

THE ROLE OF THE CLERICS AND THE RELIGIOUS FORCES IN THE IRANIAN MOVEMENT OF THE NATIONALIZATION OF OIL INDUSTRY

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Abstract: From 1941 to 1953, in the light of new atmosphere in post-Reza Shah rule, further to the court, government, the national assembly, foreign embassies and the military men, the clergy and the religious forces were one of the new but influential circles of power playing important role in the socio political developments and events of the country. The present article seeks to review the actions, attitudes and the inner development of the main religious and Islamic groups of this period, their interaction and their impact on the movement of nationalization of oil industry. To what extent the outlook and methods of these groups were in line with each other, and whether they were helpful in the fulfillment of the causes of the movement, are questions that author tries to answer without taking side with anyone of them, and against all limitations imposed on this job. Unfortunately, most resources dealt with the topic represent one dimensional picture of the activities of the religious groups and the clerics. undoubtedly, all the above groups were not of the same character, and due to heterogeneous viewpoints and tactics, coalitions and unity among them were short lived and passing.

Key words: Religion, Iran, Oil, Industry, roles.

INTRODUCTION

Iran's occupation in September 1941 led to the disintegration of the foundations of despotic monarchy and the downfall of Reza Shah. All suppressed dissatisfactions of the previous 16 years reign which were kept in silence, now were overflowing strongly.

The accession of the young Shah to the throne, with all instabilities due to the outbreak of the

Second World War, and the meddling of the rival powers opened the path for the relatively free activities of political groups.

Subsequent to September 1941, in the pluralistic and diversified atmosphere of the country, among the main centers of power in Iran were included the court, the cabinet, the Majliss, the army, political groups and parties, the clergy, overseas powers and foreign embassies.

Further to the religious forces at the top of which stood the clerics, there were a number of newly established political groups which entered the scene and played influential role in the course of events. The present article intends to study the actions and moves of these groups, the internal changes of the main religious groups in this period and their relations to each other and their impact on the developments of oil question. To what extent these religious forces were homogenous and what sort of affinity existed among them, to what extent they helped to the realization of the movement's causes, and whether they hindered its advance, are among the main questions that author tries to answer without taking side with any one of the involved groups, of course with all its limitations. The attempt has been to be fair as much as possible.

The political activities of the clerics and religious groups have been depicted in most researches and resources as mainly one sided pictures.¹ While due to the existence of various religious leadership poles in Iran's Shiite society, and the heritage of diverse religious traditions, discordant political activities were carried from 1941- 1953. Such a situation decreased the chance of formation of a single religious political trend in that extraordinary situation, and forestalled the merge of varied

thoughts and beliefs about the nationalization of oil industry and some other issues related to the nationalization affair. However, if the whole religious and political trends were in the hands of one individual or authority with absolute influence in words and decisions, he would have overshadowed the other religious leaders; in that case we could anticipate a national unity resulting from the process of oil nationalization.

However, Iran's society trekked a different path. In mid 1940s, the political instability, and the lack of an authoritative and matured religious center to make a coherent and inclusive religious and political thought prevalent in the country created an appropriate atmosphere for the growth of alternative religious political circles which endeavored to offer and sometimes impose their own political and religious wishes on the society through taking side with certain socio political circles to lead it towards their own desired system.

Shortly after the occupation of Iran by the Allies, the clergy and religious leaders left their chambers and libraries in the religious schools and came forward to examine the new possibilities and potentials rapidly. On their first attempt, without alluding to the occupation of Iran by the foreign forces, they issued an announcement, asking for removing of the prohibition of Islamic veils for women, cancelling the prohibition of holding mourning ceremonies, allocating the special endowments of religious schools to their related section, teaching of religious principles, and separating the schools for girls and boys, and also repairing of sacred tombs of Saints.

Not having stabilized itself, the government gave in against these requests and in this regard, Ali Soheli's administration issued a cabinet decree.²

The above demands were relatively trivial and not connected to the main affairs of the country and its unrest. The main concern was ensuring the national independence and it was achieved through two points: first, evacuation of Iran by foreign forces; and the next by limiting the Shah's powers.

From 1941 -1945, the activities of the clerics were mainly centered on preaching religious principles in the mosques and mourning halls especially in mourning days.

The role of the religious propagation of the clergy becomes clearer when the propagations of Tudeh party on one hand, and the deviant ideas of Ahmad Kasravi on the other hand, aimed at the minds of the youth are taken into consideration. Of course, much to the clergy's annoyance, prior to this, under Reza Shah's reign, some other individuals including Ali Akbar Hakamizadeh through writing *One Thousand Years Secrets*, and publication of *Homayun* periodical, and Shariat Sanglaji through denying divine guidance (*estekhارة*), and the subject of "corporal return" and the similar issues had criticized the intellectual frame and the beliefs of the clergy of the time and their doctrine.³ The clergy believed them to be afflicted with deviant ideas in their religious principles, and Ayatollah Khomeini who was one of the learned clergy of Qom religious schools wrote "kashfol asrar" in answering to their deviations.⁴ Furthermore, it seems that the government system under Reza Shah was to prohibit such ideas and thoughts. However, in the early years after 1941, the socio political groups and parties could propagate their own ideas and doctrines freely, and if the government did not approve of this trend, it could not prevent it at least for the next few years.

Meanwhile, the Tudeh Party announced its formation in less than two weeks after Reza Shah's official removal; and shortly after, it began to publish *Mardom* and formulate its temporary plan. The main and short term goal of the party was to formulate a program which was quite different from that of previous irreligious groups. It wished not to provoke the opposition of the clerics. In order to avoid the attacks of the clergy, they put aside Marxism from their plans, and they even held a religious ceremony for Taghi Arani's anniversary. Though the founders of the party were Marxists and overzealous fans of the Soviet Union, they refused to call themselves communists. Further to their scares from the clergy and religious authorities, the main reasons for this were the prohibition of propagation for any communal doctrines in the constitution of 1931, and also the menacing attitude of the nation towards Communism and the Soviet Union. Through this approach, they wished to bring in all veteran and young socialists and Marxists, and prepare the grounds for the membership of young democrats and even non Marxist extremists, students and laborers.

As a matter of fact, except Tudeh Party, none of the many political societies and groups which had entered the scene after September 1941 had any professional cadre or long term and well organized plans. The other groups and parties were mostly formed on the occasions of elections to gain seats in the parliament, subsequent to which, their coalitions would divert from the main course and would center on asking for more shares from the cabinets and executive appointments, supporting or opposing them. Nonetheless, the personal interests had priority over the national, party or group interests. In this atmosphere, there was no influential political party, and most of them were entangled in the collusions and intrigues of leading and prominent forces and groups.

At this stage, further to the clerics, the rest religious societies including the Islamic Society of the Engineers and the Center for the Publishing Islamic Truths (*Kanun e nashre haqayeqe eslami*) focused their propagations on opposition to the Tudeh Party. Through their modern approach to religion, they endeavored to reconcile the elements of religion, science and rationality, and fight against the superstitions and distortions in religion. The formation of Islamic societies in 1950s was an accurate reflection of the needs and preoccupations of middle class religious groups. Mehdi Bazargan, a non clergy religious figure, and the clergy Seyyed Mahmud Taleqani who had been put to jail in late Reza Shah's years for his criticisms of his regime, were among the leading figures of these groups. In later years, they were among the enthusiastic supporters of Dr. Mossadeq. The former was appointed as the head of Dispossession Board by Dr. Mossadeq who carried his task with the most sincerity and honesty. In the following years, he adored him as a shining example of political activist. The latter kept on supporting Mossaddeq when all his cleric supporters left him in late months of his administration. Taleqani continued his opposition to the Shah after 1953 and in his preaches emphasized that the nature of Shiite is democratic and irreconcilable with despotism. The Islamic Societies led by Bazargan and Taleqani in 1940s and later were mostly concentrated on the cultural activities to overcome the alienation of non religious educated class from the Islamic faith. They were successful to good extent, and paved the path for Ali Shariati in 1960s and 1970s.

As mentioned before, in 1941-1945, the activities of the clerics were mainly centered on opposition to the Tudeh Party, and propagation and preach in the mosques and mourning halls especially in religious days.

Due to the military presence of Soviet forces in northern Iran, the court, the cabinet, and the parliament could not forestall the activities of the communists and the Tudeh Party. Now, Tudeh members set to widespread propagation among the middle class, laborers and university students. The supports of the Soviets, their organizations and propagations, the press, the political demonstrations, and gaining seats in the fourth term of the parliament helped them to establish their position in the political scene of the country. These activities raised a grave concern among the court, the government, the parliament, nationalists, conservatives, clerics and pro British and pro US circles.

Upon the evacuation of Soviet forces from Iran, and elimination of danger in Azerbaijan crisis, and especially putting some limits to the activities of the Tudeh Party, it seemed that the danger of communism was removed for a while. However on the rise of the movement for nationalization of oil industry, and emphasis of the leader on the freedom of party activities, the Tudeh Party renewed and extended its actions. Again, this action grew concern among the clerics especially during the second term of Dr. Mossadeq's premiership, of which we will refer to later.

However, the most prominent clergy who entered the political scene of 1940s was Ayatollah Seyyed Aboulqassem Kashani who had lived rough times until then. He was sixteen when he left for Najaf with his father, Ayatollah Seyyed Mostafa Kashani. He was instructed by Molla Mohammad Kazem Khorasani, and in his 25 years he became a Shiite religious authority. Six years later, he participated the battles against British forces in Iraq. Again in 1919, he rose against the British in Iraq.⁵ "Subsequent to his father's death, he established Alavi School in Najaf which contained military training in its curriculum".⁶ "In 1920, he made his escape from Iraq and returned Iran via Kermanshah".⁷ In Iran, he established friendly relationship with Reza Shah to enter the Constituent Assembly and vote for the Article 36, handing over the monarchy to Reza Shah Pahlavi, and "ensuring the inheritance of monarchy in his male offspring generation after generation". He was

detained by the British army due to his contacts with the German officials and cooperation with the fifth column network of S S German Officers. It is said that he, Fazollah Zahedi and Shams Qanatabadi were in close connections with the *Kabud* (indigo) Party, whose founder was Habibollah Nobakht and which supported Fascism and the German Nazism⁸.

Eventually, upon the end of the war, Kashani was released from jail, and in late summer of 1945, he left for Tehran. Kashani's actions in relation to the nationalization of oil industry begin from this date.

Though Kashani's actions and endeavors can be considered the continuance of the tradition of political activities of other clerics who entered the scene in late Qajar period, his attitude became famous as what was later called political Islam. His ideas differed from those of Taleqani and Bazargan too. It did not contain any innovation. Kashani was more of a political leader and did not expertise to interpret religious matters.⁹ His fame was mostly for his belief in fight against the British policies in the Middle East. As he devoted all his efforts to this subject, he never wrote a religious dissertation. In an interview in October 1951, he announced, "the appreciative people of Iran have always honored and respected me. They follow my instructions and treat me as their religious and political leader. . . I rose to fame as a result of my opposition against the imperialistic policies of the British."¹⁰ As it can be observed he sees his position as a 'religious and political leader', as a result of not having a clerical rank, but of his record of political struggles. It is true that he did not claim religious authority openly; however, he hoped to get it through political affairs.

On the other hand, he had found out truly that all his political objectives would not be achieved through usual channels. He needed some obedient devoted activists as his infantry to put pressure on the situation and political climate. Establishing links and connections with "Fadaian e Eslam", paved the path for an outlook which was mostly discordant with the common traditions in religion and political interactions. The main purpose was to begin the fight for the formation of an Islamic government.¹¹ It seems that this coalition, at least in Kashani's idea was a sort of tactical and political action of expediency, not a fundamental belief. However, not long before, the

connections came to a breach. Fadaian e eslam broke up with him and became his enemy.

Until then, Kashani's supporters were mostly from the conservative middle class. The layers of this class differed from Fadaian e eslam both in social combination and intellectual and religious understandings. The members of Fadaian e eslam were mainly from among the youth living on low paid jobs in Tehran bazaar and the poorer areas of the town. According to one of Navvab Safavi's close supporters, their leader mostly made use of people "who were hooligans and tough guys, behaving violently and disturbing the peace of others"¹². His reasoning for doing this was that first of all he would correct their bad manners, and secondly, the correction of such tough guys would make others think that what sort of teachings had such impacts on them that they had changed completely. . ."¹³

Furthermore, though Kashani and Fadaian e eslam were both politically pragmatists, Fadaian e eslam were fundamentalist Islam fanatic. The contents of their program exceeded the general rules of chastity and religious recommendations and contained especial demands including the prohibition of smoking, alcohol, opium, gambling, movies, arm amputation of criminals and execution of incorrigible aggressors, prohibition of wearing foreign cloths, punishment of two sides of bribery, and punishment of those clergies who misused their religious position, elimination of some anti Islamic courses including music and also arranging for compulsory veiling for women.¹⁴

This legal –revolutionary philosophy was to great extent dependent on their understanding of "Islamic Justice". The same understanding is to be seen in both political punishments and also in various moral crimes. Their general terms used in such cases were "moharebe ba khoda va rassul" (enemy combatant against God and prophet) and "mofsede fel ardh", (corrupter of the earth). These terms, used later in Islamic Revolutionary courts, though derived from Koran, had never been legally explained, and the religious authorities had expressed doubts on the adaptation of the related Koranic verse with the said charges, and it has been the source of controversy among the cleric authorities and interpreters.

The Society of Fadaian e Eslam which was formed to fight against any form of non

religiosity, prior to their coalition with Kashani, in an early attempt, assassinated Ahmad Kasravi, the famous author and historian in 10 Mar. 1945. Of course, the defendants were acquitted in the court, since on the one hand, they were supported by the religious leaders, and on the other hand the government authorities hoped to use them for their own interests against the Tudeh Party. However, Fadaian e eslam turned to Kashani instead of collaborating with the government administration, and helped him in organizing strikes in bazaar against Qavam and violent demonstrations against AbdolHossein Hazhir.

Their first joint endeavor was mobilization of people in support of the Palestinians in Arab – Israel war. However, they never gain nationwide popularity. Of course, there were always some devoted groups to follow up their goals. But they never succeeded to create heroes as Hassan alban in having political wisdom or as Seyyed Qotb in having insight, or as AboulAla Mowdudi in merits and intellect. They mostly took part in political assassinations rather than assistance in religious and political discussions.¹⁵

Navvab Safavi remained a figure, always overshadowed by the clerics of the society. They needed to cling to the national and religious leaders to avoid the pressures of government officials, law, or the enmity of other political groups.¹⁶

Nevertheless, Navvab Safavi hoping for the immediate establishment of the Islamic government gave its powerful arm and organizations to Kashani. Their first joint operation began with demonstrations in support of Palestinians in January 1947. However, these oppositions failed to forestall the recognitions of Israel. Since summer 1948, the joint actions were centered on internal politics and continued opposition against AbdolHossein Hazhir, being considered as an example of a wicked politician in any respect.

The joint oppositions of Kashani –Fadaian e eslam against Hazhir led to the support of the minority of the fifteenth parliament. There was created a sort of unity of opinion and coordination among the religious forces involved in the oppositions which led to the formation of the National Front in 1959. The cooperation of Hossein Makki and Haerizadeh (who could manipulate the legal levers) and

religious forces (Kashani –Navvab Safavi) could be a favorite combination to achieve a political objective.

On the other hand, Seyyed Zia, famous for his support of the British policies in the past, showed a positive attitude to this trend. Shams Qanatabadi says:

“Within the Parliament, we only enjoyed the support of few men including Makki, Haerizadeh, Abdolqadir Azad, and Baqai; out of Parliament Seyyed Zia’s band were more or less with us”.¹⁷

He adds, “To overthrow Hazhir’s government almost in all meetings and demonstrations, some of Seyyed Zia’s friends and followers were with us”.¹⁸

For Kashani who claimed his main objective in political activity was resistance against the British influence, the establishment of such relations was inexplicable. However, the cooperation continued against Hazhir and kept going later on.

During the same years, another organization was formed by the leadership of Kashani, Shams Qanatabadi, and some wealthy merchant of bazaar. It was called the Assembly of Mojahed Moslems (*majma e mosalmanan e mojahed*) and it was supported by most bazaar merchants, especially the heads of guilds, religious students, and minor shopkeepers. Despite all its religious features, the Assembly was not fundamentalist and fanatical. But it had a relatively weak structure. The main purpose of this circle was to reinforce Kashani’s political positions, and in its many public announcements, it advocated the execution of Islamic law, cancellation of Reza Shah’s non religious rules, observance of Islamic veil, supporting home industries and the unity of Moslems.¹⁹

Therefore, further to Fadaian e eslam, the Assembly of the mojahed moslems were absolutely at Kashani’s service. Both groups held good capacity for political struggle, and each managed to prove its efficiency in the mobilization of forces to set off street operations and demonstrations, clashes and skirmishes with the opponents, and the police. Since then, the parliamentary tactics in a lawful context merged with ultra parliamentary activities of organized hooligans. On the one hand, Makki and Haerizadeh brought accusation against Hazhir’s government, and after a while they subjected

Saed to questioning on the accusation of the suspension of press, closure of parties, and detention of Kashani. On the other hand, Seyyed Hossein Emami, one of Navvab's close friends, and Kasravi's assassinator, threatens Hazhir in the presence of Dr. Mossaddeq, "you rascal, if I don't kill you, then I am a bastard."²⁰ The same story reveals the close connections between the National Front and Dr. Mossaddeq with the Fadaian e eslam in the early years of the nationalization of oil industry.

During the elections of the sixteenth Majlis, "the control organization over the freedom of elections" was to ensure the freedom of the voters. The same organization succeeded to exploit the electoral fraud of the official authorities in the favor of their own candidates.²¹ Seyyed Hassan Emami kept his promise by killing Hazhir in 4th Nov. 1949, and four days later, when he was only 25, he was executed. Undoubtedly, Hazhir's murder led to the entrance of National Front members in the sixteenth Majlis and the supplementary pact of Guss –Gulshaian not to be signed. It is true that Hazhir was not tried on any legal court, but the sad truth is that it was the murder of Hazhir by the hand of a religion fanatic that opened the doors of Majlis for the real representatives of nation to Majlis and the nationalization of oil industry.

Therefore, Kashani's supporters and Fadaian e eslam founded a movement which despite all its ups and downs, due to its common lines with other, not necessarily religious, forces, laid the foundations of a circle that took the power in its hands for the purpose of nationalization of oil industry. In this period, special political characteristics appear in the atmosphere of the country the most conspicuous feature of that was religious heterogeneity. This feature could be both potential and a long term problem. However, it managed to gather various forces of diverse natures around each other and give them a common line.

Regardless of endeavors for the nationalization of oil industry and cutting the foreign powers down to their size, the lack of hesitation in employing any means to achieve their ends. Dr. Mossaddeq was aware of this when he left for the court in 15th Oct. 1949 with the help of religious forces such as Seyyed Hossein Emami and founded the National Front.

During Razmara's premiership and from the early months of the sixteenth Majlis, there was a close relationship between Kashani and Mossaddeq. Both of them believed that Razmara was a despot and a foreign tool. They were concerned about the annihilation of parliamentary democratic system. In his announcements against Razmara, Kashani with followers among the middle class religious people of bazaar, attacked him not for his objections to Islamic laws, but for his not observing the legal freedoms provided by the constitution. The reason for this was that Razmara himself was a faithful man who observed all his religious duties, and "had direct and permanent connections with the clergy especially Ayatollah Seyyed Mohammad Behbahani and Sheikh Bahaaddin Nouri."²²

A review of the Shah and the court's position and attitude in this period is of some importance. The Shah's efforts to gain the absolute power in politics and government in his hands since Qavam's fall in 1947 had entered a new phase. His demands for revision in the constitution and extension of his powers became more apparent and clearer. The attempt on his life in 4th Feb. 1947 brought a good opportunity for the formation of the constituent assembly. Through the formation of this assembly in mid May 1949, the forty eight act of the constitution was revised and subsequently the power to dissolve the Majlis and the constituent assembly were devolved on the Shah. Furthermore, the single article of concession of Reza Shah's land properties to MohammadReza Shah was ratified according to which 2400 villages became the Shah's properties to be exploited by the court.

The extension of the Shah's powers, and the increase of his family's meddling in Majliss affairs, his not observing the constitution, expelling of independent and powerful prime ministers from the court, appointing their favored ministers in the cabinet by force, and putting limits on the Majlis powers since early 1950, added to the dissatisfactions with the Shah. On the other hand, the Shah's inaction against obtaining the nation's rights in matters related to oil and his support of supplementary pact of Guss –Golshaian put him to defend the British interests in Iran. Such an image of the Shah in public opinion weakened him to the point that the time for the loss of his prestige began to come.

The damage to the Shah's reputation coincided with the uniting of nationalist and religious forces in the form of nationalization of oil industry and reached to its climax in 6th March 1951. The Majlis minority backed by Kashani – Fadaian e eslam, opposed Razmara from the moment he wanted to introduce his cabinet members to the Majlis and propose his work program. Without the least regard of the etiquette, Dr. Mossaddeq and his assistants protested against Razmara and his cabinet members and did not let the prime minister speak a word. When the cabinet left the open session of the majliss, Mossaddeq addressed them, "to hell with you, shut the door to prevent the entrance of others."²³ Again, in another open session, Mossaddeq told Razamara, ". . . upon the unity of holy truth, we will shed blood; we will hit and will be killed. If you are military, I am more military than you. I will kill you right in this spot."²⁴

It is evident that this confrontation was not limited to the parliament. When Razmara left the Majlis building, Fadain e eslam members attacked his car and he just escaped car overturn."²⁵ The press supporting National Front and Fadaian e Eslam such as "Bakhtar e emruz", "Shahed", and "Nabard e Mellat" attacked Razmara's cabinet dauntlessly. Eventually, these attacks ended in Razmara's murder in 6th March 1951. Before his assassination, "specific committee of oil" had offered the proposal for the nationalization of oil industry according to the Nation Front's suggestion, and Kashani, Ayatollah Mohammad Taghi Khansari (one of the three religious authorities of Qom) had issued fatwa (religious decree) in its support.

Another point in the opposition to Razmara and his cabinet is that none of the nationalist religious forces opposed to the murder of their political opponents. Further, they welcomed the pressure put by the common men on the legal institutions including the Majliss.

The assassinator of Razmara is still an issue of controversy.²⁶ However, it is not the subject of this article. Khalil Tahmasebi undertook the responsibility and in his interrogations answered, "Razmara was a traitor and his treachery was proved to me, so I killed him."²⁷ The point is that a combination of religious and nationalist forces in a common front on the excuse of the immediate rescue of Iran, through hidebound and opportunistic methods, trampled their morals under their feet and placed the

foundation stone of the movement wrongly. The various documents prove that at least except for Kashani and Navvab Safavi, Dr. Mossaddeq, Hossein Makki and Dr. Mozaffar Baqai were informed of the plan beforehand, and had a hand in the affair indirectly. Khalil Tahmasebi confesses that three days before the murder, he met Ayatollah Kashani and informs him of his intention. Kashani tells him, "go, but never mention my name". To the interrogator's question that if Kashani had suggested not to kill Razmara, what he would have done, Tahmasebi replied, "I would refrain from killing him."²⁸ Six days after the assassination, in his interview with Daily Express journalist, Kashani described Razmara's murder 'to the benefit of Iranian nation' and called Khalil Tahmasebi's shot as "the best and the most useful strike at the body of imperialists and the enemies of Iranian nation."²⁹

Subsequent to his assassination, Fadaian e Eslam members expected the immediate execution of Islamic law upon Kashani and Mossaddeq's coming to power, and give it precedence to other issues even the oil question. On the hand, the court saw it necessary to appoint the new prime minister and arrest the assassigators and put them on trial.

First, the court had decided to appoint Seyyed Ziaaddin Tabatabai as prime minister. As it is said, the Shah recalls Seyyed Zia to the court and asks him to form his cabinet. He makes excuse that his program is not still ready and postpones it until the work time after the New Year holidays. Therefore, Hossien Ala was commissioned to form the cabinet.

On the punishment of Razmara's assassigators, it was evident that the government intends to arrest Fadain e eslam's members, and Kashani's taking position as a religious leader was important and could influence the cooperation with Fadaian e eslam. As a political leader, Kashani knew well that the insistence of the government on the arrest of Fadain's members, and putting limits on his own actions were all under the British pressures. Especially the British ambassador, Francis Shepherd forced the government to punish Kashani and his followers.³⁰ Later events proved that Kashani took a cautious attitude towards the government and Ala's cabinet and in a very short time effected his connections with the hard line Fadaian e eslam members, and took serious position against their inflexible lines. Therefore,

right at the rise of the oil nationalization movement, in a period between Razmara's murder, and a time when Dr. Mossaddeq was not appointed as prime minister by majliss yet, the tension between the two religious forces (Kashani-Fadaian e Eslam) began to appear and led to internal collapse. Two days after Ala's appointment (11 March 1951), Navvab Safavi issued an announcement declaring Ala's incompetence as a prime minister and ordered him to resign immediately.³¹ But the members of National Front and Ayatollah Kashani expressed no opposition to him and his cabinet. This was an evident dispute between the previous allies.

Kashani's avoidance of collaborating with Fadaian e eslam's Islamic government, and exploiting of the breach by other opponent groups turned it to a serious confrontation gradually, and eventually it led to the suppression and the detainment of Navvab Safavi and some of other leaders of this society.³² Subsequent to their arrest and being backed to the corners, the Fadaian e eslam members felt that they have been manipulated by other politicians and that now, none of them wanted their playing in the scene and just ask them to sit aside and watch the proceedings.³³ It was in late April or early May 1951 that Kashani met Navvab Safavi in his hiding place. Navvab asked him to release the detained members of his group, and insisted that the rules of God should be executed.³⁴ Kashani replied, "At the moment, we have to fight for oil and repel all losses from Oil Company." Kashani promised Navvab "to execute the laws of God according to the constitution" after oil settlement.³⁵

On the beginning of Dr. Mossaddeq's term of premiership, Navvab Safavi offered a proposal of four articles to Mossaddeq including compulsory prayers in all departments and offices, wearing compulsory veils by the women all over the country, prohibition of alcoholic drinks, and the removal of all women staff of the governmental organizations.³⁶ Mossaddeq replied that his program submitted to the majliss, is based on two principles; execution of the law of nationalization of oil industry and the reform in the election rules, and that he is competent only to see into these affairs. And that even if he had permission to pay attention to other issues, the situation of the country did not let him to refer to such things at the threshold of dispossession process.³⁷

On his not achieving his aims in this ways, he issued an announcement in August 1951 and attacked Kashani and Mossaddeq in the most insulting words. The contents of this declaration were protest against the martial law, detainment of Fadian e Eslam members, treachery of Mossaddeq and their not heeding the Islamic regulations.³⁸

Of course, except for Navvab Safavi, some other religious circles tried to get Kashani issue a decree on the wearing of veils and removal of women from government bureaus. In this regard, they referred to a clergy member of the parliament to draw a bill. On October 1952, a bill of four articles were drawn by Hajj Seyyed Javadi, member of 17th term of Majlis from Qazvin and signed by six members of the majlis. According to *dad*, all the above four points were included in the bill. But as Kashani did not approve of such decrees, he rejected the proposal and the bill came to a halt.³⁹ Kashani did not see it expedient to the critical situation of the country, because it would cause dispute between various classes of the society and it would end to the interests of the imperialists.⁴⁰ Though Kashani's response was effective to some extent, some Islam fanatics kept demanding such requests and put pressure on Mossaddeq's government. Mossaddeq's strategy was to keep silence and to refer it to Kashani's judgment. Little by little, such questions and the formulation of drinks bill by Faqihi Shirazi, the representative of Khorramabad, led to the confrontation of Mossaddeq and Seyyed Mohammad Behbahani. He and some other Mossaddeq's opponents found a suitable ground to attack Mossaddeq and weaken his government. On his opposing Mossaddeq, Behbahani tried his best to have Ayatollah Borujerdi, the great Shiite authority take side with him and issue a decree against Mossaddeq. Wishing not to be a political tool in the hands of Behbahani and the rest, Borujerdi avoided such a verdict. He was determined to stay away from any hasty political action with unknown consequences. He did not wish to misuse religion to advance worldly goals. He believed that any failure in such achievements might harm the religious faith of people. So he did not enter into affairs that he was not certain of its beginning and ending. He always advised his students not to get involved in such issues. The course of later events proved that it was not an easy task.

Cracks began to appear in the façade of Fadaian e Eslam members. Some of Navvab Safavi's followers left him due to their taking moderate positions regarding the nationalization of oil industry. Hajj Seyyed Hashem Hosseini, Hajj Mehdi Araqi, Hajj AboulQassem Rafi, Ahmad Shahab (Shahbodaghlu), and Abdollah Karbaschian (editor in chief of *nabard e mellat*) were among this splinter group.⁴¹ Abdolhossein Vahedi, who was out of jail still insisted on the original lines of Fadaian e Eslam and was drawn to actions such as attempt on Hossein Fatemi's life with his band.

Regardless of Fadaian e Eslam who were an important part of the movement engine, Ayatollah Kashani especially during Mossaddeq's premiership was the most outstanding religious figure. Undoubtedly his brave steps on July 1952 were of great importance in the return of Mossaddeq to power. Qavam's short period of premiership in mid July, and his strongly worded declaration that "the captain of the ship has chosen another advisor" provided Kashani with an opportunity to appear in the role of anti imperialistic movement leader to struggle for independence. He played great role in the success of 21st July rising through issuing announcements in 19th, 20th 21st July against Qavam and inviting people to civil disobedience, giving fatherly advice to the army to separate it from its commanders and coordinating it with the movement.⁴²

The success in 21st rising and Kashani's great role in the fall of Qavam's cabinet and giving powers to Mossaddeq persuaded Kashani of his right positions. And his asking for shares in the movement was approved not only by Islamic groups and societies, but also by Mossaddeq and the National Front. Of course, prior to this rising, Kashani had meddled in the majliss elections of 17th period, presided over National Front's meetings, and corresponded with the politicians of foreign countries including Khawje Nezamaddin, the governor general of Pakistan, Nahas Pasha, the Egyptian prime minister, and persuaded Mossaddeq to concede some appointments to Kashani's friends and in this way he had proved himself of having equal weight to Mossaddeq.⁴³ However, subsequent to 21st July 1952, Kashani's meddling in state affairs "reached to an unbearable point".⁴⁴ Eventually, Kashani's meddling was faced with strong objections on the side of Mossaddeq and he asked him to stop stepping in all affairs.

Shamseddin Miralai, Mossaddeq's minister of interior has listed and published Kashani's recommendation letters. "There are 58 letters, 50 of which recommend people for various appointments..."⁴⁵ "According to an account, up to mid December 1952, about one thousand and five hundred recommendation letters by Kashani and his sons were accumulated in the ministries."⁴⁶ In his memoirs, Dr. Karim Sanjabi reminds that no single day passed without receiving many letters from Kashani and his sons to ministries which were mostly impracticable and illegal to do."⁴⁷ The continuance of these ways had Mossaddeq put limitations on Kashani's actions. The same limitation caused Kashani to think that Mossaddeq's not regarding his recommendations means eliminating him from the political scene of the country.

The close relationship between Mozaffar Baqai and Kashani was one of the other issues that appeared in the political scene of Iran after 21st July rising in the absence of Fadaian e Eslam. Following 21st July events, Mossaddeq expressed his resentment of the 17th Majliss and its members in many ways to suggest that the majliss prevents him from executing his policies in particular situations. He wanted the majliss ratify his authority bill in August 1952. The Majliss members agreed to give him especial authority, but they made some critical remarks about his methods. In mid January, his period of time finished and he requested for extension of his authority. Bu this time he encountered with Baqai's fierce opposition. Haerizadeha and Kashani took sides with Baqai, and stood against Mossaddeq's request. Kashani attributed his opposition to the authority bill to its contradiction with the constitution and the expediency of country. Emphasizing on the separation and independence of the three branches of government (legislative, executive and parliament), he observed that disregard of this principle is the breach of constitutionality and return to despotism. He reminded the parliament members that they had no right to concede to any other person the authority given to them by people. In conclusion, he addressed Mossaddeq, "I am obliged to inform you that as long as I am the speaker of the national consultative assembly, I would not see it expedient to propose such bills which explicitly violate the constitution of the country."⁴⁸

Although Kashani's opposition was right in principle, Mossaddeq had such a strong position

in the country that whatever was proposed by him, even against the rules, was welcomed by the nation and expedient for the country's interests. Kashani and his followers' opposition was met with strong objections of people. Huge numbers of telegrams in support of Mossaddeq came from all over the country. A nationwide Demonstrations and strikes were launched in the country. People waited for the positive response of parliament to Mossaddeq's request for increased authority. The continued pressure caused Kashani to give up his objection to the bill and send a conciliatory message. Since then Kashani continued in political isolation. His ex ally had outrun him now. He was looking for an opportunity to swing the balance of power in his own favor.

The event of 28th Feb. 1953 paved the ground for a new and serious test of strength between Mossaddeq and Kashani. In this situation, Mossaddeq's opponents kept closer to the Shah. Now, the important issue was to defeat Mossaddeq. The oil question, success of movement and fight against the imperialism had lost their prior importance. It was true. Kashani was not among the Shah's supporters and did not advocate him in political, intellectual and religious respects, but his unfortunate attempts to oppose Mossaddeq's special powers had put him in a new political position. He felt that the recent events had driven him out. Therefore, he intended to exploit 28th February event to deal a heavy blow to the political body of his ex ally. Other clerics including Ayatollah Behbahani, Sheikh Bahaaddin Nuri, and some individuals such as Dr. Baqai and his supporters, Ali Zohri and Haerizadeh had joined him against Mossaddeq. The great tragedy is that Kashani with all his records of fights against imperialism, now sided with a circle including some officers who were against the nationalization of oil industry such as Zahedi, Parviz Khowsrovani, Arfa, Deihimi, Ali Asghar Mozaynni; some clerics known as "28th Feb. clerics"; semi fascist groups like Sumka party, Arya Party; opponents such as Mirashrafi, Sarrafzadeh, Faqihi Shirazi, Shams Qanatabadi, Amidi Nuri; and a gang of thugs and some low men of no character such as Shaban *bimokh* (headless), Amir *mubur* (blonde), and Ahmad Eshghi to prevent the Shah from leaving the country. They believed that Mossaddeq was responsible for the Shah's leaving Iran. They had intended to overthrow Mossaddeq's cabinet the same day. However, this was again unsuccessful. In 29th February, Mossaddeq's

loyal forces were in relative control of the situation.

Not all clerics supported Kashani's attitude towards Mossaddeq. Some clerics of Majlis including Angaji and Jalali still supported Mossaddeq. Ayatollah Borujerdi kept distance from Mossaddeq's opponents, and despite all pressures put on him until Mossaddeq's downfall in 19th August, he never joined them and never spoke a word that could be interpreted against Mossaddeq or his administration.

Ayatollah Borujerdi sent a written message to the Shah and Mossaddeq which could not be interpreted as a pro Shah or against Mossaddeq. The message reads:

"Expressing my deep regret for recent incidents, as I am confident that your royal highness and Mr. Prime minister enjoy the most devotion to the independence and prosperity of Iran, I am hopeful and have expectations that you keep your unity, agreement and solidarity as it has been the case before. So, no deviant elements and mischief makers would have opportunity to create instability and unrest in the country".⁴⁹

Since his return to Qom, it could be claimed that, Ayatollah Borujerdi was mostly trying to "repair the damages of Reza Shah's religious policies in his late years" and reconstructing "the previous connections of the government and the clerics". Due to the increase of the Communist activities and the hazards resulting from it, these efforts became much more serious so much so that as Ali Rahnama has pointed out in his book, it turned to be "an important part of the traditional clergys' tasks."⁵⁰

If the happenings of the nationalization of oil industry and the relations of the clerics and Mossaddeq are reviewed from this viewpoint, it might be concluded that regardless of all ups and downs of Ayatollah Kashani and Fadaian e Eslam on one hand, and those of Kashani and Mossaddeq and nationalist forces on the other hand, on the whole, the clergy opposed to the ideas and the activities of the communists. In their opposition to the Tudeh Party, they enjoyed the Shah and the court's company; particularly that the Shah keeping distance from his father's policies, cancelled the compulsory unveiling of women, the uniform clothing of men and prohibition of holding mourning

meetings, and he would hold mourning sessions in Sepahsalar mosque and met the religious authorities.

This type of clerics which MohammadTaghi Falsafi could be introduced as a representative of, believed that Mossaddeq's policies would eventually weaken the foundations of monarchy and strengthen the Tudeis. He writes in his memoirs:

He (Mossaddeq) gave the Tudeis permission of free activities after 21st July, and supported them . . . He let the communist dailies feel free to write whatever they wished and never heeded the objections of the clergy and the Moslem people."⁵¹

Somewhere else he says:

"The activities of Tudeh party had created an annoying situation. . . The clergy could not remain indifferent to the political situation of the country. In fact, the clergy had faced a dilemma; it should either defend the constitution of twelfth Shiite religion which inevitably was realized through defending the constitutional monarchy, or keep silence and give them space for Tudeh activity and its probable taking of power. . . In such a situation the clergy was responsible to take side with the constitutional monarchy against the Tudeh Party."⁵²

As a matter of fact, in late months of Mossaddeq's premiership, the propagations of the British or US agents in Iran concerning the growth of communism in Iran had increased considerably. The publication of various articles with pseudonym or anonymous worried the religious leaders about the spread of communism more than ever.

However, even if "we admit that the Tudeh Party was not a serious danger for Mossaddeq's government, it should be accepted that it had appeared as a force to disintegrate the mainstay of the society, and it had the power to extend itself at the time of crisis. Particularly, as its opponent, National Front and its leaders for their weak insights of international affairs, especially in the oil question and lack of thorough knowledge of the political and ideological nature of the super powers, decided to instigate people instead of uniting and informing them, and therefore, they depended more and more on

common man's support. National Front's affiliated periodicals were unable to appeal the youth because they lacked any attractive theoretical arguments against the Tudeh propagations which were fascinating for the students and laborers. They could not defeat the demagoguery of Tudeh Party and its affiliated groups and therefore form an independent identity."⁵³

CONCLUSION

Upon the accession of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi to the throne in September 1941, and simultaneous with Iran's occupation by the Allied army, a period of instability of governments and unrest in Iran's sociopolitical situation began. The main internal challenges at this time were the cabinet, the national consultative assembly (Majliss), veteran politicians, political groups and religious groups and the clerics. And the practice of governing was due to their obeying the rules.

Considering the varied religious experience of the clergy and religious groups, the political activities of each of them were heterogeneous. Some of them gave priority to propagation and cultural activity; so they adopted a modern approach to religion, trying to fight against superstitions and deviations in religion, reconcile the knowledge and reason with it and represent a democratic picture of Shiite doctrine. Due to the formation and extension of Tudeh Party which was on an opposite line, their concentration on cultural aspects of religion was of great importance.

There were other groups led by Ayatollah Kashani who held ideas of "political Islam". It did not ensure a particular initiative in religious doctrines. Fadaian e Islam society, Moslem Mujahed's Assembly and some groups of the traditional middle class and bazaaris followed Aytollah Kashani as their religious and political leader because of his records in fights against the imperialistic policies of the British in the Middle East. Meanwhile, Fadaian e Islam with their fanatical outlook of fundamentalist Islam and for the purpose of establishing Islamic government had entered the scene as pragmatists and removed all obstacles of taking recourse to violent political assassinations. They kept their coalition with Ayatollah Kashani to the threshold of the nationalization of oil industry. But as this coalition was tactical in Kashani's viewpoint and could not reach the Fadaian to

their desired Islamic government, on the eve of Ala's premiership in mid March 1951, a breach began to form between them. On the other hand, following the imprisonment of Fadain e Islam members, the internal dispute arose among its members. As, it seems that Navvab Safavi, contrary to Abdolhossein Vahedi and his followers, had turned to a more moderate approach, and objected to attempt on Hossein Fatemi's life by Vahedi's order. On the other hand, subsequent to 21st July event, Kashani embarked on an open opposition to Mossaddeq's demands for the extension of power to become one of his main opponents in the period between December 1952 and August 1953.

In the meantime, Ayatollah Borujeridi's position as the religious authority of the Shiite towards the Shah and the court on one hand, and the nationalization of oil industry and Dr. Mossaddeq on the other hand, was quite different from that of Kashani and other groups. His policies mainly centered on reconstructing the relationship of the governing bodies and the clerical organization which had been damaged by Reza Shah's religious policies. He kept neutrality on oil question and Mossaddeq's policies. He did not see it as a question to be solved by the issuing of a religious decree, as the success or failure of the movement would have profound impact on the faith of people. And as he was not sure of its future, he tried as far as he could to prevent the clergy from entering into this scene.

Notas.

¹ Perhaps Ali Rahnam's research in this matter is an exception. His book, *Religious Forces in the Course of National Movement*, Tehran, Gam e nou, 1384, is a valuable research on the role of the three religious forces (Ayatollah Kashani and his followers, Navvab Safavi and his Society of Fadaian e Eslam; and eventually, Ayatollah Borujerdi) since mid 1940s.

² The above requests were suggested by Ayatollah Hajj Agha Hossein Qomi, the exiled clergy to Najaf by Reza Shah upon his return from that city. Look at the appendix 1.

³ For more information on this look at Hossein Badla, *Haftad sal khatere*, Tehran, Markaze Enghelab Eslami, 1378, pp. 195-215

⁴ In the first place it was the rejection of Hakamizadeh's *one thousand years of secrets* and Ahmad Kasravi's works. Secondly, it contained strong criticisms of Reza Shah's policies. The Principle of the rule of jurisprudence was not offered yet, and monarchy had still a sort of legitimacy, provided that it was selected by a few number of religious authorities . . . (Kashfol asrar, p. 176).

⁵ *Tarikh va Farhange moasser*, shomare 6, 7, s. 32.

⁶ *Selseleye Pahlavi va niruhaye mazhabi be revayate tarikhe kambridge*, tarjome: Abbas Mokhber, virastar: Morteza Assadi, Tehran: tarhe no, chape sevvom, 1357, s. 189.

⁷ *Ayineye ebrat*, Nasrollah Seifpur Fatemi, Nashre ketab, bi ta. S. 494.

⁸ Shams Qanatabadi, "Seiri in nehzat melli shodane naft". Tehran, markaze barresi asnad e tarikhi, 1377, ss. 262-264.

⁹ Mehdi Haeri Yazdi, *Khaterat e Mehdi Haeri Yazdi*, be kusheshe Habibollah lajervadi, markaz motalleate khavar e mianeh e daneshgah e Harvard, 1380, s. 45.

¹⁰ *Ruznameh e shahed*, 9 mehr, 1330.

¹¹ Mehdi Araqi: *Khaterat e shahid hajj Mehdi araghi*, Tehran, moassesseye khadamat farhangi rassa, chape avval, 1370, s. 32.

¹² *Ibid.*, p.26.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Seyyed Mojtaba Navvab Safavi: "andisheha, mobarezat va shahadate u; Hossein Khoshneyyat. Tehran: manshure baradari, 1360, ss. 61-77; and also "barname ye fadaian e eslam", Navvab Safavi, Tehran, 1329, ss. 1-96.

¹⁵ The political assassinations of the Fadaian e eslam included: the murder of Ahmad Kasravi in 10 March, 1946; murder of AbdolHossein Hazhir, minister of court in 4 Nov. 1949, murder of HajiAli Razmara, the prime minister in 25 Feb. 1951; attempt on the minister of foreign affairs, Hossein Fatemi's life in 14 Feb. 1951; and attempt on the prime minister, Hossein Ala's life in 16 Nov. 1955.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* pp 168-172.

¹⁷ Shams Qanatabadi, *Ibid.*, p. 47.

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 159

¹⁹ Yervand Abrahamian, *Ibid.* pp. 317-318.

²⁰ Mehdi Araqi, *Ibid.* p. 39.

²¹ Shams Qanatabadi, *ibid.* p. 135; Hajj Mehdi Araqi, *ibid.* p. 41.

²² Mahmud Sherwin, *Dowlat e Mostajal*, Tehran, Elmi Publications, 1374, p. 112.

²³ Hossein Makki, "Khal e yad", part one, Tehran, Bongah e tarjomeh va nashre ketab, 1360, p. 80.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 82, and Rahim Zehtab Fard, *Afssaneh e Mossaddeq*, Tehran, Elm, 1378, p. 201.

²⁵ Mehdi Araqi, *ibid.*, p. 63.

²⁶ Mohammad Turkman's discernment in his work, *The Secrets of Razmara's Murder*, Tehran, Rasa cultural services, 1370, sheds light to some ambiguities of this murder.

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²⁸ *Jamiate Fadaine Eslam be Ravayate Asnad*, Ahmad GolMohammadi, Jelde dovvom. Tehran: markaz asnad e enghelab eslami, 1382, pp. 666 and 668.

²⁹ *Shahed*, 27 Esfand 1329.

³⁰ FO. 371/91453, from Shepherd, 26 March 1951.

³¹ *Nabard e mellat*, 24 Esfand 1329.

³² The arrest of the key members of Fadaian e eslam began on the eve of 21 March 1951 according to the article 5 of the martial law. Abdolhossein Vahedi, Seyyed Hashem Hosseini, AmirAbdollah

Karbaschian and Seyyed Mohammad Vahedi were among the detainees. Navvab Safavi was in hiding place until he was arrested in 2nd June 1951.

³³ Ali Rahnama. Ibid. p. 209.

³⁴ Hadi Khosrowshahi, *Fadaian e Eslam, Tarikh, Amalkard, Andishe*. Tehran, entesharat e Ettelaat, 1357, p. 140.

³⁵ Ibid. 140.

³⁶ *GholamReza Karbaschi, Tarikh e Shafahi Enghelab Eslami*, Tehran, Markaz Asnad Enghelab Eslami, 1380, 339.

³⁷ Ibid. pp. 339 and 340.

³⁸ Attached document no. 2.

³⁹ *dad*, nos. 13 and 15 Mehr 1331.

⁴⁰ Sarir, 5 Mehr 1331.

⁴¹ Years later, one of these members (probably Hajj AboulQassem Rafi) described the details of this splinter in a pamphlet and published it as feshordei az traikhcheye fadaian e eslam (an abstract of Fadaian e Eslam's history) in 11th Aug. 1982.

⁴² For more information of Kashani's role and his announcements see: MohammadAli Movvahhed, *Khab e ashofte ye naft, Dr. Mossaddeq, va nehzate melli naft e Iran*, Tehran, nashre karnameh, 1378, vol. 1. Pp. 474-490. And Hossein Makki, *ketab e siah*, vol. 5. Pps. 250-280.

⁴³ For example, appointment of Dr. Mahmud Shervin as the general director of Endowment Office was a tribute from Mossaddeq to Kashani.

⁴⁴ Karim Sanjabi, *Omidha va naomidiha*, London, entesharate jebhe melli, 1368, p. 125.

⁴⁵ *Tarikh va Farhange Moasser*, Shomareye 6 va 7, pp. 340-342.

⁴⁶ *dad*, 17 December 1952.

⁴⁷ Karim Sanjabi, *ibid*. p. 124.

⁴⁸ *Etellat*, 28 dey, 1331

⁴⁹ *ettellaat* daily, 3rd March 1953.

⁵⁰ Kaveh Bayat, *Politics and Religion in the Nationalization of Oil Industry*, Jahan e Ketab, 11th year, no. 4, Mordad 1385, p. 13.

⁵¹ MohammadTaghi Falsafi, *Memoirs and Struggles of Hojjatoleslam Falsafi*, Tehran: Markaz Enghelab Eslami, First print. 1376, p. 114.

⁵² Ibid. pp. 111-112.

⁵³ Unsaid tales of Dr. Mossaddeq's Administration. Manuscripts of Mohammad Ebrahim Amir Teimur (Kolali). Institute for Iranian Contemporary Historical Studies, 1380, p. 34.