

**Mahir GARIBOV**  
PhD in History

# MINISTER WHO FELL VICTIM TO TERROR

*Behbud Khan Javanshir*



“Terror” is translated from Latin as “fear” and “horror”. Nowadays, terrorism has turned into one of the pressing issues posing a threat to the whole world. The Azerbaijani people faced this misfortune as early as at the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The invasion by the 11<sup>th</sup> Russian Red Army and the destruction of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in the spring of 1920 were immediately followed by a series

of terror attacks by Armenian extremists against prominent state and political figures of Azerbaijan. In late May, **Nasib Bay Yusifbayli (Usubbayov)** was killed while emigrating abroad, **Fatali Khan Khoyski** was killed in Tiflis in June and **Hasan Bay Aghayev** in the same location in July.

**Behbud Khan Javanshir** experienced this fate too. A great-grandson of Karabakh Khanate founder Panahali Khan and a representative of the well-known and esteemed Azerbaijani dynasty, B. Javanshir was born in the Azad-Gara-Goyunlu village of Terter province in Karabakh in 1877. In 1890, he was admitted to the Tiflis non-classical specialized school with advanced German language studies and successfully graduated; in 1902, he was admitted to the mining academy in Freiberg, Germany, and subsequently graduated from this institution with honors, majoring in oil engineering. It is worth mentioning that **Behbud Khan is the first Azerbaijani to have graduated from a higher educational institution in Germany with honors.**

Year 1906 was marred by bloody pogroms against Azerbaijani civilian population, committed by the Dashnaks in many regions of the South Caucasus, including Karabakh, Nakhchivan and the Erivan Governorate. **B. Javanshir arrived in Shusha in early August and founded the Difai party**, an organization of self-defense for the Muslims of the entire Caucasus, **together with Hasan Bay Aghayev.**

Behbud Khan, who had excellent command of the German language and was fluent in Russian, French and Georgian, headed for London to take a one-year course to improve his English. Living and studying in Europe had a profound impact on his shape-up as a public and political figure. Upon return to his home country in

*Behbud Khan Javanshir in his student years*

1907, B. Javanshir started working as the chief engineer at the Baku oil field named after Shibayev. At the same time, he managed to adapt the soft wheat varieties that he had brought from Germany to the climatic conditions of Karabakh, along with the pedigree cattle that he kept in the household of his childhood friend Alfie.

Behbud Khan was also involved in road improvement in Karabakh and the emergence of the first vehicle in this area. B. Javanshir was one of the executives of the Muslim Charitable Society and a member of the Nijat educational society.

Interestingly, in that period **B. Javanshir assisted in assigning salaries for the Baku police officers guarding oil fields worth 3 percent of the oil revenues.**

Overall, B. Javanshir was closely familiar with the tough job and concerns of the police officers, and this certainly contributed to his appointment as Minister of Internal Affairs in the second ADR cabinet on June 17, 1918. **On July 2, the government ruled to establish police bodies in nine counties of the Ganja Governorate upon the initiative of B. Javanshir.** July 2 is currently officially marked as Police Day in Azerbaijan.

In September 1918, the government was relocated to Baku after the city was liberated by the Islamic Army of the Caucasus from the Bolsheviks and Dashnaks, and the Interior Ministry was transferred to the Metropol hotel building. Shortly afterwards, a police school for 1,200 cadets was opened in the Icherisheher Fortress of Baku. During B. Javanshir's tenure as Interior Minister, extensive work was done to ensure the rule of law and order in the country and prevent anarchy.

As a result of a cabinet reshuffle, on October 6, **while acting as Interior Minister, B. Javanshir began serving also as Minister of Industry and Commerce.** He facilitated the development of domestic production in Azerbaijan and the establishment of foreign economic relations. A trade agreement was signed with the Mountainous Republic on November 28 and with Georgia on December 26. These documents envisaged one-year exemption from customs duties for the cargo transported by rail.

On December 7, 1918, Behbud Khan Javanshir, who was not affiliated with any political party, was elected to the ADR Parliament and represented the non-partisan parliamentary faction. In October 1919, the faction broke up. Afterwards,

B. Javanshir set up an independent non-partisan group together with Bahram Bay Akhundov and Abdul-Ali Bay Amirjanov. During that period, **B. Javanshir,**



**together with the cabinet of Fatali Khan Khoyski, resigned from his government posts to focus exclusively on his duties as a lawmaker.** After the entry of the 11th Red Army to Baku and the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, B. Javanshir, who had a track record of a qualified engineer, did not face persecution by the new government. Moreover, by the end of the year, chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, Nariman Narimanov, delegated him to Germany to purchase oil-field equipment.

In July 1921, Behbud Khan, together with his wife Tamara and his brothers Surkhay and Jumshud, stayed in Istanbul with Ahmad Aghayev (Aghaoglu), a prominent Azerbaijani public and political figure and publicist. Later, A. Aghayev's daughter Sureya wrote in her memoirs, "After my father's return from Malta (following World War I and Istanbul's invasion by the British troops, A. Aghayev, along with a group of Turkish political figures, was taken to Malta, where they were held as prisoners - edit.), one of our acquaintances, an Armenian professor, came to see us. He said my father had been blacklisted by the Armenians and that he felt obliged to warn him about it. We

*Behbud Khan Javanshir (1st row, first from the left) with fellow students*



were informed that Azerbaijan's Interior Minister Behbud Khan Javanshir had been included in the black list as well."

At about 11 p.m. on July 17, 1921, Behbud Khan, his spouse and two brothers left the Tepebashi restaurant and headed toward the Per-Palace Hotel. At that moment, a puny man ran up to them from behind, with his face covered with a hat, and fired at B. Javanshir from a Mauser gun. A nearby **policeman detained the gunman, who turned out to be a member of the Dash-**

**naktsutyun party named Mishak Torlakyan.**

Behbud Khan, who was severely wounded, was rushed to a hospital and died there, though doctors fought to save his life. His last words were as follows: *"I have no personal enemies. Only Armenians could kill me."*

Three days later, on July 20, a funeral took place, which culminated in a mass demonstration. At that time, Torlakyan, who had already "made his mark" during the March 1918 genocide in Azerbaijan, was being held at the "Crocker" hotel in Istanbul, which housed the headquarters of British troops. 20 days later, he was brought before the British military tribunal. In this short period of time, local Armenians were mobilized to defend the terrorist, while a total of six people, which was a disappointingly small number of witnesses, were put on the stand to testify for the aggrieved party. However, despite the incomparable difference in the number of witnesses, **the plaintiff managed to reveal the actual underlying cause of this murder and expose the killers.**

One of the witnesses, lawyer **Shafi Bay Rustambayov**, who was a correspondent of the "Azerbaijan"



*Behbud Khan Javanshir (last row, second from left) with fellow students*

newspaper, gave substantiated replies to the questions asked by prosecutor Gribbon and tribunal chairman Friz. Thanks to the efforts of the Azerbaijani litigators, **the prosecutor called for a death penalty for the defendant. However, on the following day, he was unexpectedly suspended from the case.** Sureya Aghaoglu, who was a student of law at the time and was present in the courtroom, described the trial as follows: *"The murderer, a skinny, puny man, trembled all over. The prosecutor called for a death sentence. All of us were astounded at this demand as we did not expect such courage from this young officer. However, the prosecutor was recalled from Turkey within 24 hours, and his successor called for an acquittal."*

Thus, the assassin of Behbud Khan Javanshir was exonerated. The Armenians who were present at the trial explicitly regarded the terrorist as nearly a national hero, and soon thereafter, he was taken to the U.S. together with defense lawyer Khasuryan with the aid of the British authorities. **As a result of the interference of influential patrons with the course of the trial, dubbed "The Trial of the 20th Century", the crime remained unpunished.** This case could be reasonably called a dark spot in the history of European judicial proceedings. Undoubtedly, such instances of time-serving liberalism with regard to certain terror attacks and terrorists have not only hampered uprooting terrorism but also prompted terror to flourish in flamboyant colors, and it has increasingly turned into one of the serious challenges of a global scale.

As for the Armenian terrorism, which is one of the largest wings of the world terrorism network, it is noteworthy that **a great number of prominent statesmen and political figures of Azerbaijan and Turkey have fallen victim to it for decades.** In this regard, it would be appropriate to quote Levon Panos Dabagiyan, a well-known Turkish historian of Armenian descent, who wrote, *"The Armenians are directly indebted to the Turks for their existence as a nation. If we had remained among the Byzantians or Europeans, the Armenians' name would have been preserved to this day only in history books."*

This phrase once again confirms the fact that in reality, terrorism is not related to the struggle for national interests, but is a tool of big politics. ❀

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#### *Grave of Behbud Khan Javanshir in Istanbul*

