



ḤAYDAR KHAN 'AMU-OĞLI

ḤAYDAR KHAN 'AMU-OĞLI, revolutionary activist who used terror to radicalize Persian politics in the early 20th century (1880-1921; [Figure 1](#)). He was born (his place of birth is uncertain) into the Tariverdiev family and was raised in Alexandropol in Armenia. He received training in Yerevan and Tblisi in electrical engineering, before he was invited to Persia in 1901 to set up an electrical plant in Mašhad (Režāzāda Malek, pp. 17-18; Bāmdād, *Rejāl*, pp. 468-69).

Ḥaydar Khan arrived in Persia as an inexperienced young man who knew no Persian and was unfamiliar with Persian society and culture, but was driven to action by his restlessness, his sense of mission, and a belief in his own superiority to the Persians. Upon humiliating a Persian official in Khorasan, he comments in his memoirs, “I had only one purpose in mind, which was to show the people of Khorasan who lacked education and understanding that [the official] was also an ordinary human being” (Eqbāl, 1946b, p. 64).

Ḥaydar Khan stayed for about a year in Mašhad before he set out for Tehran in 1903, where the [Constitutional Revolution of 1905-09](#) was about to unfold. He may have exaggerated his role in the Constitutional Revolution when he claimed that he was the one who sent the first group of people to take refuge on the grounds of the British Embassy. However, upon the death of Moẓaffar-al-Din Shah (1896-1907) and the accession of Moḥammad-'Ali Shah (1907-09), Ḥaydar Khan, now more experienced and knowledgeable, played a significant role in radicalizing the course of Persian politics (Šamida, pp. 114-17; Režāzāda Malek, pp. 159-207).



On the very day that the Anglo-Russian Agreement was signed in St. Petersburg in 1907, dividing Persia into two spheres of influence, [Mirzā 'Ali-Aṣḡar Khan Atābak](#), the powerful Persian Premier, was shot in front of the Parliament (Majles). Ḥaydar Khan admitted that he had masterminded the assassination (Eqbāl, 1946a, pp. 50-51), and this was confirmed by Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda, who, however, denies that there existed a “Terror Committee” on whose orders Ḥaydar Khan carried out this act (Taqizāda, pp. 45-48). Atābak had just persuaded the Shah to work with Parliament, where he had a strong enough base to guarantee its cooperation. As a result of his death, the parliamentary coalition he had built soon evaporated. Moreover the Shah became more suspicious of Parliament, and, as the politicized crowd saw the revolutionary potential of Atābak’s removal, Parliament became less willing to accommodate the Shah. The lines became sharply drawn, increasing the likelihood of violent conflict (Hedāyat, pp. 207-9).

Other members of the political elite who attempted to bridge the gap between the Shah and the Constitutionalists were also the targets of Ḥaydar Khan’s political terrorism. These included Mirzā Aḡmad Khan 'Alā'-al-Dawla and the Kedmat Society, which included members of the ancien régime who professed Constitutionalist sympathies. However, the most radical attack by Ḥaydar Khan took place on 28 February 1908, when a bomb was thrown at the Shah’s motorcade. Ḥaydar Khan was found responsible for the plot and was arrested, but he was soon released at the insistence of his parliamentary Social Democrat friends (Rā'in, pp. 77-96). This single act of violence was followed by the Shah’s closing of the Parliament. The Shah and the Constitutionalists now stood against each other, and both sides were armed. Consequently in 1909, for the first time in the Middle East, a monarch was dethroned in the name of the people (see [CONSTITUTIONAL REVOLUTION iii.](#)).

During this conflict, Ḥaydar Khan first escaped to Caucasia, where he helped in the provision of men and material for the revolutionaries, before returning to fight alongside them. Once the Shah had been dethroned, he joined the radical Democratic Party and organized the assassination in January 1910 of Ayatollah Mirzā 'Abd-Allāh Behbahāni, who led the conservative wing of the Constitutionalists. Later, Ḥaydar Khan, in support of the Democrats and the governmental forces during the government of the popular Mirzā Ḥasan Khan Mostawfi-al-Mamālek, participated in attacks against [Sattār Khan](#) and [Bāqer Khan](#) and Mojāhed groups, veterans of the armed struggle during the Constitutional revolution who were now providing military support for the



Conservatives. Ḥaydar Khan and the Democrats supported Yefrem Khan, the Armenian head of the police force, and succeeded in disarming them. Sattār Khan died soon afterwards as a consequence of an injury he sustained in action (Malekzāda, pp. 22-17, 224-39).

In March 1911 Ḥaydar Khan was forced to leave Persia. The Conservatives had regrouped, and the Russians, who invaded Persia and occupied Azarbaijan, did not want a revolutionary Persia on their border. After obtaining money from the deposed Shah in Russia, by pretending that he would help him regain his throne, Ḥaydar Khan left for Europe (Režāzāda Malek, pp. 209-11).

During World War I, from 1914-16, he went to Berlin to cooperate with the Persian anti-Anglo-Russian, nationalist committee under Taqizāda, and also briefly visited Iraq to try to organize a force to fight the British alongside the Ottoman army (Šamida, pp. 116-17; Qazvini, p. 40; Režāzāda Malek, pp. 213-17).

The 1917 Russian Revolution provided an opportunity for Ḥaydar Khan to go back to the Caucasus and participate in the Baku Congress in 1921, as one of the leaders of the Persian delegation (Chaqueri, pp. 262-64). Ḥaydar Khan was sent back to Persia by the Bolsheviks to settle the conflict which raged between the Jangalis and 'Adālat, the Communist Party of Persia in Gilān. Although accounts of this episode vary in their details, it is almost certain that he was killed by a group of Jangalis soon afterwards, with or without Mirzā Kuček's knowledge (Chaqueri, pp. 344-45, 356-59, 372-74; Eqbāl, 1946b, pp. 78-80; Šamida, pp. 118-23).

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