hist. Iran VII*, p. 652). The Russian military defeated the peasants and installed Khostaria as rightful owner of the land. Subsequently, Khostaria started his industrial enterprises, and was later even allowed to run his own Georgian police force (Nikitin, pp. 101-4).

Apart from the peasants, fishermen were the largest group of the discontented in Gilān. In the late 19th century, the Lianozov Fisheries obtained the Caspian fishing concession and effectively installed a monopoly. Fishermen were forced to surrender a large portion of their catch to Lianozov at low and prefixed rates; at the same time, the increased activities of a large Russian fishing fleet and new restrictive measures turned the fishermen into mere employees of the entrepreneur. Later, Sardār Maṣur, an influential landowner and Gilāni politician, obtained the monopoly for dealing in those fish that traditionally constituted the livelihood of independent fishermen, thereby stoking the flames of discontent among them. Once the Constitutional Revolution was underway, [Anzali](#), Gilān’s main port, witnessed the protests of over 3,000 Caspian fishermen who demanded full control over their own catch. Their representatives succeeded in limiting the reach of both the Lianozov Fisheries and the customs office that oversaw the fish exports.

In general, Russian industrial and commercial activities had created a relatively large working class in Gilān. These laborers were mostly involved in the various sections of the fishing industry, in the port of Anzali, in Khostaria’s various enterprises, and in road building and timber manufacturing. Even



though just over 5,000 Russians, mostly Transcaucasians, were employed in Gilān (Issawi, p. 23), the native working class in Gilān was still probably the largest in Iran. In the case of wage earners, discontent manifested itself in even more radical forms. For instance, the dockyard workers of Anzali were on strike for a good period of time in solidarity with their counterparts in Baku; and in areas such as Ṭāleš, where peasants had been recruited as laborers, the Lianozov plant was burnt down (Ādamiyat, pp. 87, 91; Ṣāhir-al-Dawla, p. 318). In fact, when the Russian army entered Gilān in 1911, the suppression of the general strike, which was led by the Anzali workers, became its top priority.

The intensity of the struggle may induce a belief in a fully-fledged class-consciousness of the peasantry. But this was not the case. In Kargānrud, for instance, where 3,000 peasants had risen against their landlord, they eventually voted three to one to install another landlord if he promised not to repeat the atrocities of his predecessor (Rabino, 1989, p. 30). But this was not all. In truth, even the Social Democrat leaders of the peasants let them down. Furthermore, the Democratic Party (Ḥezb-e Demōkrātik) that social democrats eventually founded in Tehran in 1909 did nothing tangible to alleviate or improve the lot of the peasantry (Ādamiyat, p. 143).

Social democrats and their anjomans. The involvement of the Social Democrats in the Constitutional Revolution apparently began when the first Russian revolution was still underway. Rabino notes that most Social Democrats were migrant Iranians who worked or traded in the Caucasus, and he claims that they numbered some 6,000, which might be an exaggeration. The Social Democrats produced and smuggled arms and explosives into revolutionary Iran and extracted large amounts of money from anti-constitutionalists. They held public meetings “in which any one could speak,” but they also held secret committees with strict rules (Rabino, 1989, pp. 65-66). Rabino lists eleven *anjomans*. These associations or societies were seemingly less popular than expected among laborers, while they fared better among peasants. For instance, there is no sign of a fishermen’s *anjoman*, and the artisans had only one. The revolutionaries had their own Anjoman-e Mojāhedin, while the radical crowd of laborers and craftsmen had all gathered in the Anjoman-e Abu’l-Faḏl, which later continued its activities under the name of Anjoman-e ‘Abbāsi. The landlords and the clergy had their own active associations (Rabino, 1989, pp. 73-74). Moreover, a provincial *anjoman* was set up to represent the constitutional government.



The earliest readily available record of discontent concerns the unrest of fishermen in Anzali. It led to some bloodshed, and negotiations came to naught (Rabino, 1989, pp. 63-64). The main agrarian unrests started in the spring of 1907, while in Gilān people had begun to protest against the unfair trade in silk and other goods, trying to organize a boycott (Spring Rice to Grey, 24 April 1907, in Rabino, 1989, pp. 107-8). The *anjomans* intimidated the province's general governor into leaving the province. For an entire month, no sources of central control remained in Rasht, yet life went on smoothly and in an orderly fashion (Spring Rice to Grey, 23 May, 1907, in Rabino, 1989, p. 110). Then a new general governor was appointed by Tehran, and he succeeded temporarily in suppressing the agrarian movement in Ṭāleš (Spring Rice to Grey, 19 July, 1907, Rabino, 1989, p. 112). But the ardor of the *anjomans* was not dampened, and by the end of 1907 artisans seemed to have become more involved with the movement (Hartwig, 11-24 December 1907, in Baširi, II, p. 53). The increased activity of the *anjomans* coincided with the shah's efforts to restrict the power of the parliament in Tehran (Hartwig, 7-20 December 1907, in Baširi, II, p. 62). Around 4,000 people gathered in front of the governor's quarters in Rasht, and some even camped before governmental buildings (*kārgodāri*). Eventually the general governor had to resign, the shah lost his confrontation with the parliament, and the unrest in Rasht calmed down (Hartwig, 7-20 February 1908, in Baširi, II, p. 103).

But unrest continued in the countryside. In Ṭāleš peasants confiscated the property of a noble landowner, but the expedition dispatched to reclaim the property failed miserably in early December 1908 (Berkley to Grey, 3 December 1908, in Rabino, 1989, pp. 115-16). In Asālem and Kargānrud peasants began selling the rice they had grown on their landlords' property, and in *Fuman*, the landlord was driven from his property and killed (Marling to Grey, 28 February 1908, in Rabino, 1989, p. 113). At the same time, the *mojāhedin* continued to arrest some anti-constitutionalists, while intimidating others through hate mail and even holding their relatives hostage. They frequently extracted large sums of money from landlords and nobility, forcing them to flee the province. They also agitated against Russian interests in Gilān.

The Russian officials frequently noted the collapse of the administration in Gilān, since it allowed for the towns' self-government and gave the peasants a free hand in the countryside. Although the government in Tehran appointed Ṣāhir-al-Dawla as governor general in early March 1908 and dispatched him to Rasht, the *mojāhedin's* agitation and the unrest among the peasantry



continued. In March and April 1908, the *mojāhedīn* burned the ships of an otherwise unknown 'Amid Homāyun in Anzali; some were arrested, only to be rescued during their transport to Rasht. In Langarud peasants joined the movement when they refused to hand over all their raw silk cocoons and tried to buy silkworm eggs from Greeks and Turks offering better deals (Berkley to Grey, 10 April 1908, in Rabino, 1989, p. 115).

The provincial *anjoman* tried to represent the government and was composed of representatives from most classes in Gilān: landlords, 'olamā', merchants, and artisans; the peasants were excluded. It was to some extent bourgeois and pro-landlord, as well as anti-Russian. But when the movement of the radical revolutionaries and peasants gained momentum, the *anjoman* blatantly turned against them, presenting in essence the seemingly patriotic landlords of Gilān. There was indeed much internal friction in the provincial *anjoman*. On the one side, there were radicals such as Raḥīm Šišabor, and on the other side, its leader Ḥāji Mirzā Moḥammad-Rezā was a staunch opponent of the peasant movement in principle. Nonetheless, the *anjoman*, despite all its inadequacies, was too much for both the shah and the Russians. In 1908, the new Qajar monarch Moḥammad-'Alī Shah (r. 1907-09) carried out a coup and succeeded in shutting down the parliament in Tehran (see [Constitutional Revolution](#)). Subsequently, the government forces occupied the provincial *anjoman* in Rasht. But the people of Rasht and the *mojāhedīn* put up a fight. On 14 June, a great crowd of traders and artisans gathered before the building of the provincial *anjoman*. Yet Qajar Cossacks and Russian soldiers, who had entered Gilān previously in large numbers (Rezultade, pp. 101-3) and supported the Cossacks, awaited the crowds with cannons at Rasht's public square, the Sabza Meydān. They arrested a member of the *anjoman* and fired cannons into the crowd. Some people took sanctuary at the Ottoman consulate. Others tried the British consulate, but vice consul Rabino refused to accept them (Enclosure in Hartwig's report of 14 June 1908, in Baširi, I, p. 260). On 27 June, the government forces stormed the provincial *anjoman* in Rasht. Exchanges of fire, which left casualties, led to the closure of the bazaar (Shtritter, 15-28 June 1908, in Baširi, II, p. 215). Thus, the Constitutional Revolution was temporarily suspended in Gilān. Zāhir-al-Dawla was dismissed, since on the whole he had failed to curb the activities of the radical *anjomans*. In July 1908, the shah appointed Āqā Bālā Khan Sardār Afkām as governor of Rasht and Sardār Amjad, the landlord of Kargānrud, as governor of Ṭāleš. Both were pro-Russian members of the nobility (Hartwig to the consul in Rasht, 21 July 1908, in Baširi, II, pp. 248-49).



The response of the Gilāni revolutionaries was to seek help from Baku and Tiflis. The young constitutionalist landowner Mirzā Karim Rašti, a younger brother of Sardār Moḥyi Mo‘ezz-al-Solṭān, went to the Caucasus. He spent a considerable amount of his wealth buying weapons and explosives while recruiting Transcaucasian revolutionaries to help combat the newly established dictatorship in Iran. Arms and volunteers began arriving in Gilān in late 1908, while Mirzā Karim returned to Rasht in early February 1909. A great amount of rifles and ammunition was confiscated, and a number of northern revolutionaries were arrested when they tried to enter the province. Yet, on the whole, a good number of Georgians, Armenians, and Muslims secretly found their way to Rasht and Anzali (Afšār, 1980, pp. 1-48). The Georgian Bolshevik Sergo Ordzhonikidze (1886-1937) was among the well-known men who went to Gilān. He was Stalin’s right-hand man in the Baku underground, heading a group of 140 revolutionaries, consisting of 40 men from Georgia and 100 from Baku (Ordzhonikidze, p. 122). Others included the Armenian Ep‘rem Khan, who was a member of the Iranian branch of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, called Dašnaktsutyun (Arkun, p. 92), and the Bulgarian anarchist Feodor Panov, who was a correspondent of the Russian newspapers *Rech* and *Russkoe Slovo*. Both distinguished themselves in the revolution.

In early 1909, the revolutionaries formed their secret Sattār committee, named after Sattār Khan (1868-1914). The committee included artisans, journalists, a few intellectuals, and some petty landlords (Malekzāda, V, p. 148). It decided to restart the revolution in two essential steps. The first was to capture Rasht by force in order to establish a revolutionary government in the city. The Committee was responsible for the assassination of Sardār Afkām, the governor of Rasht, under the command of Sardār Moḥyi. At the same time, Mirzā ‘Ali Tarbiat and Ḥosayn Kasmā’i attacked the quarters of the Qajar Cossacks and subdued them after a few hours. Subsequently, police and gendarmes surrendered to the revolutionaries, and the government apparatus fell under their control (Šāhin, pp. 83-84; Navā’i, pp. 41-50). After the fall of the Rasht government, between 150 and 200 anti-constitutionalists were killed in the city (Rabino, 1989, p. 47). The second step was to organize a revolutionary army in Gilān, which became the military force that eventually marched to Tehran and toppled the shah with the help of the Baḳtiāris.

The Sattār committee invited the northern magnate Sepahdār (later Sepahsālār) A‘zam, who owned much of the neighboring Māzandarān



province, to Rasht to assume the governorship. Although Sepahdār himself was a member of the elite, he had just turned against the shah, who had given the governorship of Tonekābon, which had been in Sepahdār's family for 200 years, to someone else. Sepahdār went to Gilān with a large armed force to join the revolutionaries, and the Russians in turn dispatched troops to Baku and Julfa. Some of those troops entered Gilān, and the number of guards around the Russian consulate increased (Nicolson to Grey, 3 March 1909, in Rabino, 1989, p. 119). Nevertheless, no Russian measure hindered the work of the revolutionaries. They immediately elected a war commission in Rasht to organize the revolutionary army. Each ethnic group (Gilānis, Tabrizis, Armenians, Georgians, Transcaucasian Muslims) chose a representative, and they included Panov for his special abilities as a professional revolutionary. The war commission immediately began to dispatch troops towards Qazvin. Among the first men were Ep'rem, Sardār Moḥyi, and Mirzā Kuček Khan (1880-1921), who was later to lead the [Jangali movement](#) in Gilān (Kasravi, I, p. 12). By mid-March, the revolutionaries controlled the road to Qazvin, with the exception of the last 60 km (Berkley to Grey, 14 March 1909, in Rabino, 1989, p. 120). Tehran began to send troops, and Qazvin, halfway between Rasht and the capital, became the main battleground.

The revolutionaries immediately began their march on Tehran with the help and nominal leadership of Sepahdār, but they were not as quick as it is generally thought, or as they would have liked to be. Not only did the radicals have to tame landowners, they also suffered from financial difficulties that hampered their efforts. Sepahdār tried to be diplomatic with both the Russians and the British and claimed moderation in the revolution. Consequently, he made known that he was uneasy about what he called the extremism of the Transcaucasian revolutionaries who enjoyed much popularity in the province. Yet red flags were raised above almost every house in Rasht (Churchill's note in Berkley to Grey, 23 March, 1909, in Rabino, 1989, pp. 122-24), while the revolutionary army became stronger and better armed everyday, because more volunteers from Gilān and the Caucasus joined.

On 5 May, the revolutionaries captured Qazvin with little bloodshed (Berkley to Grey, 5 May 1909, in Rabino, 1989, p. 127); in Tehran Moḥammad-'Ali Shah backed off and reinstated the Constitution (Berkley to Grey, 20 May 1909, *ibid.*). The revolutionaries were near Tehran by 11 May, and their advance caused much consternation at the court (Berkley to Grey, 11 May, 1909, in Rabino, 1989, pp. 128-29). But once again the revolution moved at a slow pace,



because more orchestrated movements with the Tabriz resistance and the Bakhtiāris were needed. It took another two months until the revolutionary army finally accomplished its mission of capturing the capital.

On 8 June 1909, Sepahdār was appointed governor of Gilān and Māzandarān. As the revolution once again gained strength, he submitted his demands to the Tehran government: Russian and British troops were to leave Iranian territory; the provincial *anjomans* would nominate ministers as long as a new parliament was not yet elected; and the local *anjomans* would choose the provincial governors (Berkley to Grey, 5 July 1909, in Rabino, 1989, p. 139). But there was no time for a response, since the revolutionary army reached Tehran on 13 July 1909, entering the city at Bahārestān square. Fighting ensued for some days before the capital was captured. On 16 July, the shah took sanctuary in the Russian embassy (Isolskii to Russian representatives in other countries, 18 July 1909, in Baširi, II, p. 242). The next day, Moḥammad-ʿAli Shah was deposed, and his young son succeeded him as Aḥmad Shah (r. 1909-25). Moreover, Epʿrem Khan was appointed as Tehran’s chief of police.

In Rasht, the *anjomans* had been resurrected after the revolutionary coup. But now new issues came to the foreground, although efforts for democracy and peasant emancipation continued. Indeed, the revolutionaries, with the help of the provincial *anjoman*, intensified their efforts to extract money from notables and landlords in order to finance the revolution. The prominent landowner and cleric Šariʿatmadār was forced to pay 36,000 tomans to avoid being killed, while Z̧ell-al-Solṭān, another well-known member of the ruling elite, had to pay 100,000 tomans (Rabino, 1989, p. 51). Rabino estimated that altogether between 220,000 and 350,000 tomans were collected (idem, p. 47). In general, the activities of the *anjomans* appear to have become more radical. Ordzhonikidze organized the International Club, for which the Bolsheviks produced revolutionary literature and which agitated the population (Ordzhonikidze, p. 96). In October 1909, the revolutionaries held a large demonstration on the occasion of the death of a Spanish radical.

It appears that the popularity of the red flag alarmed the Russian authorities in an unprecedented way. On 7 July 1909, ships of the Russian navy with 2,000 men aboard anchored at Anzali. Although the provincial *anjoman* issued strong protests, it managed to halt the landing of the Russian Cossacks and soldiers only temporarily (Rabino, 1989, p. 49). Still, the Russian threat to the revolution allowed the provincial *anjoman* to gain the upper hand in its rivalry with the *mojāhedīn* and radical *anjomans* of artisans. In late July, 8,000



people are reported to have participated in a meeting at Rasht, and a similar meeting took place at Anzali. People gathered to discuss and protest against the landing of some Russian troops, while Ḥāji Mirzā Moḥammad-Reżā, the leader of provincial *anjoman*, dominated the urban movement. People concluded that the solution was a general strike, a closure of the bazaar, and a boycott of Russian goods (Rezultade, pp. 234-35). Officially, the Russians were trying to keep open the road from Rasht to Tehran, while protecting Russian interests in the region. But the revolutionaries were quicker and captured Tehran before the Russian military.

After the restoration of the Constitution in Tehran, the situation of the peasants and the radical *anjomans* did not change. The new constitutional government disarmed the *mojāhedīn* and *fadā'īān* (Berkley to Grey, 25 February 1910, in Rabino, 1989, p. 174), and most Transcaucasian revolutionaries returned to their home countries, perhaps with the exception of the Armenians who had gathered in Tehran around Ep'rem Khan. Tehran sent governor after governor to Rasht and dispatched gendarmes to collect taxes in the countryside, but without much success until the Russians suppressed the revolution in late 1911.

In July and August 1911, when the deposed shah attempted to return to Iran and topple the new government, a flicker of disquiet appeared in Rasht. The resistance against Moḥammad-'Ali Shah was organized in Tehran (Berkley to Grey, 9 August 1911, in Rabino, 1989, p. 182). Yet the Russian consul Nekrasov and the Russian military authorities tried to sabotage the revolution in Gilān in the same manner as they had done in Tabriz, in an overall attempt to bring the northern provinces under Russian control. They began by undermining the various institutions in the province. The governor resisted the Russians, and the provincial *anjoman* sent numerous telegrams to Tehran, though their efforts were fruitless (Kasravi, I, pp. 458-59). Czarist sabotage continued until December 1911, when the Russian government officially issued its famous ultimatum to the Iranian government. In Gilān, the Russian officials brazenly suppressed all institutions in order to seize power. But in response to the ultimatum, the people of Gilān closed the bazaar and boycotted Russian goods, although that was not always in the interest of the merchants. Crowds gathered at large political meetings at the quarters of the provincial *anjomans*, and held a general strike. The Russians violently ended this strike. They forced the traders to open shop, shut down the *anjomans*, arrested numerous constitutionalists, and began a house-to-house search of the cities (Jurābči, pp.



85-91).

What is significant about the Russian actions is that they attacked Iranian society in its entirety, hanging a number of constitutionalists, political activists, and merchants. Not only did they suppress peasants and *anjomans*, but they also made an attempt on the life of the governor of Anzali, arrested landowners, and disarmed and shot soldiers and policemen (Kasravi, II, pp. 459-75). This put into motion a process that united Iranians against foreign intervention and culminated in an armed struggle. It was triggered by the outbreak of World War I and emerged after the war as a sort of nationalism. The anti-imperialist Jangali movement flared up in Gilān in 1915 and lasted until late 1921. Near its end the Qajar Cossack brigadier Rezā Khan (r. 1925-41 as Reza Shah Pahlavi) led a coup, seizing power in the capital.

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