

FOUNDERS OF THE REPUBLIC: FATALI KHAN KHOYSKI

Fatali Khan Khoyski. Photo of 1905



Most of the persons who played a role in the national awakening and self-consciousness of the Azerbaijani people were educated in institutions of higher education of Russia and Europe. The work they carried out to establish societies of countrymen, create the national press and develop the national theater in the foreign countries where they received their education is of great importance. The awareness of these people, most of whom received their education in religious schools, about the history, literature and culture of the East and the Islamic religion combined with European culture and the way of thinking they acquired later. Fatali Khan Khoyski, who contributed to the struggle of people educated on national-spiritual grounds for national progress and national independence, received professional legal education in a classical gymnasium and then in Moscow University. This world outlook was seriously influenced by the Ganja environment, as well as the discriminatory attitude of official entities to non-Russian and non-Christian peoples in connection with his professional activities. Just like the enlightenment and charity played an important role in the centre of national thought Ganja, the experience he gained in the courts of Yelizavetpol (Ganja) and Kutaisi (Sukhumi, Yekaterinodar and Tiflis) was useful as well. Activities as a deputy of the Second State Duma form a special stage in the political and statehood biography of Fatali Khan Khoyski, who worked by his specialty at different levels of the justice system.

The biography of Fatali Khan Khoyski can be divided into two stages by its contents: the period before his participation in the national liberation movement and the period of his participation in it. The first period can be characterized by stages and divided into three categories: years of education, professional career and membership of the State Duma. Although membership of the Duma

did not last long, it was an experience that influenced the further professional career of Fatali Khan and his service to independence and statehood. At the same time, Khoyski's professional experience as a lawyer allowed him to justify his deputy mandate as a member of the Muslim faction. Two weeks after his election to the Duma, Fatali Khan, who made harsh statements against the policy of discrimination and resettlement pursued by the government, was authorized to speak on behalf of the "Muslim parliamentary group". (1) In his first extensive speech in the State Duma on 2 April 1907, Khoyski said that "Muslims who comprise more than 20 million of the total population of the Russian state" are looking forward to the settlement of the agrarian issue. Exposing the essence of the state's policy of resettlement, he indicated the consequences of the policy of Russification. He stated that "according to the viewpoint of

Khoyski (sitting on the left) with a group of deputies of the Second State Duma of the Russian empire



the Muslim group, resettlement should stop until the final settlement of the land issue”, the issue of water is the most important and vital issue and the expansion of land plots is important for those involved in cattle-breeding. (2)

Fatali Khan Khoyski criticized the illegal actions of the Yelizavetpol governor-general against the city population, and in his extensive speech on 29 May 1907, four days prior to the dissolution of the Second State Duma, he expressed his serious dissatisfaction with the bill on the reorganization of the local courts: To us, the population of the fringes, it is always clear that our government, which is established on a bureaucratic basis, has never taken the fringes into account: They [the government – F. A.] have looked on the fringes as an object of exploitation. (3) With evidence substantiated from a legal and logical point of view, Fatali Khan opposed the allegation that it is impossible to hold elections of justices of the peace in the fringes due to the absence of local government bodies. Khoyski was outraged that while new taxes were imposed on all parts of the empire at the same time and even more taxes were imposed on the fringes than on central provinces, the government believed that fringes can wait when it came to useful reforms. Raising his voice of protest against restrictions on local court elections in fringes, Fatali Khan recorded his official position in a written form: He was “one of the 173 deputies who signed the bill submitted to the State Duma on the repeal of the laws that limited the political and civil rights of citizens because of their national and religious affiliation”. (4)

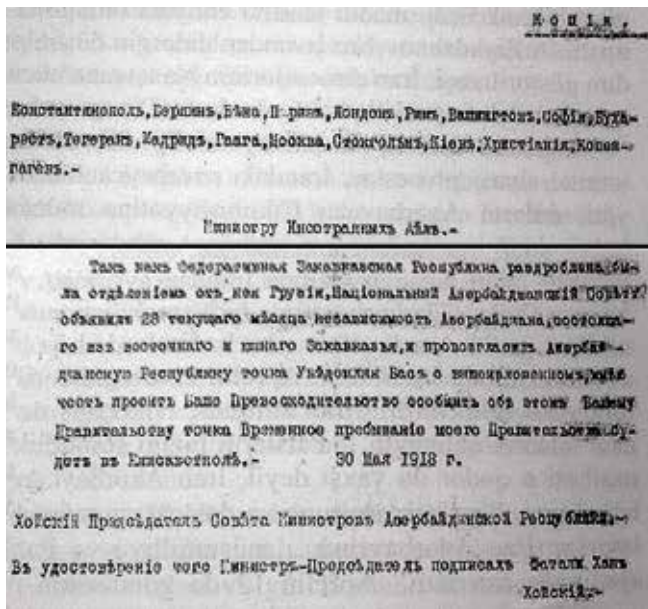
Continuing his professional activities after the dissolution of the State Duma, Fatali Khan first worked at the dis-

trict court in Ganja and was then elected a juror to the Tiflis court chamber.

Fatali Khan’s life in Baku began in 1913. He was a juror at the city district court and gained authority due to his active civil position. His activity in the public life of the city and in the work of charities determined his social status in a short time. Although he was not a member of any party, he was one of the first to get involved in political life after the overthrow of the monarchy.

As a result of his services, he was elected a member of the provisional executive committee of the Baku Muslim National Council in 1917 despite only four years of his public contacts with it and organized and participated in the Baku congress of Caucasus Muslims.

One of the most shining pages in the biography of Fatali Khan was his election as chairman of the Baku City Duma. His election as chairman of the Duma as a person representing the Muslim bloc that gained more than 10,000 votes is a high criterion as a personal indicator. While analyzing the influence of the Ganja and Baku wings of officials of the republic, it should be taken into consideration that at a time when Ganja was not the capital city and the public-political environment of Ganja did not have a strong influence, the young Bakuvian Fatali Khan Khoyski, who was originally from Ganja and had enough potential and ambitions, was able to be elected chairman of the Baku City Duma from Baku’s Muslim forces. The fact that the Baku City Duma he headed was the only rival of the Baku Soviet, which was able to seize power through merciless massacres, can be regarded as the leadership ability of Fatali Khan.



F. Khoyski's telegram to various countries of the world about the creation of the Azerbaijan Republic

In his telegram to Vladimir Lenin in May 1918, the chairman of the Baku Soviet of People's Commissars, Stepan Shaumyan, wrote that he would fight "Khoyskis" whom he called "traitors". (5)

An important period in the political life of Khoyski is his activities in the Transcaucasia Seim. As a member of the Seim's Muslim faction, Fatali Khan Khoyski moved towards the independence of his homeland in the quick and complex daily developments taking place in the South Caucasus, Azerbaijan and Baku. When the independence of the South Caucasus was being discussed, Khoyski spoke at the Seim, commented on the views of the Musavat faction and non-partisan group and at the end of his extensive speech, described the independence of the South Caucasus as the only way out of the situation and the only solution. (6) He also seriously analyzed the course of negotiations with representatives of the Turkish government in Trabzon and assumptions. When a decision was made to create a special joint commission of Transcaucasia Turks and mountain peoples of the North Caucasus, Fatali Khan was elected to the commission as one of the three representatives from Azerbaijan. (7) On 4 April, the joint session of all Muslim factions of the Seim began with reports by Khoyski and Khasmammadov. They informed members of the Seim about their conversations with the former German consul in Iran and professor of Tiflis University, Schreider. The main issue that worried members of the Seim who were trying to clarify the place of the South Caucasus in the eastern policy of Germany was the massacre carried out against the Azerbaijani people and the Muslim population of Baku by the Bolsheviks and Dashnaks. In connection with the telegram about

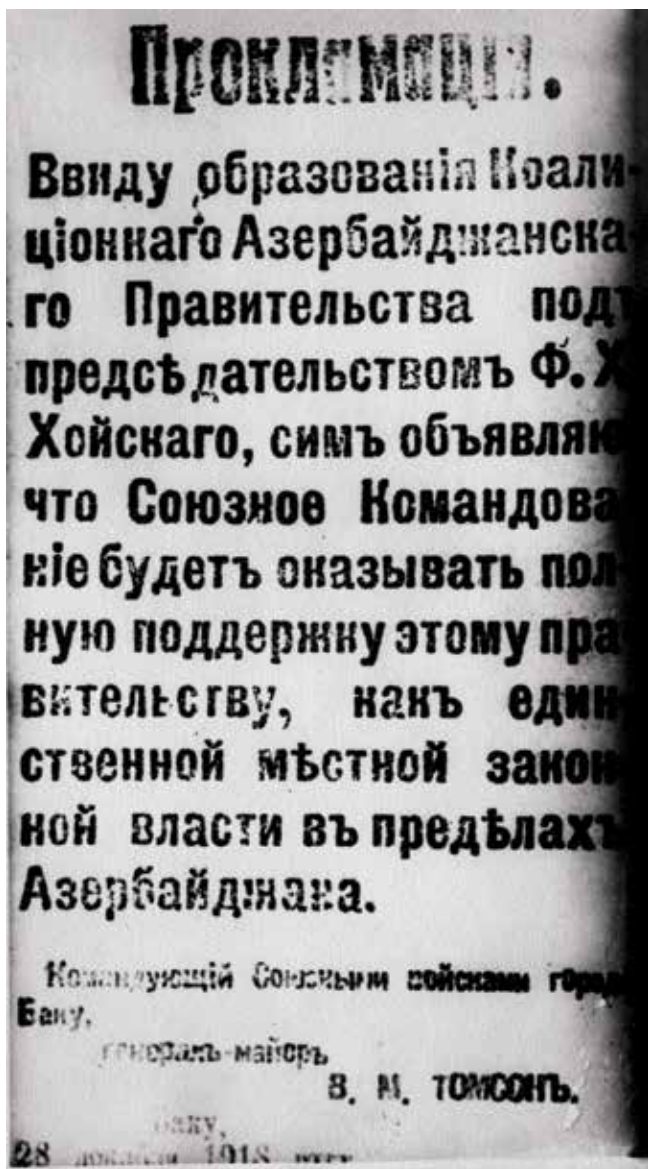
the defeat of the detachment of Colonel Prince Magalov at the Hajigabul station, the Muslim faction of the Seim convened an urgent session on 7 April. During heated discussions, Fatali Khan expressed his thoughts and supported the idea of expressing hope for negotiations with the chairman of the Trabzon delegation. He proposed a number of urgent practical measures: Naming specific persons, he considered it important to send them as representatives to regions and supported the proposals of other speakers. **On 7 April, Khoyski raised "the possibility of proclaiming the independence of the East Caucasus". (8)**

Khoyski's activities in the Seim allowed him to show his active, resolute, quick, specific, realistic and practical qualities. Fatali Khan, whose biography has no uncertain points, was especially worried about the changing position of the Mensheviks and insisted that the borders must be indicated if the independence of the Transcaucasia is proclaimed.

When the independent Transcaucasia Federal Republic was proclaimed, Khoyski was appointed to the post of minister of public education in the government that was formed on 26 April. During his short activities, Fatali Khan suggested that the European-style universities to be opened in Tiflis must be opened in Baku and played an important role in the opening of Baku University during the Azerbaijan Republic. Professor V. I. Razumovskiy, the first rector of Baku State University, wrote in his memories about that period: "... The Caucasus separated from Russia as the Transcaucasia Republic and formed a mixed government consisting of Georgians, Armenians and Turks. The minister of public education was Khan Khoyski from Baku. We offered that government to use the work we had carried out to organize the 'Russian university' in Tiflis. The minister (Khan Khoyski) listened to us and expressed his support for the establishment of the Russian university in the Caucasus, but added: 'Why in Tiflis? In Tiflis there is a polytechnic school and now a Georgian university... Maybe it would be more correct to open the university in Baku?' He took our information letter in order to look at it and promised to inform the Council of Ministers about our goals." (9) However, the government did not find time to deal with this issue.

The deteriorating situation in the Baku and Yelizavetpol provinces was discussed at the 6 May session of the Muslim faction. Before becoming a member of the Seim, Fatali Khan participated in that meeting as a member of the

Proclamation of the Commander of the Entente forces in the Caucasus, Gen Thomson, on the recognition of Khoyski's government as the sole authority on the territory of Azerbaijan



Transcaucasia Central Muslim Council. Making an extraordinary statement, Fatali Khan described the conditions of the representatives of the Seim faction of the Dashnaksutyun party regarding Baku as “a shameless proposal” and proposed setting a number of proposals for the Dashnaks: “To hand over power in Baku to Muslims, to send Muslim military units to Baku in order to protect this government and expel disarmed Armenian military units from there.” Khoyski’s proposal was unanimously adopted. (10)

The 16 May meeting of the Transcaucasia Central Muslim Council, convened in connection with sudden changes in the political situation in the South Caucasus, proposed that Khoyski join the additional delegation to be sent to Batumi. Khoyski was already attending the evening session of all Muslim factions of the Seim held on 25 May. At

sessions of the Muslim faction and National Council held in the last week of May, Fatali Khan stood out for his special responsibility. **Khoyski played an important role in the legitimization of decisions on the fate of the Azerbaijani people.** Although those decisions were determined and adopted by members of the Muslim faction, including the representatives in Batumi, Fatali Khan was tasked with holding discussions with the leadership of the Seim on the adoption of those decisions. From this point of view, the 25 May evening session of the Muslim faction of the Seim was noted for the special activity of Fatali Khan. Fatali Khan, who was presiding over the meeting, and the chairman of the Seim, Chkheidze, were tasked with clarifying the issues of tomorrow’s (26 May) session and holding urgent direct talks with Azerbaijani representatives in Batumi. Fulfilling his task, Fatali Khan told the chairman of the Seim and Georgian leaders that if Georgia proclaims its independence, Azerbaijani Turks will also adopt a relevant decision. (11) This was the last session of the Muslim faction of the Seim. Azerbaijani Muslims who called an extraordinary session as former members of the Seim on 27 May were supposed to make a fateful decision on behalf of the people. All the former Muslim members of the Transcaucasia Seim proclaimed themselves as the Provisional National Council of Transcaucasia Muslims. This was a new page in the biography of Fatali Khan Khoyski who was unanimously elected chairman of the executive body. Taking a calm position on the independence of Azerbaijan, he was in favor of forming a full government for peace negotiations with world powers. After comprehensive and active discussions, “The Act of Independence” to proclaim Azerbaijan an independent democratic republic was adopted, and Khoyski was tasked with the formation of the government. After a one-hour break, Fatali Khan makes a report on the formation of a government.

The statehood activities of Fatali Khan Khoyski, who signed the act on the independence of Azerbaijan and headed the first and then three governments in a row forms the chronicle of the restoration of destroyed Azerbaijani statehood after a century and the establishment of the first republic in the Muslim East – Turkish world. Fatali Khan, who was “chief of lawyers and interior minister” in the first provisional cabinet, was the prime minister of a state whose territory was under occupation, which had no control of its army, finances and capital city and which was proclaimed in a foreign land. The prime minister, who had difficulty sending the telegram on the proclamation of Azerbaijan’s independence from Tiflis, sent the text of the telegram in Russian and French to Foreign Minister

M. H. Hajinski so that he can report it to Istanbul and other places by radio from Batumi. (12)

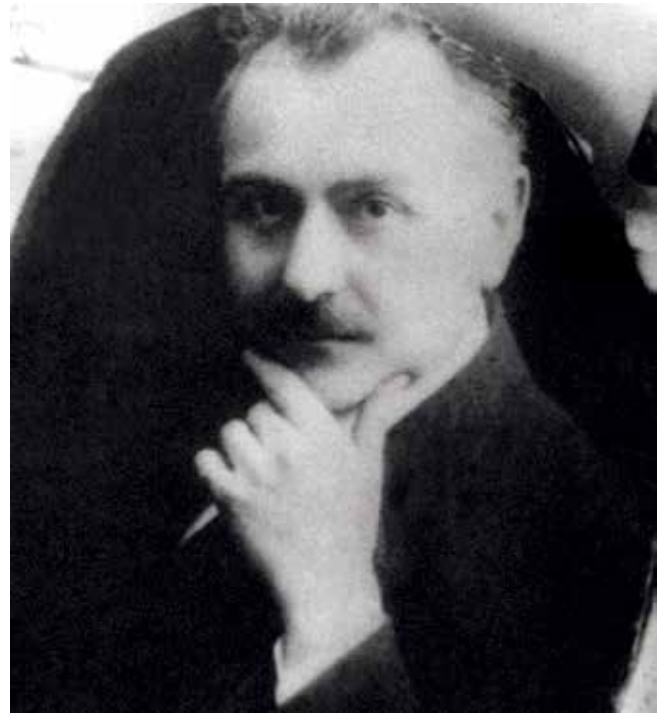
Prime Minister Khoyski had the honor to send a radiogram to the main political centers of the world on the proclamation of an independent Azerbaijan republic on 30 May 1918. The government faced a serious crisis as soon as it moved to its temporary residence in the city of Ganja. Azerbaijani statehood was under attack. Speaking at the closed session of the National Council on 17 June, Fatali Khan announced the resignation of the government, but the National Council tasked him with forming the government again. Concluding that "the country will not be able to remain without a government", Khoyski formed a new government. Along with the post of prime minister, he occupied the post of justice minister in the second government. Saying that the government of Fatali Khan Khoyski was bearing the entire brunt of political responsibility, Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh likened Fatali Khan's anxious behavior to military behavior. The most graphic comparison was made by Uzeyir Hajibayli: "Being the first prime minister of the newly-created Azerbaijani government, His Excellency Fatali Khan, who occupies an important position in the history of Azerbaijan, likens the situation of this new state to a ship put together from pieces of timber, and at such a stormy moment, it is in danger of hitting rocks and falling apart at every hour and every moment and links all its hopes to the talent and skills of the ship's captain... His Excellency Fatali Khan undertook the difficult task of sailing this weak ship between rocks and mountains on such a stormy day and led it to a safe haven, and by leading his ship to a safe haven with total caution and assumption, he displayed great mastery and skill by sailing it between rocks and mountains without hitting them until the storm abated." (13) It was a difficult task to run the country in a very complex and difficult situation. Both legislative and executive power was handed over to the government of Fatali Khan. The government, which had concentrated all power in its hands, was supposed to call an assembly of founders in no later than six months. Azerbaijan could not repeal its independence and political liberties and change agrarian and other important revolutionary laws. (14)

Fatali Khan had the honor to sign the first acts concerning Azerbaijan's national statehood. The government, which was concerned about organizational work and the need to meet current demands, got off to a courageous start with its strategic decisions. Since the number one task of the government was the liberation of Baku, the first measure was the declaration of martial law in Azerbaijan on 19 June. Army building began and a

Postage stamp of the ADR published on the initiative of Fatali Khan Khoyski in 1919



law on military conscription was adopted. The Turkic language was declared an official language, historical names began to be restored and a decision was adopted to nationalize institutions of education. An extremely important decision of strategic importance was the creation of the Extraordinary Commission of Inquiry. The commission that was set up on 15 July was supposed to investigate atrocities committed against local Muslims in the territory of the Transcaucasia during World War I. The government, which was facing acute financial difficulties, was looking for ways out. At such a moment, in his correspondence with Rasulzadeh, who was in Istanbul, Fatali Khan raised the issue of preparing Azerbaijani banknotes as an urgent task and managed to resolve the issue in a short time. Although Fatali Khan did not ignore any issue regarding statehood as prime minister, he had mobilized all forces for the liberation of Baku as the number one task. Along with the military operations of the Caucasus Islamic Army for Baku, the Azerbaijani government was also involved in intensive work. He personally inquired about the situation on the front line and intensified diplomatic efforts. In his letters to Rasulzadeh in Istanbul, he always placed an emphasis on issues concerning Azerbaijani territories, especially Baku. The decision to send Alimardan Topchubashov to Turkey

Fatali Khan Khoyski. Photo of 1919

with extraordinary authorities to defend Azerbaijan's interests at the international level should be regarded as one of the most important measures of Fatali Khan's government. For example, Topchubashov was authorized to participate in an international conference as a full member of the Azerbaijani delegation.

Fatali Khan had taken a position of principle on the adoption of strategic decisions regarding the fate of Azerbaijani statehood. Despite extremely close relations with the Ottoman State, which was the only international ally, and the fact that Turkey provided support in fateful issues, he expressed his protest at the interference of the Turkish command in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan and regarded the preservation of the independence of the state as a priority task. The thoughts Fatali Khan expressed about the liberation of Baku are a graphic expression of his attitude to the fate of the Azerbaijani people: "We also have the right to live and to live freely. Neither armored vehicles, hydroplanes, gunboats, barbed wire, mines and other technical devices, nor the British and their henchmen nor any other force were able to stop the natural course of history, and the fact that they failed to resist the attack of a small force and left Baku despite the fact that they had a 50,000-strong army should serve as a lesson to those who are trying to build their welfare and happiness on the troubles and misfortune of others." (15) The joy and pride of signing telegrams on the liberation of Baku on 15 September 1918 did not last very long and the Azerbaijani government faced a new threat. The government, which occupied itself with state building work with new enthusiasm, started to implement new measures. On 6 October, changes were made in the cabinet. Before the unification of Azerbaijani territories under the jurisdiction of the government had ended, the international situation put the Azerbaijani state in a difficult position. As the defeated side, the Ottoman state signed the Treaty of Mudros and was forced to withdraw its troops from the South Caucasus and not to oppose the occupation of Baku. Azerbaijan was declared Britain's sphere of influence. The British command, which entered Baku under the leadership of General Thomson, was ill-disposed toward the Azerbaijani government. Due to Fatali Khan Khoyski's qualities as a politician, diplomat and statesman, the Azerbaijani government was able to establish cooperation with the British command in a short period of time. A number of urgent steps were taken to promote the legitimacy of the Azerbaijani government. A telegram was sent to US President Woodrow Wilson requesting assistance in ensuring the recognition of Azerbaijan's independence by world powers.

A commission was set up to organize work to convene the parliament. In order to prove that Azerbaijan was not "a state created by Turkish intrigue", the government endorsed the tricolor of Azerbaijan on the basis of Khoyski's report on 9 November. The activities of the National Council of Azerbaijan resumed. Speaking at the first session of the National Council on 16 November, Fatali Khan briefly described the situation and made the following appeal: "The government and we are sure that even though independence is very difficult to achieve, requires a lot of casualties and causes problems, problems will become easier if we work together." (16)

In order to open the Azerbaijani parliament, Khoyski conducted constant negotiations with the Russian National Committee, the Armenian National Council and General Thomson. Speaking about the course of the negotiations at meetings of the National Council of Azerbaijan, Fatali Khan named the date for the opening of the Azerbaijani parliament. Since 3 December coincided with the death anniversary of the Prophet Muhammad, Fatali Khan suggested opening the parliament on 7 December. (17) Explaining details of another meeting with Thomson, he said that the general had a friendly attitude toward the Azerbaijani government, promised not to interfere in the internal affairs of the government and expressed readiness to support its efforts. Thomson, who did not want to recognize a state and government called Azerbaijan, changed his position and recognized Fatali Khan Khoyski's

government as the only legitimate local authority in Azerbaijan on 28 December.

As the government of Fatali Khan Khoyski did not lose its equilibrium, demonstrated political will and took resolute steps for the sake of statehood in the difficult situation for the fate of the Azerbaijan Republic, relations with the British commander turned into business cooperation.

Making a report about the activities of the government at the opening of the parliament, Fatali Khan appealed to the deputies: "...During these six months of the rule of the government, you saw that many things were organized anew. There was nothing other than chaos inside. There was not even a police force. For this reason, we paid attention to policing first of all. Now thank God, we have an organization everywhere in Azerbaijan, though not at the required level, to protect the lives and property of the people. A lot can be said in this regard. But we have to look at time and weigh what government carried out this work and when. A government that had its own history, past, soldiers and treasury? Or a government without money and soldiers that was set up in two days? If you take this into account, you will see how much work was required. The railways did not work and had been destroyed, there were no carriages. The livelihood of the country depended on this. Due to this, the government allocated time for this. It is true that we still do not have many things that are possible and necessary. However, whatever it is, thank God, railways have been restored and are being managed in both summer and winter. There was no telegraph and it was impossible to send even one message. Even though we do not have enough power to work now, post offices and telegraph have been opened in many places. You can send a telegram or a letter anywhere you like. One of the most important issues was that of finances without which it was impossible to work. The government was organized at such a time that when it was necessary to send money to Batumi representatives, we could not even find 10,000 manats and sought a loan in Tiflis... Of course, this work was not enough and is a grain of the obligations we have. However, the biggest humiliation would be that our government was in vain. For the groups that carried a banner of liberty and justice had taken Baku away from us and left us without a capital city. The heart of Azerbaijan and the Muslim nation that owned the capital was destroyed. The leaders dispersed to Dagestan, Iran and Turan. There was not a single man in the city to bring them together and do some work. In such a situation, was it possible to pay attention to any other issue?... I will not be able to talk about every observation separately. But I have to say that there

Postage stamp of the Azerbaijan Republic published in memory of Fatali Khan Khoyski



were neither schools nor justice departments at the time. The government had to pay attention to this too because if there is no justice department, you cannot rule the country with a police force. These were the two things that had to be nationalized first. Now schools have been nationalized. Primary schools and some classes have been nationalized, and many new schools have been opened. Apart from that, the government did its best and created justice departments that were nonexistent. Now, thank God, people who speak Turkic have been appointed to many justice departments, though not everywhere. We did our best to implement our duty. There are many things we have not been able to do yet, but I can safely say that along with the shortcomings of the government, the following slogan was the shining star that showed the government the way: "The Rights, Independence and Liberty of the Nation." After that, congratulations on the holiday were delivered. (18) "Today is a great and dear day for Azerbaijan, of which we did not even dream and which did not even cross our mind. Today is a day you took autonomy into your hands, and with the permission of the government, I congratulate you and ourselves on this holiday." (19) H. Agayev gave Khoyski, who resigned before the parliament, a letter requesting him to form a new third government. On 18 December, Hasan bay requested Khoyski, who expressed his thanks for the confidence, but refused the offer to form a government, to accept the post of prime minister: "... I am asking you for the sake of the nation not to remain sidelined from such a responsible duty as the formation of a government at this difficult time for the homeland and to undertake to form a new joint government." (20)

Beginning to form a new government with great determination, Khoyski makes an extensive report at the fifth session of the parliament. Giving regular reports from the rostrum of the parliament on the activities of the government, Khoyski considered the queries of opposition representatives to be biased: "This query is aimed at tripping the

government up and poking it... This is not a query, this is hiding a fist behind your back and a stone in your pocket in order to hit the government unexpectedly. How can one answer such a query?... The independence of Azerbaijan is in danger at every moment. You should know that now it is such a time that not only coarse and print calico, but also such an atmosphere may come about that there will be no Azerbaijan left and our independence will go away... At such a dangerous time, we should lead our boat, which has found itself among waves, to a safe place in order to succeed in achieving our goal." (21) Describing criticism against the government as unfair, Khoyski's government resigned in February 1919.

Continuing his activities as a member of parliament, Khoyski participated as chairman of the Azerbaijani delegation in the conference on solving territorial issues between Azerbaijan and Armenia in November 1919. Later, he was appointed foreign minister in a new government formed on 22 December. Khoyski's activities in this post represent an honorable history in terms of defending Azerbaijan's statehood. At a time when he expressed his resolute position to the government of Soviet Russia, defended the independence of Azerbaijan with his lawyer's logic and diplomatic skills and gave an effective answer to the arrogant and pretentious notes of Russia, the recognition of the independence of Azerbaijan at the Paris Peace Conference was an event that made Khoyski proud and gave him hope for tomorrow. Informing the parliament about it, he said: "I consider myself to be extremely happy as I was heading the government when our independence was declared. And now I am announcing its confirmation to you." The forces that made this joy possible left the young republic to its fate – in the clutches of Bolshevik Russia. Khoyski's war of notes with Chicherin was a link in a sly process. Trying to lull Azerbaijan's vigilance in diplomatic games, Russia achieved its goal on 27 April 1920. Azerbaijan was occupied and the Republic fell. Fatali Khan Khoyski, who relocated to the city of Tiflis immediately after the invasion, was killed by an Armenian terrorism on 19 June and was buried in an Azerbaijani cemetery in Tiflis.

The name of FATALI KHAN KHOYSKI, one of the first martyrs of Azerbaijan's independence after the occupation, is engraved in the history of Azerbaijani statehood forever. ❀

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