

Translation

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Memoirs of a Baha'i in Rasht: 1889–1903

Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā Hamadānī. Translated by Ahang Rabbani'

Abstract

The memoirs of Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā Hamadānī, covering the period 1889 to 1903 is one of the sources for the study of the early Baha'i community of Rasht.² The author was a physician in Hamadan of Jewish ancestry. He migrated to Rasht in 1889 and in 1926 wrote his recollections of the events and prominent believers that he had encountered in that city. He passed away two years later in 1347 AH³ [1928 CE].

Keywords

Baha'i Faith
 Mīrzā Yahyā 'Amīdu'l-
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Translator's Introduction

Rasht is the seat of Gilan province in northern Iran, and occupies the western half of the south Caspian littoral.

The genesis of the Babi and Baha'i Faiths in Rasht dates back to the Babi period, when apparently a number of its inhabitants embraced the faith. By the early 1850s, in the confused state following the Bāb's martyrdom, the Babi community fractured and various pockets of the Babis turned to different Babi leaders for inspiration and guidance. It was around 1271 AH [1854 CE] that one of the Rasht Babis, a certain Karbalā'ī Ibrāhīm Samsār ['dealer of second-hand goods'] Rashtī, went twice to Adharbayjan and met Mīrzā Asadu'llāh Dayyān and became a staunch follower of him, a sentiment that he shared with other Babis in the region as well.⁴ At present, not much is known of these Dayyānīs and they presumably have disappeared as a group.⁵

Around 1270 AH [1853 CE], several Babis migrated from Qazvīn to nearby Lahijan, which was the major town of Gilan at that time. One of them, Siyyid Javād, had been a Shaykhī in Qazvin – which had a robust Shaykhī-Babi community – and succeeded in converting a number of residents to the religion of the Bābī faith. Siyyid Javād, however, threw his lot in with Mīrzā Yahyā Azal and tried to keep his group of Babis isolated from the other Babis of Lahijan who had become followers of Baha'u'llah. On one occasion when Siyyid Javād was away in Qazvīn, one of his associates, Mīrzā 'Alī Ashraf (known later as the poet 'Andalīb), searched out the Baha'is and became convinced that Baha'u'llah was the new Manifestation of God. Soon Mīrzā 'Alī Ashraf succeeded in converting Siyyid Javād as well as other Azalīs of this group.⁶

Sometime earlier, Hājī Nasīr Qazvīnī, a well-known survivor of the battle at Shaykh Tabarsī, and his family had settled in Rasht and commenced trading. Though several of this family were Baha'is and known in the city as

such, no one from Rasht embraced the Faith.⁷ In the 1870s, in Lahijan, Mīrzā ‘Alī Ashraf ‘Andalīb was encouraged by the Qazvīnī Baha’is of that town to migrate to Rasht where he settled in Sarāy Mīrzā Bābā and began teaching the Faith. Soon he was joined by Siyyid Javād Qazvīnī, Āqā Muhammad Ismā’īl and Āqā Muhammad-Ibrāhīm Lahījānī, who had been taught by ‘Andalīb, and they commenced informing the locals of the Faith of Baha’u’llah.

Through these efforts, a number of locals, including the following, embraced the Cause: Mīrzā Mihdī; Mīrzā Bāqir Bassār and his brothers, Mīrzā ‘Alī and Āqā ‘Alī-Asghar and their families; Mullā Yūsuf-‘Alī and his brother, Āqā Husayn, and their father, Mullā Muhammad;⁸ Karbalā’ī Qāsim and his brother, Āqā Ridā Zargar; Āqā Rasūl Qannād [‘the confectioner’]; Āqā Muhammad-Javād; and the Sādāt Khams.⁹ By 1296 AH [1879 CE] there were some 20 Baha’is in that town. Over time, their number continued to gradually increase and included Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm [‘physician’] and Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd and some others. With great caution, they would come together in the evenings for Baha’i meetings.¹⁰

A widespread persecution against Baha’is erupted in 1300 AH [1882 CE], which greatly affected Baha’i communities in several Iranian cities. In Rasht, 11 Baha’is were imprisoned. Hājī Nasīr and another believer died in prison.¹¹

Memoirs of a Baha’i in Rasht: 1889–1903¹² By Mīrzā Yahyā ‘Amīdu’l-Atibbā Hamadānī

Translated by Ahang Rabbani

Author’s Preamble

In the Name of God, the Eternal, the Never-Ending!

Since, in accordance with the instructions of Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, the Guardian of the Cause of God, the friends of God are collecting information on historical events of the Faith in all the cities of Iran, this ephemeral servant, Mīrzā Yahyā ‘Amīdu’l-Atibbā Hamadānī, who, owing to divine grace has for many years been under the shadow of this blessed Cause and has in person witnessed many events in Rasht, I deemed it necessary to write down those events of the Faith’s history in this city in which I have participated. I compose these pages as a tribute and a means of remembrance of the righteous friends and undertake this writing on Safar 1345 AH [August 1926 CE]. I beseech the esteemed reader to offer a prayer of forgiveness and a supplication for divine confirmations upon my soul.

Arrival at Rasht

In 1307 AH [1889 CE], I came to Rasht as a physician. Two other friends, who were also Baha’is from Hamadan, accompanied me as well: Mīrzā Āqā-Chī, the son of Mūsā; and Mīrzā Āqā Jān Ibrāhīm-Zādih. We arrived in Rasht on Wednesday, 22 ‘Alī [16 November 1889]¹³ and took residence in the Caravan-Sarāy of Abū-Tālib, near Masjid Safā, across from Sardār Mansūr’s house.

At the time of our arrival in Rasht, the entire bazaar and all the shops had been destroyed by fire, except a section of buildings across from the homes of the local officials which had remained safe from the fire, belonging to the Prince Kāmṛān Mīrzā, the famous Nāyibu's-Sāltānih. After three days, we met a certain Mīrzā Ilyās Kalīmī ['the Jew'] Isfāhānī. He was a dealer of second-hand goods. Through him, we rented one of the above-mentioned apartments and took up residence there, so that we would have time to learn the ways and customs of the people of Rasht before assuming our previous professions.

Meeting Other Baha'is

After a month's stay at that location, and at the insistence of my travelling companions, we asked the aforementioned Mīrzā Ilyās about Baha'is in that area. Confidentially, he introduced to us one of the believers, named Āqā Mashhadī Qāsim Zargar ['the jeweller'], son of Mashhadī Rafī' Zargar. With all necessary wisdom and caution, I located him and one early morning went to his shop on the pretext of asking him to design an ink-vessel for my use. In this way I was able to meet him in person.

Two days later, I went again and confidentially stated, 'I am one of your spiritual friends [i.e. a Baha'i] and together with a few other friends have recently arrived in Rasht. I came previously to meet you on the pretext of purchasing an ink-vessel.' On hearing this, however, fear and apprehension that is truly beyond description overcame him.

A week later, I went again to meet him and stated, 'I am Jewish.'¹⁴ At this, he gained utmost confidence, and showed friendship and trust. At my insistence, he named several people and stated that they were among the wronged friends [i.e. Baha'is] who kept their [religious] identity a secret, emphasizing that meeting them had to be done with the utmost wisdom. The friends he introduced included Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm ['physician'], the son of Dāvūd Hakīm; Āqā 'Alī Arbāb Qazvīnī, the son of Hājī Nasīr the martyr; the Sādāt Khamsih ['the five siyyids'] who were Āqā Siyyid Ridā, Āqā Siyyid Mahmūd, Āqā Mīr[zā] 'Alī-Naqī, Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh¹⁵ known as the Barāt-Bāz ['the financier'] and Āqā Siyyid Nasru'llāh.

He gave specific instructions for meeting Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm. As such, one day I inquired of his residence and went to see him on the pretext of being ill. After six days of association, and at the introduction of the aforementioned Ustād Qāsim Zargar, I expressed my fraternity with him and my convictions [in the Baha'i Faith], but with the utmost vehemence he denied it [that he was a Baha'i].

However, I disregarded his heated denial and repudiation, and the next day returned to see him. Again, he expressed similar sentiments of denial, but with the utmost affection and warmth, I proved that I was a friend of Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān Kalīmī Hamadānī. Once he had gained complete trust in me, he flung open the gates of friendship and companionship.

Attending a Baha'i Meeting

Two weeks later he said, 'Today, an hour before dusk, come so we can go to a certain place.' At the appointed hour, together with Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān, I went to his house so that together we could proceed to the location he had in mind. On seeing Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān, he complained, 'Only one

of you may come with me, as it would not be possible for both of you to accompany me.' As such, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān returned to his house, and then with the utmost caution and prudence we proceeded to the intended destination. Along the way, at times he would hide himself under his 'abā (a traditional cloak), so that the passers-by would not recognize him or discover our intention. That distinguished personage was wearing a silk turban known as Khalīl-Khānī.

After extreme difficulty and struggle, at dusk we reached our destination, the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb, who was known in those days as 'Alī Babi. It was there that we attained the presence of the honoured Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī and the esteemed [Shaykh Kāzim] Samandar.¹⁶ After the customary embracing and pleasantries, Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī gave an exposition of my background and services to the gentlemen who were present. After this introduction, everyone present had complete confidence and trust in me. After tea was served, we spent the entire night, which was during the spring season, in spiritual discourse and heavenly discussions, which are beyond words to describe and can only be experienced by those who have embarked on this divine journey. The whisper of prayers, the chant of divine verses and the melody of celestial tablets revealed by the Birds of Paradise enthralled our spirits and enchanted our hearts.

We spent the entire night in the presence of the friends and decided to meet the following night, so that our association would be complete. At dawn, when the light of day had not yet broken, and in accordance with wisdom and prudence, we bid our host farewell. Together with Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tabīb, ¹⁷ I left the residence, and after a while we each took a separate route, I following a guide to my residence. When I arrived, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān inquired of the previous night's events and I shared with him all the details.

Four days later, Ustād Qāsim Zargar, who was fashioning an ink-vessel for me, came by with the promised object and stated, 'Remain here at your house until one hour after nightfall. At that time I will come and meet you and together we will go to the home of Āqā Siyyid Ridā, who is one of the Sadāt Khams.'

During that time, the Mushīru's-Saltanih, who ruled as the governor on behalf of the Nayibu's-Saltanih, was dismissed from office, and the Prince Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih, the son of the Hisāmu's-Saltanih – an uncle of Nasiri'd-Din Shah – had become the governor of Rasht. With that, a little more security for the Baha'is was afforded. Even though all meetings had to take place under conditions of great wisdom and prudence, the difficulties and straitened circumstances that had occurred after the tragic martyrdom of Hājī Nasīr during the governorship of 'Abdu'llāh Khān were no longer the state of affairs.¹⁸

At any rate, according to Ustād Qāsim's promise, it was one hour after sunset when we left for the residence of Āqā Siyyid Ridā. As a precaution, at times we walked together and at other times separately, until eventually we reached Āqā Siyyid Ridā's home, and on meeting the friends, we found utmost joy, bliss and pleasure. After tea, we began to discuss. Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī instructed the gathering on how we should interact and converse with the public in accordance with the conditions of the time. At the end, we recited holy verses and chanted prayers. That night was spent in such a way with our friends. In the morning, we bid each other farewell and left for our own abodes.

Early Teaching Work

During that tense period, I had no fear or trepidation [in teaching the Cause] and spoke about it with several citizens of Rasht with the utmost wisdom, delicacy and caution. It went on like this until 1309 AH [1892 CE], when I became known as being associated with this Sacred Faith [i.e. known as a Baha'i].

The gentlemen, who in secret and without knowledge of each other, met and were engaged in teaching the Cause of God were Āqā Mashhadī Bāqir 'Attār; Mullā Yūsuf Rawdih-Khān; Mashhadī Husayn and his brother Mashhadī 'Alī 'Attār; the illustrious Bassār; Mashhadī Ismā'īl; Āqā 'Alī Arbāb; Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm; Ustād Qāsim Zargar; Āqā Ridā and Āqā Naqī.

After 1309 AH [1892 CE], when I became known in Rasht as a Baha'i, due to the harassment of the nayibs and farrashes, who were the main instigators of fanaticism, I changed my residence, which was originally across from Government House, to a location behind the church. After being thus separated from my beloved friends and being established behind the church in apartments known as Khajih Arākīl Masīhī ['the Christian'], I announced the establishment of my doctor's office. Since at that time there were no sign-makers, I wrote my name and title on a cardboard, hung it over the door and began practising medicine. During leisure time, I would associate with my spiritual friends and the teachers of God's Cause, and at times, I would take seekers to teaching gatherings [i.e. 'firesides'], or invite the seekers to my home.

Some time later, a number of the 'ulamā of Rasht, who expressed goodwill towards me but were harbouring doubts as to whether I was a Jew or a Muslim, invited me one day to profess my faith in Islam in order to gain assurance about my convictions. I proved the validity of Islam in such a manner and depth that no reservation remained for anyone.

The government at the time [in Rasht] was in the hands of the prince the Mu'ayyadu'd-Dawlih. He severely punished a number of ruffians and troublemakers who were harassing the population of Rasht and who caused difficulties for the friends of God as well. At this, the people were thoroughly relieved and pleased. In every regard, the governor was considered favourable towards the people and their needs, particularly towards the much-wronged Baha'i community. Because of this attention by the just governor, the friends, who had been under some strain and had been harassed, gained some measure of ease and tranquillity. The teachers of the Cause were engaged, day and night, in spreading the Faith and the diffusion of the divine fragrance. And due to my profession, I was able to associate with certain prominent citizens and develop friendships, and after gaining their confidence, would introduce them to the honoured Bassār, the teacher of God's Cause. It continued along these lines until 1310 AH [1893 CE].

Prominent Associates

After some time, I befriended one of the eminent authorities of Rasht, Brigadier-General Nusratu'llāh Khān Tālyshī who was in charge of the garrison protecting the Anzālī border [with Russia]. He invited me to his estate situated at Kirkān-Rūd, some four days' journey from Rasht. At the same time that we were departing, my spiritual friends [i.e. Baha'is] also left, Āqā Mīrzā Āqā-Chī also left for Tabriz, and Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Jān for Anzālī.

I was in my office one day when a distinguished man entered and after the customary pleasantries, he introduced himself. He was Hājī Mīrzā Muhammad-Husayn Shīrāzī Barāt-Bāz [‘the financier’], the Amīnu’s-Sarih, and was one of the partners of Hājī Amīnu’l-Dharb (Zarb) in Tehran. After some exchanges, he stated that he wished to stay in Rasht and asked me to rent him a suitable building for this purpose. He advanced some funds for this purpose as well.

After three days, I found him a house that belonged to the deputy-chief of the tribes around Rasht. He took his residence there. That distinguished personage asked me to transfer my residence to one of the rooms of that house so we could be together. In the course of our association, it became clear that he was a prominent merchant of Shiraz and was a Baha’i. However, he observed utmost caution and would meet with other Baha’is only in secret.

After my two spiritual friends [with whom I shared a residence] had left for Tabriz and Anzalī, I was alone. Therefore, I sent a telegraph to Hamadan asking my brother, Mīrzā Nabī, to come. He arrived three weeks later and joined my medical practice.

Three months later, I left with Brigadier-General Nusratu’llāh Khān for his native town of Talish. My brother was entrusted to Āqā Mīrzā [Muhammad-] Husayn Amīnu’s-Sarih. For five or six months, I was in Talish sightseeing and engaged in the practice of medicine.

I then returned to Rasht, since the Cause was growing with the greatest vigour there. With great enthusiasm and spirit, I embarked on propagating the Faith and two individuals enrolled under the banner of the Cause. One was Āqā Hasan, who was known as Arbāb Idārih-Chī Tihirānī, and the other was Āqā Muhammad-Ridā, the brother of Mashhadī Qāsim Zargar.

Darvish Qalandar

In 1312 AH [1894 CE], I left for Hamadan to renew ties of kinship and friendships from the past. I was there for two months when a telegram was received from Brigadier-General Nusratu’llāh Khān inviting me to Talish. As I began to prepare for the journey, I encountered a certain Hājī Qalandar Dervish, who was engaged in teaching the divine Cause. We became friends and when he had completed his services to the Faith in Hamadan, he decided to leave for the Holy Land by way of Rasht and Russia. Three days later, Dervish left and I left shortly thereafter.

On the third day of my journey, I arrived by dusk at a Caravansary in Āvih and once again saw Hājī Ghulām-Husayn Dervish, known as Hājī Qalandar. After staying for one night in Āvih, we left together for Rasht. He stayed for forty days at my house behind the church. He decided to rent a residence so that he could stay longer in Rasht to serve the Cause of God and his own profession. The house that was rented for this purpose was behind Government House and belonged to Muhammad Khān, the governor’s chamberlain. I too transferred my residence there. I resumed my practice of medicine and Hājī Qalandar took a position in the bazaar at the shop of Āqā Siyyid Ridā Pūtīn-Dúz [‘the boot-maker’] as an engraver. We were together for two years.

On occasions, Hājī Qalandar would recount the history of His Holiness the Primal Point’s [i.e. the Bāb’s] appearance from the beginning until the end of the incident of the martyrdom of many believers in Shiraz. He would

talk about the appearance [of the Bāb], the conversion of Hājī [sic] Mullā Muhammad-Husayn, the Bābu'l-Bāb, until the departure of His Holiness the Primal Point [the Bāb] for Mecca.

Hājī Qalandar had studied medicine several times during his sojourn in India, which had lasted 32 years and was spent in association with ascetics. He would teach his knowledge of medicine to my brother and I.

In short, I became thoroughly known throughout Rasht at that time. For several reasons, Hājī Qalandar grew weary of his stay in Rasht and decided to visit the Holy Land and pay homage to 'Abdu'l-Bahā. For this purpose, he left Rasht for Badkubih.

Varqā and Rúhu'llāh

After Hājī Qalandar's departure, in 1314 AH [1896 CE] I changed my residence and moved to a house belonging to the late Najaf-Qulī Āqā in the Hasan-Ābād neighbourhood. Early during my stay at the new residence, the illustrious teacher of the Cause, Varqā, and his esteemed sons, Mīrzā 'Azīzu'llāh and Rúhu'llāh – who was in name Rúhu'llāh and in essence truly Rúhu'llāh¹⁹ – came to Rasht from the Holy Land and from the presence of our divine Beloved. They enkindled and enthralled everyone with the spirit of faith.

They spent their first night at the home of Mīrzā Murtidā-Qulī Massāh.²⁰ The second night was spent at Āqā 'Alī Arbāb's house, and the third night at the residence of this ephemeral servant, where the chanting of prayers by Rúhu'llāh enchanted and mesmerized every hearing soul. All the believers were in their presence all three nights, and immensely enjoyed their sweet and awakened discourse.

Thereafter, they left for Zanjan where they stayed a while with Varqā's father-in-law, the honoured Hājī Mīrzā 'Abdu'llāh. After some time, though, the fire of tribulation and persecution raged in Zanjan. The enemies learned of their stay and informed the governor of Zanjan. As a result, Varqā, Rúhu'llāh and two other believers, namely, Hājī Imān and Āqā Mīrzā Husayn were seized and sent to Tehran with bound hands and feet.

Upon arrival in Tehran, the Sipahsālār, who later was titled the Atābak-'Azam, instructed that these wronged ones be imprisoned in the dungeon. After they were in captivity for some time, the assassination of Nasiri'd-Dīn Shah by the hand of Mīrzā Ridā Kirmānī took place in [the shrine of] Shāh 'Abdu'l-'Azīm in 1314 AH [1896 CE]. Subsequently, those two distinguished personages, namely, Varqā and Rúhu'llāh, were brought out of the dungeon and made to drink from the cup of self-renunciation – and thus they hastened to the Supreme Concourse and the Abhā Horizon.

Baha'i Teachers in Rasht

In that same year, a number of teachers and propagators of the divine Cause arrived in Rasht. They included Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī; [Shaykh Kāzim] Samandar; Hājī Ghulām-Husayn Dervish Hamadānī known as Dervish Qalandar; Āqā Mīrzā Ahmad Qazvīnī; Āqā Ibn-Asdaq; Hājī Amīn; and Āqā Muhammad-'Alī Khān Baha'i. These were some of the sacred souls that came to Rasht.

After 1314 AH [1896 CE], the illustrious Ibn-Abhar came to Rasht and took his residence in the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb Qazvīnī. All the believers would come and attain his presence, and were overjoyed with his discourse.

First Spiritual Assembly in Rasht

A few days later, he invited the friends to elect the first consultative assembly, or spiritual assembly. The believers, with utmost joy and unity, participated in the election and chose the membership of the spiritual assembly.

It was in that gathering that we learned that Jamāl [Burújirdī] had arrived in Rasht and had taken his residence in the abode of Muhammad-‘Alī Qahvih-Chī. The latter was one of the Baha’is and had a teahouse across from Siyyid Abú-Ja‘far. His house was close to the office of Hājī Amīnu’l-Darb. It was agreed that several of the friends would ensure that he [Burújirdī] did not associate with any of the friends. In those days, a certain Mihdī Kāshī, who was an engraver, was secretly in contact and aligned with Burújirdī. In short, after a few days, we heard that Burújirdī had departed from Rasht.

Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī’s Visit

In 1319 AH [1901 CE], the nightingale of the divine orchard, Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī, arrived in Rasht from Tehran on his way to the Holy Land.²¹ He took his abode in the home of Āqā ‘Alī Arbāb Nasīroff.

Back in 1314 AH [1896 CE], I had briefly discussed this mighty Cause with a certain Muhammad-‘Alī Khān, the Mafākhiru’l-Mulk, who was from Isfahan. However, we had agreed that whenever one of the accomplished teachers of the Cause arrived, he would be introduced to him, so that a more thorough conversation could take place. Therefore, at this time I informed the Mafākhiru’l-Mulk, and he met Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī in my home, and for three days and nights they held discussions. At the end, he was won over to the Cause and drank his fill from the cup of certitude. He was so attracted and enkindled that it remains indescribable.

The Mafākhir was a merchant, and entered into an agreement with Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī to trade this commodity in the course of that year and to split the profits, with the Hājī’s share being sent to the Holy Land. Their discussions ended on that note.

In those days, a certain Siyyid ‘Abdu’l-Karīm, who was from Kashan, together with his family and kinfolk, arrived in Rasht. They took up their residence in my house. I commenced close association and friendship with him and after several discussions about the Cause, he accepted the Baha’i Faith.

One day, the Mafākhir gave his consent that the Siyyid [‘Abdu’l-Karīm] could come each day on behalf of Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī and examine the merchant’s books. Siyyid Kāshī [‘Abdu’l-Karīm] remained true to his commitment. Muhammad-‘Alī Khān Mafākhir, on the other hand, after some trades, amassed a considerable profit but did not fulfil his pledge, and consequently God dealt with him justly, too.

However, from the day of his belief until 1335 AH [1916 CE], he accumulated a vast fortune in Rasht, and occasionally would render a service to the Faith. Alas, although confirmations were his lot after he became a believer, disappointment was his fate after he left.

Baha’i Teachers

After Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-‘Alī had departed to attain the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā in the Holy Land, the honoured Bassār commenced teaching the Cause. The names of the teachers who would come to Rasht or who resided

in that town are mentioned here: Hājī Amīn; Ibn-Asdaq, the Shahīd ibn Shahīd;²² Āqā Mīrzā Mihdī Akhavān-Safā; Āqā Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Khān, titled the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk; Ghulām-'Alī Khān, titled the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik; Mīrzā Muhammad-'Alī Khān Tihirānī; and Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Hakīm, the Sārimu'l-Atibbā.

Sympathetic Governor

At that time, the governor of Rasht was [Muhammad-Valī Khān] Amīr-Tunukābunī, the Nasru's-Saltanih,²³ who later was given the rank of *sipah-dār* Azam [Great lieutenant general]. Because of the governor's care, compassion and concern, the divine friends had become exceptionally enkindled and inflamed, exceeding each other in activities and service to the Cause. The esteemed governor, who was attracted to the Faith, was particularly protective of the believers. At all times, reports of Baha'i activities were presented to him, and the believers, with great audacity and without the need for dissimulation,²⁴ would undertake their activities. The illustrious *sipah-dār*, too, would carefully conceal and protect the community.

Teaching Christians

During that period, a Christian priest by the name of Monsieur Marcar, who was of the Protestant denomination, accepted this mighty Cause, frequented the gatherings of the friends and with utmost vigour and enthusiasm was teaching God's Faith. At the same time, Monsieur Schuler, a Protestant priest who was a missionary from the United States to Iran, arrived in Rasht. After a while, Monsieur Marcar befriended him and spoke to him of the Cause. Further, Monsieur Marcar asked the spiritual assembly, 'If you deem it appropriate, a special gathering should be organized and Monsieur Schuler be invited so that a thorough discussion of the Faith can be undertaken.' On behalf of the spiritual assembly, the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk came to me and stated, 'This gathering will be in your house.'

On the night of 17 Rabī'u'th-Thānī 1318 AH [14 August 1900 CE], about 28 of the Christians along with Monsieur Schuler came to my residence. Several teachers of the Faith were present as well.

At first, Āqā Mīrzā Muhammad Khān Baha'i spoke. Afterwards, using the Holy Bible, Monsieur Marcar produced proofs, evidences and arguments in support of this Cause. Observing that the evidences presented had completely defeated him, with great vehemence and fervour Monsieur Schuler rose and protested, 'I must go home and bring another Bible,' when a Bible was already available at the meeting. When Monsieur Schuler objected so strongly, Monsieur Hambarson, a Christian merchant who, through Āqā Shu'a'llāh – a merchant from Milan, had learned about the Faith in Tiflis [Tbilisi, Georgia], rose and pulled out his pistol to shoot him. However, the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik quickly seized the pistol and removed it from Monsieur Hambarson's hand. The vociferous protests and complaints of the Christians intensified. The confirmations of Almighty God poured forth, however, and the meeting concluded. Since my residence was near Government House, the governor became thoroughly aware of the details of this incident and raised no objections to the believers.

Because of the priest's inability to respond [to Baha'i arguments] at that gathering, several Christian attendees accepted the truth of this mighty

Cause [i.e. became Baha'is]. Therefore, from then on, each week a number of Christians would attend the Baha'i gatherings and meetings – some held in the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb, and some in my residence. The believers at that time were in the utmost safety and security.

Cleric Opposition to the Governor

In the year 1319 AH [1901 CE], the following 'ulamā in Rasht rose up against the just government of Lieutenant-General Nasru's-Saltanih Tunukābunī: Mullā Muhammad [known as] Hājī Khummāmī; Hājī Siyyid Yūsuf Mujtahid; Hājī Mullā Muhammad Sīqlānī; Hājī Āqā Ridā; Mullā Mihdī Sharīa'tmadār; Hājī Siyyid 'Abdu'llāh; Mullā Muhammad Kadú-Sarā'tī; Mullā Sagharī-Sāzānī; Shaykh Muhammad-'Alī; Hājī Bahru'l-'Ulúm Najafī; Shaykh 'Alī Sīkā-Rudī; Shaykh 'Alī Vayksarā'tī; Mullā Yūsuf Zanbīlī; and some 20 other antagonistic clerics – all outwardly accomplished and spiritually lifeless. They gathered in Chahar-Mahal,²⁵ and for a while planned and connived on ways that would bring about the governor's dismissal from office – thinking that after his dismissal, they would implement their evil plots and injure and harm the innocent and meek friends of God [i.e. the Baha'is].

At that time, because of Governor Nasru's-Saltanih's consideration and support, the Baha'is of Rasht would freely organize gatherings, and with great joy and felicity were engaged in teaching the Cause of God. In fact, in nine neighbourhoods, without any fear or worries and without any dissimulation, they were engaged in service to the Faith. The enemies and ill-wishers learned of these things and reported the details to the concourse of the 'ulamā. In their report they emphasized that several new Baha'i teachers had recently arrived and they included all the specifics and particulars in these reports so that a pretext could be created for causing turmoil. The believers, though, continued their activities with a great deal of pride and without secrecy.²⁶

Baha'i Photographers

Several months passed. During this period a multitude were awaiting turmoil and trouble. It was then that two Baha'is, Āqā Mīrzā 'Alī Khān 'Akkās ['the photographer'] and Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Khān 'Akkās-Bāshī, arrived in Rasht. After meeting several times with the friends and believers, they started promoting their photographic art in order to advance their business. Each day the Baha'is, being completely enchanted with this novelty, would invite the two newly-arrived believers. These two distinguished photographers, however, carried their intentions to an extreme and suggested that a group photo of the entire Baha'i community be taken. After a few days, this matter was taken to the spiritual assembly, which did not deem it advisable, stating, '[The conditions in] these days are not conducive to this request, and we must await another time.'

The Picture

However, since God – Sanctified and Exalted be He – always tests His servants, after a few days, and through other means, they secured the assembly's permission. That is, as the day of the declaration of his holiness the Primal Point [i.e. the Bāb], which coincided with the anniversary of 'Abdu'l-Bahā's birth, was approaching, the spiritual assembly granted its consent

for a group picture to be taken on that auspicious day. The honoured Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān, who was the chief-of-staff for the governor, Qāsim Khan, invited all the friends to gather in his house for lunch, where a community photograph would be taken. He was a member of the spiritual assembly, and because of his request it was agreed that on the day of declaration a feast be held in his residence and a photograph be taken that would include a portrait of 'Abdu'l-Bahā. Afterwards, 12 copies of this picture were to be prepared, and the glass negative was to be kept by the assembly to ensure that prudence was observed.

On the day of the festivities all of the Baha'is gathered, and before lunch, a group picture was taken. Afterwards, everyone had lunch and the gathering was concluded.

After some time, the evil-doers reported this event to the assemblage of the 'ulamā, which afforded them the pretext [they were looking for]. Each one arose in a different way and manner, with schemes and conspiracies, to harass the friends [i.e. Baha'is] and cause a furore.

Distribution of the Picture

A month after the picture was taken, the two photographers made a copy of the picture and sold that copy to a certain Mashhadī Luft-'Alī Bandar-Chī Pīrbāzārī. The latter pretended to be a member of the Baha'i community and took the picture, decoratively framed it, and hung it in his house. His shop was located in the Pīrbāzār quarter and as such, he gave written instructions to his carriage-driver to go to his residence and fetch that picture for transference to Pīrbāzār. The carriage-driver did as bidden, but on the way he stopped at the Caravansary Mutasham, where the frame fell from his hand and broke. Several people who were there came over quickly and picked up the picture. They shouted a few obscene words at the carriage-driver and took the picture with them. The carriage-driver returned to Pīrbāzār.

That night, one of the merchants whose office was in the same Caravansary, had a *rawdih-khānī* ['prayer vigil'] in his house. His name was Āqā Siyyid Ridā Sayf-Sādāt. This Qazvīnī merchant took the picture and hid it. When the *rawdih-khānī* was concluded, the picture remained with him. Several days later, Āqā Sayf-Sādāt consulted with several hostile Twelver Shī'is. Together they went before the concourse of the 'ulamā and displayed the picture.

Owing to the plans of the assembled 'ulamā that very picture became a cause for turmoil. [The stage of quiet planning] was from 7 Jamādīu'th-Thānī [11 September 1902 CE] until 11 Dhi'l-Hajjih 1320 AH [11 March 1903 CE]. Their first step was to give the picture to Mīrzā Tāhir, the son of Mustawfī, one of the prominent citizens of Rasht, in order for him to reproduce 50 copies, one for each of the city's 'ulamā. In turn, each cleric, of his own accord, was to disperse the picture across the province of Gilan, so that tumult, disturbances and mischief could be precipitated.

Igniting the Protests

In that same year, a certain Mashhadī Taqī Zargar, along with his brother Mashhadī Ridā, who were both goldsmiths, were engaged in their profession. These two were brothers of Āqā Mashhadī Qāsim Zargar, who was mentioned earlier [in these pages]. These two brothers were working in their

shop when a woman, sent there at the instigation of the 'ulamā, came in to purchase some gold jewellery. After the usual discussions, she procured the item, paid and left. When she was leaving, [she looked at the picture frame] and according to instructions that she had been given previously, raised the cry of 'Our religion is lost!'

It is well evident what a mighty clamour resulted. As she cried hysterically, the other shopkeepers in the bazaar rushed into the shop of the two [Baha'is], and with utmost severity and cruelty dealt with those two wronged brothers. At last, they dragged the men to the home of Mullā Muhammad Khummāmī, the renowned Hujjatu'l-Islām. It must be clear what befell the two men, to such an extent that the pen is unable to recount. Moreover, given the background of strong opposition to the governorship of the Nasru's-Saltanih, it must be evident in what manner the 'ulamā of Rasht behaved. The governor, on the other hand, was proud, brave and courageous, though he was not able to change the course of events.

The 'ulamā connived even more, and this time wrote a statement in large letters, pretending that it was from the much wronged Baha'is of Rasht. This letter was addressed to the renowned Hujjatu'l-Islām and contained every manner of insult, offence, obscenity and unseemly accusations. This document was their instrument for further agitation and turmoil.

Shortly afterwards, the governor sent instructions to Āqā Shaykh Mihdī Shari'atmadār to urgently send Āqā Taqī and Āqā Ridā Zargar to Government House. When they arrived there, they were released [from captivity].

A Death and Planned Burial

After the release of those two distinguished men, Ustād Hashim Bannā Qazvīnī, the brother of Dervish Bāqir, who was known as Dervish Mas'ūd, was stricken with paralysis and passed away two days later. In short, day by day, the concourse of the 'ulamā were getting closer to their objective. When Dervish Mas'ūd learned of the death of his brother, Ustād Hashim, he began arrangements for the funeral procession, which would include marching and howling demonstrators, the raising of flags, and the music of drums and trumpets. Ustād Hashim's father-in-law, Siyyid Hasan Baqqāl ['grocer'], who was one of the mischief-makers and ruffians of Rasht, quickly learned about the funeral details and informed several of the troublemakers. Together they went to the home of the Bahru'l-'Ulūm and reported the details. In turn, the Bahru'l-'Ulūm gave every seminary student and ākhund in Rasht instructions that they should impede the funeral.

The governor learned of this plan. He sent several of his farrashes and their chief, the Muntasru'd-Dawlih, to ensure that the deceased would have a proper funeral procession.

Attack on the Baha'is

When this information reached the assemblage of the 'ulamā, they decided to attack and plunder the homes of the Baha'is and massacre them. For this purpose, during the night they hung the letter that they had forged from the Baha'is containing all manner of insults and obscenities heaped upon the Hujjatu'l-Islam, Hājī Khummāmī, at the entrance of the Hujjatu'l-Islam's home.

Mullā Muhammad Hājī Khummāmi himself was not aware of this plan. Early in the morning he came out of his house to find a large placard hung over the entrance, containing insults, abuse and curses, while his other door was covered with filth and refuse. He also was deeply perturbed that several passers-by were standing there loudly reading the letter. Quickly, he [i.e. the Hujjatu'l-Islam] informed the bazaar that the shopkeepers should close their shops and raise the cry, 'Our religion is lost!'²⁷

In light of his responsibilities, the governor moved quickly to restore order throughout the city. He gave instructions for the troops, cavalry and artillery to be stationed around Government House and to quell the insurrection, and also to ensure that no harm came to the wronged believers – perchance God's lambs might be secured from the vicious wolves.

The situation grew intense as the ruffians, hooligans and hoodlums launched their attacks. However, when the 'ulamā saw the guns and artillery and realized that the tumult and uprising would result in their own mortality, they withdrew their hands from bloodshed, mischief and sedition, relinquishing their earlier plans and hopes.

On that day, however, the 'ulamā sent the aforementioned picture to every part of Iran, fomenting all manner of cruelty and brutality. In every town, the fire of incitements and sedition rose high, particularly in Yazd, Nayriz and Isfahan, in such wise that even the field of Karbala had not witnessed such incidents.²⁸ Even foreign governments became aware of the brutality of this tyrannical, bloodthirsty [Shī'i] sect and testified to the meekness of this party [the Baha'is].²⁹

Siyid Mutivali

There was a certain Āqā Siyyid Husayn, who was from Mazandaran and had been entangled in troubles, and [some time previously] had fled to Rasht. He was in that same photograph mentioned above, seated with great dignity. To observe wisdom, he had enrolled as one of the special attendants of [the Hujjatu'l-Islam] Hājī Khummāmī to the point that he was entrusted with the administration of several religious endowments. Because of this, he was referred to as Āqā Siyyid Husayn Mutivali ['custodian of endowments'].

Without being aware of earlier events, near noon one day, during the course of the upheavals, he attended the *rawdih-khānī* of the Hujjatu'l-Islam. After the prayer session was concluded, Āqā Hājī Khummāmī instructed one of his attendants, 'Remove Siyyid Mutivali's turban, beat him over the head, and expel him from the gathering.' After this, the endowments were also removed from his administration. Of a certainty, it must be clear what befell that wronged and debilitated believer, who after a few days left Rasht.³⁰

The Funeral

[To return to the funeral account], after three days and nights, at the insistence of the believers and by instruction of the esteemed governor, the Muntasru'd-Dawlih, chief of the farrashes, picked up the remains [of Ustād Hashim]. He sent word to Dervish Mas'ūd, who came with his followers and buried the body of Ustād Hashim near Bagh Shah, at a location known as Khalbāsh-Kallih.³¹

This news reached the 'ulamā. The next morning the 'ulamā and some local thugs marched to Bagh Shah and exhumed the remains of that distinguished man from his grave. They tore him into pieces and set them on fire.

This news reached the governor. Immediately he sent his men to seize the evil-doers, and without trial to punish them appropriately. The instigators were beaten severely with sticks and the thugs had their ears and noses cut off, and, as an admonishment to others, were paraded throughout the city.

Public Uprising

As result of this incident, a public uprising took place. Some rushed to Government House, some went towards the home of the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik, some towards the home of Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Ibtihāju'l-Mulk and some attacked the home of Āqā 'Alī Arbāb. The roar of 'Our religion is lost!' and 'O Muhammad!' and 'O 'Alī!' filled the entire city. However, they were not able to injure or hurt the believers.³²

For three days this upheaval continued. The Sharī'atmadār, who was a capable and competent man, quickly came to Government House and commenced discussions regarding how to defuse this mighty uproar, which on the one hand was witnessing the attack of hooligans, and on the other, unrest throughout the city.

In short, after three days, it was determined that the way to subdue the uprising was for several of the Baha'is to leave Rasht. It was believed that with their exit, the situation would be calmed. The group [to leave town] was to consist of the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk; the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik; Hājī Mīrzā Ahmad Qazvīnī; Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd Siyāh-Kulī; Dervish Mas'ūd; Mīrzā Husayn Khān, the son of Rafī'u'l-Mulk; Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān, the chamberlain of the governor Qāsim Khān; Karbalā'ī 'Abbās 'Allāf; Mashhadī Ridā; Mashhadī Taqī Zargar; Siyyid Husayn Mutivalī; Mīrzā Āqā Sārimu'l-Atibbā; the I'tidhāu'l-Vizarih, the chief of the post office; Āqā 'Alī the maternal uncle of his honoured Mīrzā Tarāzu'llāh [Samandarī-Hand of the cause]; and this lowly servant, Yahyā. The Sanctified Lord looked upon Āqā 'Alī Arbāb and his family with the eye of compassion, since there was no mention of them in the discussions.

When the above-named [Baha'is] were about to depart from town, Siyyid Mutivalī, who previously had left town, arrived back in Rasht. The troublemakers learned of his arrival, seized him, removed his turban and placed a paper hat on that wretched soul, and, unclad, threw him out of the house. In the streets and in the bazaar that illustrious man suffered bitterly at the hands of the ungodly, and did not have a moment's rest nor comfort. Eventually, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd gave him a room in his house for a few days and protected him.

The troubles in Rasht began to spill over into other towns as well. In Lahijan, Āqā Mashhadī Ghulām-'Alī Tājir ['merchant'] was expelled from his residence and twenty other believers were harassed, tormented and beaten. Even in such places as Siyāh-Kal and, and any other location where the lamp of divine Faith was lit, they tried to extinguish its light.

This news reached the governor. He charged someone to see to the protection and support of the divine friends. However, that wretched soul, who was bereft of the knowledge of God, arrived like a Shimr³³ in Lahijan and commenced searching for the remainder of the companions of the Prince of Martyrs so he could slay them too.³⁴ That tyrannical and blood-thirsty man, whose name must be preserved for posterity, was the Jalīlu'l-Mamālik. His older brother, Mu'īn Humāyūn had rendered great services in Shiraz to the friends of God.

Soon the upheavals and tumult reached Port Anzali, which is Iran's largest port. Several Baha'is lived there, including Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tihirānī, among others. They too were engulfed by the persecution and malefactions of a bloodthirsty people.

It was about this time that it was heard that Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī had arrived from the Holy Land in Port Anzali, bearing word of glad-tidings and soul-stirring news. The people there, however, attacked the custom house [to injure him], although two or three of the believers were able to protect him. The Hājī enquired from Rasht what he should do to remain safe. In turn, the spiritual assembly contacted the governor and enquired about the means of his protection. The instruction was for Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī to arrive at one of the friends' homes under the cover of darkness. He was then to be conveyed confidentially to Tehran. In accordance with this plan, Hājī Mīrzā Haydar-'Alī came to Rasht and thence proceeded to Tehran.

Banishment of the Baha'is

In Rasht, after discussions between the concourse of the 'ulamā and the governor, it was decided to exile a number of the friends, whose names were recorded previously, in order to mitigate the uproar and tumult. The governor sent his men in the early morning of 27 Rabī'u'th-Thānī [23 July 1903] to summon those condemned to exile to Government House. This included Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk; Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān; Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd; Ghulām-'Alī Khān, the Mudabbir [u'l-Mamālik]; and this humble servant.

When we had arrived at Government House and saw each other, the honoured Ghulām-'Alī Khān, the Mudabbir, commenced to protest with the governor's chief of farrashes. At the urging of Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān, Mīrzā Ibrāhīm and I decided to go before the governor and beseech him to withdraw the order for our exile. However, when we came before the governor and he saw us — particularly the wretched Āqā Mīrzā Ibrāhīm — he shouted, 'Take them outside and beat them with sticks until I come myself!' They took Mīrzā Ibrāhīm, but Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān and I escaped through another door and were deprived of the great bounty of being beaten with sticks!

However, the honoured Mīrzā Ibrāhīm bountifully partook of this grace and while being beaten would cry out, 'Yā Hadrat-i-'Abbās, Yā Hadrat-i-'Abbās!' From another entrance to Government House, I reached him, and at that point they stopped beating him, because in those days I carried some influence and was esteemed by those who worked in Government House; for this reason they decided to abandon any further corporal punishment. They took him to prison instead.

Quickly I left Government House to see what had befallen my friends. A carriage was immediately summoned, and I put on board the Mudabbiru'l-Mamālik and the Ibtihāju'l-Mulk and conveyed them to the Idarih Rāh-Shoussée [Highway Office], which in those days was leased by Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh Barāt-Bāz, who at the time owned the transportation system. I asked for a half-hour reprieve from an officer who had arrived to conduct the men [on their exile] to Tehran, so that a change of clothing could be brought from their residences. They were then sent off to Tehran.³⁵

After this occurrence, the Nimrod-like fire caused by the 'ulamā, trouble-makers and ruffians was extinguished.

Colonel Nūru'llāh Khān, who was among the staunch and steadfast Baha'is, came to Government House accompanied by ten of his cavalry soldiers, so that they could conduct the exiled men from Rasht to Manjil. Several of the governor's officers brought a number of the believers to Government House, as they were supposed to be seen by the 'ulamā before being sent on exile. The governor intended for their exile to commence once they had arrived outside the city limits, but the 'ulamā insisted they must be conducted through the bazaar[market square], so that everyone would be certain of their fate and therefore would grow quiet. In short, the men who were brought in this manner were Āqā Mīrzā Husayn Khān, the son of the Rafi'u'l-Mulk; Karbalā'i 'Abbās 'Allāf; Mashhadī Ridā Zargar; Mashhadī Taqī Zargar; Āqā Mīrzā Bāqir Dervish, known as Dervish Mas'ūd; Āqā 'Alī Dā'i; Āqā Siyyid Husayn Mutivalī; Āqā Ustād 'Abdu'llāh Qannād; Āqā Mashhadī 'Alī Qahvih-Chī Isfahānī; and Āqā Mashhadī Husayn Qazvīnī, who had a shop near Khāhar-Imām. These believers attained the honour of service to the Faith by being banished.

The following believers, however, were deprived of this mighty bounty and were not exiled: Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd Siyāh-Kalī; Colonel Jahān-Bakhsh Khān; Āqā Mīrzā Muhammad-'Alī Khān Tīhrānī, who worked in the telegraph office; the I'tidhā'u'l-Vūzarā; Hājī Mīrzā Ahmad Tājir Qazvīnī; Monsieur Kalus[Carlos];³⁶ Mīrzā Ishaq Khān Kashānī; Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tabīb, known as the Sāramu'l-Atibbā; and this ephemeral servant. Considering their professional occupations, these individuals were not pursued any further by the governor or by the 'ulamā.

Continued Harassment of the Baha'is

After these events, it was decided that the Baha'is – both men and women – would not be permitted to use the public baths. Moreover, instead of shaving Baha'i heads, the barbers were cutting their scalps.

In short, two months later, the wretched Siyyid Mutivalī, who had been hiding in various places, came out one day without his turban [the sign of his lineage], for the purpose of earning a living. However, he encountered two of the 'ulamā, who ruthlessly forced him into their residence. These two were Āqā Siyyid Ismā'īl Mujtahid Rashtī and Āqā Siyyid 'Abdu'llāh Rashtī, who was related to the Hujjatu'l-Islam. There he was told, 'Either you must deny and curse [the Baha'i Faith] or we will tear you into pieces.'

This news reached the new governor, the Hakīmu'l-Mulk. [It should be noted that] he had been installed when the Nasru's-Saltanih, the then governor, was dismissed from his office two months after the upheavals caused by the 'ulamā.³⁷

I am not sure how Siyyid Mutivalī managed to escape from the two clerics after all his clothes had been torn and he had been stripped of every garment. Nevertheless, he ran into the street and a Muslim – who apparently was not a Muslim but was one of the believers of this mighty Cause – found him and covered him with his own thin, black summer 'abā and showed him a way to flee.

In the utmost state of wretchedness, injury and fatigue, Siyyid Mutivalī came to the residence of my brother, Āqā Mīrzā Nabī – a home that belonged to a non-Baha'i. It was midnight when they informed me, so I

went and brought him to my own home, where he stayed in secret. Two days later, I took him to his own residence and, after consulting with the friends, a week later he was sent to Badkubih and then to 'Ishqabad.

At that time, Āqā 'Alī Arbāb lived in a caravansary located behind the town's large square. Half of this building belonged to Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh, who was [one of the] Sādāt Khams. Although he was a believer, he hid his allegiance and strenuously avoided all the Baha'is of Rasht. One of the rooms in this caravansary was occupied by Āqā 'Alī Arbāb. Several other residents of this caravansary were among the ruffians and agitators, and they sternly told Āqā Siyyid Asadu'llāh, 'You must expel 'Alī Babi from this location.'

That distinguished man obeyed and informed Arbāb that he was to vacate the premises. It must be clear what a strain was placed on him until he left that caravansary. After he had left that location, through the intercessions of Mīrzā Ibrāhīm Jadīd and the Mafākhiru'l-Mulk, he found a room in Sarāy-Kamrāniyyih, which was located behind Government House. This room, however, was so foul that no one could stand even an hour in it. However, even after paying a large sum, this was the only room he could acquire. Āqā 'Alī Arbāb, Āqā Mīrzā Tarāzu'llāh[Samandarī] and Āqā Ghulām-'Alī lived in that room.

There was a few thousand tumans was owed to Āqā 'Alī Arbāb by creditors in Rasht. A few days after he had transferred his residence to the new location, Hājī Khummāmī proclaimed that all who owed money to 'Alī Babi were excused from paying him even the smallest coin, and that this debt was forgiven to everyone, much the same way as a mother's milk is free to the babe. He added that only if Arbāb had a son and the son were a Muslim, then the money would have been owed to the boy. For a long time Arbāb tried to negotiate with those who owed him money, but in the end he was not able to collect even a single coin.

Mention of Āqā Mīrzā Āqā Tabīb, the Sāremu'l-Atibbā, was made earlier. That desolate soul had gone one day to the public bath known as Hammām Hājī Mīrzā Nasīr. He had not started his bath and had not gone into the pool, when this news was taken to Hājī Khummāmī. The Hujjatu'l-Islam sent a gang of his evil-doers, who were his seminary students, to the bath, and they dragged him outside, unclad, wearing only a torn towel. In this way, he was paraded in the streets and bazaar. I saw him when this incident was happening, and by spending a considerable sum was able to win his ransom and save him from the claws of those bloodthirsty wolves.

From the beginning of the tumult on 11 Dhi'l-Hajjih 1320 AH [11 March 1903 CE] until its conclusion was two months. During that period, the wretched, wronged believers were seized by the hands of ferocious tyrants. Each day they were tormented and tortured with a new excuse. Praise be unto God that this wronged community shone brilliantly on the field of trial and emerged steadfast and sincere. Although outwardly the Baha'is of Rasht did not suffer martyrdom, alas, each hour of every day was like drinking from the chalice of self-renunciation. The martyrs of other towns in Iran suffered only once as a martyr; but the believers of Rasht, despite their fewness in number, were to suffer unabated and most bitterly over a long period.

It was three days after the passing of the Hakīmu'l-Mulk, who was the governor of Rasht and had died suddenly from a heart attack, that I bid my friends goodbye and left for Talish.

A Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahā

After these incidents, I have nothing worthy of my readers to present. Therefore, I conclude with the text of a tablet that I received during the course of those upheavals, which I include in these pages of history.

Rasht. The honoured Mīrzā Yahyā Khān, the 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā, upon him rest the glory of God!

He is God!

O steadfast servant of God! Even though the clouds of tribulation repeatedly poured forth the rains of affliction; the field of suffering was spread; the ensemble of trials was readied; the chalice of persecution was disseminated; and the friends drank their fill and became targets of oppression and cruelty – this servant too was a partner and participant in each of these ordeals, and an inhabitant of a corner of this territory of calamity and difficulties. Do not be sad. Do not grieve. Whatever occurs, of a certainty, it is ordained and appropriate. This is the prerequisite of faithfulness in the love of God. It is decreed and ordained for the friends of God.

Days pass away. Continually every day and night witness new events. All created things are targets of the arrow of destiny and subject to every calamity. It is for this reason that the contingent world is subject to change and revolution, and subordinate to hardship and adversity.

The difference is that all others suffer trials in the path of self-desire, while the divine friends accept the darts of trials in the path of God. The first is futile, while the latter will bear results more precious than pearls and jewels. Therefore, give thanks unto the Lord that in the path of God you have suffered difficulties.

The hope of the faithful is that from His infinite bounties, this hardship will transform into blessings, and this anguish will become the mightiest recompense and the greatest bestowal.

*Upon thee be salutations and praise,
'A. 'A.³⁸*

Colophon

This history of the Cause was written in the city of Rasht on 1 Rabī'u'l-Avval 1345 AH [9 September 1926 CE], by the least of writers, the 'Amīdu'l-Atibbā Hamadānī.

Appendix 1

Two Documents on the 1903 Persecutions in Iran

The intensity of the 1903 persecution of the Baha'is throughout Iran resulted in considerable attention and reports by the foreign embassies in Tehran. The Ottoman embassy also reported on this ordeal, and two such reports are cited below through the kindness of Dr Necati Alkan. The original Turkish is cited along with Dr Alkan's translation.

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (Istanbul), Y.PRK.EŞA. (Yıldız Perakende Evrakı: Elçilik, Şehbenderlik ve Ataşemiliterlik), No. 43/23

1) Report No. 491 from the Ottoman Embassy in Tehran (Sefaret-i kübrâ-yı Devlet-i Osmaniyye)

Mâbeyn-i Hümâyun-i Cenâb-ı Mulûkâne-i Başkitâbet-i celilesine

Devletli efendim hazretleri

İran'da min el-kadim Babi mezhebi aleyhinde teessüs eden münâferet ahîren kesb-i şiddet ederek Reşt'de vefat eden bir şahsı Babi olduğu beyaniyle ahali kabirden çıkararak ihrak bi'l-nâr eyledikleri ve bir takım muteberânın hâne ve dükkanlarını dahi ashâbı Babi olduğu vesilesiyle yağma ve gâret etdikleri hükûmet-i mahalliye tarafından da işbu vak'ada müşevvek olanları mücazaaten kulakları kesilerek vak'anın önü alınabildiği ve Yazd şehrinde dahi muteberân-ı ulemâdan on ikisinin Babi buldukları iddiasıyla ahali tarafından parça parça edilerek katl ve hâneleri yağma edildiği ve İsfahan'da dahi yirmi kişinin ahali tarafından yine bu vesileyle katl ve itlâf edildikleri ve Tahran'da dahi ... ahalinin bazı tüccar mutebere hânelerine bu vesileyle hücum etmek niyetinde bulduklarının hükûmetce istihbar edilmesi üzere bir gûna iğtişâş vukûuna meydan bırakmamak üzere şehirde taraf taraf asâkir-i mustahfaza gezdirilmek olduğu ve vilâyet-i sâirenin ekserisinin dahi bu vechle hâl-i iğtişâşda bulunduğu istihbar edilmekle berâ-yı mâlumat arzına mücâseret kılındı ve ol bâbda ve her halde emr ü ferman hazret-i men lehülemrimdir.

11 Rebiülâhîr 321/24 Haziran 319 (7 Temmuz 1903) Tahran maslahatgüzarı, mühür:

[Translation]

To the Imperial Chief Secretary

The longstanding enmity against the Babi sect in Iran has recently gained in its violence. It was reported that a person in Rasht who died and was believed to be a Babi, was taken out of his grave and burned by the people; and that houses and shops, the owners of which are Babis, of some respected people were plundered. The local government stopped the events and punished those involved by cutting off their ears. Twelve respected 'ulamâ in Yazd who were believed to be Babis were cut to pieces by the mob and their houses pillaged. In Isfahan, also, twenty people were slaughtered on these grounds. And it was reported by the government that the ... [cannot read the word] people in Tehran intended to attack the houses of respected merchants, but that soldiers were sent to different places to prevent the tumults; other provinces are also facing tumults.

11 Rabi' II [1]321 (7 July 1903), the charges d'affair in Tehran, seal: Muhammed Bahauddin

2) Report No. 506 from the Ottoman Embassy in Tehran (Sefaret-i kübrâ-yı Devlet-i Osmaniyye)

Mâbeyn-i Hümâyun-i Cenâb-ı Mulûkâne-i baş kitâbet-i celilesine

Devletli efendim hazretleri

İran'ın bazı vilâyetlerinde Babi mezhebi aleyhinde zuhur edib 24 Haziran 319 (7 Temmuz 1903) tarih ve dört yüz doksan bir numarolu tahrîrât-ı çâkerânemle arz ve işâr kılınan iğtişâşdan Yazd ve İsfahan cihetleri iğtişâşı henüz ber taraf edilemeyerek o cihetle kuvve-i askeriye sevkine mecburiyet hâsıl olduğu Hariciye Nâzırı tarafından ifade edilmiş olmağla li-eceli'l-mâlumat arzına mücâseret kılındı. Ol bâbda ve her halde emr ü fermân Hazret-i men lehülemrimdir.

15 Rebiülâhîr 321/28 Haziran 319, Tahran maslahatgüzarı, mühür: Muhammed Bahauddin

[Translation]

To the Imperial Chief Secretary

Among the tumults (*iġtiṣāṣât/iġhtishâshât*) in some of the provinces in Iran, owing to the opposition towards the Babi sect that occurred on 24 Haziran [1]329 (7 July 1903), and which was presented in report No. 491 by this servant, the tumults in Yazd and Isfahan could not yet be prevented. The Foreign Minister informed that therefore it was compulsory to send military forces.

15 Rabi' II [1]321 (11 July 1903), the charges d'affair in Tehran, seal: Muhammed Bahauddin

Appendix 2**'Abdu'l-Bahā's Tablet to the Author**

[At the end of his narrative, the author cited a tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahā, and for the ease of reference the text of that communication, as given in Makātīb 'Abdu'l-Bahā, vol. 6, 112–13, is provided below. The Translator.]

۱۱۳

رسید بساط محنت گسرتده گشت بزم امتحان آراسته شد
جام افتتان دورزد و یاران سرمست آن باده گشتند و
معروض شد اند و آلام گردیدند ولی این عبد در هر بلائی
شریک و سهمیم بود و در زاویه مصائب و رزایا مقیم محزون
مباشید مغموم مگردید هر چه پیش آید البته آن باید و
شاید یعنی از لوازم ثبوت بر محبت الله است و از فرائض
مقدّره براحتبآء الله ایام درگذراست و حوادث لیل و
نهار ممتد و مستمر کائنات کل هدف تیرقضا و مورد
انواع جفا زیرا عالم امکان معروض تغییر و انقلاب است
ولا بد از حدوث مشقت و عذاب فوق در اینجا است که
کل در سبیل هونی معروض بلایند و یاران در راه هدئی
مورد تیر جفا آن بی ثمر است و این نتایجش مانند درو
گهر پس شکر کن خدا را که در سبیل هدئی مورد جفا
گشتی و از فضل بیمنتھی امید اهل و فاجنا ناست که
این بلا سبب عطا شود و این محنت وسیلهٔ محنت کبری
و موهبت عظمی شود و عليك التقية والثناء ع ع

۱۱۲

زلف مشکبار آزادهٔ لامکان زحمت و مشقتی که در سبیل
جانان کشیدی همیشه در خاطر این آوارگانست و سبب
تقرب درگاه یزدان نفسی که در سبیل آن دلبر آفاق
صدمه و بلا نکشد در خسران و زیانست و مبتلا بزایه
نسیان و هر بزرگواری که مانند جام سرشار از بادهٔ بلا
لبریز است پر روح و ریحان و محرم خلوتگاه یزدان
پس ای یار مهربان از مشقت و بلائی که کشیدی شادمان
باش و شکرانه نما زیرا محتمل این بلا یا مانند بند و افتاب
و برکت خرمین محقق و مقدر امة الله رقیه سلطان را
تحتیت برسان و همچنین امة الله قبر سلطان را و همچنین
آقا جلال را از الطاف بی پایان حضرت رحمن امیدوارم
که مشمول الطاف گردند و منظور بعین عنایت حضرت
رحمن و علی الكل التقية والثناء والبهاء الى الابد الاباع ع
هو الله
ای بندهٔ ثابت حق هر چند از غم بلا یاران جفا پی در پی

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Dr Ahang Rabbani has published numerous scholarly articles, essays, books and translations over the course of several decades including regular valued contributions for the *Baha'i Studies Review*. A major book that he translated, *The Genesis of the Babi-Baha'i Faiths in Shiraz and Fars* was published by Brill in 2008. Dr Rabbani passed away in 2013.

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Endnotes

1. A debt of gratitude is owed to Prof Juan R. Cole, who in the mid 1990s graciously shared with me a copy of this important manuscript, which he had located in the Afnan Library in England. This manuscript has since been digitally published on H-Bahai at: <http://www.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol5/rasht/rasht.htm>. I am also indebted to Phillip Tussing who with great care read through the manuscript and offered a number of suggestions for its improvement, and to Sen McGlinn and Dr Moojan Momen for several important comments. I am grateful to Dr Necati Alkan for the two important documents cited in Appendix 1. All errors and shortcomings, however, are mine.
2. Three other documents are known to the translator: 1. Memoir of Mīrzā Mihdī Tabīb. In his seminal work, Hasan Balyuzi refers to this memoir: 'In Rasht, Samandar spent most of his time meeting enquirers in the home of a physician, Mīrzā Mihdī Khān. This zealous Baha'i, a native of Hamadan of Jewish background, has written an absorbing autobiography, which unfortunately has not seen the light of day.' 2. *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq*, vol. 6, pp. 923–74. This section covers the introduction of the Faith in Gilan province and has considerable biographical information on the early Baha'is of Rasht. 3. *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq*, vol. 8, part 2, pp. 757–99. This account deals with the Baha'i community of Gilan in general, and of Rasht to a great extent, during 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry.
3. Mīrzā Asadu'llāh Fādil Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq*, vols. 1–9, digital facsimile, East Lansing, MI: H-Bahai, 1998–1999. <http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/index/diglib/mazand1.htm>Māzandarānī, 6: 992.
4. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 8: 757.
5. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 923.
6. Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh: With Some Historical Background*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1985, 62–4.
7. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 928.
8. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 923, notes that the newly-converted Mullā Muhammad was 70 years old. In 1295 AH [1878 CE], when the laws of the obligatory prayers had not been promulgated, he inquired of his religious duties. He was given a collection of prayers that he was to recite each day after reciting 'Allāh'u'Abhā' 95 times.
9. The five brothers, known as Sādāt Khams – a title bestowed by Baha'u'llah – were merchants and had obtained Russian citizenship with the surname Baqiroff. Two of the brothers were able to negotiate a contract with the holder of the Imperial concession for the paved road between Anzali and Tehran for the provision of traveller's services along the route – rest-houses, food, accommodation and other necessities. Because of this, they became very rich. After their conversion, they were to render important services to the Faith of Baha'u'llah, particularly Siyyid Nasru'llāh who lived in Tehran and covered the majority of the expenses of 'Abdu'l-Baha's travels in Europe and America. Siyyid Ahmad, son of one of these brothers, travelled to Europe, attended 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris and travelled with him in 1913 when he visited Stuttgart, Budapest and Vienna. For more details see Ruhu'llāh Mihrabkhani. *Khandān Sadāt-i Khams*; Germany: 'Asr-i Jadid, 1994.
10. Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh Zuhūru'l-Haqq* 6: 928.
11. Ibid. 6: 928–30; and Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh* 69–72.

12. In the present rendering, subheadings, footnotes and clarifying comments in square brackets have been added.
13. Assuming that by “A 1” the author means Rabī’u’l-Avval, then according to calendars available to the present translator, 22 Rabī’u’l-Avval 1307 AH was on a Saturday.
14. Early Iranian Baha’is often continued to identify themselves by their former religions, so by this statement the author means he is a Baha’i of Jewish descent.
15. He is the recipient of an important tablet from Baha’u’llah known as Lawh Ittihad; text in Baha’u’llah, *Ad’iyyah Hadrat Mahbub*, Germany: Bahá’í Verlag, 1980, 388–406.
16. Balyuzi notes, Samandar ‘was in Rasht for three months, and held a special class to teach the *Bayán*’, *Eminent Bahá’ís in the Time of Bahá’u’lláh* 212.
17. Tabīb and Hakīm are interchangeable, meaning a physician.
18. Hājī Nasīr was first a Bābī and fought at the battle of Shaykh Tabarsi. He went on to render important services, and his martyrdom is lamented by Baha’u’llah: ‘Previous to these forty years controversies and conflicts continually prevailed and agitated the servants of God. But since then, aided by the hosts of wisdom, of utterance, of exhortations and understanding, they have all seized and taken fast hold of the firm cord of patience and of the shining hem of fortitude, in such wise that this wronged people endured steadfastly whatever befell them, and committed everything unto God, and this notwithstanding that in Māzandarān and at Rasht a great many have been most hideously tormented. Among them was his honor, Hājī Nasīr, who, unquestionably, was a brilliant light that shone forth above the horizon of resignation. After he had suffered martyrdom, they plucked out his eyes and cut off his nose, and inflicted on him such indignities that strangers wept and lamented, and secretly raised funds to support his wife and children.’ Bahā’u’llāh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, 3rd ed. Wilmette: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1988, 71–72. Hājī Nasīr’s fascinating memories are available in *Witness to Shaykh Tabarsi: The Narrative of Hājī Nasīr Qazvīnī*, Witnesses to Bábī and Bahá’í History, vol. 10, eBook, 2007.
19. Lit. the Spirit of God.
20. Massāh may not be a correct reading by the present translator.
21. With the development of transportation infrastructure in Russian territory, the ship from Rasht to Baku became a common route for Baha’i pilgrims to ‘Akkā. Often prominent Baha’i figures travelled through Rasht, and would stay there for some time.
22. Literally, martyr son of martyr. Mullā Muqaddas Khurasanī was granted the station of martyr, as was his son, without either one dying a martyr’s death.
23. Muhammad-Valī Khān Tunukābunī, the Nasru’s-Saltanīh (who later received titles of Sepahdar A’zam and Sepahsalar A’zam), was a native of Tunukabun in province of Mazandaran. For some time he was the governor of Tunukabun and in 1885 became a brigadier-general. He received the title the Nasru’s-Saltanīh in 1887. After several other posts, he became governor of Rasht in 1899, a post that he held for four years and four months until his dismissal. He later achieved prominence as a leader of the Constitutional Movement. In February 1909, he was the leader of the Nationalist forces, as they took the town of Rasht. He headed the march on Tehran, entering it in July 1909 and thus forcing Muhammad-‘Alī Shah’s abdication. In the new regime, he served several times as prime minister until his death in January 1926 in Tehran. The French diplomat A. L. M. Nicolas reports that in his meeting with him in 1912, the Nasru’s-Saltanīh was very sympathetic to the Bāb’s movement; (Moojan Momen, *The Bábī and Bahá’í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1981, 534). The Nasru’s-Saltanīh met ‘Abdu’l-Bahā in 1913 in Paris. At same year, he met Laura Clifford Barney (1879–1974) at Paris and been introduced to Baha’i Faith by her. While reading *Some Answered to Questions of Abdul-Baha*, left a monument account as eye witness to Martyrdom of Badi and Badi been tortured. He wrote the first-hand account at margin of that book. Now, that document kept at B.W.C.
24. The original term, *hikmat*, is often translated as wisdom. In context of many primary historical source documents of the Bābī and early Bahā’í period it refers to dissimulation of one’s faith as means of self-preservation.
25. Literally, four neighbourhoods. The present translator is uncertain whether it refers to a specific location or four different neighbourhoods in Rasht.
26. The author refers to *bī hikmatī* which literally means ‘lack of wisdom’, but in this context the phrase is understood by the translator to mean lack of secrecy in holding Baha’i gatherings.

27. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, 375–6, on 16 May 1903, Alfred Churchill sent a dispatch in the care of Major Archibald Douglas, who was the military attaché to Tehran Legation, to Sir Arthur Hardinge (Churchill to Hardinge No. 28, 16 May 1903: FO 248 792):

I am taking advantage of the departure of Major Douglas to communicate to your Excellency the latest news respecting the Babi agitation, which is if anything more acute, owing to an obscure placard discovered this morning on the door of the Mujtehed Haji Hummami.

This placard, purporting to have been written by a Babi, heaped the foulest abuse on Haji Hummami and his female relatives. The Ulema were held up to contempt for being powerless and Syed Assadullah, the head of the Transport Company, the Ferrash Bashi and Haji Mirza Mohamed Arbabi were praised as being the high protectors of Babis and members of the glorious community.

It requires little perspicacity to recognise that the offending document was not composed by a Babi but by some evil-disposed person anxious to cause trouble. The Mollahs however insist that it was the work of the Babis and a meeting took place in the house of Haji Hummami this morning.

The wildest rumours are current throughout the town. The latest information I have is that two of the principal Babis were called to Government House this afternoon and that a Jew who has in turn been Mussulman, Babi and then Mussulman again was sticked this afternoon by order of the Nasres Saltaneh in connection with the placard incident. This shows that the Nasres Saltaneh's hand has been forced to a certain extent but it is difficult to obtain reliable information.

Some days ago a dervish was arrested for reviling Babis in the Bazaars. The Governor General caused his head to be shaved and expelled him from the town. This gives rise to much talk to the effect that dervishes singing in praise of Ali and true-believers who dig up the corpse of a renegade Mussulman are sticked, shaved and have their ears cut off.

I am told that a telegraphic petition complaining of the conduct of the Governor General has been sent to Menjil for despatch to Tehran from the Telegraph office there.

I will not fail to communicate to your Excellency any further occurrences which may take place.

28. Karbala is the scene of the martyrdom of Imam Husayn and his companions and marks one of the most significant events in the entire history of Shi'ism.
29. In the summer of 1903, a widespread persecution of Baha'is in Isfahan led to a pogrom of Baha'is in Yazd and surrounding towns. By September, 'Abdu'l-Baha had written a long treatise detailing the occurrences and had a copy translated into English and published in the West, which resulted in many Americans and Europeans becoming aware of the intense persecution of Baha'is in Iran. For a history of this incident (and a new translation of this watershed document), see, Ahang Rabbani, "Abdu'l-Baha's Proclamation on the Persecution of Baha'is in 1903", *Baha'i Studies Review*: 14, 53–67, 2007. <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/intellect/bsr/2007/00000014/00000001/art00004>.
30. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 373–4, the British consul at Rasht, Alfred Churchill, reported on these episodes in a dispatch dated 8 May 1903 to Sir Arthur Hardinge, the British minister at Tehran (Churchill to Hardinge, No. 22, 8 May 1903: FO 248 792).

I have the honour to report that a disturbance took place on Sunday last, the 3rd instant, between a Babi jeweller and some Mussulmans.

The indirect cause of this disturbance was a photograph of a section of the Rasht Babi community which through the bad faith of a photographer has been circulating throughout the town. Two individuals passing by the jeweller's shop in the Bazaar made some jocular remarks in regard to this photograph, whereupon the owner of the shop is reported to have roared out that he was a Babi and would allow no one to insult his religion.

This resulted in a dispute followed by a general melee in which students from a neighbouring college took part. No great harm, however, appears to have been done, the combatants, Gileks[peasants of Gilan] inordinately afflicted with cacothoes loquendi, [a mania for speech] having no doubt exhausted themselves during the preliminary clamour.

The Governor General sent for the Babi and his brother and detained them until the next day in order to keep them out of harm's way. On Monday the jeweller opened his shop and has not been molested in any way since.

A copy of the photograph found its way into the hands of Haji Hummami, one of the principal and perhaps the most learned of the Resht Ulema, who was astounded to see that a Syed, [footnote this that it is Siyyid Husayn Mutivali] his trusted henchman and Mutevalli [custodian] of a Saint's tomb near Sangar, was one of the group of Babis. The Syed had timely warning and has prudently kept out of the way of the Mujtehed who threatens to beat him severely. I am told that the Haji and others of the Ulema have decreed that the Syed and other Babis must divorce their Mussulman wives but that the Nasres Saltaneh has intimated to them that no interference will be allowed as it is the desire of H. M. the Shah that religion should be free. I am also told that the Nasres Saltaneh has sent for a further detachment of one hundred soldiers who are to come from Kasvin and I may mention that since last Sunday the small force stationed at Resht has been served with ball cartridges.

There has been some talk on the part of the Mollahs of boycotting the Babis, who it was proposed, should not be allowed to enter the public baths but I trust that the firm and sympathetic attitude of the Governor General will prevent the execution of any plans which the Mollahs may have formed with the object of creating disturbance at the expense of the community at Resht.

I am informed that the Babis here amount to about one thousand persons of both sexes including at least one Greek and some Armenians.

31. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, pp. 374–5, on 10 May 1903, Alfred Churchill dispatched the following report (Churchill to Hardinge No. 24, 10 May 1903: FO 248 792):

With reference to my despatch No. 22 of the 8th instant, I have the honour to report a further incident created by the demise of a Babi mason yesterday.

The relatives proposed the customary obsequies according to Mussulman rites but the arrival of the usual paraphernalia in the shape of bier and wooden sweetmeat trays caused some excitement in the neighbourhood which speedily resulted in the gathering of a large mob from all parts of the town.

A disturbance being feared, the Governor General requested the Shariat Madar to arrange matters. The Mujtehed did so in a very commendable manner as, although the crowd remained in the vicinity of the house during the whole of the day, no breach of the peace occurred.

During the night the corpse was secretly taken in the direction of the Boosar Toll Station by some soldiers, farrashes and two servants of the Shariat Madar, who dug a grave and interred the body.

Nothing further of importance has occurred but there can be no doubt that the people are excited. My Russian colleague is of opinion that the rise of prices has to a great extent irritated the lower classes and points out the recent disturbances at Meshed due to the same cause.

It is certain that the dearness of the common necessities of life is much felt at Resht and, with your Excellency's permission, I will on a future occasion revert to the question.

32. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 374–5, on 15 May 1903, Alfred Churchill reported (Churchill to Hardinge No. 26, 15 May 1903: FO 248 792):

With reference to my despatch No. 24 dated the 10th instant, I have the honour to further report that a number of malefactors exhumed and mutilated the body of the Babi mason, which they subsequently proceeded to burn with naptha.

For this outrage many arrests were made and two rogues lost an auricle apiece besides being sticked. The executioner was also bastinadoed for being implicated as were likewise the other persons who had been arrested.

A servant of the Mujtehed Haji Hummami was arrested in connection with this outrage and was, I understand, well sticked but he was released in consequence of the threatening proceedings of the Haji in his mosque. The Mujtehed stopped the 'Rozeh' which was being held and sent for the religious students for the purpose, it is said, of releasing his servant by force.

The release of this man, however, smoothed matters over for the time being but I fear that at the present juncture it will require little to cause an explosion if the Mollahs do not keep quiet.

It is generally suspected that the Nasres Saltaneh is himself a Babi. Whether this is the case or not there can be no doubt that he is helping them in every way.

33. Shimr was the persecutor of Imam Husayn on the field of Karbala.
34. Meaning the officer in charge of protecting the Baha'i community instead turned into its persecutor.
35. Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 376, records that on 19 May, Alfred Churchill reported [Churchill to Hardinge No. 29, 19 May 1903: FO 248 792]:

In continuation of my despatch No. 28 of the 16th instant, I have the honour to report that the Vezir Nizam, who arrived from Europe last week, has not yet left for Tehran having been instructed to remain at Resht to cooperate with the Governor General so long as the agitation against the Babis continues.

Two prominent Babis, the Ebtehaj ol Mulk and the Mudabber el Memalek, left Resht on the 17th instant and matters have since taken a more favourable aspect giving rise to the hope that the agitation will gradually subside before more harm results.

The best remedy would be a heavy fall of rain which would be of great benefit to the crops and would at the same time prevent people gathering at the numerous rozeh khanehs and taziehs which are being held in all parts of the town as is customary here.

36. The present translator is uncertain of the correct spelling.
37. According to Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* 376, 'the agitation died away gradually, but the courage and efficiency of Nasru's-Saltanih was not rewarded. Indeed a short while later he was removed from his Governorship and left Rasht on 1 June 1903,' (reference is made to correspondence between the British consul in Rasht, Alfred Churchill to Sir Arthur Hardinge No. 31, 6 June 1903: FO 248 792).
38. The present translator is grateful to Adel Shafipour for bringing to his attention that this tablet also appeared in 'Abdu'l-Bahā, *Makātīb 'Abdu'l-Bahá*; vol. 6, Tehran: Mú'assasih Millī Matbú'āt Amī, 133 BE [1976 CE], 112–13. For ease of reference, that text is provided in Appendix 2. The current rendering has benefited from a draft translation posted by Dr Khazeh Fananapazir on the Tarjuman Internet discussion group on 18 February 2007.