

FROM IMPERIAL PROVINCE TO PARLIAMENTARY REPUBLIC (February 1917-May 1918)

Edition of Kaspi, a popular newspaper in Azerbaijan, with information about the abdication of Emperor Nicholas II from power. The National Museum of History of Azerbaijan (NMHA)

During the last years the history of our independent First Republic – the Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (DRA) became a subject of attention of historians and political scientists, not only from our country but also beyond its borders.

The history of the Azerbaijani Safavid state and its relationship with the Ottoman Empire has always attracted the attention of both domestic and foreign historians. The last third of the 16th century is inextricably linked with the war of these two empires. Along with the general fundamental works on the history of these states, which reflect the history of Safavid-Ottoman relations, there are also illustrations to the works of the chroniclers of the time.

The desire of Shah Tahmasib I to establish peaceful relations with the Ottoman Empire is eloquently attested to by diplomatic missions sent by the Safavid Shah to the court of the Sultan in 1568 and 1576 on the occasion of the accession to the throne of Sultan Selim II and Sultan Murat III respectively. Despite the fact that the Turkish side did not even send an official notification about the accession of Sultan Murat III to the throne, the Safavid court sent on this occasion a very impressive delegation both in composition and in the value of the presented gifts, among which a special



Revolutionary rally in Baku in connection with the abdication of Emperor Nicholas II. February 1917.
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place was occupied by more than 50 volumes of rare manuscripts, including a masterpiece in the art of the hand-written book - Shahnameh, which took 20 years to create. According to the materials of "Jawahir ul-akh-bar" by Budaq Munshi Qazvini, it is known that in response to the insistent requests of his beloved nephew Sultan Ibrahim Mirza to send something else instead of this book, Shah Tahmasib I stated that "peace and quiet are more important for him than a book, which he does not have to read."

As early as 1548, during the third campaign of Sultan Suleiman I in Azerbaijan, the Ottoman side attempted to build a fortress here, but without success. With a sudden attack, the eldest son of Shah Tahmasib I, Ismail Mirza, thwarted the intention of the Ottoman authorities and destroyed the fortress that was being built.

Since Shah Tahmasib I lost confidence in his brothers and in the bravest of his sons Ismail (the future Ismail II), he increasingly relied on relatives, first of all on his sister Sultanim (d. 1562) and daughter Parikhankhanum (d. 1578). The manuscript "Qiran-us-Sadain" by Amir Khusrau Dihlavi gives the story of the complex relationship between the Shah and his brother Sam Mirza. And although his glory was great, "Qiran-us-Sadain" or "Meeting of Two Auspicious Stars" was not among the most illustrated manuscripts, neither Timurid nor Turkic. Perhaps the scene of the meeting of the two brothers here illustrates two events simultaneously, both from Safavid history: the arrival of Shah Ismail in Isfahan to see the newborn Tahmasib, and the meeting of Shah Tahmasib with his brother Sam Mirza in the spring of 1531, which corresponds to the title "Meeting of Two Auspicious Stars".

If everything is clear with the first of the events, the second event requires special consideration, since it is this that is illustrated, not the central event of the father's meeting with his son. The young prince Sam Mirza (1517-61), the nominal ruler of Herat, escaped from the town besieged by the Uzbeks in 1529, when his guard Hussein Khan Shamlu received a free corridor for the prince and his troops to retreat. But the terms of the evacuation, agreed by Hussein Khan, as well as the reluctance to join Tahmasib gave rise to doubt about the intentions of Sam Mirza and his reliability at the court. Therefore, the subsequent warm reception of



Sam Mirza by Tahmasib was a great relief for the latter, and he could very well order this manuscript in gratitude to the shah.

As you know, at the time of the creation of this manuscript of "Divan" by Hafez, the young Sam Mirza was the ruler of Herat under the tutelage of Hussein Khan Shamlu, the cousin of the shah on the maternal line, and the latter strengthened his ties with the Shah's court even more, marrying his daughter to Sam Mirza. In 1534 he organized an unsuccessful coup. The inscription shows the ambitions of Sam Mirza. He ordered to change the inscription, because he believed that Tahmasib was doomed to failure in the battle with the Ottomans.

Great problems for Shah Tahmasib were created by his brothers Alkas Mirza and Sam Mirza, in particular, the mutiny of the Shirvan baylarbay Alkas Mirza: before the new Ottoman invasion the position of the Safavid state was complicated in connection with his insurgency. Using the separatism of the local Shirvan nobility, Alkas Mirza decided to declare himself an independent sovereign. In the spring of 1546 Shah Tahmasib and his troops moved towards Tabriz and sent Urgenj-oglu to Shirvan for talks with Alkas Mirza. The mother informed the shah about the repentance of her son and his request for forgiveness with the promise that this would never happen again. But after the return of the emirs from Shirvan, taking advantage of the internecine wars of the Qizilbash nobility in the capital, Alkas Mirza again declared himself independent. Therefore, Shah Tahmasib, when he returned from his campaign in Georgia, decided to crack down on his rebellious brother. The rebels met on the banks of the Samur River with the Shah's troops and were defeated. The army started to defect to the Shah en masse. With a handful of people



Members of the Hummat party - one of the strongest Azerbaijani political organizations. NMHA

Alkas managed to hide in the mountains and get to the possessions of Shamkhal. Then he moved to the Azov Sea and reached Kafa (Theodosia), from where he went to Istanbul. The son of Shah Ismail Mirza (future Shah Ismail II) was appointed Shirvan's new baylarbay.

According to Sharaf Khan, Alkas Mirza, persuading the Sultan to go on a campaign against the Safavids, predicted to him that as soon as the sultan enters Iraq, the Qizilbashs will turn their backs on the Shah.

However, in 1549 Alkas Mirza quarreled with the

Sultan and refused to return to Istanbul at the request of Suleiman. Therefore, the 30,000-strong army of Muhammad Pasha was sent against him. Fleeing from the Sultan, Alkas fled to the Merivan fortress, where Surkhab bey ruled. According to Hassan bey Rumlu, the Shah sent Bahram Mirza to Surkhab with a 20,000-strong army. With promises and threats Bahram Mirza forced them to extradite Alkas and brought him to the Shah, who imprisoned his rebellious brother in the Qahqaha fortress, where he was soon killed.

At this time, Tahmasib received the news that the Sultan had sent Kullaragasi Osman Celebi with a 4,000-strong army to restore the Kars fortress. The eldest son of Tahmasib, Ismail Mirza, was sent against him with Gokcha Soltan Qajar. Osman Celebi, taking 600 people with him, appeared in the Prince's headquarters, where he suddenly pulled his sword and attacked him. Osman's men, following the example of their leader, attacked the Qizilbashs. However, Ismail Mirza showed composure and did not lose his head. The Kars fortress was destroyed by the Qizilbashs.



Sailors of the Caspian flotilla with revolutionary slogans. The Bolsheviks staked on them. NMHA

*Revolutionary rally in Nukha (now the city of Sheki)
in connection with the abdication of Emperor
Nicholas II. April 1917. NMHA*

Ismail Mirza, known under the name of Shah Ismail II, entered the political arena as a 14-year-old boy. When in 1547 (954) the brother of Shah Alkas Mirza rebelled and moved to the court of the Turkish sultan, the young Ismail was entrusted to rule Shirvan instead of him.

A terrible impression on the Turks was made by the decisive victory of the Qizilbash troops under the command of Ismail Mirza over the Ottoman ruler of Erzurum, the arrogant Iskender Pasha, in 1552 (969). In this battle, Ismail managed to carry out a tactical maneuver, which consisted in the fact that the Qizilbashes, by a false retreat, got the enemy out of the fortress and surrounded and defeated Iskender Pasha's troops in the open field, capturing a number of high-ranking dignitaries of the Turkish sultan.

The maneuvers of Ismail are very reminiscent of the tactics of his grandfather Shah Ismail I, who defeated Shaybani Khan from Merv in the same way in 1510. This brilliant triumph of Ismail brought him the glory of an invincible commander. The Turks, whom he terrified with his daring lightning raids, called him "insane Ismail" ("Deli Ismail"). Even after twenty years, the legend of Ismail's exploits was still alive in Azerbaijan and, as happens in these cases, was excessively embellished.

Ismail, without asking the Shah, had sent letters to the regional governors demanding that they immediately collect troops and, in violation of the Amasya treaty, invade the Ottoman possessions. The Shah could not approve such dangerous signs of disobedience, especially as the heavy blows inflicted on him by his brothers Alkas and Sam were still fresh in his mind. In addition, the Shah was well aware of the popularity of his son among the Qizilbash warriors. It is logical to assume that Tahmasib seriously feared that Ismail sought to remove him from the throne and take his place. Fearing the further activities of Ismail, Tahmasib immediately sent the chief of his guard (gurchibashi) Sevindik bey Afshar to Herat ordering him to remove Ismail. In his place, Muhammad Mirza was again appointed ruler of Herat. Sevindik bey delivered Ismail through Tabes and Yazd to Sava, where he was handed over to Masum bey, who imprisoned him in the Qahqaha fortress.

Ismail was imprisoned for 19 years, 6 months and



21 days. He crossed the threshold of the fortress as 24-year-old man full of strength and energy and was able to leave it only as 43-year-old man, bruised morally and physically. This imprisonment left an irreparable mark on the soul of Ismail and was reflected in his inhuman cruelties during his short reign.

During Ismail's stay in Qahqaha, an event occurred that predetermined the unrest at the court and the split among the nobility after the death of Shah Tahmasib. In this story, the tragic fate of Ibrahim Mirza is indicative.

In 1554, Shah Tahmasib appointed Sultan Ibrahim Mirza ruler of Mashhad, one of the most important cities of the empire. His appointment coincided with the marriage of Govhar-Sultan Khanim, the eldest daughter of Shah Tahmasib. This marriage was carried out by the Shah's decision, or, at least, was approved by him. One of the Safavid historians recorded that she was distinguished among others by her education, beauty and wisdom. The exact date of the wedding cannot be determined, but it was preceded by lengthy celebrations of engagement in Mashhad, for several months during the spring and summer of 1560.

The process of creating the manuscript had already been started. And although it is not mentioned in the sources, Ibrahim Mirza's marriage, his appointment and the order of the manuscript are related, as several miniatures of the manuscript touch upon this topic. For example, the miniatures "Aziz and Zuleikha enter the capital of Egypt and the people greet them" and "Yusuf gives a royal feast on the occasion of his marriage with Zuleikha" from the illustrations to "Yusuf and Zuleikha" correspond to the events mentioned in the chronicles.

Like all representatives of the Safavid dynasty, including men and women, Sultan Ibrahim Mirza was an excellent connoisseur of poetry and arts, and a patron. After the death of his father Bahram Mirza in 1549, he



was attracted by his uncle Shah Tahmasib to Tabriz. There he received a truly royal education in all spheres of art, music and poetry.

Another of the representatives of the Safavids fell victim to palace intrigues. The chronicles tell about the brilliant victories gained over the Turks by the son of Tahmasib, the crown prince of the Safavid throne, Hamza Mirza. It is known that after the conquest of Shirvan by the Ottomans, the Safavid court, which was not interested in a war with the Ottoman Empire, especially in view of the difficult internal political situation, tried to settle the situation peacefully, insisting on the observance of the terms of the Amasya treaty (79, p. 157, 16, p. 146). But, since these attempts were unsuccessful, there was only one way out - mobilize all forces and carry out a military campaign against the Ottomans.

The 80,000-strong united Safavid army led by



Memorial medal in honor of the abdication of the emperor. February 1917. NMHA

Prince Hamza Mirza and Vizier Mirza Salman, crossing a pontoon bridge on the Kura River on 26 Ramadan 986 / November 26, 1578, approached Shamakhi. Surrounding the city from all sides, the Qizilbash troops launched an offensive from the upper part of the city, from the side of the Gulistan fortress and broke the resistance of the Ottomans.

October 25, 1585 saw one more major battle with the personal participation of Hamza Mirza on the bank of the Fahusfanj River. On the way to Shamb-i Gazan, Ottoman troops were again attacked by the troops of Hamza Mirza.

Against the background of these events, the personality of Asafi Pasha attracts attention. The story of this Ottoman author, "Shujayat-nameh" by Asafi Pasha, dated 994/1586, is of special interest to us because it was written not just by a contemporary, but also by an eyewitness of the scenes described.

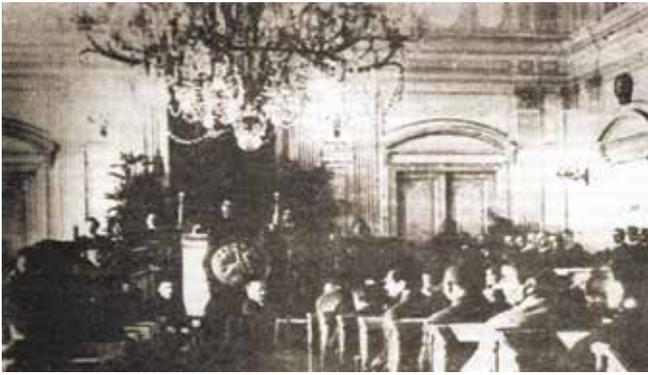
At a time when Asafi went together with Osman Pasha to the Gabala fortress, which was under siege then, he was captured by the Safavids in 1582. He was taken to Qazvin and imprisoned, but Hamza Mirza helped him escape.

Farhad Pasha, re-appointed commander-in-chief of the Ottoman army, offered the Safavids a truce in September-October 1586. Contrary to the resistance of the Qizilbash emirs, Hamza Mirza, realizing the situation and hoping to get a peaceful respite, agreed to these conditions, but insisted on the mandatory withdrawal of Ottoman troops from Tabriz. To this end, at the suggestion of Farhad Pasha, it was decided to send to Istanbul one of the Safavid princes to whom the sultan would probably "hand over the Tabriz vilayet." Hamza Mirza begged for peace and accepted the Ottomans' condition to send his young son Heydar Mirza as the nominal ruler of Tabriz in exchange for peace.

However, Hamza Mirza's plans were not to be realized, since not far from Ganja he fell victim to a conspiracy of high-ranking emirs, who were dissatisfied with his centralist policy. The death of this self-sacrificing Safavid prince, who led the struggle for the recapture of the occupied territories, in fact meant the cessation

Revolutionary rally in Nukha (now the city of Sheki) in connection with the abdication of Emperor Nicholas II. April 1917. NMHA

Meeting of National Council at which independence of Azerbaijan was declared. May 28, 1918



of the further resistance of the Qizilbash troops to the conquerors.

The murder of Hamza Mirza put Shah Muhammad in an extremely difficult position and forced him to write the most flattering and self-deprecating letter ever addressed by the Safavids to the High Porte. Cursing Ismail II for the resumption of Safavid-Ottoman enmity, he recognized the rule of the Ottomans over his possessions and asked Murat III to grant him the unoccupied part of the country as a hereditary principality (ölkə). But soon he was deposed and replaced by his youngest son Abbas. Further negotiations led to the implementation of Hamza Mirza's plan and, as was previously agreed, his son Heydar Mirza was sent to the Porte. A few years later this unfortunate child died of the plague.

The history of influential grandee Mirza Salman is inextricably linked with the fate of Hamza Mirza. The new political figure Mirza Salman appeared at the court for the first time in the last period of Shah Tahmasib's rule and was appointed manager of the palace household. He even managed to get his daughter to marry the heir to the throne Hamza Mirza and make the eldest son Mirza Abdullah a vizier of the prince. Thus, Mirza Salman strove for complete unlimited power.

Although Iskandar Munshi in general highly speaks about the intellect and abilities of Mirza Salman as a statesman, he also notes that his intrigues against the Qizilbash tribes disrupted military campaigns and damaged interests. The Qizilbash emirs learned about the vizier's machinations against them and decided to kill him: it happened in Herat in 1583.

The Divan of Hafez (Topkapi, H. 986) was created in October 1581 for Mirza Salman. The miniatures of the Divan, in our opinion, reflect the most important events in the political career of Mirza Salman. In each of the four miniatures, in one or another allegorical form, the vizier himself is present. Such is also the separate

miniature "Playing Chovgan" with his image with a ball for the game.

Thus, by 1586-1589, almost the whole of Azerbaijan was gradually occupied by the armies of Sultan Murat III. Coming to power in Qazvin, the new Safavi ruler Shah Abbas I, in view of the difficult situation of the state, hastened to continue peace talks with Turkey initiated by Hamza Mirza. The Safavids were forced to accept the harsh conditions of the Sultan in order to preserve the rest of their possessions. According to the conditions of the Istanbul peace of 1590, besides Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, western regions of Iran were also taken over by Ottoman Turkey. 🌟

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Participants in a revolutionary rally at a railway station in Azerbaijan. April 1917. NMHA