

A Review on the Cultural Situation of Iran During the First Russian Revolution and Constitution Period (1905-1911)

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Abstract: The Russians 1905-1907 Revolution was the first revolution in the world which had been influenced by the goals of French Great Revolution. Although the revolution seemed a failure, it left great effects in the future progress and changes of Russia and its neighbor countries of that time in as much that many political, social and cultural changes in Iran were influenced by the Russian revolution. The Constitution Movement of 1906 is one of the significant events of Iran and during this revolution, our nation could overcome the medieval dictatorship of authoritarians. The years 1905-1911 were filled of great political, social and particularly cultural changes for the Iranian people. The present study not only reviews the reasons of backwardness of modern intellectuals in Iran, but also gives information on the grounds for publishing journals and newsstudies in that period. It should be noted that the Iranian cultural situation in that period could be better studied by reviewing publication of journals and newspaper as well as establishing a few cultural centers. Although societies and many formations had been already organized as secret and underground societies and had some activities as well, the most important activities were in political issues and those groups did not pay much attention to the cultural situation of society. Therefore, the journals and newsstudy undertook the role of improving the thought and wisdom of Iranian oppressed people. In addition, this study discusses cultural schools and centers which were established as an influence of the Russian revolution in Caucasia, Baku and Badkubeh during 1906-1911 in addition to the journals and newspapers. In conclusion, it should be noted that in the passage of time, great revolutions and changes in any land would surely influence its nearby people and nations.

Key words: Cultural situation, First russian revolution

Introduction

A subject which is worthy of notice in Iranian constitution is that the modern and educated class with European education group were left behind from the movement of constitutionalists and justice seeking people and maintaining the old relationship of courtiers' relatives with the King and court on one hand and trying to keep a balance and precaution of this group towards freedom. A few who due to lack of any opportunity were waiting to progress in the existing beauracrazy were looking forward to any changes in situation never thought of transfer of the center of power from known courtiers to clergymen, Bazaar, merchants, craftsmen or villagers. After the rise of constitution, press and journals, as the products of national government appeared in the horizon of Iranian press one by one. The most important of these journals and newspapers were Majles, Neda-e- Vatan, Sobh Sadegh, Hayyealal Salah, Seratol Mostaghim, Kokab, Dorri, Norouz, Mohakemat, Tarraghi, Favayed Ammeh, Jaamejam, Zaban Mellat, Mosavat, Adamiat, Khorram, Iraq of Ajam, Tadayon, Etehad, Estebdad, Sour Esrafil and some other newspaper. The first newspaper which was published after establishment of Majles (Parliament) was Majles, managed by Seyed Mohammad Sadegh Tabatabaei. This newspaper never abandoned its policy and way of thought while it was published and was never polluted to personal benefits or treachery.

Among the editors and founders of newspapers who stepped into the circle of press some could not survive whether for lack of spiritual and physical capital, some for lack of people's attention and some used the newspapers to earn money and trivial advantages.

There were only a few newspapers, which were published to defend proper principles and freedom though. These few were the symbol of modern revolution and carried the flag of constitution. To pay tribute to those honored newspapers and their patriotic authors and writers their names are mentioned here:

First, Majles Newspaper.

Second, Hablolmatin Tehran. The editor was Seyed Hassan Hablolmatin and the chief editor was Sheikh Yahya Kashi.

Third was Neda-e- Vatan, managed by Majdoleslam Kerman, the powerful, knowledgeable and intelligent writer.

Before signing Constitution decree by Mozafareddin Shah in August 1906, there were only a few newspapers in Iran which lacked any political importance and their only value was in literary terms, including publishing poems and critical articles which were published once in a while.

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At the end of 1906, several important newspapers with topography print, such as Majles newspaper. As the time passed, more and more newspapers were published and this process continued until Mohammad Alishah's coup d' etate on June 23, 1908. During this period, called Minor Dictatorship, the freedom of press was practically stopped temporarily.

When the revolutionary forces in Gilan and Isfahan started rebels and following new changes and evolutions, the journals and newspapers of those regions experienced a revival and by victorious arrival of Nationalists to Tehran and overthrowing Mohammad Alishah in July 1909, the press materials increased in number, even more than "first period of Constitution" (except a short time in August 1910 and break down of war and disarmament of "Fadaian" in Tehran). The progress was in a desirable conditions until the second National Parliament was forced to dissolve and the Russian aggressive invasions occurred in final days of 1911.

On that time, press publication was stopped once again and the only important newspapers which were published in Tehran were Aftab- an official or semi-official newspaper and the relatively independent newspaper of Iran Konouni (Present Iran) (this newspaper changed its name into Ra'd on November 27, 1913).

However, the Tsarian Russia not only violently stopped press materials and publications in Tabriz, Rasht and Mashhad, but also prevented any manifestation of freedom and national thought. The Iranian newspapers which were published abroad were definitely much more independent in freedom and political trends than those published inside Iran. The most important of these newspapers were Akhtar in Istanbul (1875-1895), Ghanoun in London (1889-1890), Hablolmatin, 1893, Calcutta, Soraya, Parvaresh, Hekmat, Chehrnam,... and Mulla Nassreddin (Turkish) satire journal which had a strong influence in discussing social problems of Iran. It should be mentioned that this newspaper was actually published as a journal and played a significant role in awakening Iranians and freedom movement in East. In the meantime, many of the fabulous poems of Ashraf Gilani, Malekolshoara Bahar, Allameh Dehkoda and most satirist critical and political pictures of constitution journals and newspapers were under direct influence of Mulla Nassreddin.

According to Brown, the Constitution Movement and the modern Iranian press are indebted to the great effects of Mulla Nassreddin Journal and its great authors who were all Azerbaijanis. This magazine was then published in Baku. During issuance of the order for establishing Majles- known today as Constitution Decree, there were newspapers in the Capital city. Iran, Etellae, Tarbiat, Adab and Shahanshahi were series of ethics. Jadid and Kamal were published in Tabriz and Mozafari was a newspaper which was published in Boushehr; all there were news and literary journals. Isfahan which until a few years before this time had the best newspapers of towns was still deprived from having a worthy newspaper although the authors and editors of Farhang newspaper were living and despite the academic advantage it had over other cities of Iran.

Upon the rise of Constitution and after augmentation of Majles in ***** (1324) and until the end of ****1324 where no regulations have been issued for publishing newspapers and although more than 20 journals and newspapers had received obtained permits to publish- although with the same manner of dictatorship period and based on orders- more than half of the journals and newspapers were published in Tabriz, one third in Tehran, only two in Isfahan and one in Mashhad.

A point which should be remembered that after Baghshah Coup d'etate when all journals and newspapers were closed, Anjoman newspapers of Isfahan kept publishing due to the situation of Isfahan in resisting dictator government and during the challenge and fight against dictators, this journal was the tribune of constitutionalists of Iran, Iraq, Caucasian and Istanbul. Except Anjoman newspaper, there were also Azad, Okhovat, Etehad, Eblagh, Omid, Mesbah, Dabestan and Eslamieh in Tabriz which were published at the same year. Among these newspapers, Eslamieh and Okhovat were the tribune of Tabriz dictatorship.

It should be noted that during 1907-1908, Mosavat newspaper in Tehran, managed by Seyed Mohammad Reza Shirazi and Seyed Abdolrahim Khalkhai was known as a newspaper with extraordinary brevity and resistance which defended constitution. It was the hero of press materials of the First Constitution as well. By passing Press Materials, Mosavat gained great fame and published an edition full of stores and tales to imply that according to this law, any subject and topic rather than tales and stories are forbidden; however, publishing an important article against Mohammad Ali Shah with the topic of "What is Shah up to?" led to closing the newspaper and the editor was named as being under legal detention.

Seyed Mohammad Reza was one of the eight persons who submitted a request to Mohammad Ali Shah and asked for establishing Parliament; however, after firing Majles on June 23, 1908, he could escape and the government could not arrest him. He escaped to Caucasian and returned to Tabriz afterward. He published Mosavat newspaper during revolution and seize of Tabriz. He was later elected as a parliament member from Tabriz for the Second course of Majles.

This newspaper was a constitutional, radical and liberal newspaper. According to Rabino in edition 188: In sum, this newspaper published 25 volumes in Tehran the first was on October 12, 1907 and the last was on May 2, 1908.

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Sour Esrafil was another important newspaper of Constitution time. The editors were three young constitutionalists who were liberal and democratic in thought and deed and three heroes of freedom, Mirza Jahangirkhan, Mirza Ghasemkhan and Mirza Ali Akbarkhan Dehkhoda.

Although in the course of history, names of these three self-sacrificing men are frequently mentioned and their great efforts as well as the effect of Sour Esrafil Newspaper in constitution and changes in situation and fighting against dictatorship will be mentioned this fact should not be left unsaid that Sour Esrafil has such a great rank among those fighting for liberty and freedom that the collection of this nationalistic newspaper is kept like a holy book and the children of Iran are proud of the founders. The history of Iranian constitution has saved Sour Esrafil has the most valuable and brilliant works of Constitution revolution and its brave editor, Mirza Jahangirkhan is known as one of the greatest heroes of freedom and his name is known as one of the martyrs.

Since the most important duty of press in any country is to awaken political conscious and developing literary taste among people, it is necessary to have a short glance on the relationship of activities in the history of press and the last movements of the Renaissance period.

In addition to journals and newspapers, there were also books and passages which played a great role in developing conscious of thought and these were translations of European books or books and passages which had been inspired by the European civilization and culture. Most of these books had gradual and slow effects. These books were translated under influence of their academic and technical aspects or were published to be used by governmental institute- Darolfonoun- with education purpose (in that time, a large number of European teachers were staying in Iran either to teach in the school or military bases). A number of books brought by Prince Abbas Mirza- the Regent of that time, should be added to this list. Most of these books were collected by the European teachers or older Iranian teachers who taught in that school.

Among the efforts made before Constitution movement, one may note establishment of elementary schools in Iran. Besides large cities, elementary schools were also established in small towns such as Maragheh. Sokhatomolk, the governor of the region established a worthy elementary school in Ghayen, a small and far off village and invited many teachers from Tehran to teach in that school.

A great emotion was aroused in Tabriz too and the leaders of liberty thought it a must to establish schools. There were two or three elementary schools in Tabriz before Constitution; however, they did not have much power in attracting people and although they were founded by a man from Tabriz, no result was gained; nevertheless, after Constitution revolution, the output and activities of those schools increased.

In most small cities, ten or twelve wealthy and known people used to gather, invest some money from their own capital or collect from others and found a school. They used to pay monthly salary of teachers and staff and administer the general affairs of the school. Many such schools were founded and many students were taught there. Residents of the city were hopeful and respected those people very much. They had rootless hopes on their young children's education and at the end of each academic year, great feasts were arranged in each school and many pioneers of liberty, heads of offices and others were invited. Music, songs and lectures were among the programs and the participants were asked to pay "contributions" to school.

People used to participate in this act with their own wish and once in a while, the whole budget of one year was collected by people. Essentially, people would volunteer in removing problems and each tried to do his best in cooperation and helping the school.

The activities of constitution movement in Tabriz Society founded the first newspaper of Tabriz. For a long time, the newspaper was called "National newspaper" and later, the Society changed the name to "Anjoman Newspaper".

The editor- writer of the newspaper was Mirza Ali Akbarkhan (of Vakili Family). He did not engage himself to any other task than handling Society (Anjoman) affairs and the events of Azarbaijan. His writings were in simple language and the newspaper was published by lithography, it was one of the most suitable newspapers of that time and we obtained much of our information of this history from it.

In analyzing this newspaper, Kasravi writes:

" On the simple style and good heart of the author it is sufficient to say when Mojtahed and provincial parliament members turned their faces from constitution and the incident of Gharechaman occurred, as we wrote, these parliament members supported Mojtahed and wanted to take the incident too light, suggesting to send four messengers to investigate the case in Gharechaman and by such offer planned to put the story low and when they ordered Ali Akbar Khan to hide the truth, the latter had no way than following their orders. However, he could not hide his sadness of this event and in one of the editions wrote 'O' my pen, for how long you should be in chains and stones and until when this merry tongue should be kept sealed by the seal of injustice and cruelty?'"

And when the radicals and liberty followers resisted the Mojtahedeen (religious leaders) and that group of parliament members and found victory, he was again asked and was a victim of this. In this incident he wrote:

"After this, they called me, this editor of Anjoman newspaper to stay before their court and questions and said they

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had appointed me as a representative of public in this office and society to publish the event in the newspaper with no secrecy or conservation so people would have knowledge of the events, know the corrupted and the accused ones, become aware of the cruelty of the cruelest, not asking me to fill paper with titles and false names, hiding the cruel acts of the dictators and hoarders. This humble servant thus had no way than present invalidated documents and issues and to say that it was for that consideration and commitment that I had to give my resignation every day and I was witnessing when dictators had discharged and spelled out with a word Mr. Sheikh Salim and others despite their efforts and endeavors for this sacred duty, when there had been no following their investigation and fulfilling their rights, when the repeated announcement and the commitment of journals and the cries of the broken pens could be heard from the newspaper, nobody would interrogate me. I was then afraid of this very court while I was bound in chains and dictatorship.... They then replied that I was right (may God forgive those who were before us). However, (they said) if from that day on I would show least hesitate and conservation or concerns on doing my mission and if I would have least secrecy of an individual's deed and doing, I would not be forgiven and should be ready to be questioned."

Of the other newspapers published in Tabriz of those days, one may mention Azarbaijan Newspaper and Mulla Nassreddin which was written in Caucasian and the author had the highest sales of newspapers of that time by his caricatures and satire articles.

Omid, Azad, Etehad Melli and after that Edalat were among the newspapers which were published in Tabriz. There was also a small newspaper named Anna Dili in Turkish language which was printed for a short time and left the scene very soon.

There was a noteworthy newspaper named Fariad which was published in Oroumieh and the editor was Mirza Habibollah Aghazadeh and Mirza Mahmoud Ghanizadeh was the main writer.

Cultural Situation: Despite deep influence of classic culture of Iran at Caucasian, there was a vast economic relationship between Iran and Caucasian, there were a group of Iranian wealthy men and merchants in that territory and there were also hundreds of thousands of craftsmen and Iranian labors who worked at that country as wage receiving people and participated in political riots along with other labors in that territory.

Iranian students were studying in the modern schools of that region. There were two reliable schools in Baku (Etehad and Tamadon) and two Persian journals were published in Badkubeh, one was Norwouz and the other was Haghayegh, edited by Mirza Ali Mohammadkhan Oveysi, one of the officials of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who spread national ideas and during Tsar, a collection of poems on Liberty were published by him. The Moslem Caucasian writers had their eyes on Iran. Dr. Nariman, the socialist writer wrote Nader Shah drama and Rasoulzadeh, the socialist democrat wrote "Siavash of our Time" while Aziz Haji Begli composed "Rostam and Sohrab", "Leili and Majnoun" and "Shah Abbas and Khorshid Banu" operas. Moslem Maghamayov composed "Shah Esmaeil" opera in that time. Saber, composed epical poems on constitution of Iran. In the traditional schools of Caucasian, the Iranian students were taught Persian language and memorized Persian poems. The modern Moslem newspapers of Caucasian reached Iran and had subscribers. Ershad newspaper of Badkubeh had a Persian appendix which was published by Adibolmolk Farahani. Talebzadeh Tabrizi, the Iranian social writer wrote political and scientific books and run Marefat journal. In the business guild, three were Iranians in Badkubeh who had social conscious and knowledge and were elected as parliament members among whom we may note Agha Mohammad Tabrizi-Vakiloltojjar and Mohammad Sadegh Alizadeh, a member of Iranian Democrat Party. Mobserolmok, the Badkubeh Council also testifies the national Iranian feelings in Caucasian. One of the other newspapers which were published during Constitution movement was Roholghodos which was first published by Sheikh Ahmad Roholghodos Torbati, known as Soltanol Ulama Khorasani.

Sheikh Ahmad Roholghodos Torbati was one of the valuable heroes of Constitution revolution and Seyed Ahmad Kasravi has described his character in his great book of Constitution history : " The office of Roholghodos newspaper was in Cheragh Bargh street, next to Arash Tea Shop. I occupied one of the rooms and put my small furniture and Randel gun. In that time, everything was very chaotic and worries were everywhere. I argued with Sheikh Ahmad many times and did whatever I had learned from the old master to convince him to return to Torbat. It was useless. He ultimately used his strong reason that with that situation, not only his travel to Khorasan was not a useful act, but also a very harmful one and would lead to the problems for his father and family members. He argued that until the time when everything became clear, it would be wise to pause for a moment and return there jointly."

No author has explained Roholghodos, the financial life and life of its editor in Tehran better than Dehkhoda, for, when Soltanol Ulama was put in trial, Dehkhoda in the 17th edition of Sourolesrafil addressed the then Minister of Science (Mokhberolsaltaneh) in defending Roholghodos and wrote:

" I want to talk to the Minister of Science and the minister of Justice plainly and like two men. As an example, I want to say today you are judging a poor scholar whose food is bread and yoghurt! You who have not even developed the

first word of law try to establish and use it for a poor wandering man who has no shelter..."

Azadistan was also one of the newspapers which were attached. It was managed by Ale Rafat, one of the servants of Agah and the same one who committed suicide due to feeling desperate and hopeless of saving his country. During the trial of journalists, Mokhberolsaltaneh was either the minister of science, minister of justice or in-charge of Azarbaijan governor office.

Following the respectful trial of Mirza Jahangirkhan, the trial of Sheikh Ahmad Torbati was the first official trial of a journalist at the ministry of justice. As it has written in his biography: Sheikh Ahmad Torbati was the brave and intellect writer of his time and despite being a wanderer and problems he strongly defended and loved freedom of writing. He used to live in the front room of (former) Shah Mosque and the present Imam Mosque, at Sadr School like a poor clergyman and his scholar room was a front of liberty.

In any event, despite all problems mentioned on his life, Soltanol Ulama was the bravest journalist of Constitution time. The front page article of issue 13 of Roholghodos was the cause of his trial, while none of the articles of Soltanol Ulama is not free from sharp criticism of the political situation, noblemen and court, one should note that edition 13 of Roholghodos was taken as a tool to give a legal face to his trial. It is for this reason that when Mokhberolsaltaneh, the chief of publications participated in the Soltanol Ulama's trial and questioned Adib Khalvat "In which part of the newspaper you have any word to say?" he answered, "in five items".

However, most part of the front page article of 13th edition of Roholghodos was addressing Mohammad Ali Shah himself and Adib Khalvat used it for its fifth question.

For a short time, Moshiroldoleh was in-charge of ministry of justice and Mokhbersol Saltaneh from the ministry of knowledge and endowment replaced Moshiroldoleh. Mokhberolsaltaneh who had a harsh opinion against the journalists of freedom time and we studied his discussion with Mirza Jahangirkhan, immediately issued an order for the trial of Soltanol Ulama as soon as he was appointed to the office. A point which should be noted is that during the first course of national parliament's legislation, many sessions were spent to speak of journals and newspapers. A number of parliament members were in fact asking for freedom of writing and press and a group wanted it to be a headless, tailless and powerless lion, desiring no talk of politics or religion. It was the journals and newspapers task to write on farming, business, science or ethics.

The radicalism of Roholghodos could be seen from the beginning of publication. One may easily note what would happen to a journalist such as Soltanol Ulama during the difficult conditions of Mohammad Ali Mirza's reign. Roholghodos was attached upon direct order of Mohammad Ali Shah and his editor was the first journalist who was judged in the justice ministry. Majdoleslam Kermani in his (semi government) Mohakemat newspaper- which was in fact the speaker of Justice Ministry, has described the editor's trial in two or three editions in brief.

The text of Roholghodos trial is as follows:

"In these twenty days when Mohakemat had not been published and the honored subscribers did not receive it, the cause could be said as to be the irregularities in the administration office of justice ministry, no trial and not having the minister of justice. Now, while His Honor, Mokhberolsaltaneh has honored the seat of ministry of justice in this short time, by the effort of Mr. Mokhberolsaltaneh, Mohakemat is semi legal and will be immediately a legal and official one."

The newspaper has no publication date at this time. Following the above-mentioned note, the text of Mohakemat was published and its date has been written as to be 1906 It is not clear that while a journalist like the editor of Roholghodos was judged in a criminal court.

Abdolhossein Navaei explicitly gives news on throwing Soltanol Ulama into a well. He writes: "The day after opening fire to Majles (Wednesday, 24 Jamadiol Akhar) the order of military state by Liakhov was published in Tehran and all the works and properties of constitution were destroyed at once and nothing was left from all those political societies and newspapers.

The same date, Mohammad Ali Shah sent an order, personally written by him, to Moshiroldoleh, his head of state, stating that, to prevent the corruption and maintaining peace and order of people "the Majles should be dissolved starting from this date till three months and after this time, religious parliament members who should be friends of people and government should be elected or a senate parliament, in accordance with the constitution should be established for regulating the affairs."

Mohammad Ali Shah's purpose was to pretend he had not rejected constitution and was faithful to constitution law, however in fact, none of these scripts was followed and it was after issuing both that he ordered to martyr Judge Ardaghi in Bagh Shah and also ordered to kill the editor of Roholghodos by throwing him in a well. Soltanol Ulama was left to starve to death in the well. He joined other martyrs of freedom and liberty."

It is worth of saying that Sadr Hashemi in his valuable book of "History of Iranian Press and Journals" has introduced Roholghodos, Soltanol Ulama and Dehkhoda with following words:

"Roholghodos was founded and published by Mirza Ali Akbar Khan Dehkhoda from Switzerland. After surpassing

revolution and flee of liberals to other countries, Mr. Dehkhoda was also one of the journalists who escaped. He used to write articles of Sore Esrafil as "Charand o Parand". He was also editor of Roholghodos newspaper in Tehran. After arriving to Switzerland, he published two volumes of Roholghodos there.

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In 1904 alone, Russian migration visas wee issued for fifty four thousand and eight hundred forty six ordinary Iranian labors. In 1905, three hundred thousands of Iranian traveled to Russia. A large number of this group was workers and many of them used to return to Iran each year. Their return was on definite seasons. However, there were always tens of thousands of Iranian workers in Transcaucasia particularly in Baku, Tiflis, Batum, Ganjeh and the harbors of Caucasia. Two thousand and five hundred Iranian labors were working at Allah Verdi Copper mines of Armenia in 1906 and they were the "main core" of labors riots of that year.

All figures are given by Abdollahov and the English translation of his paper was published at the Iranian History of Economics, a book of different articles, published in 1971.

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