Armenian Social Democrats, the Democrat Party of Iran, and Īrān-i Naw: a Secret Camaraderie

Janet Afary

INTRODUCTION

CHRONICLERS OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION have often hailed the courage and fearless commitment of the Armenian revolutionaries who participated in the restoration of the Constitutional order in 1327/1909. What is often lost in these accounts, however, is the contribution of Armenian social democrats to the debates over revolutionary and democratic ideas in the Second Constitutional Period of 1327–9/1909–11. As historians in the West have become more committed to documenting the multicultural nature of their societies and social movements, so should we pay more attention to the fact that the democratic order of the Constitutional Revolution stemmed in part from the multicultural and multiethnic leadership of the revolutionary movement which included religious dissidents, non-Persians, and non-Muslims.

Iraj Afšar, who has contributed so much to our understanding of the Constitutional Revolution, published in 1980 a new documentary collection entitled Awrāq-i tāzah ʿyāb-i Mashrūṭyāt marbūt bih sāhē-yi 1325–1330 Qomārī 1 which is of considerable importance for gaining an understanding of the above issues. This volume stands out in particular for illuminating the origins of the Democrat Party (Firqah-‘i Dimakrāt-ı Īrān) (1327–9/1909–11), Iran’s first modern political party, and the intellectual and organizational contribution of several Armenian-Iranian social democrats to the Party. Afšar’s facsimile publication in this volume of close to one hundred pages of private correspondence conducted in French between two Armenian-Iranian social democrats, Vram Pilossian and Tigran Ter Hacopian (T. Darvish), and Majlis deputy and leader of the Democrat Party, Sayyid Hasan Taqīzādah, shows that there was a close affinity of ideas between the Muslim and Armenian social democrats who created the Party. The correspondence indicates that the idea of forming the Party took shape in Tabriz during the siege of that city in the late 1326–early 1327/winter and spring 1909. The letters also point to the intimate camaraderie of Ter Hacopian and Pilossian with the two celebrated Transcaucasian Muslim social democrats, Ėydar Khan Amū Uğlū and Mehmet Emin Resulzade, who also worked within the Democrat Party. Moreover, Resulzade and Ter Hacopian helped shape the journal Īrān-i naw which remains one of the most sophisticated socialist newspapers of 20th century Iran.

THE TABRIZ SOCIAL DEMOCRATS, THE ORIGINS OF THE DEMOCRAT PARTY, AND ĪRĀN-I NAW

On 23 Jumādā I 1326/23 June 1908, the Majlis was closed by a royalist coup led by the Russian officer of the Cossack Brigade, Colonel Liakhoff. Many leading Constitutionalists of Tehran went into exile, and the revolutionary center moved to Tabriz. The Āzarbāyjān Provincial Council (Anjuman-ı iyyālīt-ī Āzarbāyjān, also known as Anjuman-ī Tabriz), the social democratic Secret Center (Markaz-ı Ghaib), and the rank-and-file mujāhidīn fighters would soon form the revolutionary army of Tabriz whose military leadership was held by the former horse-dealer and outlaw Sattār Khan and his colleague the stone mason Bāqir Khan. A number of Transcaucasian revolutionaries (Muslims, Armenians, Georgians), as well as many Iranian-Armenians, joined the resistance as well.

On 19 Ramadān 1326/16 October 1908, a group of thirty mostly Armenian social democrats, who held leadership positions in the resistance army of Tabriz, organized a conference in that city where they discussed the future direction of the movement. Two different political strategies were discussed during this conference. The majority believed that socialists should struggle for the establishment of liberal democracy and for the achievement of radical social and economic progress for the poor and the working class of Āzarbāyjān and ultimately Iran. The minority argued that social democrats must temporarily abandon their more radical agenda, and instead fully enter the democratic movement, forming alliances with the leadership of the Constitutional movement. After the meeting Vasu Khachaturian and Arshavir Chalanganar on behalf of the majority, and Tigran Ter Hacopian who represented the


* I am grateful to Kambiz Eslami for his many suggestions and helpful editing of this article.

1 Afšar 1980; the cover title of the book is slightly different: Awrāq-i tāzah ʿyāb-i Mashrūṭyāt va naqsh-ī Taqīzādah.
minority wing of the conference, each sent copies of the minutes of the meeting to the leading Russian Marxist Georgi Plekhanov.4

The correspondence between Taqīzādah, Ploissian, and Ter Hacopian shows that following the victory of the Constitutionalists and the reconquest of Tehran in Jumādā II 1327/July 1909, the minority wing of the Tabriz social democrats defied the majority and followed through on precisely the policies they had presented at the October 1908 conference. They became close colleagues of the Majlis deputy Hasan Taqīzādah, who had arrived in Tabriz in the last days of December 1908, and explored with him the possibility of organizing Iran’s first modern political party.

Taqīzādah returned to Tehran on 21 Rajab 1327/8 August 1909 after its conquest by the revolutionary army, and became the foremost member of the provisional government which began preparations for elections to the Second Majlis. During the same period, Taqīzādah campaigned for the formation of the Democratic Party which he and his colleagues from Tabriz had discussed. Gradually, branches of the Democratic Party were formed in a number of cities, including Tabriz, Urūmiyeh, Mashhad, Rasht, Kirmānštāsh, ʻIsfahān, and Hamadān. Many of the local branches published their own newspapers, but the most important newspaper of the Party was Irān-i nawa which was published in Tehran between 1327/1909 and 1329/1911.5

Irān-i nawa had a circulation of two to three thousand and was the most sophisticated daily paper of Tehran during the Second Constitutional Period. The paper was founded in Rajab 1327/August 1909 (hence the phrase “Rajab 1327” incorporated in its caption title) and began publication on 7 Shaʿbān 1327/24 August 1909. It became the official organ of the Central Committee of the Democratic Party on 21 Shawwāl 1328/26 October 1910. Edward G. Browne would thus praise Irān-i nawa for its contribution to the Constitutional Revolution:

Irān-i nawa had the most extraordinary adventures in defending its liberal policy and during the period of its publication was frequently the object of vehement attacks on the part of the journals which opposed it, so that most of its time was spent in polemics and it became both the agent and victim of important political events... Since the Irān-i nawa was in opposition, that is to say was the partisan and organ of the minority (i.e., the Democrats), it was always liable to repression or suppression, and was the constant object of the anger, vengeance and recriminations of the supporters of the Government.6

The paper, which introduced European-style journalism to the country, broke new ground in its social criticism. Its targets included class society, prejudice towards women, anti-Semitism, and other forms of ethnic and religious prejudice. In addition, the journal made significant literary contributions. Some of the earliest poems of Malik al-Shuʿarā’ Bahār and Lāhūtī Kirmānštāsh, two leading poets of the early 20th century, were first published in Irān-i nawa.7 The works of several major European writers, among them Alexandre Dumas and Leo Tolstoy, were made accessible to the Iranian public through Persian translations. Edward G. Browne’s The Persian Revolution of 1905–1909 was translated and published in serialized form in Irān-i nawa soon after its publication in Britain. Browne’s lectures in Europe in behalf of the Constitutionalists were also extensively reported in Irān-i nawa.

Of special importance was the regular coverage of the debates in the Parliament under the title Akhbār-i Dār al-Shārū-yi Millī (News of the National House of Consultation). These reports provided readers with a perspective different from that of the official Rāzāmānā-i Majlis (Majlis Newspaper) which sided with the conservative Moderate Party (Jātina'i-yi Tidāšīyān). Irān-i nawa printed letters and commentaries on social issues of the time. It discussed—often in articles written by women—the need for greater freedom for and education of women, the many grievances of workers and artisans, and, to a lesser extent, the oppression of the peasantry. In addition, it reported on labor and socialist movements on the international scene. Reports on China, India, Russia, and North Africa, as well as news of labor movements, socialist organizations, and especially women’s suffragists in Western Europe were published with much sympathy. The editorials were highly critical of the imperialist policies of the European powers in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The harshest criticisms were reserved for the tsarist government, which had occupied the northern provinces of Azerbaijan, Gilan, and Qazvin, while a strong bond of solidarity was drawn between the revolutionary movements in Russia and Iran.

4 See Chaqueri 1979, 46–9 and Ravāsānī 1989, 101–17. Ravāsānī and ʻIthādīyāh, who made extensive use of these documents in her study of the development of political parties during the Constitutional Revolution, have assumed that Ter Hacopian was a member of the Dashnak Armenian rationalist party. But Taqīzādah, as we shall see later, argues otherwise, see Ravāsānī 1989, 104 and ʻIthādīyāh 1982, 244.
The nominal editor of *Irān-i nawa* in its first year was Muḥammad Shabastāri, also known as Abū al-Ẓiyā, a former editor of the paper *Mujāhid* in Tabriz. The principal financial backer of the paper, as well as its managing editor, was a wealthy Armenian named Joseph Basil, who also financed the Dashnak Armenian paper *Āravud* (Morning). The editorial board included Muslims and Armenians from both Iran and Transcaucasia. The actual editor, Mehmet Emin Resulzade (1884–1954), a Muslim social democrat from Baku, came to Gilan in 1327/1909 on behalf of the Organization of Social Democrats (*Firqah-i Ḵārijī-tiyūn ʿĀmīyūn*). A month after the reconstitution of the constitutional government, he helped to establish *Irān-i nawa* in Tehran. Resulzade had been involved in the 1905 Russian revolution, had joined the Russian Social Democratic Workers Party, and had assumed the editorship of the socialist paper *Tekāmil* (December 1906–March 1907) in Baku. Even before his arrival in Iran in 1327/1909, Resulzade was known as an accomplished journalist, poet, and playwright. Though he knew little Persian at first, and for the first three months worked through a translator, Resulzade regularly contributed to the paper, and some of his articles appeared under the pen name Nīsh (Sting).

Many of the more ground-breaking theoretical articles in *Irān-i nawa* did not have Resulzade’s signature. Edward G. Browne has argued that the more significant articles were written by Amir Hājjī, also known as Ghulām Rīzā. He identifies Hājjī as a Georgian who assumed the identity of a Muslim, wrote his articles in French, and had them translated into Persian. The correspondence between Taqi’z̲âdah and Ter Hacobjan confirms, however, that it was Ter Hacobjan, an Iranian-Armenian and not a Georgian, who, under the pen name T. Darvish, submitted many of the more important theoretical essays that were published in the paper, particularly after autumn of 1328/1910. These articles were originally written in French and then translated into Per-

sian. Ter Hacobjan, who had studied political science in Switzerland, was a key theoretician of the minority wing of the Tabriz social democrats. It was he who had written to Plekhanov in the fall of 1908 and argued for a “democratic,” rather than a “social democratic” ideology for the future party.

Both Pilossian and Ter Hacobjian corresponded in French with Taqi’z̲âdah because, as members of ethnic minorities, they were beginners in the Persian language, a deficiency they deplored and were trying to remedy. Our information about both men and their other Armenian colleagues is limited, but a closer look at their letters to Taqi’z̲âdah, as well as some of Ter Hacobjian’s writings, shows the extent to which these two Armenian social democrats helped shape the Democrat Party and its organ *Irān-i nawa*.

**THE LETTERS OF PILOSSIAN TO TAQI’Z̲ÂDAH: A NEW FORM OF ORGANIZATION IN IRAN**

Pilossian, who signed his letters and articles under the pen names Bahr (Sea) or Dīhāt (Peasant), was active in forming committees of the Democrat Party in Tabriz. Seven letters from Pilossian to Taqi’z̲âdah have survived and appear in *Awrāq*. In these letters, written between 19 August 1909/2 Shawwal 1327 and 19 October 1910/14 Shawwāl 1328, Pilossian proposed new ways of developing the Party nationally and giving it specifically Iranian characteristics. He warned Taqi’z̲âdah that membership should not be limited to Azarbâyjâns, adding “you must find members among the Persians as well, so that the Party will not have a provincial character.” He also suggested that an appropriate Persian substitute for the word Democrat be found, asking “do you have a Persian or Arabic word that would mean ‘democrat’? I am afraid this European word would keep away those who always have a repugnance for foreign words. Furthermore they may equally confuse it with ‘social democrats’. In any case, I do not give much weight to a name, as long as our compatriots do not find it inappropriate.”

When Taqi’z̲âdah wrote to him of the growth of the Party in Tehran in January 1910/Dhū al-Ḥijjah 1327–Muḥarram 1328, Pilossian rejoiced at the development, replying that it was indeed a tremendous achievement “to have in an Oriental country 390 people under the flag of a democrat party,

---

8 It was difficult to remove Abū al-Ẓiyā as editor after the paper became the official organ of the Democrat Party. There was much arguing over money before he agreed to relinquish his position, see Afsahr 1380, 328–9.
10 After Resulzade was expelled from Iran by the government, his biography appeared in *Irān-i nawa* 3, no. 55, 30 May 1911. See also Bennigsen and Wimbush 1979, 204; and Ādamiyat 1975, 96–7.
11 Browne (1914) 1983, 52.
12 Ter Hacobjian to Taqi’z̲âdah, 1 November 1910, in Afsahr 1380, 318. Most of the columns and editorials in *Irān-i nawa* do not have a signature. It is, therefore, difficult to determine which were written by Resulzade. Many of the more substantial essays, however, have Ter Hacobjian’s pen name.
13 Ter Hacobjian to Taqi’z̲âdah, 1 November 1910, in Afsahr 1380, 317–8.
14 Pilossian to Taqi’z̲âdah, 19 August 1909, in Afsahr 1380, 240.
15 Pilossian to Taqi’z̲âdah, 3 February 1910, in Afsahr 1380, 260.
16 Ibid. The name Āmīyūn, roughly meaning “of the people” was suggested instead and was used intermittently in party documents, but the organization was primarily known to all as the *Firqah-i Dimūkrātī Irān*. The name “Social Democrat” would presumably have discouraged liberal politicians (whom the Democrat Party was courting) from joining.
especially when this party is organized on a European model.” 17 The letters indicate that the Armenian social democrats were involved not only in the organizational work of the Party, but also in establishing its ideological direction. 18 Pilossian wrote the internal regulations of the Party in French and told Taqī zādah that he was sending them to Tehran for adoption by the Central Committee. 19

In his letter of 19 August 1909/2 Sha‘bān 1327, Pilossian sent a list of possible candidates which the joint committee of Armenian and Muslim social democrats in Tabriz had drafted, and suggested that they be asked to run for elections to the Second Majlis: “We must strive to create within the second parliament an organized democratic majority. People are tired of the revolution and its upheavals. They want peace. If the Constitutionalists are not organized both inside and outside the Parliament, peace will never arrive.” 20

A month later, Pilossian would anxiously inquire about the work of the Democrat Party and Majlis elections: “Internal disorders on the one hand, and the presence of foreign soldiers on the other hand, threaten the integrity and independence of the country. We must have energetic and truly patriotic men in the Second Majlis, because if the Second Majlis does not satisfy people, and does not put an end to the anarchy in the provinces, our very independence will be in danger.” 21 Seasoned Party members were not to be engaged in military campaigns in the provinces because they were needed in Tehran. When the famous Transcaucasian Muslim social democrat Ḥaydar Khān ‘Amū Ughlū accepted an assignment to fight the Shāhsavan brigand Rahīm Khān in the town of Karaj, north of Tehran, Pilossian wrote to Taqī zādah that Ḥaydar Khān’s “presence in Tehran is indispensable for the progress of the Democrat Party [and] we have begged him not to go. Please do everything necessary to keep him in Tehran because he is a good organizer and a good propagandist.” 22

Despite their relatively moderate politics compared to other socialists of the time, Pilossian and his colleagues were concerned about the growing power of the anti-constitutionalist forces and felt that such challenges to the new order should be dealt with swiftly and severely. When a “reactionary” aristocrat,

Habīb Allāh Muwāqqar al-Saltanah, who had been expelled from the country along with the former Shāh, Muḥammad ʿAli Mirzā, returned to foment trouble, he was executed in Muḥarram 1328/January 1910 and Pilossian wrote with Jacobin enthusiasm: “We read in the newspapers of the latest news in Tehran regarding the arrest of certain reactionaries and the hanging of Movakkeres-Saltanēh. Well done. If such measures had been taken a few months earlier the reactionaries and the mullahs would not have become so arrogant as they are now. One must be merciless towards these people. Without this [harshness] we shall never have peace.” 23

Despite the growth of the Tabriz branch of the Democrat Party, Pilossian and his colleagues did not hesitate to abide by the decisions of the Central Committee in Tehran:

For a very long time we have been organizing a section of the Democrat Party in Tabriz and we will probably have the pleasure of including you in the Committee. We shall place ourselves under the internal disposition of the Central Committee and we shall conform to the instructions we receive for the Tabriz section of the organization. You have done very well in organizing the Tehran Central Committee. Because the people of Tehran are more educated than those of Tabriz, it is not logical to place the former under the orders of the latter. 24

The ideological solidarity between Armenian and Muslim social democrats was impressive. Taqī zādah pointed out that the Dashnaks in Tehran provided jobs for members of their organization, and that Armenians such as Ter Hacopian, who were not affiliated with the Dashnak Party, often remained unemployed. Nevertheless, Ter Hacopian and Pilossian were committed to the Democrat Party and competed with the Dashnaks in recruiting young Armenian social democrats to their organization. 25 Pilossian and his Armenian colleagues in Tabriz also felt that the Democrat Party should consult with them before recruiting any Armenians or Georgians. “You should never enter into relations with either the Armenians or the Georgians without asking for our advice; just as we do not know the Persians very well, in the same way you do not know the Armenians.” 26

Pilossian encouraged Taqī zādah to maintain absolute secrecy in the work of the provisional Central Committee of the Party in Tehran. The Armenian

19 Ibid., 238-42, and Afshar 1980, appendix, 366 (11-23). The internal regulations reprinted in facsimile in Awdiq appear to be in Ter Hacopian’s handwriting and not Pilossian’s. It is, of course, quite possible that the two collaborated on composing the document.
21 Pilossian to Taqī zādah, 19 September 1909, in Afshar 1980, 244.
22 Pilossian to Taqī zādah, 26 January 1910, in Afshar 1980, 250.
23 Ibid., 251-2.
24 See the draft letter by Taqī zādah dated 28 Ramādān 1328/3 October 1910 (Afshar 1980, 223) which shows that Ter Hacopian was not a Dashnak, certainly not by this time.
social democrats also kept their connection to Taqi’zâdah and the Democrat Party secret because the involvement of non-Muslims in the leadership of the Party could give the conservative Moderate Party, as well as the anticonstitutionalists, ample ammunition against the Democrats. 27

Despite their strong loyalty to Taqi’zâdah and the Central Committee, the Armenian social democrats recognized the importance of their own contribution to the Democrat Party. When the Party began to expand in Tehran, Taqi’zâdah did not keep regular contact with his Tabriz comrades, despite their urgings. Pilossian’s anxiety is clear in his letters. He believed that this lack of communication would deprive the Muslim intellectuals in Tehran of the regular guidance and help of their Armenian colleagues in Tabriz and would ultimately hurt the Party irrevocably. 28

THE LETTERS AND ESSAYS OF TIGRAN TER HACOBIAN

A second set of four letters in Arméq was written by Ter Hacopian to Taqi’zâdah between 21 January 1910/9 Muharram 1328 and 1 November 1910/27 Shawwâl 1328. From Tabriz, Ter Hacopian reported to the Central Committee of the Democrat Party in Tehran on the progress of the Tabriz chapter and contributed articles to Irân-i nava. 29 After Taqi’zâdah was forced to leave Tehran in Rajab 1328/July 1910, Ter Hacopian moved from Tabriz to Tehran where he joined the editorial board and also became a consultant to the Central Committee.

Taqi’zâdah’s absence severely disrupted the work of the Democrat Party. Upon his arrival in Tehran, Ter Hacopian wrote of the complete chaos and disorganization in the Democrat Party, including the parliamentary faction. “Almost everything is lost,” he wrote to Taqi’zâdah, “your return to Tehran is absolutely necessary.” 30 Contemporaneously, Ter Hacopian suggested a total reconstruction of the Party and began to recruit working-class members. He organized a labor union for telephone workers, recruited pharmacy workers, and worked within the Iranian-Armenian community. Had it not been for his insufficient knowledge of the Persian language, Ter Hacopian claimed in his letters, he could have easily recruited 400 to 500 new members into the Party. Meanwhile he continued to support the activities of the literary center where the meetings of the Party were taking place, and encouraged the formation of other cultural and political clubs among Persian intellectuals. 31

In late Dhû al-Qa’dah 1328/November 1910, the Bakhtiyârî-Democrat coalition government was near collapse, and the nation was threatened with more aggressive political maneuvers from Britain and Russia. In the pages of Irân-i nava Ter Hacopian called for the formation of a National Salvation Committee (Kamitiât-i Nujâh-i Millî). This was to be a coalition of the various left and liberal political parties and heads of tribes, one which Ter Hacopian had hoped would restrain the more conservative Moderate Party. 32 A few months later, however, the new regent Abi al-Qâsim Khân Nâsrî al-Mulk successfully adopted a similar tactic, except that in his plan a broad conservative majority was created to oppose the Democrats and support the Moderate Party.

A New Concept Of Nationality for the Democrat Party

Two central themes appear in Ter Hacopian’s writings: (1) His belief that a new concept of nationality transcending ethnic and religious affiliations should be developed; (2) his abhorrence of political terrorism and critique of social democrats who had succumbed to terrorism in their efforts to remove the conservative opposition.

The first theme, the construction of a new concept of nationality, was also a great concern of several other social democrats of this period such as Taqi’zâdah and Resulzâde, and would be reflected in the program of the Democrat Party. The subject of political rights for non-Muslims (Jews, Armenians, Zoroastrians), as well as Muslims who did not belong to the Shi‘ite Ithnâ ‘Ashari branch of Islam, was a highly controversial one during both the First and Second Constitutional Periods. In the spring of 1325/1907, a heated debate developed over article 8 of the proposed Supplementary Constitutional Laws (Mutammin-i Qanûn-i Asâsî). This article, which was originally adopted from the Belgian Constitution of 1831, had been proposed by a seven-member commission which included Taqi’zâdah. 33 It stated, “The people of the Persian Empire are to enjoy equal rights before the Law.” 34 “The People” were defined as male and middle class members of society who were not religious dissidents such as Bahâ’îs or Azali-Bâbis. Partly in response to that article, Shaykh Fazl Allâh Nûrî, the staunchly anticonstitutionalist mujahid, who had referred to the Supplementary Laws as Zâliût’-nâmah (Book of Deviance), 35 proposed article 2, which stated that no legal enactment of the

27 Ibid., 253.
30 Ter Hacopian to Taqi’zâdah, 1 November 1910, in Afshar 1980, 319.
31 Ibid., 311-20.
32 Ibid.; Irân-i nava, 7 November 1910, 1.
35 Malik’zâdah 1984, 4:873.
Majlis could “be at variance with the sacred principles of Islam.” He also called for the establishment of a committee of ‘ulama to monitor all deliberations in the Majlis. After much heated debate and discussion, both article 2 and article 8 were ratified and incorporated into the Supplementary Constitutional Laws.

Taqi‘zadah and his colleagues took pride in ratifying article 8 and felt that even in its modified form, the Supplementary Constitutional Laws had made a breakthrough by recognizing the equal rights of dhimmis (recognized non-Muslims) in Iranian society. In his lecture to a British audience at the Central Asian Society in November 1908, Taqi‘zadah, who was in London to appeal to the European community for the restoration of the constitutional order, began by speaking of article 8 as one of the most important achievements of the First Majlis, if not the most important one:

One thing established by the Constitution was religious equality... a real religious equality, and not a theoretical one. Before that non-Muslims had been treated as not on the same plane in the matter of liberty of observance as the followers of the Prophet... The clerical element in Persia was against the framing of a fundamental law of religious liberty, but the reformers succeeded in getting it through, and obtaining recognition of the great principle that in the eyes of the law and the Administration there should be no difference between Christian or Muhammadan, Zoroastrian or Jew.

After the restoration of the constitutional order in Tehran in Jumâdá II 1327/July 1909, Ter Hacopian, Resulzade, and Taqi‘zadah further developed this new concept of nationality in their writings, as well as in their activities. Ter Hacopian felt that the issue was not only a matter of equal protection for non-Muslims and Muslims before the law, but also implied a new concept of nationality in which ethnic and religious affiliations were altogether irrelevant:

We must create a new [concept] of nationality which will be Iranian. It would be the same to us if people speak different languages or worship different gods. In our view, there should be no differentiation among ethnic groups (les nations). We shall recognize only one nation—the Iranian nation, the Persian citizen.

Resulzade continued this line of thought in his political treatise Tanâid-i Firâgh-i l‘itidâliyân yâ Jîmnâmâ’tâyân-i l‘itidâliyân (Critique of the Moderate Party or Social Moderates) in which he developed a scathing critique of the ethnic prejudices of the Moderate Party. The most provocative section of the treatise was its commentary on the role of religion and on the attitudes of the Moderate Party toward members of non-Muslim ethnicities. The Moderates had called for the unity of all Iranians, claiming they were all “Muslims and followers of one religion and one ideology.” This argument showed that the Moderate Party “did not recognize a single person other than Muslims as citizens of Iran.” Their attitude was thus similar to that of the tsarist government which accused the revolutionaries of being “fooled by the Jews, sold out to the foreigners, and enemies of the nation.” The truth, however, was that “the history of the Iranian revolution, which still continues, shows that [many] Fidâ’is [who helped restore the constitutional order] came from among the ranks of these same non-Muslims.”

These views were also reflected in the program of the Democrat Party which was presented to the Majlis and published in Iran-i navv on 19 Rabî’ I 1329/20 March 1911. The program called for “equality of all people of the nation before the government and the law without distinction of race, religion, or nationality,” as well as “complete separation of political power from religious power.”

The Democrats’ commitment to equal civil rights especially troubled the conservative Moderate Party and gave the opponents of Taqi‘zadah the opportunity to remove him from the Majlis. In the spring of 1328/1910, a case was brought up in the Majlis which involved two Ismâ‘îli Iranian victims, men who were both Muslim and Shi‘ite but did not belong to the dominant Ithnâ‘ Ashârî branch of Shi‘ism. When the two Ismâ‘îli men returned to their village near Nayshâbûr from a pilgrimage to Mecca, they were killed as a result of a religious edict (fatwâ) issued by a local cleric, Shaykh Bâqîr, and upheld by the leading mujtahid of Mashhad. Taqi‘zadah called attention to the matter in the Majlis and asked that the police arrest and prosecute Shaykh Bâqîr who apparently had killed the men himself and confiscated their property. When Shaykh Bâqîr was arrested by the Armenian chief of police Yehphren Khan, the ‘ulamâ were outraged. Those who had waited for an opportunity to force out the leader of the Democrat Party, including some of the

38 Browne 1909, 10. Mansour Bonakdarian brought this article to my attention.
40 Resulzade 1982. The treatise was originally published in Tehran in 1328/1910.
41 Resulzade 1982, 75-6.
42 Iran-i navv, 20 March 1911, 1. For a more detailed discussion of the Democrat Party and its agenda, see Afary 1996.
Najaf ‘ulamā, saw this as their chance. Taqī’zādah was accused of conduct that was “in conflict with the Muslim characteristics of the nation and the holy shari‘ah laws.”43 The condemnation by the ‘ulamā was not openly debated in the Majlīs since this would have brought to surface the unconstitutional nature of their conduct. Instead, on 24 Jumādā I 1328/2 July 1910, Taqī’zādah was quietly asked to take a three-month leave of absence from the Majlīs.44

In Tabrīz, Pilosian was outraged by this treatment of Taqī’zādah and the pressure by Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh Bihbahanī and other members of the ‘ulamā to force Taqī’zādah out of the Majlīs. He complained to Taqī’zādah that had they been informed sooner and been kept abreast of the events in Tehran, they could have helped him by organizing demonstrations in his support. Through public protestations in Tabrīz, Pilosian argued, they could have warned the Majlīs that it had no right to expel a delegate of the province of Āzarbāyjān without the express approval of that community.45 But Taqī’zādah had not informed his colleagues and no such demonstration in his support took place. Instead, some members of the Democrat Party, who were angry with the unconstitutional treatment of their leader, resorted to political terrorism, thereby further alienating the progressive community that had placed much of its hope in the Democrat Party.

Ter Hacobian’s Critique of Political Terrorism

On 8 Rajab 1328/16 July 1910, Sayyid ‘Abd Allāh Bihbahanī was gunned down in his home by four members of the mujāhidīn who were associated with Haydar Khān and the Democrats. Bihbahanī, the leading constitutionalist mujāhid, who with his son led the Moderate Party, had been blamed for the censorship of Taqī’zādah in the Majlīs. The murder of the seventy-year-old cleric, one of the two ranking ‘ulamā who had been the initial leaders of the Constitutional Revolution, created mass outrage. The bazaars closed in protest, and both Haydar Khān and Taqī’zādah, who was then still in Tehran, were implicated.46 This incident led to the exile of Taqī’zādah from Iran and subsequent terrorist actions by supporters of the Moderate Party against members of the Democrat Party. The assassination of Bihbahanī and the subsequent killings of supporters of both the Democrat and the Moderate Parties seriously demoralized the public. It seemed that their many sacrifices for the reestablishment of the parliament and the constitution had proved futile. Rather than solving conflicts in a democratic fashion, as all had hoped, the contending political parties now resorted to assassination and terrorism.

Of particular significance in this period are a series of eight essays in Irān-i nāv in which Ter Hacobian analyzed the question of political terrorism and declared it detrimental to the progressive cause. He tried to demonstrate why political terrorism was destructive and presented the contemporary social democratic analysis that progressive changes in social conditions of a society resulted only from fundamental changes in economic structures and not from the removal of individual leaders through terrorism.

Ter Hacobian began by explaining the point of view of the adherents of political terrorism. Those who tried to justify terrorism as a viable means for social change considered it a powerful tool through which the state machinery could be crushed. The proponents of this ideology argued that when the authorities faced individual acts of terrorism they became concerned for their personal safety. This, in turn, led the government to adopt a more moderate course of action and lessened the prevalent political oppression of the people. The advocates of political terrorism argued that their actions “awakened the populace,” so that when citizens realized that the aim of the rebels was to help the poor and oppressed, they became politically conscious. They were further strengthened by the knowledge that the revolutionaries were not weak, but were strong and capable men who could hurt the regime.47

Ter Hacobian then presented his rebuttal, and in the process gave a short synopsis of his social democratic views as well. He contended that socialism rejected political terrorism as a viable course of action. Individual leaders were not the cause of deteriorating social conditions, economic structures were. With the gradual development of means of production according to “scientific means,” a new, freer, and more developed social formation came into being. Each new stage of production gave birth to new social classes which in turn determined the political character of society. With each progressive stage of culture, from the hunter gatherer society, to agriculture, and finally to capitalist society, the “influence of religion” on the people also diminished.

The Iranian Revolution was itself a result of growing capitalist relations of production which necessitated an end to the reign of the khān, the landlords, and the monarch, Ter Hacobian wrote. The revolution, however, had developed only half-way and unless there was a corresponding change in the means of production, it could proceed no further. Ultimately, once new social

44 Afshar 1980, 226. See also the report in the Times (London), 4 July 1910, 6.
classes began to grow stronger, and the new society gained an independent life of its own, the old government and the old ways of life would disappear.48

The murder of an influential figure would not alter a system of government or challenge oppressed social forces to make a revolution. We cannot allow “revolution and terror” to become synonymous, he contended. Revolution was the act of a whole society which had acquired the necessary material, intellectual, and spiritual forces to take “the role of the midwife” in giving birth to a new society. Terrorism was a “futile one-shot act,” which stemmed from the illusion that society could be transformed in one stroke and through an individual’s will.49

“Every dictator and every absolute monarch represents a certain class,” Ter Hacobian argued. “Napoleon represented the French bourgeoisie, Pugachev represented the Russian peasantry, while Nādir Shāh represented the Khāns of Iran.” Just as no building could stand without proper foundations, so no government could remain in power without its class foundations. The supporters of political terrorism made a grave mistake when they compared the government to a machine, using the analogy that if one removed a few nuts and bolts the whole system would collapse. The political machinery of the government needed an internal social revolution before its life could be ended. If indeed terrorism had such magical powers, Ter Hacobian argued, then no system of government would exist for long. There were always many who were discontented, and if indeed the political terrorism of a few instigated the movement of the whole, then the continuing fight between the ruling classes and the forces of opposition would result in a series of unstable governments.50

“History shows that the result of acts of terror is not revolution but an unleashing of counter-revolution.”51 Drawing upon the example of the Russian Revolution, Ter Hacobian presented a chart which listed the number of imprisoned revolutionaries and acts of political terrorism carried out in the first decade of the 20th century in Russia. The chart showed that in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution, when many acts of terrorism were committed, there was a significant increase in the level of government repression as well. Thus in 1909 alone, 240,000 revolutionaries were imprisoned in addition to the thousands who were killed or sent to exile in Siberia. Terrorism neither disturbed the government nor succeeded in changing the foundations of power. Rather, as the case of Russia demonstrated, after each act of terrorism “repression gains more, the inhumane acts of the government increase.”52

In fact, terrorism had had yet another disastrous effect. Ter Hacobian warned. Revolutionaries, terrorist, and murderers became the same in the minds of people. Political terrorism resulted in the loss of respect for revolutionary ideas among the people and took away from revolutionary organizations the one foundation they could count on, namely, the people’s support and sympathy which was of utmost significance for any revolution.53

The political salvation and security of Iran depended upon its adherence to democracy. Terrorism not only did not improve the situation of the country, it created a further excuse for foreign enemies to enter the country on the pretext of ending internal disorder. The autocrats did not fear the hand grenades of a terrorist, but they trembled at the thought of an educated and orderly nation aware of its power and its rights.54

The detailed discussion of terrorism in Irān-i nāw points to the significant political disagreements within the Democrat Party in the months following the assassination of Bihbahānī and others. Ter Hacobian’s strong criticism of political terror and his emphasis on the way it alienated the masses from the revolutionaries was significant. Clearly Haydar Khān ‘Amū Ughlū was among the targets of this criticism. A new ideological rift had emerged within Iranian socialism and would continue to exist throughout the 20th century. This was not a division between those who opted for alliance with liberal politicians and those who wanted to push for a more radical agenda including workers’ rights. It was an ideological division between those who saw political terrorism as a viable means towards reaching the end of a new social order, and others who rejected it, but nevertheless adhered to a quasi mechanical concept of Marxism in which economic structures determined ideological superstructures and modernization progressively eliminated the influences of cultural and religious beliefs.

CONCLUSION

The Democrat Party and its organ Irān-i nāw began a new era of social democratic politics and journalism in the 20th century Iran. As the writings of Pilossian and Ter Hacobian have demonstrated, Armenian social democrats were involved at every stage of the formation of the Party and made important

50 Ibid.
52 Ter Hacobian, “Terror: 7,” Irān-i nāw, 3 January 1911, 2.
54 Ibid.
organizational and intellectual contributions to it. They oversaw the development of the Tabriz branch of the party and made many suggestions about the composition and activities of the Central Committee in Tehran. They proposed new delegates for the Second Majlis and contributed to the by-laws and program of the Democrat Party. They brought new recruits to the Party, especially from within the Armenian Party, organized labor unions, and became involved in the political and cultural clubs of the Democrats. They also provided Taqgźadah, Resulzade, and other Muslim social democrats with constant support and advice. Ter Hocbian was an outspoken critic of political terrorism and showed that it could lead to a strengthening of the conservative opposition and alienation of the ordinary people. The Armenian social democrats and their Muslim colleagues saw their intellectual cooperation as a possible model for a future Iranian society. They were committed to a new concept of nationality, one in which prejudicial attitudes towards non-Muslims were replaced by social integration and solidarity. They also envisioned a multiethnic-social democratic Iranian society in which Muslims and non-Muslims lived in harmony and worked towards a secular progressive society.

Because nearly everyone in the Democrat Party kept the involvement of Armenian social democrats secret, fearing an outburst by the conservative opposition against the Party, this important dimension of the Constitutional Revolution was nearly lost to us. Taqgźadah himself, as well as leading historians of the Constitutional Revolution such as Kasravi and Malikzadeh who mentioned the role of Armenian social democrats, also downplayed its importance, sometimes in a misguided effort to legitimize the Revolution. With his effort to bring to light neglected or forgotten aspects of the Constitutional Revolution, Iraj Afshar has once again made us aware of the multidimensionality of that revolution, and its important contribution to the origins of democracy in Iran.

BIBLIOGRAPHY


THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF POLITICAL REVOLUTIONS

JACK A. GOLDSTONE, Editor
way for the constitutional movement.

For the first time, the regime's political clubs and associations had an influence over the government, and their influence was felt on both sides of the political spectrum. The Constitutional Revolution was the first real opportunity for the Iranian people to have a say in the running of their country. The revolution was a major turning point in Iranian history, and it paved the way for many future changes in the country's political and social landscape.

Following the revolution, the constitution was adopted and implemented. The new constitution was a significant step forward for Iran, and it helped to establish a more democratic and modern government. The country has continued to develop and grow since then, and it has become a major player on the international stage.

In conclusion, the Constitutional Revolution was a major turning point in Iranian history, and it paved the way for many future changes in the country's political and social landscape. The revolution was a significant step forward for Iran, and it helped to establish a more democratic and modern government. The country has continued to develop and grow since then, and it has become a major player on the international stage.
THE FIRST CONSTITUTIONAL PERIOD (1906–1908)

The electoral laws of September 9, 1906, created a limited male franchise and brought about a Majlis drawn from the ruling Qajar family, the ulama and theology students, nobles, landowners and small holders, and merchants and guild members. As in most countries at the time, women were excluded from voting, and property and language qualifications excluded most others from representation in the first Majlis. The heavy representation given guilds and Tehran and Tabriz resulted in a more radical Majlis than would have been elected through universal suffrage. The inclusion of trade guilds, as well as the contributions of liberal and social democratic delegates, made the first Majlis into one of the most respected political institutions of twentieth-century Iran. The constitution of December 30, 1906, effectively limited the authority of the shah, the ministers, and the foreign powers. Deputies gained and practiced the right to ratify major financial transactions, to ban foreign loans, to remove irresponsible ministers and government officials, and to cut the salaries of court employees and the shah. The first Majlis also abolished land allotments (similar to European fiefs), gave administrative autonomy to the provinces, established a free press, and introduced secular laws and judicial codes that reduced the powers of the ulama.

Many of these reforms were initiated by radical deputies, such as Hasan Taqizadah, who had been influenced by the ideas of social democracy from Russian-controlled Transcaucasia. The Organization of Iranian Social Democrats, whose headquarters remained in Baku, opened branches inside Iran and followed a modified social democratic agenda. The Social Democrats, as well as other liberal supporters of the movement, helped create modern schools, published newspapers, and encouraged multiethnic participation, especially in the northern provincial councils. Some councils encouraged rent and tax strikes by peasants in the Caspian region in Azerbaijan. Activist women of Tehran took the initiative in organizing societies, schools, and orphanages and also wrote for leading newspapers of the period. There was also a burst of literary creativity centered around journals such as Suri Istifl (“The Trumpet Call of Angel Gabriel”), in which the writings of Ali Akbar Dihkhuda appeared. The new monarch, Muhammad Ali Shah (1907–1909), detested the limits that the Majlis and the constitution placed on the previously unbridled power of the monarchy, and he openly began to undermine the new order.

The monarch was encouraged by the leading conservative cleric, Shaikh Fazulullah Nuri, and many wealthy landowners. They backed the shah and stated that the con-
and recognition of the Second Constitutional Period.

The Second Constitutional Period (1906-1917)
government, with British support, demanded the dismissal of Shuster. Additionally, Russia demanded a guarantee by the Iranian government that it would not hire foreign advisers without consent of the two powers. Soon, Russian troops began to move toward Tehran. The Russian ultimatum was resisted by the Majlis almost to the end. But the cabinet, faced with the impending occupation of Tehran, closed down the Majlis on December 24, 1911, thereby bringing the Constitutional Revolution to an end.

See also Iranian Islamic Revolution (1979).

BIBLIOGRAPHY


IRANIAN ISLAMIC REVOLUTION (1979)

Iran’s Islamic Revolution of 1979 is arguably the most popular revolution of the modern time. Paradoxically, Mohammad Reza Shah Pahlavi lost the Peacock Throne at the pinnacle of his power and glory despite the full support of the United States; SAVAK, his feared secret police; and the imperial army, the world’s fifth largest. Equally surprising was the subsequent establishment of the Islamic Republic by Ayatollah Ruhollah Musavi Khomeini in a land with more than twenty-five hundred years of monarchical tradition (see map p. 246).

THE LONG-TERM REASONS FOR THE REVOLUTION

The main long-term reason behind the revolution was that, during the reign of Mohammad Reza Shah (1941–1979), the economy grew considerably and was somewhat modernized whereas the state remained traditional. The shah’s policies alienated the nationalists, the ulama (‘experts on Islamic law and Islam), the bazaars (merchants and shop-keepers), and others. He suppressed his opponents, denied political participation to the masses, and failed to rely on a popular ideology to legitimate his modernizing reforms. While appearing strong, the Pahlavi state was in fact fragile, infected with the virus of autocracy, devoid of much popular support, and insufficiently disciplined to withstand the tensions the king’s policies had generated.

When Mohammad Reza became king in 1941, he hoped to emulate his father’s autocratic ways but could not. He lacked Reza Shah’s iron will and charisma, and the armed forces, upon whose might his father had ruled, were in disarray. The crisis that transformed his rule to autocracy was created by the National Front, an alliance of nationalists formed by Mohammad Mosaddeq in 1949. Mosaddeq became prime minister in 1951, nationalized the British-controlled Anglo-Iranian Oil Company, and reduced the king’s powers. In retaliation, the British and American intelligence agencies, with the support from the Iranian military and the shah, staged a coup d’état and overthrew the popular prime minister in August 1953.

The coup that saved the shah was the first major step toward the revolution that ended his dynasty. The shah lost legitimacy and was tainted as “America’s shah,” irrevocably damaged his relationship with nationalists and intellectuals, and formed a new alliance with the United States that facilitated his ascendance as a powerful autocrat. He appointed Gen. Fazlollah Zahedi, a major player in the coup, as Mosaddeq’s replacement. The general, in effect, denationalized the oil industry by making an agreement with a new consortium consisting of British and, for the first time, American oil companies, and he unleashed a campaign of terror, killing hundreds and arresting thousands of people, including Mosaddeq. In 1957 the shah, with CIA support, created SAVAK, which he personally controlled.

In the early 1960s the emboldened king launched the White Revolution, the linchpin of which was the distribution of land to the landless peasants. Supported by Washington as a deterrent against a peasant revolution, land reform created a rift between the shah and the two traditional pillars of monarchical support: the landed upper class and the ulama, who were landowners and administrators of some forty thousand charitable religious endowments. Without ever mentioning land reform, Ayatollah Khomeini opposed the White Revolution as a conspiracy against Islam and Iran. (Ayatollah is a revered title in Shi’i Islam conferred on an individual recognized for his piety, expertise in Islamic jurisprudence, and the ability to make independent judgment on all kinds of issues that his followers are obligated to follow.) Khomeini’s arrest by the government precipitated the June Uprising of 1963, in which the police killed and