

Firdovsiyya AHMADOVA
PhD in History

FOREIGN MINISTERS OF THE AZERBAIJAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC

Mammadhasan Jafargulu oghlu H. Hajinski (1875-1931) served as the first foreign minister of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR).

M. H. Hajinski started his diplomatic activity prior to his appointment as minister of foreign affairs. During the talks held with representatives of the Ottoman state in Batum, Hajinski joined effort with Mahammad Amin Rasulzade to secure an outcome that would meet the interests of the Azerbaijani people. The Seim's Muslim faction in Tiflis was making decisions in accordance with their suggestions made as a result of the Batum discussions. Since the Ottoman Empire had a final say on military affairs in the region, this state played a key role in determining the fate of the Caucasus nations. For this very reason, representing Azerbaijan at the negotiations with Ottoman representatives was a great responsibility and vesting this mission in M. A. Rasulzade and M. H. Hajinski was not a mere coincidence. Thus, M. A. Rasulzade chaired the Transcaucasian Seim's Muslim faction, while M. H. Hajinski acted as its deputy chairman. The Azerbaijan Republic was proclaimed in Tiflis as both of them continued holding talks in Batum. M.A.Rasulzade and M.H.Hajinski were the Batum-based representatives in charge of sending consultative letters regarding these developments. Taking into consideration their mission and their status in the Muslim faction, M. A. Rasulzade was appointed Chairman of the Azerbaijan National Council, established on May 27, 1918, while M. H. Hajinski was named Foreign Minister in the first government of the Azerbaijan Republic, which was declared by the Council, in the absence of Rasulzade and Hajinski.

Fatali Khan Khoyski, the head of government, vested his first assignment in the foreign minister on May 29. Following the proclamation of the Republic, F. Khoyski

said in a letter sent to M. H. Hajinski from Tiflis that he was sending him the text of the cable about the declaration of Azerbaijan's independence in Russian and French due to various obstacles that stood in the way of sending it.

The telegram on Azerbaijan's independence was expected to be the first document to be signed by M. H. Hajinski in the capacity of foreign minister and he was authorized to do so by Prime Minister Fatali Khan Khoyski. Hajinski was to send the telegram from Batum to Istanbul directly via radio and onward to other recipients. The newly established state, which had to select a temporary capital for itself, was in need of foreign aid and support. From this point of view, the cable sent to Ottoman Foreign Minister Ahmed Nesimi Bey could be considered the first document signed by the foreign minister. Requesting that Turkish embassies undertake the task of housing Azerbaijan's representations in European capitals, Hajinski wrote in a confidential cable sent from Batum that the technical capacities of the newly independent Azerbaijan Republic for pursuing its foreign policy were extremely limited. The minister requested Azerbaijan's representation in all European capital cities where Turkish embassies were based, including Moscow. Hajinski also asked the Ottoman Foreign Ministry to broker recognition of Azerbaijan's independence by Russia and European countries.

The first intergovernmental agreement of the Azerbaijan Republic was also signed by Foreign Minister M. H. Hajinski with Turkey. The friendship treaty between Azerbaijan and the Ottoman Empire, inked in Batum on June 4, 1918, was a substantial outcome of the talks held there by M. H. Hajinski and M. A. Rasulzade. In keeping with Clause 4 of the treaty, Hajinski and Rasulzade requested military assistance from the Ottoman state for

Mammad Hasan Hajinski

the Azerbaijani people, who faced a massacre committed by the Armenian Dashnaks. On June 4, a number of international documents were also signed. These included a deal among the Ottoman, Azerbaijani and Georgian governments on operating the Baku-Batum oil pipeline and an agreement among the Ottoman state, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia on dividing the South Caucasus rail lines.

Foreign Minister Hajinski faced crucial objectives regarding the future destiny of the Azerbaijani state. These goals included declaring the liberated Baku the capital city, efforts aimed at international recognition of the Azerbaijan Republic, resolving territorial issues with the country's close neighbors, securing foreign aid for meeting the essential needs of the newly established state, etc. In a bid to precisely define the borders of the South Caucasus republics, Hajinski suggested establishing joint commissions to the Georgian and Armenian governments. However, first and foremost, it was pivotal to focus on liberating Baku, which necessitated not only countering internal rivals but also waging struggle internationally. The "Baku issue" was of international importance. The newly independent Azerbaijan Republic had to become involved in tough rivalry for this cause against the Soviet Russia, Britain and Germany. Though military power was a deciding factor, prompt diplomatic efforts were crucial as well.

Certainly, sparing no effort to solve the "Baku issue" prior to eliminating other imminent threats would have been inappropriate. During the first month of the post-independence period M. H. Hajinski had to issue numerous protest notes on behalf of the Azerbaijani government in the wake of territorial claims put forward by the ADR's close neighbors. The issue of delineating the state borders among the South Caucasus republics had not been comprehensively resolved until the fall of these states. However, the Foreign Ministry put forth a clear-cut stance from the very outset with regard to the affiliation and future fate of the Azerbaijani territories. M. H. Hajinski, who signed the credentials granted to the Azerbaijani delegation by the government along with F. Khoyski to attend the conference due in Istanbul, sought to normalize the challenging situation facing Azerbaijan by forging military, financial and economic cooperation with other countries. On behalf of Azerbaijan, M. H. Hajinski co-signed the agreement with the Ottoman military railway and seaport administration, along with



Minister of Roads K. Malikaslanov, on July 14, 1918. Hajinski regularly maintained formal communication with the head of the Azerbaijani delegation in Istanbul, M. A. Rasulzade. Rasulzade consistently informed Hajinski of the meetings and negotiations he was holding in Istanbul. Hajinski, in turn, informed Rasulzade of the situation in the Caucasus and Azerbaijan and consulted with him regarding pertinent issues, and also tried to provide the Azerbaijani delegation with important documents and other content.

The investigative body, established on the foreign minister's initiative, was of great importance not only for the period of its existence but also for the time that came a century thereafter. On July 15, 1918, he stated in an appeal to Prime Minister F. Khoyski that it was necessary to establish an emergency investigation commission to scrutinize the mass killings perpetrated by the Armenians against Turkic-Muslim civilians.

As battles raged over Baku Hajinski frequently visited the frontline area. Following the liberation of Baku, Hajinski continued to serve as foreign minister in the government that was relocated to the city from Ganja till October 6, 1918. Until that date Hajinski also temporarily



Fatali Khan Khoyski

held the position of Minister for State Control. Afterwards, Hajinski acted as ADR's Minister of Finance until the opening of parliamentary sessions, i.e. until the resignation of the second cabinet. Taking charge of the republic's financial well-being over two months was a daunting task. That time period saw crucial changes in the region and throughout the world. The British military, which represented the winners of World War I, oversaw the South Caucasus. Therefore, it was quite challenging to carry out state administration under the command of the British troops entering Baku. During this period the Azerbaijan Republic not only pursued a policy aimed at peaceful co-existence with its neighbors but also provided them with political and moral support, as well as financial assistance. In accordance with the agreement it concluded with the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus (Mountain Republic) on November 28, 1918, Azerbaijan allocated interest-free bonds worth 10 million Rubles to its northern neighbor. The document was signed by M. H. Hajinski and B. Javanshir on behalf of Azerbaijan.



Memorial plaque on the house in Baku where Fatali Khan Khoyski lived

Although Hajinski did not serve as foreign minister in the subsequent administrations, he essentially worked in this field. One of the key tasks facing the republic was to achieve its international recognition. The delegation that headed to the Paris Peace Conference for this purpose also included Hajinski, who was a government official and member of parliament. During the Paris peace talks Hajinski and A. Topchubashov had meetings with the leaders, officials and diplomats of the United States, Britain, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Iran and other countries, informing them of the Azerbaijani people's quest for independence, the country's facing a severe economic situation and its rich oil reserves. Hajinski also co-signed an agreement in Paris on September 16, 1919 -- along with A. Topchubashov -- on appointing M. Robinov, a US citizen, a financial consultant of the Azerbaijani delegation. While in Paris, Hajinski also contributed to the drafting of a bilateral agreement between the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR) and the Mountain Republic.

Following his return to Azerbaijan, Hajinski left for



Adil Khan Ziyadkhanov

Tiflis in November 1919 with Prime Minister Nasib Yusifbayli to hold talks with the Armenian government. On November 23, he took part in the signing of a peace treaty between the ADR and the Republic of Armenia. During the visit Hajinski made a report to the Georgian government in Paris in the capacity of the chairman of the Azerbaijani-Georgian economic department, informing his interlocutors that major and lucrative economic agreements had been drafted for Azerbaijan and Georgia to be concluded with large British and US companies. According to the decision passed by the State Defense Committee on December 9, 1919, Hajinski was included in the governmental delegation that was to attend an Azerbaijani-Armenian conference, along with Fatali Khan Khoyski and Mammadrza Bay Vakilov. Addressing the conference, Hajinski said disputed territories were the main hurdle for establishing friendly relations between the Republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia. According to him, if the Caucasus republics acceded to a union such as a confederation as independent states, these outstanding issues would cease to exist.

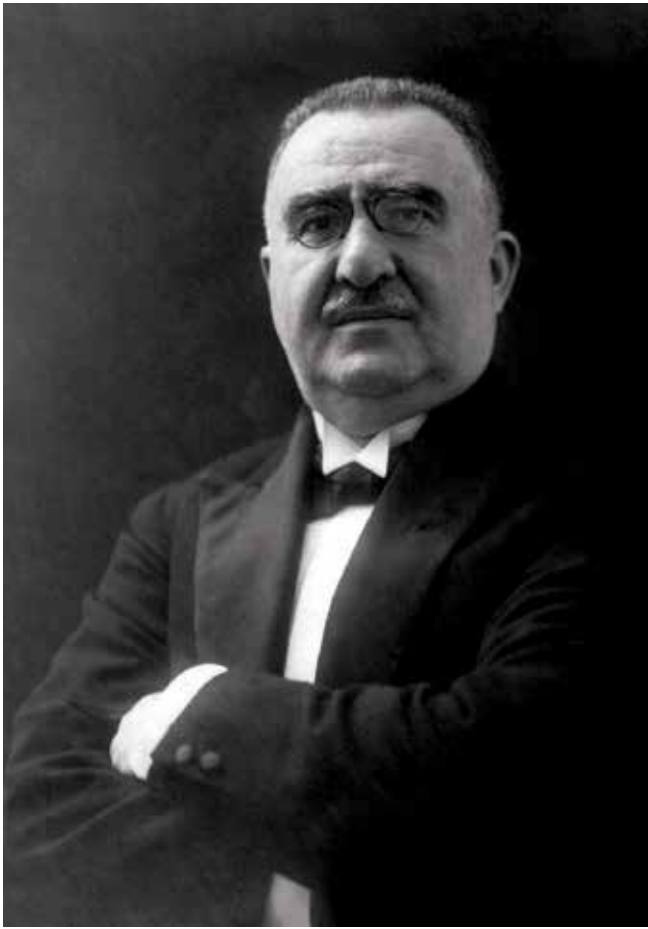


*Memorial plate on
A. Ziyadkhanov's home in Ganja*

Following the relocation of the Azerbaijani government to Baku from Ganja in September 1918, Adil Khan Afulfat Agha oghlu Ziyadkhanov (1872-1954) served as the acting foreign minister. Ziyadkhanov, who took up his duties amid a complicated political situation when Turkish troops were obliged to withdraw from Azerbaijan under the 1918 Armistice of Mudros concluded between Turkey and the Entente, while the Allied Powers' forces were expected to enter the country, prepared a report on the ongoing developments. The report, which was released during the 1919 Novruz holiday, was a comprehensive overview of his diplomatic activity.

Ziyadkhanov, who formally greeted General Thomson on November 17 together with Interior Minister Behbud Khan Javanshir, reminded him of the responsibility for the future fate of Azerbaijan. Thomson replied that he would not interfere with the republic's internal affairs.

In January 1919, Ziyadkhanov hosted the commander-in-chief of British troops, Gen. George Milne. In the wake of the state of war that had emerged between Georgia and Armenia, Ziyadkhanov, who was seeking



Alimardan Bay Topchubashov continued his struggle for independence even after the fall of the ADR

to mend ties and maintain peace with the close neighbors, sent a diplomatic note to the Georgian and Armenian foreign ministers in late 1918, expressing concern over the armed clashes resulting from a territorial and border-related dispute in the Borchali region. He noted that the territories of the region populated by the Turks were an integral part of Azerbaijan. The diplomatic note, published by the "Azerbaijan" newspaper on January 7, 1919, said that up to 300 Azerbaijanis drowned in the Araz River while attempting to escape Armenian violence and persecution in the Irevan governorate. The diplomat voiced protest over the arbitrariness in the governorate's part that is undisputed territory of Azerbaijan, urging action to prevent it. Ziyadkhanov, who learned about the halt of military conflict between the two neighboring republics three days thereafter, sent a congratulatory letter to their foreign ministers, reiterating that border disputes could be resolved strictly on

the basis of accord among the three states. Ziyadkhanov condemned the Armenian government agencies' move to establish a customs checkpoint in the Gazakh province within the boundaries of Azerbaijan as an obvious and gross violation of the neighboring state's rights and urged to shut it down. Furthermore, Ziyadkhanov issued a particularly strongly worded diplomatic note, which was released on February 12. The atrocities committed around Goyche were prompting the Azerbaijani government to take more hardline steps. Ziyadkhanov warned the Armenian authorities of the threat of sparking further ire amongst his people, which meant that his government would not be responsible for a potential recurrence of the tragedy or a failure to bring the culprits to book. A copy of the diplomatic note was also sent to the command of the allied states in the Caucasus. Ziyadkhanov also informed the Azerbaijani delegation of the situation in Azerbaijan at the Paris Peace Conference in a ciphered letter. Moreover, Ziyadkhanov sent an urgent cable on June 26, 1919 to Jafar Bay Rustambayov, the Azerbaijani diplomatic representative at the Kuban government, regarding diplomatic ties with the command of Denikin's Volunteer Army.

"Definitely be aware that the Azerbaijani people will not go anywhere and will only form their own Institutions or another assembly. Our government's view is that no matter who it is -- Bolsheviks, Mensheviks or anyone else, whoever assaults the independence of Azerbaijan is its enemy... Our stance with regard to the Volunteer Army is as follows: a final and resolute decision has been passed to prevent Volunteer Army units from entering the territory of the Azerbaijan Republic; a call should also be made for a pullout of such units from Dagestan and the Azerbaijani troops' withholding them till the Dagestan demarcation line." Having familiarized themselves with this message, members of the Azerbaijani delegation in Paris were "profoundly content" with it, hailing Ziyadkhanov's "firm, decisive and patriotic policy".

Ziyadkhanov, who was appointed the ADR's diplomatic representative in Iran, left for Tehran in January 1920 with a delegation of diplomats. Iran was said to have made an effort to defend the rights of Azerbaijanis and their cultural and educational activities. In a letter to the Azerbaijani foreign minister, he noted that unlike Iran's government agencies, the country's Turkic Azerbaijani community had a friendly and fraternal attitude toward the ADR and that Iran supported the Azerbaijanis' endeavors aimed at gaining autonomy and independence.

Members of the Azerbaijani delegation at the Paris Peace Conference



Following the opening of the Azerbaijani Parliament's sessions, the third government cabinet was formed. The prime minister in the new administration, Fatali Khan Iskandar Khan oghlu Khoyski (1875-1920) also served as foreign minister. F. K. Khoyski, who had the honor to send out radio telegrams regarding the declaration of the independent Azerbaijan Republic to the world's political powerhouses on May 30, 1918, continued acting as a member of parliament and also headed Azerbaijan's delegation at the Azerbaijani-Armenian conference convened in November 1919 to address territorial issues. The tenure of Khoyski, who was appointed foreign minister in the new cabinet that was established on December 22, 1919, is a glorious page in the history of Azerbaijani statehood.

Khoyski, who was striving to achieve the Azerbaijan Republic's recognition by the Soviet Russia, repeatedly sent relevant diplomatic notes to the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic's People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, G. V. Chicherin. Khoyski courageously rejected the insidious plan of the Commissar, who ignored Azerbaijan's aspirations and instead sought to draw the republic to an anti-Denikin union. In his re-

sponse to Chicherin, Khoyski insisted that the Azerbaijani government deemed the Soviet Russia's struggle against the Denikin forces as an internal affair of the Russian people and interference with this matter would be unacceptable. After stating a clear-cut stance to the Soviet Russian government and managing to defend Azerbaijan's independence based on the logic of jurisprudence and diplomatic skill and to adequately respond to Russia's high-flown and harsh diplomatic notes, Khoyski was gladdened and encouraged by the news that Azerbaijan's independence was recognized at the Paris Peace Conference.

"This is truly a festive occasion," Khoyski said while informing participants of the solemn parliamentary session in this regard on January 14, 1920. "This is a great day not only for us but also for the whole Turkic nation and the Turkic world. Other nations have endeavored for decades for this day to come. However, we have made it happen in just a year and a half. I am convinced that a nation that has attained independence in such a short period of time will hold on to it firmly. I extend congratulations to you on behalf of my government on this joyous occasion. I am utterly delighted to have

been at the helm of the government during the proclamation of our independence. And now I declare to you its endorsement."

The forces that had allowed that festive occasion to take place left the newly independent republic at the mercy of fate, i.e. at the hands of Bolshevik Russia. Khoyski and Chicherin's exchange of strongly worded diplomatic notes was part of the crafty process. Having sought to mislead Azerbaijan with diplomatic tricks, Russia finally achieved its goal on April 27, 1920 as Azerbaijan was invaded and the republic collapsed.

The Red Army units approached the northern borders of the Azerbaijan Republic after defeating the Denikin forces in the North Caucasus in mid-April 1920. Therefore, Khoyski sent a diplomatic note to the Soviet Russian authorities on behalf of his government on April 15. On April 27, the 11th Red Army crossed Azerbaijan's borders, in defiance of international law, and launched an offensive operation on Baku. As a result, the Azerbaijan Republic ceased to exist.

Following the invasion, Fatali Khan Khoyski immediately decided to continue his activity in Tiflis, but was murdered there on June 19 by an Armenian terrorist, namely, a mercenary linked to Dashnaksutyun.

Alimardan Bay Alakbar Bay oghlu Topchubashov (1863-1934) significantly facilitated shaping up and pursuing the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic's foreign policy. Topchubashov made an unmatched contribution to international recognition of the newly independent state. Initially serving as a minister without portfolio in the second government cabinet, he was appointed foreign minister on August 20; shortly thereafter, on August 23, he was delegated to Istanbul as the ADR's extraordinary envoy and authorized minister. Topchubashov, who undertook extensive diplomatic efforts in Istanbul, held discussions there with the authorized representatives of Britain, the United States, Italy, Holland, Sweden, Iran, Ukraine, as well as others. He also voiced protest over the 11th and 15th provisions of the Armistice of Mudros relating to Azerbaijan. Topchubashov was seeking unification of the Caucasus nations under a single federation as he believed this would allow them to forge closer ties and join effort in countering external interference with their affairs.

Topchubashov was elected the ADR parliament speaker in absentia during the first parliamentary session at the proposal of M. A. Rasulzade. A. Topchubashov was also put in charge of the Azerbaijani delegation at the Paris Peace Conference, in accordance with a de-

cision passed at a joint meeting of the Government and the Parliament's Council of Elders. The meetings and negotiations held by the delegation members, who finally arrived in Paris in May 1919 after tough challenges, began to yield fruit. On May 28, 1919, US President Woodrow Wilson hosted the Azerbaijani delegation led by Topchubashov. During the meeting Topchubashov mentioned the possibility of establishing a confederation of the Caucasus peoples, namely, Azerbaijanis, Armenians, Georgians and mountaineers, and presented a memorandum of the Azerbaijan Republic's representatives to the US president.

In an appeal to President Wilson, Topchubashov said, *"We hereby appeal to You, Mr. President, a representative of the powerful America, with a request to hear out information from us about our country, nation as well as ourselves, given that we frequently witness erroneous, false and untrue reports concerning Azerbaijan circulated by European and US media. True, we are not well-known yet and this our first visit to Europe, but we assure You that the conference attendees will hear us out and we will be allowed to join the League of Nations here. We are convinced that we will receive assistance based on Your high principles, just like all other nations."*

In conclusion of the appeal, Topchubashov said decisively, *"We declare that we will not recognize Kolchak, Denikin or anyone else who intends to reinstate power within the boundaries of the old (defunct) Russian Empire. We recognize and will continue to recognize only our own Parliament and our own Government in Azerbaijan."*

A. Topchubashov was re-elected chairman of the ADR Parliament in December 1919 though he was in Paris at the time. The Azerbaijan Republic's delegation, which worked hard under Topchubashov's leadership, achieved de-facto recognition of Azerbaijan's independence. On January 11, 1920, the supreme council of the Paris Peace Conference stated that it was de-facto recognizing the independence of Azerbaijan and Georgia. On January 15, A. Topchubashov and Mahammad Maharramov were invited to France's Foreign Ministry and formally informed of this decision.

Following the fall of the ADR, Topchubashov continued his political activity in Paris. He attended the Geneva meeting of the League of Nations in November 1920, as well as the conferences in London and Genoa in 1920 and in Lausanne in 1923, comprehensively informing participants of the occupation of Azerbaijan by Bolshevik Russia and the crimes committed by the Bolsheviks in Azerbaijan. Topchubashov also discussed the possibility

Mahammadyusif Jafarov

of establishing a Caucasus confederation with representatives of the other Caucasus republics, and they further met in Paris on May 8, 1921. On June 10, authorized representatives of the three Caucasus republics agreed to establish a political and economic union at a meeting chaired by Topchubashov. During the meeting Topchubashov said Azerbaijani representatives strongly backed the Caucasus confederation idea. Shortly before his death, in 1934, as a member of the Azerbaijan National Center council, Topchubashov co-signed together with M. A. Rasulzade the "Caucasus Confederation Declaration" in Brussels in a ceremony joined by Georgian and North Caucasus representatives. Topchubashov, who struggled for the independence of not only his people but also Turkic Muslim nations throughout Russia, continued making an effort to achieve restoration of Azerbaijan's independence for the rest of his life.

Mahammadyusif Hajibaba oghlu Jafarov (1885-1938) served as one of the ADR's foreign ministers. Prior to this appointment, M. Jafarov had a track record of diplomatic service. He held the position of the ADR diplomatic representative in the Republic of Georgia from late June 1918 to mid-March 1919. In this capacity, he contributed to forging friendly ties between the Azerbaijani and Georgian governments and dividing the property of the former Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic, and also closely participated in the conference joined by representatives of Georgia and the Mountainous Republic of the Northern Caucasus in Tiflis, as well as co-signed an agreement on the emission of extra transitional paper money between Azerbaijan and Georgia. M. Jafarov served as foreign minister in the fourth government cabinet formed on March 14, 1919 and held the position until December 22, 1919. As a dedicated diplomat Jafarov defended the Azerbaijan Republic's cause. His extensive merits in this regard are clearly illustrated by the Azerbaijani-Georgian agreement on military and defense cooperation that he signed, along with the agreement among the Republics of Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia, as well as his efforts to protect the interests and property rights of the Muslim population, his diplomatic notes condemning the genocide and policy of discrimination against Azerbaijanis sent to the Armenian Foreign Ministry and those on defending Azerbaijan's territorial integrity, addressed to the command of the British troops in the South Caucasus and Baku, etc.



All of the ADR's foreign ministers conscientiously served for the sake of the newly independent republic's interests. All of them pursued a consistent policy aimed at ensuring the territorial integrity of the Azerbaijan Republic, achieving its formal international recognition and countering outside threats and aggression, serving their country with professionalism and devotion to the paramount principles of statehood. 🌟

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