



change in the countenance of the King, however when at the request of the prime minister and the Mustufi'l-Mamalik and some others, the monarch arrived at the nearby gardens of Sanduq-Khanih, it was determined that a few pellets had penetrated the skin above the collarbones and only caused a superficial scratch and a slightly deeper cut.

And the following week, on 26 August 1852, the same newspaper reported:

Hájí Sulayman Khán, the son of Yahyá Khán Tabrizi, whose situation was described earlier, together with Hájí Qasim Nayrízí who was the successor of Siyyid Yahyá [i.e. Vahíd] were brought [from Niavaran] to the city by Áqá Hasan, the vice-general. Their bodies were pierced with lit candles and to the sound of trumpets were paraded in the streets for the people to see, but were prevented from being stoned. At the gate leading to [the shrine of] Shah 'Abdu'l-'Azim, the executioners cut their bodies into four pieces, each piece being displayed by one of the city's gates.[2]

It is reported that when they wanted to slay Sulayman Khán, he had said, "First martyr Hájí Qasim Nayrízí and let him attain unto this exalted bounty, as he is eminent over me." [3]

Hájí Qasim was survived by two sons, Hájí Muhammad and Mullá Husayn.

Having weathered the storm of Nayríz-I, Hájí Muhammad was once again caught in the midst of the second interlude, where he and his family were made prisoner.

The oral memoirs left by Hájí Muhammad describe the events through the time that the captives, himself among them, were taken to Shiraz. He was fortuitously released from captivity at that time, but decided to stay in that city for a while. A few years later, he moved to Dariyun[4], but some time later returned to his native town of Nayríz as the new governor, Fath-'Alí Khán, had taken a solemn oath to remedy the past misdeeds of his father.

In Nayriz, Haji Muhammad was occupied with farming and raising sheep, and as he was a robust man, often was engaged in working the fields himself. Soon Fath-'Alí Khán, having explicit faith in the trustworthiness of Bahá'ís, asked Hájí Muhammad to supervise his personal properties in the Rastaq region. The house of the Hájí at both Rastaq and Nayríz was the abode of all Bahá'í teachers passing through the region and he served the Cause with great distinction and devotion. He married a niece of the renown 'Alí Sardar[5], who was a daughter of Mullá Husayn, and she brought him six children: Fadlu'llah; Muhammad-Qasim; Faraju'llah; Habibu'llah; Qudratu'llah; and Sakinih. His descendents suffered bitterly in the course of Nayríz-III in 1909 - this family is one of the chains that connect the believers of Nayríz across the span of several generations in this panorama of suffering and

steadfastness. In all his days, Hájí Muhammad was fond of recalling the events of his youth, particularly the 1853 episodes. He lived to be nearly a hundred years old and passed away in 1935 in Nayríz[6]. A Tablet revealed in his honor by 'Abdu'l-Bahá immortalizes his memory.

The value of his memoirs lies foremost in the fact that it is told by one who participated in the events. Though in many ways it does not convey the rich detail of the narrative of Mullá Muhammad Shafi', it is nevertheless an independent description which closely collaborates the account of the former, and in a few instances provides some additional amplifications. However, one must note that by the time this narrative was committed to paper, Hájí Muhammad was at a relatively advanced age and the passage of time has taken its toll, so that a few of the minor details are conflated, (see footnotes below). The original of this recollection was published in Muhammad-'Alí Faizi, *Nayríz-i Mushkbiz*, pages 108-116.

This account begins in the spring of 1853 when once more the Bábís commenced reorganizing and re-emerging as a distinct community and tells of the brutal response that awaited them.

#### Memoirs of Hájí Muhammad Nayrízí

After the arrival of soldiers, they launched an attack against us and while doing so were aided by many from the town. This resulted in the believers retreating from Nayríz and taking refuge at the foot of the mountains at a location known as Bid Najviyyih, famous for its fresh air and vivifying nature. The attackers continued to pursue us to that spot and with increased intensity and severity, continually assaulted our camp. For that reason, we proceeded further up the mountain to an area known as Darb Shiguft, and raised a number of makeshift dwellings commonly referred to as yurd constructed from wood and tree branches and roofed by twigs and leaves.

Each day witnessed a considerable increase in the number of besiegers who had surrounded us from all sides and we were placed in dire need and grave hardship. In response, led by Mírzá 'Alí Sardar, our group put forth defensive measures and pushed back the attackers who beseeched Shiraz to augment their number with additional forces. At this time, Mírzá Na'im went forth to Shiraz and in his reports exaggerated the scope of the events which resulted in a large number of artillery pieces, ammunition and cannons being sent back with him, supplemented by several groups of tribal gunmen. Soon a large camp was raised, surrounding us from all directions, and they launched a massive offensive. A devastating battle took place between the opposing sides that resulted in our dwellings (yurds) being burned completely. Even though our numbers were relatively few in comparison to the armed camp, by spectacular bravery, coupled with undaunted fortitude and steadfastness, the believers were able to deliver a decisive defeat to the foes resulting in complete disarray and flight of the attackers. In the course of their retreat, the soldiers left behind a large cache of arms including a

cannon that was brought up to the mountain and used thereafter.[7]

At that time, we proceeded to another section of the mountain known as Bala-Taram and stayed there for a while. This was beneficial as it allowed us relative safety and tranquility, and we even organized several weddings during this period. On the instructions of Mírzá 'Alí Sardar, our group constructed nineteen fortifications in the number of vahíds[8] of the Bayan. Each was named after a certain participant, such as, one was named after 'Alí Sardar, and another after Khájíh Qutba and yet another that was defended by the womenfolk was known as Madar Sami' [mother of Sami']. The remains of these fortifications stand to this day.

During this time a number of clashes took place, until Mírzá Na'im was once again able to gather a considerable number of soldiers and gunmen, and from the direction of Darb Shiguft entered the region and raised his camp. Mírzá 'Alí Sardar organized two groups of nineteen men each to rush and surprise the camp, one attacking from the higher elevations while the other was to circle and attack from beneath the camp. However, in the dark of the night and having frail eyesight, Siyyid Husayn, the leader of one of the two groups, tripped over a rock that was dislodged and rolled down the hill. This caused the camp to become aware that a night attack was underway and eliminated the element of surprise. A fierce battle was waged between the two sides that witnessed great many gallantries by Mírzá 'Alí Sardar who at each instance, single-handedly, would raise the cry of "Ya Sahib Zaman" as he fearlessly rushed the soldiers with his saber and scattered their forces. The other believers and companions also manifested exceptional courage, fortitude and self-sacrifice in their efforts, and even the womenfolk joined in by throwing rocks and stones at the enemy. All of this resulted in a bitter defeat for the camp and flight of the soldiers from the field of battle. Even the camp's leader, Mírzá Na'im, was so overwhelmed with trepidation that he was unable to escape on his own and soldiers had to carry him away on their backs to save his life. Fearing for their very being, every person in the soldiers' camp escaped and scattered throughout the countryside.

After this defeat, Mírzá Na'im wrote to the Prince Mu'ayyi'd-Dawlih, the governor of Fars, explaining the pathetic condition of his own and his fallen men and yet again asked for military assistance, a request that was awarded with four regiments of men. That is, orders were issued that gunmen from all villages, hamlets and tribes in the neighboring regions were to be gathered at [Mírzá Na'im's] camp so that once and for all the Bábís would be eliminated. Lutf-'Alí Khán Qashqa'i came accompanied with both foot and cavalry forces, and they were joined with Ahmad Khán Bahárlu who brought five hundred of his well-known sharpshooters. The enemy's camp was rapidly growing in number and each day their encompassing increased in intensity.

Prior to this, Sardar assembled and informed us that our remaining days were

but a few, and said that if anyone wished not to suffer at the hand of the enemy, it would be best for them to leave at once. None among the believers preferred to abandon him and all remained faithful and steadfast. The number of our group at that time was four hundred men and six hundred women.

This time the battle was particularly severe. Sardar, in accordance with his usual practice, raised the cry of "Ya Zahib Zaman" and riding high on a mount charged the enemy. In this campaign, a number of Bahárlu gunmen had hidden behind the rocks and trees and from there were able to severely shoot Sardar, who dragged himself to our fortification where the bird of his spirit was released from the prison of self. He was buried next to the fortification named after him.

After Mírzá 'Alí Sardar was slain, his companions remained steadfast until the last breath, even though a number of them were killed and the rest seized by the soldiers and tribal gunmen, who perpetrated uncountable cruelties upon their prisoners. Of the captives, all men aged twenty and older were slain and their heads piled in large baskets which, together with the women and children and some remaining elderly men, were paraded back to Nayríz in the company of an exuberant army. Upon arrival, the prisoners were confined to the Madrisih Khán and guards ensured that no one contacted us.

After we were kept in such miserable conditions for a few days, together with the basket of heads, we were sent to Shiraz. En route, because of the sufferings and hardships, a number of the captives expired and they too were decapitated and their [severed] heads added to the piles. One such case was Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn, the judge and the soothsayer of Nayríz, who had stood with the illustrious Vahíd and had survived the first episode and was among the baqiyatu's-Sayf, and now was included in the company of the captives. As the incarcerated believers were being conducted from Shiraz to Tihrán, upon reaching the village of Siyyidan, a distance of two days journey to Abadih, having endured immeasurable afflictions, Mullá 'Abdu'l-Husayn passed away and the soldiers beheaded his body, taking the head with them and burying the remains in that locality.

Proceeding under such heart-wrenching conditions, when our caravan of captives reached Tang Sa'di, news was sent to the governor of Fárs and inquiry was made about the manner of entry into the city. The governor sent long spears equal to the number of the severed heads and instructed that each be raised above these lances, and in the company of the drums and cymbals to enter Shiraz. In such sorrowful and tormented state, the women, children and elderly men walked bare footed in the midst of columns of soldiers, who each carried a spear bearing the severed head of one of the loved ones of our pitiful band. By order of the governor, a number of noble and distinguished citizens of the city had come forth to observe this sad spectacle. On seeing their condition, many of the citizens were moved to tears over the miserable state of the prisoners and sobbed loudly, while others were bewildered by the cruelty of the armed men, and yet others tormented the wronged captives by

assaulting them verbally and heaping abuse upon them and indeed some even spit on their faces. It was in the course of this agonizing scene, where every observer was profoundly moved with deep emotions of regret, that the Qavamu'l-Mulk Shirazi, who was among the onlookers, was moved to cry out to Mírzá Na'im, reproaching him with such words: "O Na'im! Have you sought to recreate Karbila? Even the plane of Karbila did not witness such misery!"[9]

In such poignant and pitiful state, our band of wronged ones was brought forth to the city and placed in Shah-Mir Hamzih caravansary. One day the governor of Fárs called a number of the captives to his presence and in the course of interrogation instructed some to repudiate their faith [in the Bab], and as they remained steadfast, issued orders for their execution. These included: Sadiq, son of Salih; 'Alí Garmsiry; Husayn, son of Hadi; Hájí, son of Asghar; and Muhammad, son of Muhsin.

Soon, instructions were received from Tihrán to send the severed heads to that city and to free the women and children and so the baskets of heads and the elderly men were sent forth towards Tihrán. However, when they reached Abadih, further orders were received to bury the heads in that spot. The captives were taken to Tihrán though, and there some were freed while others were martyred.

#### Notes

[1] Lama'atu'l-Avar 1:155 reports that he participated in Nayríz II events and survived that event as well. The information provided by Mullá Muhammad Shafi' and Tarikh Shuhaday Amr 3:254-6, as well as other sources consulted by the author, indicate that he was among the Bábís who went to Tihrán to assassinate the Shah. Haqayiqu'l-Akhbar Nasiri 116-7 reports that Hájí Qasim claimed to be the successor to Vahíd. The same is noted in Mu'inu'd-Din Mihrabi's Quratu'l-'Ayn 126.

[2] The two newspaper extracts appear in Tarikh Shuhaday Amr 3:255. For other details on the failed assassination attempt see Haqayiqu'l-Akhar Nasiri 113-7 and the Dawn-Breakers chapter 26.

[3] Muhammad-Rida Fishahi, Vapasin Junbish Qurun Vusta Dar Duran Fu'adali 131.

[4] A village at a distance of 180 kilometers from Nayríz and 42 kilometers from Shiraz and had been on the path of the caravan leading the Babi captives to Shiraz.

[5] Babi leader during Nayriz-II battles.

[6] Nayriz Mushkbiz 116 suggests that he lived to the age of 115. However since it is known that he was 14 years old at the time of Vahíd's arrival in 1850, that suggests his birth took place

circa 1836, placing his age at the time of passing at about 100.

[7] Most sources indicate that the capture of this cannon occurred at the next battle.

[8] Vahid has the numerical value of 19.

[9] Lam'atu'l-Anvar 1:196 reports that afterwards, the indignant Qavam sought an audience with the governor of Fárs and stated, "With these heinous deeds, Mírzá Na'im has indeed recreated the field of Karbila and the taking of the Holy Household to Damascus. The only thing lacking is decorating the city; and once that is accomplished, then the scene is completely recreated!"

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