



## HAŽIR, 'ABD-AL-ḤOSAYN

**HAŽIR, 'ABD-AL-ḤOSAYN**, (1895-1949), Minister, Prime Minister, Court Minister ([Figure 1](#)). Hažir was born in Tehran circa 1374 Š./1895 to Moḥammad Khan Woṭuq-Ḳalwat, a minor court official, civil servant, and constitutionalist (Şafā'i, pp. 3-7; PRO, FO 371/24582, Bullard to Halifax, 24 February 1940, Report on Personalities in Persia, 1940). From March 1922 until 1925, Hažir and his father published the paper *Paykān* in Tehran (Bām-dād, *Rejāl* II, pp. 258-59; Mostawfi, p. 119). After graduating from Dār al Fonun (q.v.) and the School of Political Science, Hažir was employed by the Foreign Ministry. He then joined the Soviet embassy as an interpreter and secretary (Şafā'i, pp. 3-7; Bamdad, *Rejāl* II, pp. 258-59). He later rejoined the services of the Persian government, enlisting the favor or patronage of a number of influential statesmen, particularly 'Ali Akbar Dāvar (q.v.) and Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda.

In 1930 he served under Sayyed Ḥasan Taqizāda at the ministry of Roads and Communications. When Taqizāda became Finance Minister, Hažir followed him to that ministry, and in August 1931 was appointed by Taqizāda as government inspector at the National Bank. The above-mentioned British report describes Hažir as “energetic and resourceful” and adds: “A favourite of Dāvar he was given various posts by him, including the management of the Cloth Monopoly (“Şerkat-e Qomāš”), and most important of all, the direction of the Exchange Control Commission” (Bullard to Halifax, *op. cit.*). In the summer of 1937, Hažir relinquished this position in order to travel to Europe as part of a delegation to purchase stocks for the Cloth Monopoly. In August 1938 he



became head of the Industrial and Agricultural Bank (ibid.).

Hažir's rise to the ministerial ranks began following the Allied invasion of August-September 1941: he served as minister of Arts and Crafts (later Arts, Crafts, and Commerce), Roads, Interior, and particularly Finance, which seemed to suit his experience and skills. His longest term of office in this capacity was in Aḥmad Qawām's second cabinet in the post-1941 era, when he served as Finance Minister from August 1946 until December 1947. Hažir held this position as a concession on Qa-wām's part to the court. In March 1947, Hažir joined the cabinet of Ebrāhim Ḥakimi (q.v.) amidst strong denunciation by the politico-religious leader Ayatollah Sayyed Abu'l-Qāsem Kāšāni, who described Hažir as a foreign hireling. A dispute between Hažir and the finance minister Abu'l-Qāsem Najm added to Ḥakimi's problems; Hažir was also involved in efforts to undermine Ḥakimi (Ġani, VIII, pp. 397-98).

Hažir had come to enjoy the growing favor of the Shah (Ārāmeš, p. 287) and his twin sister Princess Ashraf, who actively lobbied parliamentary deputies for his premiership (Golšā'iān, pp. 782, 790; Ġani, VIII, pp. 395-99; idem, 1982, pp. 243-45; Pahlavi, pp. 111-12). He also seemed favorable to defusing the lingering discord between the court and former prime minister Qawām, who had been forced out of office at the royal behest in December 1947, but who still enjoyed considerable support among many deputies of the fifteenth Majles (June 1947–July 1949). These deputies owed their seats to Qa-wām's control of the elections. With only just over half the deputies present in the Majles voting in support of his nomination, Hažir was appointed prime minister by the Shah in June 1948, against a background of several days of unrest and violent protests in Tehran and Qom organized by Kāšāni. Hažir lacked public standing due to his close ties with the court and association with Princess Ashraf's circle. He was particularly unpopular due to widespread suspicion of close ties with the British, which also to a large extent accounted for the continued animosity of Kāšāni and his supporters (Qanātābādi, pp. 41-128; 'Erāqi, pp. 32-13). Allegations, albeit unsubstantiated (Golšā'iān, pp. 807-08), of his irreligion or adherence to the Bahā'i faith also militated or were used against him (ibid.; Tafreši and Aḥmadi, pp. 147-48; Qan-ātābādi, p. 63). Ironically, the prominent anglophile Sayyed Ziā'-al-Din Ṭabāṭabā'i, who was then not on cordial terms with the Shah, was also opposed to Hažir. This situation gave rise to a belief that Sayyed Ziā' and Kāšāni were in alliance against Hažir. The British embassy described Kāšāni as "generally accepted as a mouthpiece" of Sayyed Ziā' (PRO, FO 371/ 68705, Le Rougetel to Bevin, 17



March 1948).

As prime minister Hażir constantly sought active British advice and support, leading the British ambassador Le Rougetel to wonder whether he would “ever be able to stand on his own legs” (PRO, FO 371/68708, Le Rougetel to Wright, 29 September 1948). Hażir showed unusual concern about the activities of his opponents, including Sayyed Ziā’ (PRO, FO 371/68706, Creswell to Burrows, 29 June 1948); he suspected the Soviets of being in contact with Kāšāni (ibid.) and the Americans of supporting Qawām (PRO, FO 371/68706, British Embassy, Washington to FO, 30 June 1948; FO 371/ 68708, Wiley, US ambassador’s conversation with the Shah, 30 October 1948). In Hażir’s mind, Qawām was in collaboration with Sayyed Ziā’, who was in touch with the Soviet embassy (PRO, FO 371/ 68707, Creswell to FO, 31 July 1948). He complained that opposition to him and the court was “largely inspired by Sayyed Ziā’” (PRO, FO 371/ 68707, Tehran to FO, 6 August 1948). The extent of his complaints about Qawām, Sayyed Ziā’, and Kāšāni, whom he believed to be in collusion with foreign powers, led Le Rougetel to report that Hażir “is considerably lacking in self-confidence and I therefore feel that we should afford him such moral support as we can, provided that any action which he takes seems to us to be reasonable” (PRO, FO 371/68708, Le Rougetel to FO, 25 October 1948). Hażir had indeed been subject to what the British embassy called a “campaign of vilification” (PRO, FO 371/ 68708, Tehran to FO, 27 October 1948). He seemed haunted by the real or perceived intrigues of his opponents and the effectiveness of their machinations against him.

He put forward an ambitious cabinet program, which remained unfulfilled, and failed to secure a loan from either the British or the Americans. His government met with parliamentary opposition or non-cooperation from the outset, and several motions of interpellation were tabled against it. The issue of charges of misconduct, which the royalists had leveled against Qawām in the parliament with the aim of obstructing his formal reentry into the political scene, continued to mar Hażir’s term of office. He was willing to resolve the matter in order to win over Qawām’s supporters, but any move in this direction only served to provoke the royalists (Azimi, pp. 195-96).

The beleaguered Hażir was viewed by his opponents as a court protégé, but even royalist deputies were half-hearted in their support of his cabinet. His efforts to push a budget bill through the parliament remained unsuccessful, as did his other bills. Even Taqizāda, his friend and a deputy in the fifteenth Majlis, was critical of his budget bill, which he denounced as likely to benefit



the greedy ruling class (*Mozākerāt-eMajles*, 15 Sahrivar 1327 Š./ 5 September 1948). Hažir's attempt to bar government officials from owning newspapers or working for them provoked strong opposition. It was seen as a measure intended to muzzle the press in the interests of the British and the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company (q.v.; AIOC) when negotiations about oil were underway. Regarding two issues then firmly on the agenda of Persian politics, i.e., oil and the assertion of Iranian sovereignty over Bah-rain, Hažir could not in any way reassure or placate the deputies without alienating the British (Azimi, p. 198). Concerning the oil issue, his cabinet engaged in some negotiations to extract better terms for Persia from the AIOC (Bamberg p. 389). He had, however, pledged to the British that "in no way" did he intend to challenge or dispute "the validity of the concession itself" (PRO, FO 371/ 68706, Tehran to FO, 30 June 1948; Mowahhed, pp. 75-79).

Contrary to the image which he wished to project, Hažir showed little resolution and force of character. Crippling fear, not only of his opponents, but also of the consequences of any sustained initiative or action, foiled most of his objectives. Widely seen as a royal protégé and a dedicated anglophile, Hažir remained unable to create a credible image. He failed to defuse the opposition of the pro-Soviet Tudeh party (see COMMUNISM ii.). In the eyes of Nur-al-Din Kiānuri, a party leader, Hažir had devised a plan to ban the party (Kiānuri, p. 179). Such a plan had indeed been spearheaded by cabinet members such as the education minister Manučehr Eqbāl (q.v.), and the cabinet had given its backing to it (PRO, FO 371/ 68709, Memorandum of conversation with Eqbal, 3 November 1948). Hažir also failed, despite extensive efforts, to placate or neutralize his religious and traditionalist opponents. His efforts in this regard comprised the inclusion of opposition to the partition of Palestine in his cabinet program and measures to demonstrate his strong adherence to Islamic religious orthodoxy (Azimi, p. 199). As prime minister, Hažir's room for maneuver was drastically limited, as he bore the brunt of the growing apprehension among the deputies of the Shah's intention to increase his prerogatives by revising the Constitution. Hažir lacked the requisite skills to muster real support among the deputies. He was unjustifiably credited by the British charge d'affaires with having "a flair for the subtleties of political combinations on which the position of any Government here depends" (PRO, FO 371/68706, Creswell to Burrows, 28 January 1948).

Hažir resigned the premiership on 6 November 1948 but remained, and indeed became a more active confidant of the Shah. He played an important



role in paving the way for the implementation in the spring of 1949 of the long cherished royal design for the revision of the Constitution (Taqizāda, p. 289; Ebtehāj, p. 206). Thanks to royal favor and the activities of Princess Ashraf, Hażir had already been acting as de facto court minister before formally assuming the position on 20 July 1949 in place of the elderly Maḥmud Jam, who was dispatched as ambassador to Rome. Le Rougetel attributed Jam's removal to his refusal to be "a sycophant" and his unwillingness "to stand more than a certain amount of nonsense from the imperial family." Hażir, on the other hand, was described as "very much in both with [the army chief of staff General Hāji 'Ali] Razmara and the unpopular clique which surrounds Princess Ashraf . . . and has been instrumental in throwing out Jam to make way for him [Hażir]" (PRO, FO 371/ 75466, Le Rougetel to Wright, 19 July 1949).

As court minister, Hażir advocated managing the elections for the sixteenth Majles with a view to ensuring that candidates critical of the court or British influence were denied the chance of winning seats. "On several occasions" he tried to draw the attention of the British embassy to the importance from the British point of view of a "Majlis being elected which would be as favourable as possible to the ratification of the Oil Agreement . . ."; he asked whether the British had "any suggestion" as to what should be done about members of the former Majles who had opposed the agreement (PRO, FO 371/ 75466, Lawford to FO 13 October 1949).

Widespread electoral misconduct was seen by the public as intended to bring about a compliant parliament ready to approve an oil agreement favorable to the British. It provoked growing protest, including a well-publicized sit-in (*taḥaṣṣon*) at the royal court in October 1947, led by the veteran constitutionalist and popular figure Moḥammad Moṣaddeq. Hażir tried in vain to win the support of the British embassy for dealing firmly with the protesters. However, on 3 November 1949, while taking part in a Moḥarram commemoration ceremony organized by the court at Tehran's Sepahsālār seminary, Hażir was shot by Sayyed Ḥosayn Emāmi, a member of the Fedā'iān-e Eslām (q.v.), who had assassinated the controversial historian and essayist Aḥmad Kasrawi in March 1946. The medical treatment Hażir received was incompetent and ineffective, and he died the next day (*Bāktar* [*Bāktar-emruz*], 14 Aban, 1328 Š./ 4 November, 1949; PRO, FO 371/ 75467, Le Rouge-tel to Bevin, 11 November 1949). His assassination, coming nine months after an attempt on the Shah's life, was a major blow to the court. It also came as a warning to other politicians not to espouse unpopular causes.



Hažir had, ironically, advocated and actively helped to secure the release from prison of Emami after his arrest for the murder of Kasrawi (Ġani and Amin, eds., pp. 323-24; Eskandari, p. 225). Hažir's assassination was primarily a result of the religio-political sentiments mobilized against him. Such sentiments were accentuated by his high-profile royalism, his identification with the least popular policies and conduct of the court and the government, particularly the rigging of elections, and his image as a close ally of the British. This image, which he not only failed to dispel, but in some ways reinforced, was not unwarranted. Indeed, in his dealing with the British embassy he sometimes gave the impression of being more concerned with safeguarding British interests than the embassy officials themselves.

Hažir's "bluntness" and lack of discretion (*pardadari*) had earned him much enmity, (Ārāmeš, p. 301) as did his arrogance (Golšā'iān, p. 807). Opposition to him came mostly from outside the ruling elite but also included established royalists as well as anglophiles. He was also disliked by a considerable number of independent-minded, established politicians. Qāsem Ġani, the statesman and man of letters, was unhesitatingly dismissive of Hažir, viewing him as a dangerous anglophile willing to do anything to appease his supporters (Ġani, XI, p. 119). Ġani also blamed Hažir for willingness to tolerate any humiliation in order to retain office, and for paving the way for the ascendancy of Kāšāni and his supporters (op.cit., p. 392). On the other hand, there were those politicians who knew him for many years and were more sympathetic: General Aḥmad Amir-Aḥmadi, a cabinet colleague, attributed Hažir's unpopularity to his refusal to give in to the custom of dispensing largess in order to gain support (Amir-Aḥmadi, pp. 530-31).

'Abbāsqli Golšā'iān, who served as Hažir's justice minister, praised him for his intelligence and integrity, describing him as a man who was impervious to abusing office for material gain, who "lived in a rented accommodation and only had a small property where he entertained [Princess] Ashraf" (Golšā'iān, p. 808). According to Golšā'iān, Hažir initiated the idea of forming the Imperial Organization for Public Services (*Sāzman-e šāhanšāhi-eḳadamāt-e ejtemā'i*) to be "a patrimony [*toyul*] of Princess Ašhraf" (Golšā'iān, p. 682). Privately Golšā'iān was more critical; he viewed Hažir's appointment as court minister to be "deeply damaging to the Shah" and described Hažir as "ready to resort to any illegitimate action to gain and retain high office" (Golšā'iān, letter to Ġani, 16 July 1949, text in Ġani, IX, pp. 621-25).

In addition to his significant role in facilitating the formal enhancement of



royal powers and promoting the influence of Princes Ashraf, Hażir had advocated increasing the budget of the Imperial Organization for Public Services, as well as that of the court (Ārāmeš, p. 286). He also played an important role in the return to the Shah's control, in July 1949, of lands which had belonged to Reżā Shah. These lands had largely been coercively purchased or acquired by the latter and were managed by the government in the post-1941 era (Ebte-hāj, p. 206; Azimi, p. 209). Hażir's dedication to the court was seen as being motivated by the belief that the court was an institution which represented stability, as opposed to other fluctuating forces and figures in Persian politics (Ārāmeš, p. 285). It has also been claimed that his appointment to the premiership was intended to result in a stable government which might last at least ten years (Ārāmeš, p. 288).

'Ali Amini and Abu'l-Ḥasan Ebtehāj, two politicians who knew Hażir from the time of their association with Dāvar and were cognizant of his intelligence and literary knowledge, viewed him as utterly unsuitable for the premiership. Amini, a parliamentary deputy when Hażir became prime minister, considered him to be desperately incapable of handling the challenge (Amini, p. 163). While praising Hażir for his integrity, dedication to hard work, and perseverance, Ebtehāj viewed him as too susceptible to the influence of the powerful. Individuals such as 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Nikpur, a self-made big merchant, politician, and president of the Chamber of Commerce (q.v.), exerted immense influence over Hażir (Ebtehāj, p. 206). According to Ebtehāj, Hażir was also overly susceptible to British influence and enjoyed the support of Anne K. S. Lambton, the former press attaché at the British embassy (ibid.), while another politician characterized the relationship between Hażir and Lambton as "deep friendship" (Ārāmeš, p. 294). Some of Hażir's political opponents contended that, had he not been so dependent on the British and the court, "he could have achieved much by way of service to the country" (Makki, p. 95).

Taqizāda, in many respects Hażir's mentor, praised him, not only for being "unquestioningly obedient" to him, but also for being a "very good person," possessing "all the good qualities," and particularly for his various abilities. He described Hażir as being more capable than the veteran statesman Ḥasan Woṭuq, who was renowned for his political and administrative resourcefulness. Taqizāda also praised Hażir for his athleticism, his good singing voice, prodigious memory, and intimate knowledge of the last two hundred years of Persian history. Taqizāda faulted him, however, for his



inordinate political ambitiousness (Taqizāda, pp. 268-69).

A number of published letters addressed by Hažir to Taqizāda reveal the former's solid literary style in the tradition of learned Persian bureaucrats. They also convey the sense of crisis which ensued in the post-Rezā Shah era and indicate Hažir's deep dismay and emotional exhaustion in the face of what he viewed to be the relentless machinations and malicious rumors and accusations leveled against him by various opponents. He resents his lack of material comfort or public recognition commensurate with his years of service. Cynical and pessimistic about the future of the country, he contends that government in the proper sense does not exist in Persia; personal interests are at the root of the ceaseless replacement of higher government personnel, while the process is justified in terms of the public interest. The government enjoys no real authority; officials are mostly self-seekers; there are no dedicated leaders caring for the country, which faces a dead-end. He is no more charitable to his ordinary compatriots, whom he dismisses as given to deceit, fraud, and lies. (For the text of Hažir's letters to Taqizāda dated from August 1944 to May 1947, see Afšār, ed., 2000, pp. 434-73.)

Hažir remained a bachelor all his life. Blind in one eye since childhood, he always wore dark sun glasses which "added to his mysteriousness" (Ebtehāj, p. 204). He had a reputation for hard work, knew Russian and French well, and found time to attend to his interests in history and literature as well as gardening. While finance minister in Qawām's cabinet he had, according to one account, started to write an economic and financial history of Persia (*Bāktar*, op. cit.) He published *Hāfez-e tašriḥ* (Tehran, 1921), in which he thematically rearranged selected verses from the *Divān* of Ḥāfez. He also translated historical texts and published a work of history entitled *Bā Peterzburg yā Qostantaniya* (London, 1943), which is notable for the quality of its prose.

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