



IRĀN-E JAVĀN, ANJOMAN-E

IRĀN-E JAVĀN, ANJOMAN-E (The society of young Iran), a society founded in January 1921 by a number of young intellectuals who had received their higher education in Europe. It was initially called *Soruš-e dāneš* before assuming the name *Irān-e javān*. The founders were Ḥasan Nafisi, 'Ali-Akbar Siāsi, Mortazā Mošfeq Kāzemi, 'Ali Sohayli, Esmā'il Mer'āt, 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Meykada, 'Aliqoli Mohandes-al-Dawla, Ḥasan Khan Šaqāqi, and Moḥsen Ra'is, some of whom had earlier been involved in the running of the Persian journal *Nāma-e farhangestān* in Berlin. Later on Maḥmud Afšār, Moḥammad Waḥid Tonokāboni, Jawād 'Āmeri, and Ḥasan Moqaddam joined the society.

The society's platform (*marām-nāma*) was published in Farvardin 1300/April 1921 with a green cover symbolizing hope for the future (Siāsi, 1987, p. 75). The principal points of the platform were: the establishment of secular government in Persia and the separation of civil and religious issues; the abolition of extra-territorial rights of foreign powers (see [CONCESSIONS](#)) and all the legal privileges enjoyed by their citizens; the abolition of private tribunals and the referral of all cases to secular public courts; demand for the construction of railroads in various parts of the country; revision of commercial treaties and agreements, in particular those involving customs; reform of the system of taxation and the establishment of graduated taxes on income, capital, and inheritance; banning the use of opium and restricting its cultivation; giving high priority to education in general, making elementary education compulsory and free, building more high schools, providing classes for adult education, and paying more attention to technical training; sending



students (both male and female) abroad to study; changing the Persian alphabet; building museums, libraries, reading facilities, and theaters; the removal of the obstacles in the progress of women; and adopting and propagating the beneficial elements of Western culture.

According to 'Ali-Akbar Siāsi, who headed the society throughout its existence, at the beginning membership was restricted to those who had studied in Europe or the United States and hence were familiar with Western ideas. The reason for such restriction, according to Siāsi, was the fact that the ideas that the society wished to promote were too radical for the popular taste, and there was also the consideration that the inclusion of members unfamiliar with ideas of modernity might hinder the smooth functioning of the society (Siāsi, pp. 74-75).

The founders considered it necessary that the general public be made knowledgeable about the world outside Persia. They believed in modernity and in the idea that Persia should play an active role in international affairs, free of fear and without resorting to xenophobia (*Irān-e javān*, no. 1). In other words, they believed that the only solution to the problems facing the country was following the same path that the West had traveled, which, according to them, could be achieved only by the determined efforts of the educated young generation. They, however, like so many other intellectual societies formed at the time to promote the idea of modernity, failed to formulate a strategy for political development to help them realize their ideas. They actively followed up their ideals concerning modernization of the educational system, industrialization, and economic development, but ignored political development altogether, despite their occasional lip service to the concept of democracy (e.g., Siāsi's remark in *Irān-e javān*, no. 48).

From its inception, the society tried to bring its message to the people by holding public lectures, cultural events, and theatrical shows. All plays were acted by the members of the society, who had no professional training. In this way, the society not only managed to reach out to a large audience of people with progressive ideas but also earned enough money to set up an office of its own and publish the journal *Irān-e javān* (q.v.) as its organ. The first show was put on the stage in the Grand Hotel and consisted of two plays, one in Persian called *ʿEšq o waṭan* (Love and homeland), written by Siāsi, and another one in French by Eugène Labiche. The most successful play staged by the society was Ḥasan Moqaddam's *Ja'far Kān az Farang āmada*, a biting, single-act comedy about the encounter of two extremes, one represented by Ja'far Khan, a highly



westernized youth returning from France, and the other by his strictly traditional family (Siāsi, 1968-69, I, p. 5; idem, 1987, pp. 75-76).

A short time after the society was founded, Sardār-e Sepah (the future Reza Shah), then the prime minister, summoned the society's representatives and assured them that he would make sure that their ideas would be realized (Siāsi, pp. 76-77). Not long after this, however, Reza Shah decided to set up a political party named Ḥezb-e Irān-e Now (New Iran) under his powerful minister of court, 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Teymurtāš, which made Irān-e javān forsake politics and turn into an intellectual gathering (Mošfeq Kāžemi, p. 255). It resumed political activities for a short period of time after the fall of Reza Shah, but it failed to distinguish itself as a viable political entity and again turned into a purely intellectual gathering that continued to exist for the next fifty years under the name of Bāšgāh-e Irān-e javān (Irān-e javān club).

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