

Development of Secret Societies, Influenced by Social Democrat Parties, During Constitution

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Abstract: Among significant historical events of the world, the Iranian Constitutional Movement in 1906 has a significant position. This movement deserves to be considered as a real change in the life of Iranian national. By this movement, our nation could find victory over the middle-age dictatorship that dominated Iran on that time. A large group of people raised in the course of this movement and did their best; however, because of their ignorance on the path of international changes and lack of a structural and organized group, along with disregarding religious beliefs and tradition, the movement was torn apart and the revolution was diverted from its main path and the results which should have been gained were not obtained since the Iranian Constitutional Movement in its nature was a bourgeois revolution combined by religious interests. The secret societies and organizations were founded in constitution movement time via unity and cooperation. Many of these organizations were actually initiated by efforts of different political Figs such as Melkom, Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei, Rasoulzadeh and others. It should be noted that until victory of constitution, those movements and societies which had political and underground activities were named secret societies. This study studies creation of these societies and their activities as well as their rise and fall during constitution movement.

Key words: Secret societies, Social democrat parties

Introduction

In studying development of political parties, a review should be made on the collective activities and political cooperation before constitution age. Till victory of constitutionalists, the only political organizations which in some extent led underground activities were the "Secret Association", created at the end of Nassereddin Shah's reign and the beginning of Mozafareddin Shah's ruling.

In the mid- 19th century, a few authorities initiated some reforms in the governmental and state affairs. These people pursued two purposes, one was to block the foreigners' penetration in Iran via military reforms and the other purpose was to reform on state affairs. These imitators started with comparing the Iranian situation and the causes of its backwardness in comparison with the European countries, believing lack of law, security and freedom as the main reasons and factors in the backwardness.

Seyed Jamaledin Assadabadi spoke of the unity of world Moslems (Pan Islamism) to resist the aggressiveness of West. He believed that dictator governments could be overthrown only in the light of people's enlightenment and knowledge. It has been said that Seyed 's goal was to establish a republic and constitution. A number of constitutionalist leaders met him and with no doubt, had been influenced by his ideas. It has been recorded that Malekolmotekalemin, Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei and Haj Mohammad Hossein Aminolzarb, the father of Haj Hossein Aminolzarb had met him and were influenced by him.

Mirza Melkamkhan was another political Fig. who repeatedly called for reforms since 1855. The political Fig. of Melkom is a very controversial one; nevertheless, one may not deny his great share in awakening thought. Melkom was an Armenian who was educated in France. After returning to Iran, he was appointed as translator at Darolfonoun School and in 1855 left Iran to France accompanying Farrokh Khan Ghaffari's delegation. He cooperated in concluding Iran- English peace treaty in Paris. In return to Iran, he founded 'Faramoushkhaneh in Iran to practice his reform plans. Faramoushkhaneh was a secret organization similar to the European Freemasonry Leagues. One of the researchers believe on some similarities between Faramoushkhaneh and Sufist fractions and considers the success of Faramoushkhaneh as a by product of people's familiarity with those types of fractions.

The Sufist fractions had a traditional and religious organizations, while Faramoushkhaneh followed political goals. In Paris, Melkam became a member of League Ceramitea, a branch of League grand of Orient and in Iran, he founded the Faramoushkhaneh. Faramoushkhaneh had no relationship with the European leagues; however, some of their goals were similar, among which, one may call progress, development, change, morality and humanitarian. Melkam's use of semi-Freemasonry was not his own initiation since Freemasonry foundations in Europe was a political organization model in as much that it played a great role in creation and development of liberal thoughts in Europe, particularly in France and Belgium. Years later, in his interview with Scawn Blunt, the famous orientalist, in talking about Faramoushkhaneh, Melkam said that he had learned the essence and spirit of different religious sects of Christianity and the organizational structure of Freemasonry secret association and had mixed the European politics and Science with the religious knowledge of Asia. In fact, Melkam's goal was to mix religion with modern thought.

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However, since his ideas and goals were controversial, soon suspects aroused. Although he claimed that his ideas were not an innovation, it was clear that the consequences would have created many changes. Therefore, both Shah and the clergymen suspected him and in 1858, Shah ordered to close Faramouskhaneh and sent Melkam into exile. Later, Melkam returned to Iran in company of Mirza Hosseinkhan Moshiroldoleh and worked in the Iranian Embassy in England for a time. It was in the same place he started publishing "Ghanoun" (Law) newspaper. This newspaper was soon found much popularity among Iranian and despite being a banned one, it was distributed among groups of people.

Melkam's goal was to unite enlightened people to start activities and call for reforms. However, the method was a kind of deception and Melkam's efforts were aimed at colonialism purposes.

Melkam believed that political activities should be carried out via unity and cooperation and to establish this unity, he established "Adamiyat Association" which was a semi-Freemasonry foundation, similar to Faramouskhaneh. He was very much interested in cooperation of the Association, in particular. He called the members "Adam" (Human being) and they had to work in unity. He admitted that there might be some differences in personal thoughts; still he believed that they all should follow one single goal.

The group members were not allowed to show lack of interest to the situation of their country for, the main cause of all evils was disinterest. The members of the society had to believe the seven-principal of Adamiyat and do their best in keeping away from evils, take actions for goods, remove injustice and cruelty, try for unity, ask for knowledge, propagate humanity and keeping order and discipline.

During the last years of Nassereddin Shah's reign, any political activities and expression of reformist thoughts would be taken with suspects and were officially prohibited. However, during Mozafareddin Shah's rule, a relative freedom was given to people and as a result, the number of secret societies increased. All these societies aimed at following reforms and restricting Shah and government's power.

In 1982, the Secret Society was founded upon suggestion of Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei. It should be reminded that his father, Seyed Sadegh, was a member of Melkam's Faramouskhaneh. It seems Seyed Mohammad had also some connections with Freemasonry.

According to Nazemoleslam Kermani, Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei's goal of founding secret society was a basic one and he planned to awaken people by this. It seems that gradually, the society followed a more radical approach; however, it was not clear if the founders had that degree of radicalism or they adopted this approach in more definite and final way gradually.

The secret society had an association memorandum and its members were called "Fadaei" (self-sacrificed).

Kermani writes that they had sworn to work for justice house and parliament. According to him, Tabatabaei's goal was to establish a republic.

In one of the meetings of secret society, it has been discussed if there were no disagreement between establishing republic and constitution and it had been added that in principle, the goal is to overthrow injustice whether through establishing a republic state or constitutionalism. In addition to Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei and Nazemoleslam Kermani, other members of the society were: Sheikh Mohammad Shirazi Zolriasetyn, Seyed Borhan Khalkhali, Sheikh Hossein Ali Adib Behbahani and Mirza Agha Esfahani (called also Mujahed and later became a parliament member). Majdoleslam Kermani was another member who, in 1905, together with Mirza Hassan, principal of Roshdieh School, was exiled to Kalat by Einoldoleh.

Nazemoleslam writes that this society was in-charge of establishing unity and cooperation between two great Mojtaheed (religious leader) of Tehran; that is, Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei and Seyed Abdollah Behbahani. Another society, the National Society, claimed the same.

National Society (Anjoman Melli): This society was founded in Moharram of 1904. There were 60 members in the beginning. Malekolmotekalemin was one of the active members of this association and his son, Mehdi Malekzadeh has remarked on this society in his "History of Constitution".

National Society had a revolutionary nature and had been founded to unite and centralize separated political activities and societies.

Malekolmotekalemin believed that no reform could take place while power is not in people's possession. The goal of the society was to prepare ground for revolution and according to Malekzadeh, this society tried to establish cooperation between to great Mojtaheed of that time, Seyed Abdollah Behbahani and Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei. A number of members of National Society were revolutionaries and played effective role in the constitutionalism movement among whom, one may note Mirza Jahangirkhah, the editor of Sour-e- Esrafil newspaper, Seyed Mohammad Reza Mosavat, the editor of Mosavat Newspaper, Malekolmotekalemin and Seyed Jamal Vaez, both them were among highly influential lecturers and unchallengeable defenders of freedom. Yahya Dolatabadi and his brother, Ali Mohammad Dolatabadi who were of active members in revolution were also members of this society. Some of the members of this society had records of acquaintance with Seyed Jamaledin Assadabadi, of whom, one may mention Hajj Sayyah, Mirza Ali Akbar Saatsaz, Zokaolmoklk and Yahya Mirza.

Members of all social classes could be found in this society, great Mojtaheeds (religious leaders), significant

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merchants, landowners, civil employees, even one Khan (Lord of Land) and a Zoroastrian. The secret, particularly the committee, was a secret leader of Constitutionalism Movement during revolution.

The main cause of people's dissatisfaction was the heavy loans imposed by Russian to Iran. These loans were used in non-useful plans by Shah and the noblemen of the Court. A new customs contract with Russians, concluded by Noze- the Belgium national head of customs in 1902 faced with merchants' dissatisfaction. On the other hand, the increasing influence of foreigners in the state affairs led to confrontation the religious leaders and clergymen with government. The peak of societies' activities could be found in 1904 to 1907.

These societies worked hard to use the opportunity and reach their goals. The National Society made clergymen (Ulama) to accept the call for Justice House establishment. Nazemoleslam Kermani and Tabatabaei had privately talked of Justice House in Shah Abdolazim Shrine; however, their names were mistakenly missed.

In 1906, another society – "The Second Secret Society" (Anjoman Makhfi Sani)- was founded by Seyed Mohammad Tabatabaei to gain some more independence in action. A number of members of Secret Society were also members of this Society.

It seemed that this society had not have much importance and it had been only the National Society which had significant activities. A number of members of The National Society established a committee called "Revolution Committee" that worked with the aim of supporting the parliament. This committee had also some connections with the Russian's Social Democrats and Hemmat Party.

Russian socialists gave whatever helped they could to the Iranian in as much that the contributions showed their effectiveness in the second half of the revolution. Nevertheless, information in this connection is not much; for, most of the contributions were secret and through unofficial paths.

The British Minister had suspected some connection between the Iranian and Russian revolutionaries; still, he did not have much information. Spring Rice who had stayed in Russia before and had already observed the growth of revolutionary feelings was well aware of its consequences in Iran. According to him, it was day clear that the movement had penetrated from Caucasian to north Iran.

In another report, Spring Rice wrote : "The leaders of this movement are not infamous and its seems they are inspired from north and perhaps Caucasian. South is relatively calm." He also added that the movement was stronger in north Iran, Azarbaijan and Tehran and the number of secret societies had increased. In Baku and north Iran, a group of Fadaeis had sworn to endow their lives to fulfill the best interest of country. There had been some similarities between Russian and Iranian movements. Lack of leader, hate to government and secret activities. However, Iran's problem was lack of money, army and power.

In his history of Constitutionalism Revolution, a work which has a classic Fig. and is still used, Edward Brown does not show any information on this connection and only remarks on the Caucasians who were in Sepahdar's troops. A number of contemporary writers have expressed similarities between Russian and Iranian revolutions. It goes without doubt that a group of Iranian revolutionaries had been inspired from the Russia's revolution in 1905; still, the important point is the relationship between Russian Social Democrat revolutionaries and Iranian. Little information is available in this respect; however, after firing artillery to the parliament, the Social Democrats made effective aids to Tabriz Resist and Shomal (north) Movement in public.

It should be noted that in the beginning of 20th century, a large number of Iranian migrated to southern cities of Russia and Caucasian in search of employment. With no doubt, they were confronted with any kinds of political thoughts. According to the Russian sources, the number of these migrating labors in 1905 was 62000 and in 1911, their number increased to 200,000. In 1904, the Russians issued 71,400 entry permit to Russian territory, 90% of which were from Azarbaijan. However, it was possible that some would pass without permit. In 1891, 11% of labors in Baku were Iranian and in 1903, this number increased to 22.2%. Some authors have spoken of a group of Caucasians among Iranian revolutionaries. However, it should be noted that not all of them were Caucasians or Russian nationals, but Iranians who dressed in Caucasian style and could not be easily recognized and thus, one could not guess who was Iranian and who Caucasian.

In the beginning of 20th century, Socialism grew among Russian Moslems and soon, great number of people, particularly in Baku where most of settlers were oil industry labors, joined this school. The Russian Social Democrat Party was trying to attract the Moslem minorities of Russia and in 1905, Hemmat Party was founded by a group of local Bolshevik leaders, including Stalin, Aziz Beykof and Zaparadzeh.

The liberals "Markaz Gheybi" (Secret Center) which was established in Tabriz had in fact a small organization which worked in secret. It has been said that one of its plans was a copy of Caucasian Popular Plan.

The Russian Soviets of 1905 were the model of this society. Ali Monsieur, Haj Ali Davaforoush and Haj Rasoul Sedghiani were of the significant members of this society and had great influence in Tabriz. Perhaps, they were directing the society like a revolutionary committee. It seems that not all members of the society were led by Baku and there were some religious Figs in them as well.

The parliament was seriously weak and it seemed that societies were the only defenders of the Parliament. In his "Yaha's Survival" book, Dolatabadi marks "Baradaran Darvazeh Ghazvin", "Mozafari", "Shahabad" and "Mujahedeen" societies, all of whom were preparing to arm themselves for any possible attack from Shah and they had also

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informed the Parliament that they had 2000 armed men ready.

The Mujahedeen Society's name is seen less; however, there is no doubt that there had been such a society whose armed people were busy in Tabriz.

"Moslem Youth" was the first organization which was founded by Rasoulzadeh in 1902. The Turk language students of Russian universities and schools were members of this organization. Arousing and stimulating Turkish nationalism, developing Turkish language, studying the works of local authors and literature and reading anti-Russian poems and works of Turk Poets were among the goals of this organization. Till then, Turkish language had not been taught in Russia officially as an independent language and for this reason, major activities of Rasoulzadeh were focused on the mentioned subjects.

None of the family members of Rasoulzadeh had slightest idea of the organization and its activities. Usually, anti-Russian thoughts were propagated in meeting and a so called enmity with Czarism dictatorship could be found in it. However, the meetings soon found a nationalist character.

Nariman Narimanov and Aziz Beygov were the first two sympathies of Rasoulzadeh who later took a separate way. Later on, Narimanov joined the Communists and after the establishment of first Socialist Republic of Azarbaijan acted as its leader and during Stalin's rule, called for arresting Rasoulzadeh.

The Organization became famous as Hemmat Organization of Baku due to publishing Hemmat gazette. The labors of Baku served as the major center of activities of Hemmat Organization. There were thousands of Iranian among those labors that following constitution movement in Iran played an important role in the changes took place in Tabriz. Rasoulzadeh and Stalin became acquaintance in these years. Mohammad Ali, Rasoulzadeh cousin was the one who brought them together. In 1904, Stalin had been assigned to a mission by the Bolsheviks to organize Baku labors. At this time, Bolsheviks were present in Caucasian together with Mensheviks and Social Radicals (S.R.) and each one of these organizations tried to have the sympathy of Hemmat Organization; however, despite its socialist mottoes, Hemmat was more a nationalist group. It is thus evident that although compatibility was not impossible for the two groups, it was difficult in large extent. Rasoulzadeh and Stalin met in the house of one of the labors near Baku oil mines. Stalin tried to have Rasoulzadeh support of Bolsheviks in that meeting. However, Rasoulzadeh argued that due to Caucasian Turk people's way of living and their attitudes, communism ideology would not be welcomed. Stalin's efforts did not prove effective.

At the end of the two decade of 19h century, the motto of Great Armenian Organization found its way in Caucasian. Dashkankasion was the leader of this idea and most of its activities were focused in Gharebagh Region where Armenians had majority. The flames of war grew among the Turks and Armenian nationalists and it was at this time that Ahmad Aghayov founded "Fadaei" ("Defaei") Party. The goal of this party was to defend the Turks against Armenians and supporting them with financial and military aids. Soon the Party established branches in Gharebagh, Shoushi and Ganjeh. The war drove the important cities of Caucasian, such as Teflis, Baku and Iravan into chaos and insecurity. It was Ahmad Aghayov whose radical speeches and mottoes stimulated the uneasiness and war. In his letter to the governor of Baku, Ahmad Aghayov for the first time spoke of Armenian Nation and Turkish Nation. At the same time, Rasoulzadeh who was following the process of war published some articles on the war.

It should be noted that immediately upon arriving Iran, Rasoulzadeh engaged himself in political challenges and announced his support of constitution (Rasoulzadeh was 24 years of old when he arrived Iran).

The arrival of Rasoulzadeh was simultaneous with Constitution Movement in Iran. In that time, Azarbaijan was in uneasiness and chaotic conditions. It was obvious that a large part of changes in Azarbaijan rooted in the presence of Iranian in Baku. There have been labors who were working in the Baku oil fields to earn their livings and were influenced by the revolutionary activities of the active groups of that region. These groups were called "Caucasian Mojtaheds" in Iran; however, these Mojtaheds were essentially Iranian not Caucasian and calling them Caucasian was for their long stay in Caucasian and wearing Caucasian clothes. These groups were the most radical fractions of Constitutionalists. This subject has been discussed in details in previous sections.

The British Embassy in its report on pre-constitution situation of Iran writes:

It has been a long time since Iranian's situation was becoming worse. Shah was totally in the hand of a group of corrupted courtiers who were eating out of plundering both the state and people. All wealth Shah's father had left for him as well as most royal and national wealth and treasure had been all spent by Shah and the Shah had no way than borrowing money from foreign governments. He spent the loans either on traveling to Europe or sharing with his courtiers. The deficit in income was an obvious fact and the budget deficit increased every day.

In his History of Iran, Sir Percy Syx, the famous research on Iran affairs writes:

Iranian had not learned to work together. They brought their domestic disputes, personal interests, materialistic problems and finally, their personal enmity and hatreds in to the Parliament. The parliament members refrained from cooperation. The societies founded the pillars of the revolution and the societies were of two types: one was official societies, including the municipality and administrative societies as well as provincial and regional committees and the other was the non-official societies or clubs. The official delegations had a great share in the new system. Unlike it, the clubs were political and mostly anarchic with a significant similarity to the French clubs during the Great Revolution. Shah was carefully watching the delegations or the latter societies and intended to communicate with

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"Adamiat" Society which seemed to be stronger than all.

However, in fact, this club was an artificial one and was actually a kind of desperation of Iranian revolution which had failed to free itself from the chaos and anarchy propagated by these clubs. This led to failure of the revolution. Nevertheless, the National Society of Tabriz saved this city from a dangerous situation and the terrorist who assassinated Atabak Azam left a message saying "Abbas Agha, the Azerbaijani Party, a Member of Fadaian Melli Society , No. 41".

The viewpoint of British officials on the Constitution Revolution and Political Societies of that time could be seen in Sir Percy Syx's writing and many facts could be guessed.

In fact, the effects of historical events in the social psychology of Iran were not little. Mikadonameh poem of Mirza Hosseinali Shirazi and the History of Russian Rebel were translated into Persian immediately upon their publication and it is the sign of alertness towards both historical events where the first one wrote on account of battle "since describing the movement of zealous nations 'may cause movement and getting lessons' and the second was the story of a nation's fight in its challenge for freedom....."

In any event, these factors, along with formation of Turkish though movements and flourish of industrial revolution in Europe, reflection of other foreign events along with the internal factors and the explosive conditions of the country developed the seed of constitution in the depth of Iranian society.

A short review on these factors would show the rootless and falsehood of claims which tries to show Iranian constitution was a British-made movement and believe free and national press materials as puppets of foreigners. Those who raise such claims are actually bound to their dogmatic and backward thoughts and are not able to admit the share of people, the social-economic conditions and role of liberals and radicals of new thoughts in historical movements and changes.

This group tried to keep the society within a historically dead system, rejected any innovation and mental, social and economic changes, keeping people in an insulting and deprived state; thus, called the leaders of constitution revolution and those who fought for democracy and liberty as to be

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The depth and advance aspect of Iranian constitution movement in turn inspired the Turkish constitution movement in 1908