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ANJOMAN-E VELĀYATI

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ANJOMAN-E VELĀYATI

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(Provincial Council) of Isfahan, set up subsequent to the establishment of the Parliament (*majles*) to secure the aims of the Constitutional Revolution.

ANJOMAN-E VELĀYATI (Provincial Council) of Isfahan was set up subsequent to the establishment of the Parliament (*majles*) to secure the aims of the Constitutional Revolution. The Council's first meeting in Čehelsoṭun (q.v.) on 21 December 1906, was presided over by Hājj-Āqā Nur-Allāh Najafī (1861-1927) and attended by the representatives of diverse classes and groups. Żell-al-Solṭān, the then governor of Isfahan, addressed the inaugural session (*al-Jenāb*, No. 3, pp. 4-8). Three phases can be distinguished in the life of the Council: 1) the period between the establishment of the Parliament and the restoration of the anti-constitutional government of Moḥammad 'Ali Shah (*estebdād-e saġir*); 2) during the arbitrary reign of Moḥammad 'Ali Shah; and 3) from the conquest of Isfahan by the constitutional forces until 1909.

Among those who attended the first meetings of the Council were: Āḳund Mollā-Akbar Hezbi, Hājj Mirzā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Ṣadr-al-Anām, Hājj Mirzā Moḥammad Bāqer Ḥakim-Bāši, Morteżā Qoli Khan Nā'ini, Mirzā 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Anṣāri, Amin-al-Tojjār, Hājj Mirzā Moḥammad-Ḥosayn Kāzeruni, Hājj Mirzā Moḥammad Reżā, Malek-al-Tojjār, Hājj-ÚÚĀÚqā Nur-Allāh Āqā-Najafī. The most significant measure taken by the Council in the first phase was the election of Isfahan's deputies to the Parliament. Hājj Sayyed Ismā'il, Hājj Amin al-tojjār, Mirzā Ḥādī Javāheri, and Mirzā Morteżā Qoli Khan Nā'ini represented the clergy, the merchants, the guilds, and the landowners, respectively (*al-Jenāb*, no.3, pp.4-8, no. 4, p. 2, no. 6, p. 6; Nāẓem-al-Eslām kermāni, vol. 4, p. 34; Baširiya, vol. 1 p. 24). In addition, the Council ratified its by-law (*Nezām-nāma-ye dāḳeli*); facilitated the establishment of a branch of the National Bank (*Bānk-e melli*) in Isfahan; oversaw the activities of other councils in Isfahan (*Jahād-e akbar*, 22, p.), attempted to involve governmental offices in the activities intended to improve the city, and established regular contacts with the Parliament and Court in Teheran (*Vāqe'āt-e ettefāqiya*, vol.1, p. 349; *Jahād-e Akbar*, 34, pp. 4-8 & No. 29. p. 6)). Most significantly, mention should be made of the Council's successful attempt to dismiss Żell-al-solṭān, and blocking his return to power (*Āqeli*, p. 14; Nāẓem-al-Eslām Kermāni, pp. 1-3 & pp. 110-11; Jāberī Anṣāri, vol. 3, p. 121; Dānešvar 'Alavi, p. 6 & pp.11-13).

News of deliberations, proceedings and measures taken by the Council were prominently featured in the local newspapers. These included *al-Jenāb*, under the management of Mir Sayyed 'Ali Jenāb (1906); and *Jahād-e akbar*, under the management of Mirzā 'Ali Āqā Ḳorāsāni, (1907). But the principal source for reporting the current events and activities was a newspaper that was actually the

organ of the Council, initially titled *Anjoman-e moqaddas-e melli-ye Esfahan* (The sacred national council of Isfahan), but soon changed to *Anjoman-e velāyati-ye Isfahan* (The sacred provincial council of Isfahan) and eventually to *Anjoman-e Esfahan* (The Council of Isfahan). Published between 1906-1911 under the management of Serāj-al-Din Jabal-al-‘Āmeli and editorship of Najm-al-Vā‘ezin Musavi, the newspaper continued to appear during the arbitrary reign of Moḥammad ‘Ali Shah and even after the conquest of Isfahan. It constitutes one of the most prominent and reliable sources for the events unfolding in Isfahan during that period (Nāẓem-al-Eslām Kermāni, pp. 288-93; Moḥiṭ Ṭabāṭabāi, pp. 129-30). Hearing the news about the shelling of the Parliament, the people assembled in protest at Čehelsoṭun, the headquarters of the Council. Following the rally, ‘Alā’-al-Molk, the governor of Isfahan, was removed from office and Eqbāl-al-Dowla Kāši was appointed as his successor. The new governor, however, attempted to dissolve the Council all together (Dānešvar ‘Alavi, p. 4).

A complete set is not available of the newspapers that were published during the restoration of the anti-constitutional government of Moḥammad ‘Ali Shah. The Council, however, had clandestine meetings during this phase (Dānešvar ‘Alavi, pp. 30-32). Under Eqbāl-al-Dowla’s despotic rule, the people led by Āqā-Najafī, confronted the governor’s troops and the bazaar in Isfahan closed down in protest. (Kāšāni, vol. 1, p. 349; Nāẓem-al-Eslām Kermāni, vol. 4, p. 201). This phase came to an end, as Baḳtiāri militia, supported by the Council and the *mojāhedīn* of Isfahan, entered the city. Eqbāl-al-Dowla was defeated and sought sanctuary at the British Consulate in Isfahan (Dānešvar ‘Alavi, pp. 21-22 & 30-48).

The arrival of Baḳtiāri militia in Isfahan marks the beginning of the Council’s third phase. During this period the Council held meetings everyday, presided over by Ḥājj-āqā Nur-Allāh Najafī (Nāẓem-al-Eslām Kermāni, vol. 5, p. 284; Baširiya, vol. 2 p. 367; Kāšāni, vol. 1, p. 256; Dānešvar ‘Alavi, p. 38). The overwhelming influence of Baḳtiāris, established by the governorship of Šamsām-al-Dawla Baḳtiāri on 17th July 1909, intensified the tension between the Moderates (*e’ tedāliun*) and Democrats (*demokrāt-hā*) and led to the resignation of Ḥājj-āqā Nur-Allāh Najafī and his subsequent departure to Iraq. (Baširiya, vol. 3, p. 71, and vol. 4, pp. 956-7). There are yet further reports about sporadic unrests and the close-out of the Bazaar in support of Ḥājj-āqā Nur-Allāh Najafī in the following year (Baširiya, vol. 4, pp. 811-12), but the influence and efficacy of the Council henceforth started to decline gradually.

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