CHAPTER EIGHT

FIRST BAHÁ’Í MARTYRS OF SHÍRÁZ IN 1871

After the departure of Hájí Muhammad-Ibráhím [Muballigh] from Shíráz, the admired Nabil Akbar, that is, Mullá Muhammad Qá’iní, arrived here. He stayed for thirteen months in Shíráz, and his residence was the home of Áqá Mírzá Áqá Afnán. During this time, he was engaged in teaching and serving [the Bahá’í Faith] and was able to convert a large number [of seekers to the Bahá’í Faith] and to renew their spirits.162

The Intercession of the Qavámu’l-Mulk

Among the incidents that occurred during this period in Shíráz and caused disturbance for the friends was the bitter dispute and conflict between Mírzá Abúl-Hasan Khán, the Mushíru’l-Mulk [II], and Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad Khán, the Qavámu’l-Mulk [II].163 Since the Mushíru’l-Mulk was a vizier [of the province] and the Qavámu’l-Mulk performed the offices of Kalántar [police] and Biglar-bayki [provincial mayor], the believers became pawns in their contentions. The Mushír’s intent was to cause revolt and unrest throughout the realm, in the hope that it would engulf [his opponent] the Qavám. In whatever town he arrived, the Mushír would compile a list of the believers and forward it to the governor-general. Further, he would incite the ‘ulamá and urge them to perpetrate various evils. Several times, he precipitated such disturbances and injuries.

Eventually, in AH 1283 [1866], during the governorship of Sultán-Murád Mírzá, the Hisámu’ís-Saltanih,165 he prepared a list of the believers

162 Balyúzí, Eminent Bahá’ís in the Time of Bahá’u’lláh, p. 229, indicates that Hájí Mírzá Abúl-Qásim<11> became a believer at this time, thereby completing the conversion of the Afnán family.

163 He inherited the title after the passing of his father.

164 The fourth son of Hájí ‘Alí-Akbar Khán, the Qavámu’l-Mulk I, he was born in 1829 and in 1865, after the passing of his father, assumed his title and position. Among the projects he supervised was the construction of an aqueduct in 1879 that brought fresh water to the city. He passed away at the age of 56.

165 See appendix 5 for a biography.
[in Shíráz] and provoked Shaykh Husayn Zálim, known as the Nazimu’-sh-Shari’i, to most vigorously pursue these souls. The persons who, of every class, were on this list included Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, the Khál; Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí Afnán; Hájí Mírzá Buzurg Afnán; Hájí Mírzá Abú’l-Qásim Afnán; and Áqá Mírzá Áqá Afnán. All ranked as the noblest citizens of Shíráz and were among the renowned merchants. [Other believers also on the list were] Hájí Abú’l-Hasan; Mashhadí Abú’l-Qásim Kharráz; Mashhadí Nabi Khayyát; Mashhadí Muhammad-Ja’far Khayyát; Áqá Mírzá Áqá Rikáb-Sáz; Karbalá’í Muhammad-Háshim Qassáb; Áqá Mullá ‘Abdu’l-lláh Zarqání, whom the Abhá Pen had surnamed “Rafí Bádí”; Mullá ‘Abdu’l-láh Biká; and a number of others.

This list was given [by the Mushír] to the Qájár Prince Hisámu’d-Saltanih, who upon reviewing the recorded names, summoned Mírzá ‘Alí-Muhammad Khán, the Qavámu’l-Mulk, and with great vehemence, admonished him, “For several years now you have been given a position of service in the everlasting [central] government. And yet, you do not administer in the best interest of the government since the number of the traitorous elements [i.e., Bahá’ís] has grown to very many in the city! Why have you not on your own initiative reported the matter to us so that we would order their complete eradication? The first and foremost command of the everlasting government to the governors and officers is destruction of the enemies of the exalted Qájár crown and throne, and extermination of the filth of their person from the realm. Most assuredly and of a certainty, I expect these men [on the list] to be brought before me by tomorrow.”

Noting the fury of the Prince, the Qavámu’l-Mulk had remained silent for a few moments. The taciturnity of the latter added to the anger of the Prince who had spoken most abrasively to the Qavám. Eventually, the Qavámu’l-Mulk stated, “Your exalted self should enjoy a water-pipe while I explain the circumstances.” He ordered a water-pipe for the Prince whose rage subsided to some degree due to the poisonous effect of its tobacco. The Qavámu’l-Mulk then offered, “If it pleases your Excellency, I would

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167 Mázandarání, Tāríkh Zuhúru’l-Haqq, vol. 6, pp. 859–60, gives his name as Muhammad, which most likely is a misreading of “Mashhadí.”
168 For one instance of such designation, see Bahá’u’lláh’s Tablet to Núr’i’d-Dín in Port Said, INBMC 51:338, no. 342.