CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

POLITICAL REFORMS AND UPHEAVALS OF 1909–10

Dismissal of the Ásifuʾd-Dawlih

On hearing of the occurrences in Nayríz, the general disturbances in Fárs, and the ineptness of the Ásifuʾd-Dawlih, the authorities in Tíhrán decided to discharge Ásifuʾd-Dawlih from office and appoint a competent, law-abiding person as the governor-general of Fárs. Therefore, they telegraphed the dismissal of Hájí Ásifuʾd-Dawlih, with the additional instruction for him to quickly depart for the capital, entrusting the affairs of Fárs to Habíbuʾlláh Kháń, the Qávámuʾl-Mulk [who became the acting governor-general].

Baháʾís in the Administration of the Sahámuʾd-Dawlih

After several months, Jáʿfar-Qulí Kháń, the Sahámuʾd-Dawlih, was appointed to the governorship of Fárs and on the 1 Shaʿbán AH 1327 [18 August 1909], accompanied by only seven others, arrived at Shíráz. As he was an accomplished administrator, upon arrival he rolled up the remnant of the absolutists’ regime and allowed the constitutional monarchists to flourish. He announced that whoever volunteered [as a civil servant], would be hired with sufficient salaries. Many people from diverse strata accepted, and among those registering were a number of believers, either known or unidentified [as Baháʾís]. Included in this group was the late Hájí Mírzá Muhammad-Sádiq Khábbáz [the baker] who was particularly well known as a Baháʾí, and indeed his fame was on all tongues. Other believers were less known or were unidentified [as Baháʾís]. With no exception, all were accepted for service.

Very quickly, in the [Governor’s] Ark, which was one of the buildings from the era of the late Karím Kháń Zand, various functions for a city-government were firmly established. One section of the building was set aside for the [civil] courts [and the judicial system]; another for the police; another for the municipality; and another for the military. The central building was designated for the provincial offices. The work of the government began to unfold in an orderly fashion and in accord
with the established laws, which everyone was obliged to follow. All petitions were reviewed [by the governor-general] and if deemed to be a legal issue, submitted to the judiciary for processing. The governor, however, closely scrutinized all operations, and if an agency was about to act with inequity and carry out an unjust decision, they were punished according to the percepts of the law. All levels of the administration were most cognizant of the need for careful expenditure of funds and had discarded the old practice of bribery and gifts. He also effectively reorganized the armed services.

The governor was particularly close to the two sons of the late Qavámu’l-Mulk—Habíbu’lláh Khán, the Qavámu’l-Mulk [IV], and Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí Khán, the Nasru’d-Dawlih—and showed them much attention and consideration. He entrusted the former with the police and security forces, while Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí, the Nasru’d-Dawlih, was prized and placed in charge of the military forces, with the title of Amír-Túmnání. The governor personally supervised the payment of monthly salaries to military personnel and ensured that payment was delivered properly on the first of each month.

The justice of the governor became renowned throughout the province of Fárs. In accordance with both religious law as well as civil ordinances, each crime or treachery had a specific code of punishment. Those having committed unseemly acts, after having their guilt proven, and upon the ruling of the court, would be forced to wear a colorful, paper hat, with bells hanging on the sides, and in such a [humiliating] condition, they would be lashed publicly. In one instance, a woman had committed thievery and after the court had pronounced against her, in accord with the quranic law, “As to the thief, male or female, cut off   his or her hands,” four of her left fingers were severed on the public square. Such incidents served to ensure complete order throughout the region, and none dared being presumptuous towards others.

346 For a biography see Bámdád, *Sharh Hál Rijál Iran*, vol. 1, pp. 310–11.

347 The text lists the following offices: Kalántar, Bíglar-Bayki, and the Nazmiyyih, which are respectively the chief of police, the district administrator and the security forces.

348 The implication being that during the interim period, the powerful Qavám family had emerged as supporters of constitutional reform. This enabled them to regain their previous prestige and influence.

349 Qur’án 5:41.