



# KĀŠĀNI, SAYYED ABU'L-QĀSEM

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**KĀŠĀNI, SAYYED ABU'L-QĀSEM** (b. Tehran, 1877; d. Tehran, 12 March 1962; [Figure 1](#)), the leading political cleric during the critical period of 1941-53. Sayyed Abu'l-Qāsem was born to Sayyed Moṣṭafā b. Sayyed Ḥosayn Kāšāni, who was a source of emulation (*marja'-e taqlid*) (Kāšāni, interviewed by Ḳosrowšāhi, I, p. 268; Āḡā Bozorg Tehrani, p. 75; Šarif Rāzi, I, p. 267; for a biography of Sayyed Moṣṭafā, see Modarres, V, p. 21).

## KĀŠĀNI IN IRAQ

*Education.* Following his primary and secondary education, Sayyed Abu'l-Qāsem left Tehran at the age of 15 or 16 and accompanied his father to Najaf, where he continued his religious studies. Abu'l-Qāsem studied with his father as well as Ayatollahs Mirzā Ḳalil Tehrāni and Āḡund Mollā Kāzem Ḳorāsāni (see [AḲUND ḲORĀSĀNI](#)). He is reported to have become a *mojtahed* at the very young age of 25 (Āḡā Bozorg Tehrani, p. 75; Šarif Rāzi, I, p. 267; for Kāšāni's mediocre level of knowledge in Shi'ite law, see Montazeri, p. 78).

*Anti-British activist.* Kāšāni's staunch anti-British stance, maintained throughout his life, must be understood in the context of his experience of the British occupation of Basra in November 1914 and Karbalā and Najaf in late 1917. Kāšāni joined the anti-British struggle. Once the revolt was suppressed in October 1920, the British authorities are said to have issued a warrant for



Kāšāni's arrest; he escaped Iraq and reached Tehran in 1921 (Šarīf Rāzi, I, p. 268).

#### KĀŠĀNI IN IRAN: 1921-41

*Returning to Iran.* On his return in 1921, Kāšāni was a 44-year-old man who had spent 28 years of his life in exile. In Tehran, Kāšāni continued to agitate against British rule in the Middle East and Egypt. In November 1925, Kāšāni was elected to the Iranian Constituent Assembly (Majles-e mo'assesān). On 12 December 1925, he voted in favor of the controversial Article 36, ending the Qajar dynasty and simultaneously installing Reza Shah's monarchy. Article 36 also guaranteed the continuity of the Pahlavi dynasty as the ruling monarchy through its male descendents (Fāṭemi, p. 494).

#### KĀŠĀNI IN 1941-48

Until the departure of Reza Shah from Iran in 1941, Kāšāni stayed on the sidelines of domestic Iranian politics. The 21-year-old Mohammad Reza Shah ascended to his father's throne on 16 September 1941. On 8 October 1941, Kāšāni voiced his grievances to [Moḥammad 'Ali Foruḡi](#), the prime minister. In a letter, Kāšāni emphasized the necessity of applying the "divine laws" and criticized the gradual replacement of old religious schools with modern schools as well as the unacceptable behavior of the police harassing veiled women and turbaned clerics (Kāšāni, II, pp. 63-64).

*Pro-German activities.* On 16 June 1944, along with 164 other Iranians, Kāšāni was arrested by British forces. He was accused of collaboration and liaison with the Germans and membership in an organization affiliated with German S.S. officers. A communiqué issued by the British Embassy in Tehran after the raid on the so-called German fifth column identified Kāšāni and Ḥabīb-Allāh Nowbaḡt as the ringleaders of anti-Allied activities (*Rahbar*, 24 February 1944). Nowbaḡt was the founder of the Azure Party ("Hezb-e kabud") a pro-fascist political party founded on the basis of solidarity with Hitler's Nazi Germany. Kāšāni, Šams Qanātābādi, and General Faẓl-Allāh Zāhedi are reported to have been closely affiliated with the Azure Party (Qanātābādi, pp. 262-64). Kāšāni was released after the war and arrived in Tehran in September 1945 (Kāšāni, pp. 195-207). This was the first of Kāšāni's three rounds of imprisonment, house arrest, and exile between 1944 and 1950.

Again on 20 July 1946 Kāšāni was arrested in Sabzavār. He was accused of



sedition and disturbing the public peace and placed under house arrest in Behjatābād, a village near Qazvin (Kāšāni, p. 419). This eleven-month incarceration was the second round of his detentions.

*Kāšāni meets Navvāb Şafavi.* Sometime between September 1945 and late February 1946, Kāšāni met with a young cleric called Mojtabā Mir Lowḥi, better known as Navvāb Şafavi (q.v.). By this time, Navvāb Şafavi, a freshman student in Najaf, had obtained two *fatwas* to murder [Aḥmad Kasravi](#) and had returned to Iran to carry out his mission. Two *mojtaheds* residing in Iraq, Ayatollahs Abd-al-Ḥosayn Amini and Ḥosayn Qomi, had ruled that Kasravi was an apostate and his blood was forfeit (Amini, p. 64).

In the meeting between the 68-year-old Kāšāni and the 21-year-old Navvāb Şafavi, an important covenant with the objective of establishing an Islamic Government was concluded (‘Arāqi, p. 32; Kosrowšāhi, p. 57). From 1945 to 1951 a solid axis was formed between the two men. During this period, Kāšāni became the source of emulation of the [Fedā’iān-e Eslām](#) (“Devotees of Islam”), and as such his edicts became undisputable obligations incumbent upon the members of this organization (Yazdi, p. 169). Navvāb Şafavi’s organization of Fedā’iān-e Eslām declared its objectives and existence on 28 February 1945, ten days before the assassination of Kasravi.

*Solidarity with the Palestinian cause.* In response to the U.N. partition of Palestine, the Kāšāni-Navvāb Şafavi axis began its political activities by campaigning for Arab Palestinians and against British policy and Jewish encroachments in the region. From January 1948 on, Kāšāni and Navvāb Şafavi issued fiery communiqués and organized a series of high profile demonstrations and marches in Tehran. In his declarations and speeches on Palestine Kāšāni usually attacked premiers Aḥmad Qavām and later [‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Hażir](#) for their corruption and mismanagement of the affairs of the nation. Kāšāni held the Jews who had migrated from all over the world to Palestine as responsible for the injustice and murder committed against the Muslims, distinguishing them from the Jews living in Muslim countries. He reminded his audience that Jews under the protection of Muslim countries benefited from the security and sanctity of life and property (Dehnavi, I, p. 44).

*Agitating against the Hażir government.* The premiership of Hażir, which began on 12 June 1948, further cemented the Kāšāni-Navvāb Şafavi alliance. Hażir was rumored to be close to the British and a trusted confidant of the court. During the rancorous campaign conducted against Hażir, Navvāb Şafavi



acted as Kāšāni's "special representative" and right-hand man (Tafreši and Tāher Aḥmadi, II, p. 157; Ḳosrowšāhi, pp. 72-76). Kāšāni publicly announced that Hażir's premiership was harmful for the country. In the days that followed, the demonstrations incited and orchestrated by Kāšāni and managed by Navvāb Şafavi in Tehran intensified, and cities such as Qom, Mashad, and [Isfahan](#), joined in (Rahnema, p. 36). But the electric week of protestations and agitation in mid-June of 1948 died out abruptly without attaining its objective of forcing Hażir to resign.

Kāšāni's anti-Hażir campaign was a mysterious one. It has been suggested that Sayyed Żiā'-al-Din Ṭabāṭabā'i, who was very closely associated with British interests in Iran, was instrumental in what seemed to be a Kāšāni-Navvāb Şafavi anti-Hażir and anti-British campaign. The majority of those who attended the five-day demonstrations were supporters of Sayyed Żiā'-al-Din, whom Kāšāni is reported to have met with around the time of the protests (Tafreši and Tāher Aḥmadi, II, pp. 141, 168, 168).

*Society of Muslim Mujaheds.* In December of 1948, with the assistance of Maḥmud Şervin, another close associate of Kāšāni, Qanātābādi founded the "Society of Muslim Mujaheds" (Majma'-e mosalmānān-e mojāhed) (Qanātābādi, pp. 72-73, 106; *Ḳvāndanihā*, 7 Dey 1327/28 December 1948). At this time, in addition to Navvāb Şafavi, the zealous and awe-inspiring soldier of the Hidden Imam, Kāšāni needed a more flexible, mundane, and suave diplomat-cum-enforcer who could negotiate with various people whom Kāšāni befriended. Şams Qanātābādi and his "Association of Muslim Mujaheds" proved to be the ideal candidate and organization. This multi-task organization became Kāšāni's religious, political, cultural, and social executive arm and mouthpiece.

#### POPULARITY AND INFLUENCE DURING EXILE: FEBRUARY 1949 – JUNE 1950

*The assassination attempt on the shah.* On 4 February 1949 during an official commemoration ceremony at the University of Tehran, Nāşer Faḳr Ārā'i shot five bullets at Mohammad Reza Shah. The shah escaped from the assassination attempt. Faḳr Ārā'i was said to have had sympathies for the pro-Soviet Tudeh Party of Iran, yet he was at the ceremony as a reporter for the newspaper *Parĉam-e Eslām* (The Flag of Islam), the managing director of which was Faḳihi Şirāzi. It was reported that Kāšāni had personally introduced Faḳr Ārā'i to the newspaper ('Arāqi, p. 34; 'Āqeli, I, p. 420). It is doubtful that Kāšāni and Faḳihi Şirāzi had any knowledge or role in the assassination attempt. Kāšāni



was arrested and sent to the infamous Falak al-Aflāk fortress before he was put on a plane and sent first to Damascus and then exile in Beirut (‘Arāqi, p. 35; Dehnavi, I, p. 251).

In Kāšāni’s absence, three major events marked the Iranian political and religious scene; from exile, Kāšāni played a commanding role in each event. First, Kāšāni ordered his followers and sympathizers, including the Fedā’iān-e Eslām and Qanātābādi, to cooperate with nationalist figures during the 16th Majles elections; second, Kāšāni’s old target of wrath, Hażir, was assassinated by a member of the Fedā’iān-e Eslām; and third, an unusual wave of unrest and agitation spread among the Seminary School students and the clergy in Qom.

At the end of September 1949, Kāšāni issued his directive concerning the elections to the 16th Majles. The list of candidates supported by Kāšāni included himself, Moḥammad Moşaddeq, Abu’l-Ḥasan Ḥā’erizādeh, Ḥosayn Makki, Możaffar Baqā’i, Abdu’l-Qadir Āzād, Sayyed ‘Ali Şāyegān, and Maḥmud Narimān (Dehnavi, I, p. 61; Dehnavi, V, p. 105; Kōsrowşāhi, p. 83; Maleki, p. 19). At this time, Kāšāni also prompted Navvāb Şafavi’s “Devotees of Islam” and Qanātābādi’s “Association of Muslim Mujahids” to enter into a tactical and operational alliance with the National Front (Jebhe-ye Melli) in order to assure the election of his designated candidates (Kōsrowşāhi, p. 83; ‘Arāqi, p. 38; Qanātābādi, p. 129). The National Front, under the leadership of Moşaddeq, announced its formation on the eve of 22 October 1949.

Faced with Navvāb Şafavi’s irritation at the collaboration with National Front members, whom he considered insufficiently pious, Kāšāni presented a two-phase political plan. He argued that, at the time, religious forces did not possess religious notables skilled in the art of politics. Therefore, it was first necessary to use and take advantage of those politicians who had nationalist tendencies. Kāšāni argued that in the meantime the religious forces should train and educate politicians who were pious and possessed a solid religious stature (‘Arāqi, p. 38; Ḥosayni, p. 97).

Kāšāni’s argument convinced Navvāb Şafavi, and he actively entered into a tactical alliance with the National Front. Thus, the Kāšāni-Navvāb Şafavi axis joined forces with the National Front and Moşaddeq. Despite the efforts of this newly formed alliance to keep a close watch on the polling stations and ensure free elections, widespread government intervention and fraud led to the gradual elimination of candidates supported by the Kāšāni-Navvāb Şafavi-



Moşaddeq alliance (‘Arāqi, p. 42; Sanjābi, p. 97).

*Assassination of Hażir.* On 2 November 1949, twelve days after the inception of the National Front, ‘Abd-al-Ḥosayn Hażir, the powerful minister of court and one of the shah’s closest confidants, was assassinated at the Sepahsalar Mosque (Masjed-e Sepahsālār). Hażir’s assassin, Sayyed Ḥosayn Emāmi, a member of the Fedā’iān-e Eslām, which had already assassinated Aḥmad Kasravi, fired on him at close range and then gave himself up. The Fedā’iān-e Eslām had come to the conclusion that, since the peaceful protest of the National Front had failed to annul the “illegal” elections, Hażir had to pay the ultimate price (Košniyat, p. 44).

One of the many theories as to who ordered Hażir’s assassination points an accusing finger at Kāšāni. Qanātābādi opines that Emāmi had the highest esteem and regard for Kāšāni, and the Ayatollah was known to approve of killing the enemies of religion and those who spread corruption on earth (Qanātābādi, p. 126). At the time, it was widely rumored that Kāšāni was behind the assassination of Hażir. In a conversation with the British ambassador to Tehran, the shah assured him that Kāšāni was aware of the assassination (F. O. 371/75467, 14 November 1949).

In the aftermath of Hażir’s assassination, the previous elections were annulled and a new election campaign was launched. On 9 April 1950 the Tehran results of the election to the Majles were announced. Moşaddeq, Kāšāni and the other candidates of the Kāšāni-Mošaddeq axis were all elected. This strong minority faction in parliament set the nationalization of the oil industry as its prime objective. It would be historically valid to say that, without the assassination of Hażir by Emāmi, the irregular first round of Tehran elections would not have been annulled and the second round would not have happened.

*Kāšāni vs. Borujerdi.* In exile, Kāšāni construed Ayatollah Borujerdi’s indifference to his arrest as an act of betrayal. In the aftermath of Kāšāni’s arrest on 5 February 1949, Navvāb Şafavi dispatched a number of his followers to Borujerdi’s house to convince the Ayatollah to intercede with the authorities for Kāšāni’s freedom (Golmoḥammadi, p. 222). Borujerdi’s reception of the members of the Fedā’iān-e Eslām who had staged a sit-in at his house was cold and inhospitable (Kosrowşāhi, p. 81). This incident aggravated the differences that already existed between the two Ayatollahs’ perceptions of the role and responsibilities of religious leadership and the relation between



religion and politics.

From 1950, Kāšāni directed his followers to persuade the people that political quietism and apathy in the face of injustice was an irreligious act (Dehnavi, V, p. 99). In an important letter, Kāšāni informed Reżā Faqihzādeh of “a highly confidential” plan. He explained that “some of our friends have entered the Qom Seminary Center (Ḥawza-ye ‘elmiya-ye Qom) and ordered him to “purge” the Center with the help of this newly infiltrated group (Dehnavi, I, p. 62).

Relying on the Fedā’iān-e Eslām on the ground, Kāšāni hoped to remove Borujerdi from his position as the highest source of emulation by way of a coup. If Kāšāni was to succeed in replacing Borujerdi with Ayatollah Sayyed Moḥammad K̄vānsāri, his old friend from Najaf, he could rally the powerful religious establishment of the country behind his own religio-political ambitions. Consequently, between 1949 and 1950, the Fedā’iān-e Eslām concentrated their efforts on Qom and tried to infiltrate the Qom religious center.

In May 1950, the government’s plan to transport Reza Shah’s corpse to Qom for the appropriate religious ceremonies provided a good opportunity for the Fedā’iān-e Eslām to mobilize and politicize the city’s clergy following Kāšāni’s edict. In Qom, Navvāb Şafavi denounced the deceased shah and ordered the clergy not to attend the ceremonies, threatening them with death if they disobeyed (*Yād* 6, Spring 1987, p. 46). The Fedā’iān-e Eslām’s intimidation tactics bore fruit and the clergy stayed home, giving the general impression that Borujerdi’s authority in Qom was waning while that of Kāšāni and the Fedā’iān-e Eslām was on the ascent.

On 30 May 1950, ten days before Kāšāni’s triumphant return to Iran, Borujerdi referred to the Fedā’iān-e Eslām’s recent activities in Qom and warned the seminary students engaging in politics that they would be purged if they continued their activities (Manzur-al-Ajdād, pp. 462-63). Even though Borujerdi was cautioning the politicized sympathizers of the Fedā’iān-e Eslām who had disrupted the academic life of Qom, his words were primarily directed at Kāšāni and probably also at Ayatollah K̄vānsāri (Kalkāli, p. 42).

On 3 June 1950, clerical students (*tollāb*) affiliated with the Fedā’iān-e Eslāmin in Qom wrote two communiqués, precipitating the showdown with Borujerdi (Davani, p. 376). In one, they attacked Borujerdi in highly offensive and vulgar language, and in the other they invited the clergy to participate in Kāšāni’s



welcoming ceremonies in Tehran (Rahnema, p. 90). The provocation evoked the wrath of Ayatollah Borujerdi's followers (mainly combative strongmen from Lur tribes of Borujerd), who brandished their clubs and sticks. In the scuffle that ensued Ayatollah K̄vānsāri's prayers on 4 June 1950, the followers of the Fedā'iān-e Eslām and Kāšāni were assaulted, sent to the hospital, and eventually chased out of Qom (Rahnema, pp. 90-93; Amini, p. 158; Davāni, pp. 376-77; Kalkāli, p. 45). If Kāšāni had hoped that on his return to Iran he would have a cooperative and obedient source of emulation in place and that he would have the spiritual authority of the *ruḥāniyat* (the clerical institution) in the palm of his hand, his plans were foiled.

#### THE KĀŠĀNI-MOŠADDEQ-NAVVĀB ŠAFĀVI ALLIANCE

*Return from exile.* Upon the official invitation of Prime Minister 'Ali Maṣṣūr, Kāšāni returned to Iran on 10 June 1950 (Āqeli, I, p. 433). Tehran extended a very warm welcome to the Ayatollah. Buses carried his picture, while crowds brandishing his photograph and the Iranian flag gathered around the airport. The welcoming party at the airport included, among others, Mošaddeq, Mozaḥḥar Baqā'i, Sayyed 'Ali Šāyegān, Sayyed Mehdi Mir Ašrāfi, [Ayatollah Behbahāni](#), and [Ša'bān Ja'fari](#) (*Ruḥāni-e mobārez* I, pp. 102-7; Saršār, pp. 78-80).

Four days after his return, Kāšāni met with members of the National Front at Mošaddeq's house and told them that, even though he would not become an official member of the organization, he would support it wholeheartedly. Kāšāni then rushed to Qom for an eighteen-hour visit (*Ruḥāni-e mobārez* I, p. 143).

The main object of Kāšāni's trip was to meet Ayatollah Borujerdi and probably to mend fences with him, even if superficially. During a cold yet candid meeting, Kāšāni informed Borujerdi that he did not expect to have his support on political initiatives and issues, but he appealed to Borujerdi not to disapprove of his initiatives publicly. Borujerdi's response typified his measured style of conversation. The Ayatollah said; "I will inform everyone that I consider you a just jurist" (*Hamšahri-e māh*, 24 February 2001). Kāšāni knew that Borujerdi would not follow his political lead and was content with an understanding of non-belligerence between the two. He needed assurances that the highest source of Shi'ite emulation would not undermine his religious authority. Borujerdi acknowledged Kāšāni as a just (*ādel*), but not a distinguished, Islamic jurist, implying that in religious domains Kāšāni's position remained subordinate to those who were the most knowledgeable



(*alam*).

Back in Tehran, Kāšāni's 17 June 1950 speech to the Majles was read out by Moṣaddeq, symbolizing the proximity and unity between the two. Kāšāni informed the parliamentarians that Iran's oil belonged to the Iranian people. He warned that Iranians would not yield to despotism and posited that the Constituent Assembly (Majles-e moassesān) of March 1948 was null and void because of the unlawful electoral process by which its members had been chosen (Dehnavi, I, p. 73).

#### RAZMĀRĀ'S ASSASSINATION AND OIL NATIONALIZATION

Under pressure from Moṣaddeq and the National Front to clarify his position on the controversial Gass-Golshayan Supplemental Oil Agreement signed in July 1949 (see [ANGLO-PERSIAN OIL COMPANY](#)), 'Ali Maṣūr resigned fifteen days after Kāšāni's return. The National Front and Kāšāni opposed the ratification of this agreement by the Majles, arguing that it was against national interests and continued to guarantee British monopoly and hegemony over Iran's oil industry. Subsequently, the shah appointed General Hājj 'Ali Razmārā as prime minister on 26 June 1950 ('Āqeli, I, p. 435). A few days later, after delivering his own speech on Razmārā's premiership at the Majles, Moṣaddeq read out Kāšāni's communiqué. Kāšāni's line of attack on Razmārā was very similar to Moṣaddeq's. Kāšāni warned of invisible hands pushing Iran into "the clutches of a dictatorship." He argued that Razmārā was trying to usurp power with the support and intervention of foreigners. Kāšāni argued that in conformity with "the majority of Muslims" he too "strongly and categorically opposed" Razmārā's government (Dehnavi, I, pp. 75-76).

Throughout Razmārā's ten-month premiership, Kāšāni and his allies escalated their criticism of him and his administration. The Kāšāni-Moṣaddeq axis confronted Razmārā on three simultaneous fronts: the parliament, the press, and the streets. On the day that Razmārā came to the Majles to obtain a vote of confidence for his cabinet, he was greeted by shouts of "death to the dictator"; and on his way out, having obtained 95 of the 106 votes, his car was attacked by stone-throwing members of Kāšāni's Fedā'iān-e Eslām and Mosalmānān-e mojāhed ('Arāqi, pp. 62-63; Šervin, p. 112).

On 18 June 1950 the Selected Committee or Special Oil Committee of 18 deputies, commissioned by the Majles to study the Gass-Golshayan Supplemental Oil Agreement and report back, concluded that the Agreement



was insufficient to secure Iran's rights, and they therefore opposed it (Makki, 1984, p. 307). From November 1950, the calls for oil nationalization echoed in the Iranian parliament (Makki, 1984, pp. 208, 285, 289, 291). On 12 December 1950 Iranian newspapers published Kāšāni's *fatwa*. In his edict, "the great leader of Muslims" established "the religious and patriotic duty of the Islamic people of Iran" (*Šāhed-e kešāvarzān*, 13 December 1950). Kāšāni ruled that "all Iranians should demand the nationalization of Iran's oil industry throughout the entire geographical expanse of the country" (*ibid.*).

In parliament and on the streets, however, the anti-Razmārā and pro-nationalization current prompted by the Kāšāni-Moṣaddeq axis rapidly gained momentum. In rallies ranging from a few thousand to about 60,000 participants, at which various organizations associated with Kāšāni were present, Razmārā was denounced as a traitor and a foreign puppet, as Hažir was before him.

Kāšāni's evocation of his religious duty to support the oil nationalization movement was also a message to Borujerdi and the cautious, non-politicized clerical establishment, unconvinced of mixing religion with politics, to rally behind him. The only influential clergy who responded positively was Ayatollah K̄vānsāri (*Šāhed*, 13 February 1951; *Nabard-e mellat*, 15 February 1951). *Nabard-e mellat*, the mouthpiece of Kāšāni and the Fedā'iān-e Eslām at this time, wrote: "Ayatollah K̄vānsāri, the leader of millions of good-hearted Muslims, has voiced his categorical position, though Ayatollah Borujerdi has yet to break his silence on this vital issue" (*Nabard-e mellat*, 15 February 1951). Borujerdi, however, did not break his public silence.

On 7 March 1951 Razmārā was shot to death at The Shah's Mosque (Masjed-e šāh). K̄alil Ṭahmāsbī, a 26-year-old member of the Fedā'iān-e Eslām, was arrested for his murder. Sometime in early January of that year, Navvāb Ṣafavi and Kāšāni met at Ḥājj Abu'l-Qāsem Rafi'i's house to discuss Razmārā's fate. Kāšāni is reported to have presented Navvāb Ṣafavi with a list of seven politicians, at the top of which was Razmārā's name, who should be assassinated to pave the way for religious and national progress ('Arāqi, pp. 76-77).

After the assassination of Razmārā, Kāšāni sent word to the Fedā'iān-e Eslām: "you have severed Britain's artery; I do not think it is necessary to kill anyone else" (*Nabard-e mellat* as *Navā-ye mellat*, 23 January 1951). Kāšāni publicly announced that the murder of the prime minister was in the interest of Iran



and Ṭahmāsbī's bullet was the best and most useful blow against colonialism and the enemies of Iran (*Šāhed*, 18 March 1951). Less than a week after Razmārā's assassination, the Majles voted unanimously to nationalize Iran's oil industry.

#### KĀŠĀNI'S REALIGNMENTS

*Rupture with Fedā'iān-e Eslām.* Following Razmārā's assassination, the imprisonment of Ṭahmāsbī, the imposition of martial law, nationalization of the oil industry, and the growing popularity and power of Kāšāni and the National Front, Kāšāni's relations with Navvāb Šafavi deteriorated, ending in a bitter feud, at which point Navvāb Šafavi threatened to kill the Ayatollah. Kāšāni was attempting to take political credit for the assassination and the nationalization of oil to strengthen his own position on the Iranian political scene. He was also trying to appease the worries of the court and Ḥosayn 'Alā', the new prime minister, by demonstrating that the time for political assassinations and violence was over. The Fedā'iān-e Eslām, on the other hand, felt used and betrayed.

Fedā'iān-e Eslām threatened that, if Ṭahmāsbī was not released within three days, further bloodshed would follow (*Ḳošniyat*, p. 57). This untimely threat infuriated Kāšāni. It undermined his authority over the activities of the Fedā'iān-e Eslām in the eyes of others. Kāšāni also feared that such threats would lead to the Fedā'iān's repression and arrest. On the evening of 21 March 1951, the key operational and propaganda figures of the Fedā'iān, other than Navvāb Šafavi, were arrested (*Eṭṭelā'āt*, 30 March 1951).

After Mošaddeq assumed the premiership on 28 April 1951 the Fedā'iān-e Eslām expected him to release their arrested members. As they lingered behind bars, Navvāb Šafavi felt more betrayed and frustrated. In an abusive and slanderous proclamation, Navvāb Šafavi lashed out at the National Front and particularly at Kāšāni, referring to him as worse than "Parisian whores" and proclaiming his blood forfeit (*Goft o gu*, Fall 2000; Qanātābādi, p. 213; *Ruḥāni-e mobārez* I, p. 399). The Kāšāni camp retaliated mercilessly by accusing the Fedā'iān-e Eslām of being a mysterious and corrupt circle of dishonorable thieves founded by the British and acting consciously and intentionally as their murderous agents (*Šāhed*, 8 May 1951). About five weeks after Mošaddeq became prime minister, Navvāb Šafavi was arrested.

*Social democracy and religious tolerance.* Mošaddeq's premiership implied



Kāšāni's rise to power. The Ayatollah was in an exceptional position. He had immeasurable political power and extensive authority as Moṣaddeq's unofficial political partner, yet he had no official responsibilities. During his political honeymoon with Moṣaddeq, all religion-related cultural issues—such as consumption of alcoholic beverages, musical programs on the national radio, women in the workplace, the veil, cinemas, theaters and cabarets—to which Kāšāni had been highly sensitive during Razmārā's period suddenly became secondary and non-pressing (*Ruḥāni-e mobārez* I, pp. 284, 285, 305, 316, 342). Whenever the necessity of addressing such concerns was raised by zealous clerics, Kāšāni diplomatically retorted that the oil nationalization drive and ridding the country of the British evil constituted his prime objective (*Kosrowšāhi*, p. 140; *Dehnavi*, I, p. 160).

In this period, Kāšāni's discourse moved away from religious concerns. Throughout 1951, Kāšāni focused his non-oil-related speeches on the promise of providing “a comfortable and prosperous life for all social classes”; “free education, health and social justice throughout the country”; constructing a “free and honorable living environment”; and “caring for the under-privileged and the working classes” (*Eṭṭelā'āt*, 6 November 1951). The Ayatollah's discourse was that of an Islamic social democrat. During this period, Kāšāni was a loyal ally of Moṣaddeq and the political parties supporting him. Until November 1952, Kāšāni did not miss an opportunity to reiterate his full and unconditional support for Moṣaddeq and his policies (*Šāhed*, 18 May 1951; 21 September 1951; 11 August 1950; *Eṭṭelā'āt*, 14 July 1950).

*Kāšāni in command.* With the beginning of the election campaign for the 17th Majles on 25 December 1951, Kāšāni turned his attention to sending his hand-picked candidates to parliament. Kāšāni's support for the election of Qanātābādi as the deputy from Šāhrud created major political tensions leading to the resignation of Amir Teymur Kalāli, Moṣaddeq's trustworthy minister of the interior. Under pressure from the Ayatollah to succumb to his wishes, Allāhyār Šāleḥ, the new minister of the interior sent word to Kāšāni that, as much as he respected the Ayatollah, he was not his servant nor could he engage in any illegal activities during the election (*Movaḥḥed*, p. 400). Even Makki, who at this time was very close to Kāšāni, lamented that the Ayatollah's sons were actively intervening in various districts to ensure the election of their designated candidates (*Maleki*, pp. 46-47).

During the 4 December 1951 bloody clashes, pro-Tudeh newspaper offices as well as anti-Kāšāni, anti-Baqā'i, and anti-Moṣaddeq newspaper headquarters



were gutted, ransacked, and looted. The anti-government members of the 16th Majles accused Moṣaddeq of unleashing his thugs against the people and the opposition. In a tense parliamentary session Jamāl Emāmi, Sayyed Moḥammad-‘Ali Šuštari, and Sayyed Mehdi Pirāsteh accused the prime minister of being an incurable disease for the nation and poured personal and political scorn on him. Disheartened by this event Moṣaddeq informed the members of the National Front of his decision to resign (Maleki, p. 38; Makki, 1999, p. 24). According to one hypothesis, it was Kāšāni who convinced Moṣaddeq not to do so (Maleki, p. 38). Kāšāni issued two communiqués inviting the people to prove their loyalty to Moṣaddeq through demonstrations and accusing Moṣaddeq’s detractors of being “obedient slaves to the British Embassy” (*Eṭṭelā’āt*, 11 December 1951). The people’s response was overwhelming, and on 11 December 1951, at Kāšāni’s behest, Tehran re-asserted its allegiance to Moṣaddeq.

*“30 Tir” insurrection.* After the 17th Majles was convened, Moṣaddeq was reconfirmed as prime minister on 8 July 1952. Three days later, Moṣaddeq, who had already met with the shah and demanded extra-ordinary financial, military, and executive powers, discussed his plans with the new members of parliament. On 15 July, the shah disagreed with Moṣaddeq’s decision to serve also as defense minister, and on the next day, Moṣaddeq resigned. On 18 July, the shah appointed Aḥmad Qavām as prime minister.

Even though by this time signs of disagreement and irritation were manifest between the two, on 18 July Kāšāni issued a powerful communiqué in which he declared that Moṣaddeq’s government was “the strongest barrier against colonial atrocities” and asserted that his removal and Qavām’s appointment was “the result of colonial policies.” He ordered Iranians to engage in a jihad (see [islam in iran xi. jihad in islam](#)) against Qavām’s government and warned that the Muslim people of Iran would not allow foreigners to threaten their independence and sovereignty (Dehnavi, II, p. 206). At five in the afternoon of the 30th of Tir (20 July), after the tanks rolled into the streets of Tehran and the military opened fire on the crowd, killing some 25 people, Tehran radio announced the resignation of Qavām (*Āqeli*, I, p. 468).

#### KĀŠĀNI OPPOSES MOSSADEQ

*From friendship to malaise.* The fall of Qavām represents the apex of Kāšāni’s political cooperation with Moṣaddeq. Out of natural self-preservation and interest, Kāšāni stood by Moṣaddeq. The aftermath of this pinnacle of



solidarity was a rapid fracture and demise. After Moṣaddeq's return to power, Kāšāni was voted as the president of the 17th Majles.

The popular uprising which triumphantly reinstated the power and authority of both Kāšāni and Moṣaddeq convinced both men that they could, each independent of the other, lead the nationalization movement and resolve the domestic and international problems that resulted from it. While Moṣaddeq was growing weary of Kāšāni's patronal interventions, heavy-handed dealings with his opponents, and clientalism, the Ayatollah was growing impatient of being in the shadow of Moṣaddeq, always supporting him at crucial moments and not being at the helm. In the aftermath of Qavām's fall, Moṣaddeq decided to retract his accommodation of Kāšāni and his ally, Baqā'i. Moṣaddeq concentrated on domestic policy and made independent decisions that previously would have been made in consultation with Kāšāni.

In November 1952, Kāšāni criticized Moṣaddeq's Bill on Public Security (*Amniyat ejtemā'i*), not because of its content, but because he had not consulted the Ayatollah (Makki, 1991, p. 91). In mid-December, Kāšāni railed against Moṣaddeq's demand for a one-year extension of his exceptional powers as illegal, unconstitutional, and dictatorial (*Eṭṭelā'āt*, 18 January 1953). In his capacity as the president of the Majles, Kāšāni prohibited the parliament from considering Moṣaddeq's request. Kāšāni's rebuke of Moṣaddeq resulted in mass demonstrations across Iran in support of extending Moṣaddeq's exceptional powers. The parliament's Governing Board (*hay'at-e ra'iseh*) ruled against Kāšāni's prohibition, and the deputies voted overwhelmingly in favor of Moṣaddeq's demand (Rahnema, pp. 786-94).

Moṣaddeq's new appointments could be construed as unfriendly, if not disrespectful, towards Kāšāni and his entourage. He appointed Brigadier General Moḥammad Daftari, his relative and the man who had roughed up and arrested Kāšāni before sending him to exile in 1948, as the new Chief of Customs Guards. He also replaced Brigadier General 'Aziz-Allāh Kamāl, the Chief of Police who was close to Kāšāni, with Brigadier General Moḥammad Afšārṭus and removed Šervin, the Ayatollah's close confidant, from the directorship of the powerful Religious Endowment Organization (Awqāf; *Bāktar-e emruz*, 11 December 1952; *Eṭṭelā'āt*, 20 January 1953; Rahnema, p. 779). The unease and tension between Kāšāni and Moṣaddeq increased as anti-Kāšāni announcements with injurious cartoons of the Ayatollah began to circulate. It is reported that most of these cartoons and inflammatory publications were prepared in Washington by a high-ranking CIA consultant,



Donald Wilber (Wilber, 2000).

#### UNCOMFORTABLE POLITICAL ALLIANCE

The conspiracy of the “9th of Esfand” (27 February 1953) was the beginning of a decisive phase in Kāšāni’s political career. The Ayatollah decided to oppose, remove, and replace Moṣaddeq. At this point, Kāšāni was convinced that it was more important to neutralize Moṣaddeq’s “threat” than to keep his alliance in the face of dangers threatening the oil nationalization movement. The shah’s decision to leave the country for a while, even though Moṣaddeq was against the idea, provided Kāšāni with an ideal occasion to demonstrate that Moṣaddeq sought to oust the shah and consolidate all powers in his own hands. On 27 February, Kāšāni wrote two letters directly to the shah requesting him not to leave the country and issued a fatwa instructing the people to mobilize and the bazaar to close in protest against the shah’s planned departure. After receiving his orders, Ša’bān Ja’fari, a well-known ring-leader of Tehran’s thugs, departed Kāšāni’s house to rally the crowds and close the bazaar (Saršār, p. 123).

The combined efforts of Kāšāni and Ayatollah Behbahāni—the latter was known for his close connection with the court and the British—bore fruit, and the crowds they mobilized or allegedly bought prevented the shah from leaving the country. These events were used by the new Kāšāni-Baqā’i-Behbahāni camp as an excuse to demonstrate that Moṣaddeq was intent on overthrowing the constitutional monarchy, chasing out the shah, exiling the ‘*olamā*’, and destroying the army (*Demokrāt-e Eslāmi*, 7 March 1953). Ousting the “rebellious prime minister” became a battle cry for Kāšāni and his allies (*Eṭṭelā’āt*, 11 March; 26 May 1953).

From the spring of 1953, U.S. and British diplomatic circles looked for a “suitable” replacement for Moṣaddeq who would guarantee their interest, possess national stature, and be acceptable to the shah. Kāšāni was considered as a possible replacement (FO 371/104566, 25 March 1953). By the end of March, U.S. and British authorities concluded that grooming Kāšāni would be contrary to their interests (FO 371/104565, 31 March 1953). Ḥosayn ‘Alā’, the minister of court, convinced the U.S. and the British that General Zāhedi was the ideal replacement for Moṣaddeq and that the general also benefited from Kāšāni’s support (FO 371/104564, 7 April 1953).

*Kāšāni supports Zāhedi and the coup.* From late April 1953, Kāšāni’s name was



associated with attempts at destabilizing Moṣaddeq's government. On 20 April 1953 General Maḥmud Afšārṭus, Moṣaddeq's loyal chief of police was abducted and murdered by a group of four brigadiers. Brigadier General 'Ali-Ašḡar Mozayyeni, one of the key military figures involved in the plot, admitted to having had contacts and meetings with Kāšāni, his son Sayyed Moṣṭafā, Qanātābādi, and Baqā'i (Torkamān, 1984, p. 92). In the process of investigating Afšārṭus's murder, the authorities sought to interrogate General Zāhedi, whose son had provided one of the participants with a gun (ibid., p. 106). Zāhedi claimed that he could not trust the legal system and sought sanctuary in the Majles. Kāšāni, as president of the parliament, granted him safety. Under Kāšāni's protection, Zāhedi conducted his anti-Moṣaddeq activities in coordination with the CIA (Wilber, 2000, pp. 7, 26; Rahnema, p. 931).

In the eyes of the Kāšāni camp, Moṣaddeq had become a traitor, who was not only jeopardizing national and religious interests, but was in collusion with foreigners. Kāšāni's new line of propaganda was to present Moṣaddeq as a puppet of the communists pushing Iran into the arms of the atheists and Bolsheviks (*Mellat-e mā*, 13 August 1953). At this point, Kāšāni suddenly became an anti-communist crusader, aligning himself with the shah (Rahnema, pp. 974-75).

On 29 June 1953, threatened by the National Front candidate 'Abd-Allāh Mo'azzami, who successfully laid claim to Kāšāni's presidency of the Majles, the Ayatollah issued a fatwa-like communiqué in which he called Moṣaddeq a rebel against Iran's constitutional regime and promised that he would be hanged (*Siāsat-e mā*, 1 July 1953). Less than a month before the coup, Kāšāni donned his religious cap once again and declared that Moṣaddeq's government was opposed to the holy religion of Islam (*Eṭṭelā'āt*, 29 July 1953).

In the midst of organizing crowds following the failure of the first coup attempt on 16 August 1953, Asad-Allāh Rašidiān, a main MI6 operative, suggested that the CIA team "seek help from Ayatollah Kashani and said he could be contacted through their ally Ahmad Aramesh. In the early morning of August 19, two CIA officers therefore went to Aramesh's home and gave him ten thousand dollars to give to Kashani to organize demonstrations. It is not clear whether Kashani [or his son Mostafa] received this money and, if so, whether he used it for this purpose" (Gasirowski, p. 254).

On 19 August 1953, the coup against Moṣaddeq succeeded (see [COUP D'ÉTAT OF 1953](#)). Among those "upon whom reliance had been placed" by the CIA,



Moṣṭafā Kāšāni, the Ayatollah's son, spoke on the radio announcing the ousting of Moṣaddeq (Wilber, 2000, p. 63). Šervin, another close associate of Kāšāni, was among those who spoke on the radio before the victorious General Zāhedi, the shah's newly appointed prime minister, went on the air (*Eṭṭelā'āt*, 22 August 1953). Two days after the coup, Kāšāni and Zāhedi met to discuss the political situation (*Ātaš*, 22 August 1953).

#### KĀŠĀNI IN ISOLATION

The social base which rallied to the cause of Moṣaddeq and Kāšāni during the "30 Tir" insurrection supported Moṣaddeq and Kāšāni for their anti-colonialist, pro-nationalization, and anti-autocratic positions. The fall of Moṣaddeq brought back the colonialists and imperialists, de-nationalized the oil industry, and restored an autocratic shah. Kāšāni, who had passionately supported Moṣaddeq's fall, lost his original social base without managing to acquire a new one. Kāšāni lost his people in the aftermath of the coup, and two years later, on 13 November 1955 he lost his beloved son Moṣṭafā, who had become a member of the Majles.

On 19 January 1956 the alienated and saddened Kāšāni was once again humiliated. In connection with Razmārā's old assassination case, the 79-year-old Ayatollah was again arrested by those whom he had helped bring to power (*Ruḥāni-e mobārez* II, pp. 744, 746). Among those who pressed for Kāšāni's release was Ayatollah Borujerdi, who privately sent word to the shah that, if Kāšāni was not released immediately, he would personally have to come to Tehran (*Ruḥāni-e mobārez* II, pp. 747-51). The Ayatollah was released on 13 March 1956. Kāšāni continued to blame Moṣaddeq for Iran's fate after the coup and cursed him incessantly (*Ruḥāni-e mobārez* II, pp. 824, 858, 861). The policies of those whom he had helped bring to power did not please him either. He considered them as British agents and wrote: "I do not know what to do; I have no solutions" (Dehnavi, V, p. 292).

Until his death on 17 March 1962, Kāšāni remained an affable, politically concerned, and restless political cleric. Those who knew him remember him for his straight talk, his deep-felt sense of friendship, and famous term of endearment *bisavād* or "illiterate."



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Sources on Kāšāni can be broadly divided into two different periods: pre-Revolution and post-Revolution. Sources in the former period appear to be less exaggerated and more reliable, including the interview with him by Ẕosrowšāhi and writings on him in biographies of the *'olamā* and other documents, such as proceedings of the Majles or his own speeches. Certain studies published on Kāšāni during the post-Revolution period portray a laudatory and adulatory image of him and should be cautiously examined against reliable pre-Revolution sources and documents.

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