

Between Tsarism and Ottomans: Russian/ Caucasian Muslims in the Writings of M. E. Resulzade During the First World War

Çarlık ve Osmanlılar Arasında: M. E. Resulzade'nin I. Dünya Savaşı Yazılarında Rusya/Kafkasya Müslümanları

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the war-time writings of Mehmet Emin Resulzade (1884-1955), a famous Azerbaijani journalist/intellectual and politician. Participating before in the Russian (1905) and Iranian (1906) revolutions as well as the Young Turk Movement and being a highly experienced journalist, Resulzade was especially influential in the media during the Great War in Baku, and later he became one of the principal founders of Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (1918-1920). In this sense, it is important to analyse Resulzade's writings to understand the concerns and feelings of Muslim intellectuals in the Caucasus and the issues that they discussed during WWI. Humanitarian aid to the desperate Muslim people in Elviye-i Selase (Kars, Ardahan and Batum), fund-raising campaigns organised by the local Muslim charity organisations for the Ottoman war prisoners, Tsarist authorities' suspicious approaches towards the Muslim minorities, discussions about the future of Russia or the status of the Straits were some of issues that Resulzade discussed in his writings. This article argues that Resulzade's writings reveal the latent oscillation among Muslim minorities between Tsarism and the Ottomans and their implied orientation/sympathy towards the latter.

Keywords: The WWI, Russian Muslims, Azerbaijanis, M. E. Resulzade, Ottomans

ÖZ

Bu yazı, meşhur Azerbaycanlı gazeteci/aydın ve politikacı Mehmet Emin Resulzade'nin (1884-1955) savaş zamanındaki yazılarını incelemektedir. Daha önce 1905 Rus Devrimi ile 1906 İran Meşrutiyeti'nin yanı sıra Genç Türkler Hareketi'ne de katılan Resulzade, tecrübeli bir gazeteci olarak özellikle Büyük Harp zamanı Bakü basın hayatında etkili olmuş ve daha sonra da Azerbaycan Demokratik Cumhuriyeti'nin (1918-1920) başlıca kurucularından biri haline

gelmiştir. Bu bağlamda, Resulzade'nin yazılarını incelemek, I. Dünya Savaşı esnasında Kafkasya'daki Müslüman aydınların endişelerini/duygularını ve tartıştıkları konuları anlamak açısından önemlidir. Sözgelimi, Elviye-i Selase'deki (Kars, Ardahan ve Batum) çaresiz İslam ahalisine yapılan insani yardımlar, yerli Müslüman hayır cemiyetleri tarafından Osmanlı savaş esirlerine yönelik yardım kampanyaları, Çarlık otoritelerinin Müslüman azınlıklara karşı kuşkulu yaklaşımları, cephelerde ve muharip ülkelerdeki gelişmeler, savaş sonrası Rusya'nın geleceği veya Boğazlar'ın statüsüyle ilgili tartışmalar, Resulzade'nin yazılarındaki konulardan bazılarıdır. Bu makale, onun bu yazılarından yola çıkarak Müslüman azınlıkların Çarlık ve Osmanlılar arasında örtük bir tereddüde düştüklerini ve Osmanlılar lehine zımnî bir sempati beslediklerini ileri sürmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: I. Dünya Savaşı, Rusya Müslümanları, Azerbaycanlılar, M. E. Resulzade, Osmanlılar

Introduction

At the beginning of the First World War, the Russian Muslims¹ defended Tsarism by organising their own military units, gathering material sources and praying for the success of the Tsar. But when the Ottoman Sultan declared jihad against Russia, they faced a dilemma: to continue to defend Russian Tsarism against the Muslim Ottomans or to pursue their communal desires for equality, freedom, and even independence. In this sense, it is worthwhile examining how the Russian Muslim intellectuals formulated their attitudes and ideas during the war and how they found a solution to the above-mentioned dilemma.

This article aims to explore within this framework the writings of Mehmet Emin Resulzade (1884-1955), a famous Azerbaijani journalist/intellectual and politician who participated in the Russian (1905) and Iranian (1906) revolutions as well as the Young Turk Movement. Resulzade was especially influential in the local press during the Great War in Baku, and later became one of the principal founders of the Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (1918-1920). Living throughout the First World War in Baku, Resulzade was able to observe and to write about events which took place in the Caucasus and whole of Tsarist Russia. As a highly experienced journalist, Resulzade produced a number of articles and comments which were published in local journals and newspapers.

By examining Resulzade's writings, this article attempts to analyse the issues which were important to the Muslim intellectuals in the Caucasus and the subjects which they discussed in general during the First World War. Such subjects like humanitarian aid to the desperate Muslim people in *Elviye-i Selase* (Kars, Ardahan and Batum), fund-raising campaigns for the Ottoman war prisoners, and the Russian authorities' suspicious approach towards the Muslim minorities, discussions about the future of Russia or the status of the Straits are some points in question. It can be argued that Resulzade's writings reveal the latent oscillation among Muslim minorities between Tsarism and Ottomans and their implied sympathy/orientation towards the latter.

Mehmet Emin Resulzade: Life of Revolutionary Azerbaijani

Before going on to analyse Resulzade's writings, it may be suitable to briefly highlight his political life and activities in order to better understand his role and contribution in/to the Russian/Caucasian Muslim community. Mehmet Emin Resulzade

1 In this article, "the Russian Muslims" refer to all communities including Turks, Caucasians etc. living in the Tsarist Russia.

(1884-1955) was a well-known intellectual and politician at the beginning of the 20th century in Northern Azerbaijani society. After graduation from secondary school, he actively participated in the socio-political life of Caucasian Muslims by contributing regularly to the local press and organising local socio-political forces. In 1904, Resulzade was among the founders of *Himmet*, the first Muslim Social-Democrat group in Baku. As a passionate supporter of the first Russian Revolution in 1905, he established close relations with Russian Social-Democrats as well as one of their local activists, Joseph Stalin (1878-1953). Though Resulzade did not have a university degree, he proved himself as a professional journalist and able organiser in a short amount of time, and became a chairman of one of the mainstream charity foundations of that time, *Nijat* (Salvation), when he was 25 years old.² In 1909, in order to avoid persecution by the Tsarist police, Resulzade had to move to Iran and work there as a special correspondent for the Baku newspaper, *Terakki*, whose editor was Ahmet Agayev (Ağaoğlu). For a long time, Resulzade reported on Iranian affairs from Tehran.³ In addition to this, he founded the first European style Iranian daily, *Iran-e Nov*, which was the main organ of the *Demokrat* Party, one of the most powerful political groups in the Iranian Revolution. As a member of the Central Committee of the *Demokrat* Party, Resulzade became very active in the Iranian Constitutional Movement. However, his activism in Iranian politics and especially his opposition to the Russian colonialism in Tehran drew reaction in Petersburg. Under pressure from the Russian authorities, he left for Istanbul in 1911. For approximately two years (from May 1911 to March 1913), Resulzade lived in Istanbul. Here he kept in touch with various representatives of the Young Turk Movement as well as Turkish intellectuals such as Ziya Gökalp. His articles were published in *Türk Yurdu* and *Sebilürreşat* journals. In 1913, upon the declaration of the amnesty on the occasion of the Romanov dynasty's 300 years anniversary, Resulzade could return to Baku. During the pre-war period he did not suspend his journalistic activities and even in October 1915 he established his own newspaper, *Açık Söz*. As a prolific journalist and politician, Resulzade was quite influential in the local press and society during WWI. Simultaneously he was secretly involved in the efforts of organising the

2 There are many biographical pieces about M. E. Resulzade, see: Mövsüm Aliyev, "Azerbaycan Ruhü: Mehmet Emin Resulzade'nin Ömür Yolu", *Azerbaycan*, No: 269 (July-August-September), Ankara, 1989, p. 5-18; Aydın Balaev, *Mamed Emin Rasulzade (1884-1955)*, Moscow, Flinta, 2009; Müsteqil Ağayev, *Mehmed Emin Resulzade*, Bakü, Nurlan, 2006; Sabahattin Şimşir, *Mehmet Emin Resulzade: Hayatı ve Şahsiyeti*, İstanbul, Doğu Kütüphanesi, 2012; Nesiman Yaqublu, *M. E. Resulzade Ensiklopediyası*, Bakü, Kitab Klubu, 2013. Recently, Balaev has produced an extended version of his work on Resulzade, see: Aydın Balaev, *Mamed Emin Rasulzade: Politicheskii Portret* [M. E. Resulzade: A Political Portrate], Bakü, TEAS, 2018.

3 Resulzade's reports from Tehran can be found in Mehmed Emin Resulzade, *Eserleri 1903-1909*, Vol: 1, ed. Şirmemmed Hüseyinov, Bakü, Azereşr, 1992, p. 295-443.

Müsavət Party which would grow to be one of the main political organisations after the war in the Northern Azerbaijan.

Rezulzade was also highly active in the “interim period” between February and October in 1917. During that period, the future structure of the Russian state was intensively discussed in many places and representatives of local nations formulated their own demands. In this context, Rezulzade actively participated in the First Congress of the Caucasian Muslims in Baku (April 1917) and then the Fifth Congress of Russian Muslims in Moscow (May 1917) and in both congresses defended the idea of territorial autonomy for Russian Muslims. His thesis was supported by the majority of deputies. In this sense, he became well-known not only among Azerbaijanis, but also Russian Muslims. After the October *coup d’etat* he sought to consolidate efforts at a regional level and to organise the Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic composed of local nations. Nevertheless, upon the failure of the federation, he became one of the founders and leaders of the independent Azerbaijani Democratic Republic (1918-1920)⁴ and after the occupation of this republic by the Red Army in April 1920, he had to live in exile.

As can be seen, Rezulzade was well experienced in revolutionary political movements and participated in the Russian (1905), Iranian (1906) and Turkish (1908) constitutional revolutionary processes. Until WWI, he was active in the key socio-political events in Baku, Tehran and Istanbul and worked closely with local political groups. At the beginning of his political life, he was influenced by the social democratic ideas in Baku. He later adopted an anti-colonialist democratic stance in Tehran and afterwards became mingled with Turkish nationalists in Istanbul. It should be noted that Rezulzade was a living witness of the Ottoman-Italian War and the First Balkan War which resulted in military and civil catastrophes for the Ottomans. When he came back to Baku just before WWI, he had already gained great experience in the politics and social life of the Ottomans. During WWI, his daily *Açık Söz* became one of the most influential national press organs where Rezulzade together with other intellectuals attempted to formulate a distinct Azerbaijani identity. Thus, it can be said that he had a representative voice/power. Also, it should be noted that during the Great War, Rezulzade was actively organizing local cells of the *Müsavət* Party. Considering all the above-mentioned points, it can be assumed that he was not a marginal figure in Baku, and even it can be said that he was a voice of the main segments of Azerbaijani society.

4 For more details about the rise of Azerbaijani national movement and establishment of ADR see: Halil Bal, *Azerbaycan Cumhuriyeti'nin Kuruluş Mücadelesi ve Kafkas İslam Ordusu*, İstanbul, İdil Yayıncılık, 2010.

Content of His Writings

As Resulzade had a representative voice, his war-time writings might be examined to decipher the local attitudes and latent discussions in the society. All his war-period writings were recently published in three volumes in Baku thanks to the efforts of Şirmemmed Hüseyinov, a professor of Baku State University.⁵ In this article, references are given to these publications with the original titles and dates.

As to Resulzade's writings, it should be noted that within the scope of this article pieces published only between April 1913 and April 1918 have been examined. They were published partly in the *Şelale* journal, *İkbal* (and *Yeni İkbal*) newspaper and mainly in *Açık Söz*.⁶ Up until the February 1917 Revolution, there was official censorship. It can be said that there was also self-censorship, otherwise, the newspapers/journals might be closed in a short time. And one can easily notice the difference between writings published before and after the February Revolution. Lastly, from his writings one cannot make an inference that Resulzade was provincial. Subjects discussed in his comments ranged from local to regional and to world issues: the problems of education in Muslim communities, political representation of non-Russians in city *dumas*, election procedures to provincial *zemstvos*, a political crisis in Iran, internal situation in Turkestan, international affairs in Europe and Asia, etc. It seems that he was well-informed about both daily local politics and world issues.

Pre-war Attitude towards Ottomans

Resulzade's sympathetic attitude towards the Ottoman Turks can be easily noticed in his pre-war period writings. Generally saying, he extensively presented the life and politics of the Ottomans, and in many cases praised the progress recorded in Turkey during the Constitutional Period. Nevertheless, he sometimes criticised the inability of Ottoman officials. His third comment written just after returning from Istanbul in June 1913 was devoted to the failures of the Ottomans in the Balkan wars.⁷ It appears that local Muslim people sympathised towards the Ottomans in this war, but they asked why the Ottomans could not consolidate themselves before the external threat. Resulzade tried to explain that moral reasons (like inactivity and a decline in education and culture etc.) rather than

5 Mehmed Emin Resulzade, *Eserleri 1909-1914*, Vol: 2, ed. Şirmemmed Hüseyinov, Baku, Şirvanneşr, 2001; Mehmed Emin Resulzade, *Eserleri 1915-1916*, Vol: 3, ed. Şirmemmed Hüseyinov, Baku, Elm, 2012 and Mehmed Emin Resulzade, *Eserleri 1917-April 1918*, Vol: 4, ed. Şirmemmed Hüseyinov, Baku, Qanun, 2013.

6 For a brief information about the national press in Azerbaijan see: İbrahim Yüksel, *Azerbaycan'da Fikir Hayatı ve Basın*, İstanbul, Acar Yayınları, 1989 and Akif Aşırılı, *Azerbaycan Matbuatı Tarihi (1975-1920)*, Baku, Elm ve Tahsil, 2009.

7 "İbret Günleri", *İkbal*, No: 377, 5 June 1913, Vol: 2, p. 183-186.

material ones played important roles in the failures of Islamic societies before Europeans. His fourth article was also about the new Ottoman cabinet headed by Said Halim Pasha but mainly organised by Talat Pasha.⁸ He made a detailed presentation about the new cabinet and especially praised Talat Pasha and his political assertiveness. According to Resulzade, “Talat Bey” was “a great organiser” and he had, to some extent, a political determination and will which was required for the Ottoman politicians.

In subsequent comments Resulzade touched on the Armenian issue and demands of the Arabs in Ottoman provinces.⁹ He also criticised the attitude of the Ottoman press, affirming that when domestic problems were discussed, writers always stated that there was a foreign instigation (*ecnebi tahriki*) in every event. After a month, he returned to the (second) Balkan war theme and commented on a new situation on the front and suggested the Ottoman government should participate in the war in order to restore its prestige and self-respect.¹⁰

Language was another issue in Resulzade’s writings.¹¹ He supported the efforts of the simplification of vocabulary and grammar in the Turkish language and appreciated the works of the *Yeni Lisan* movement. At the same time, he complained that Ottoman writers almost always described life and people living only in Istanbul, not mentioning Anatolia, which was the main base of the Turkish nation. In this sense, his favourite poet was Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul), who depicted the natural landscape and the ordinary people of Anatolia in his poems.

To illustrate his enthusiasm towards language issues, one comment should be especially mentioned here. In February 1914, Resulzade was very excited when he received “some very important news” from Istanbul newspapers that the Ottoman army would use a simplified alphabet and orthography in its military schools, textbooks and army communication.¹² Enver Pasha had developed his own version of the new Ottoman alphabet and now this was the first official effort to implement the alphabet reform. There was no doubt that this reform in the Ottoman military, if it succeeded, would be fulfilled by the other state organisations and at the end, it would be disseminated to the Islamic countries. Enver Pasha was known as a hero of freedom and nation, and now if he was

8 “Yeni Osmanlı Kabinesi ve Talat Bey”, *İkbal*, No: 379, 7 June 1913, Vol: 2, p. 186-190.

9 “Ermeni Meselesinden Bir Az”, *İkbal*, No: 380, 9 June 1913, Vol: 2, p. 190-195; “Bir Az da Arap Meselesinden”, *İkbal*, No: 384, 13 June 1913, Vol: 2, p. 195-198.

10 “Balkanlarda Harp”, *İkbal*, No: 392, 23 June 1913, Vol: 2, p. 216-219.

11 « Asan Dil – Yeni Lisan », *Şelale*, No: 19, 22 June 1913 and No: 20, 22 June 1913, Vol: 2, p. 219-225; “Yeni Lisancılar ve Türkçüler”, *Şelale*, No: 24, 20 July 1913 and No: 25, 27 July 1913, Vol: 2, p. 226-232.

12 “Mühim Bir Haber Münasebetiyle”, *İkbal*, No: 607, 23 March 1914, Vol: 2, p. 315-319.

successful in his alphabet reforms, he would deserve to be called as a combatant for renovation (*mücahid-i teceddüd*). These words also demonstrate Resulzade's latent sympathy towards Enver Pasha and other Turkish reformers.

The advance position of Turkish women was also praised in Resulzade's writings. In a series of articles, he sheds light on the position of Turkish women in Ottoman society. He gave many details about women's participation in daily and social life, their clothing styles, and the emergence of women writers.¹³ In terms of clothing styles, according to Resulzade, Ottoman women might have been an example for all Muslim women. After comparing Iranian and Caucasians with Ottoman women, he concluded that in general the latter ones had more rights and were even a bit modernised having extensive educational opportunities and contributed more to society.

The last account in the pre-war period regarding the Ottomans was about the Turkish pilots, Fethi Bey and Nuri Bey, whose plane crashed while flying from Istanbul to Cairo in May 1914. Resulzade indirectly appreciated the creation of the Ottoman/Turkish air force, and also praised the pilots who tried to raise the glorious crescent in the air of Egypt. He fully cited a poem devoted to the martyr Nuri Bey. It seems that local Caucasian Muslims were also unhappy with this plane accident. However, new pilots Salim Bey and Kemal Bey could successfully complete their missions. Resulzade interpreted this as "a great success of Turks" and stated that their success was not an ordinary one because they restored the self-confidence of Muslims. At the end he added: "May God increase much their progress and successes".¹⁴

To conclude Resulzade's pre-war writings, it can be said that the accounts indicated above demonstrate that he was not alone in sharing common feelings with the Ottoman Muslims in their successes in many areas of social, economic and cultural life. It seems that before the Great War, like Resulzade many Russian Muslims, full of sympathy towards the Ottomans, were interested in the life of the Ottomans and the reforms conducted by the Young Turks.

13 "Türkiye'de Kadınlar", *İkbal*, No: 397, 28 June 1913; No: 398, 30 June 1913; No: 403, 5 July 1913; No: 420, 25 July 1913 and No: 422, 28 July 1913, Vol: 2, p. 236-247.

14 "Türklerin Muzafferiyeti", *İkbal*, No: 657, 20 May 1914, Vol: 2, p. 350-353.

The War for the “Motherland Russia”¹⁵

When the Great War began in August 1914, Russian Muslims unhesitatingly defended the Tsarism by condemning “enemies” and organising various meetings to support the government, gathering money for the needs of the army and praying for the success of the Tsar.¹⁶ Also, there was an attempt to organise a voluntary military division composed of Muslims. Historically, Muslims had not been recruited for the regular army in Tsarist Russia. Nevertheless, some members of the old Muslim aristocracy (*khans, beys*) and their children had been serving in the Tsarist army and there were even a few generals and high-ranking officers.¹⁷

Meanwhile, Resulzade had not made any comments for a long time, from July to September in 1914 to be exact. Notwithstanding, he began to write intensively on the war in October 1914. His first comment about WWI concerned the “Belgium’s catastrophe”.¹⁸ According to him, although the Belgium army was crushed and some regions were occupied by the Prussian/German cavalry, the Belgians in fact, were not defeated. Because of their heroic resistance, they gave inspiration to the people who wanted to defend their motherland. This small nation pursued the following principle: “For the sake of the motherland, we can die, but there is no way back”.¹⁹ Here it may be felt that by this comment, Resulzade indirectly supported Russia’s struggle or perhaps gave a message about patriotism to his own nation.

One of the important themes for Russian Muslims at the beginning of the war was to prove their loyalty to the Tsarist administration. In this sense, Resulzade included this topic in the agenda of his comments. For example, on 5 October 1914, he published a

15 One can find many references in Resulzade’s writings at the beginning of the Great War where he refers to Russia as a motherland (*vatan*) or common motherland (*müşterek vatan*). In this sense, he underlined the importance of the defence of the motherland or support for the armed forces given by Russian Muslims (*Rusya İslamları*).

16 For a brief information about the attitudes of Russian Muslims towards the WWI see: S. M. Iskhakov, “Pervaia Mirovaia Voina Glazami Rossiiskikh Musul’man” [WWI in the eyes of Russian Muslims], *Rossia i Pervaia Mirovaia Voina* [Russia and the WWI], Petersburg, Dmitrii Bulanin, 1999, p. 419-431 and S. M. Iskhakov, “Otnoshenie Rossiiskikh Musul’man k Pervoi Mirovoi Voine” [Attitude of Russian Muslims towards the World War I], *Rossiiskaia Istoriiia*, No: 5, 2014, p. 109-121.

17 For brief information about the participation of Turks-Muslims into the Russian army see: S. M. Iskhakov, “Tiuurki-Musul’mane v Rossiiskom Armii (1914-1917)” [Turks-Muslims in the Russian Army 1914-1917], *Tiuurkologicheskii Sbornik 2002: Rossia i Tiuurkskii Mir*, Petersburg, Vostochnaia Literatura, 2003, p. 245-280. For an English version of this article see: S. M. Iskhakov, “Turkic Muslims in the Russian Army: From the Beginning of the First World War to the Revolutions of 1917”, *Combatants of Muslim Origin in European Armies in the Twentieth Century*, eds. Xavier Bougarel, Raphaëlle Branche, Cloé Drieu, London, Bloomsbury, 2017, p. 95-120.

18 “Belçika’nın Felaketi”, *İkbal*, No: 753, 2 October 1914, Vol: 2, p. 369-371.

19 “Vatan yolunda ölmek var, dönmek yok!”, *İkbal*, No: 753, 2 October 1914, Vol: 2, p. 371.

letter to Petrograd Muslims in which they called to gather money for the building of a mobile military hospital.²⁰ In this context, Resulzade underlined that the donations should be fitting to the prestige and the current and future position of the nation (that is, Russian Muslims) within Russia, which was “the common motherland”. Also, while mentioning the Russian retreat from the fronts in Polish lands upon the German advance movement in October 1914, he stated this retreat was not compulsory, but it stemmed from military purposes and suggested waiting for good news from the fronts.²¹

In mid October 1914, when Muslims celebrated the Festival of Sacrifice (*Kurban Bayramı*), Resulzade wrote that “our common motherland” was also giving sacrifices on the fronts and even maybe they would not see “those non-Muslim neighbours who had so far congratulated us in the Festive of Sacrifice. Where were they? Who knows their fates?”²² He concluded that Muslims should not forget the defenders of the motherland during this festival and should donate peltry for the sake of the victims of the war, wounded soldiers and their families. *Açık Söz* also published the proclamation of the *Kadı* of Baku in this regard.

Here it is useful to state that after the war began, thousands of Muslims were conscripted into the Russian Army. It was estimated that between 1 and 1.5 million Muslims engaged in the Russian army throughout the war. Even a Special Caucasian Cavalry Division, *Dikaya Diviziya* (the Iron Division)²³ was organised in 1914 to recruit Russian Muslims. While Muslims were recruited, some problems relating to their life also aroused. For instance, at the end of December 1914, Resulzade touched on the mullah issue in military units.²⁴ He became aware of the fact that there was no special mullahs in the Caucasian military divisions. Therefore, generals allocated 15 Rubles and 5 yards cotton material for one mullah to fulfill the required procedures to bury Muslim soldiers who were killed in battle. But Resulzade thought that the army would not be able to afford this expenditure because 10-15 Muslim soldiers died every day. Only at the beginning of 1916, did Tsar Nikolay II order the army to recruit mullahs for every division in order to implement burial procedures as well as to raise the spiritual mood of Muslim soldiers.

20 “Petrograd Müslümanlarının Müracaatı”, *İkbal*, No: 755, 5 October 1914, Vol: 2, p. 373-375.

21 “Muharibe Gedişi”, *İkbal*, No: 758, 8 October 1914, Vol: 2, p. 379-383.

22 “Kurban Münasebetiyle”, *İkbal*, No: 766, 17 October 1914, Vol: 2, p. 390-392.

23 Some translate it literally as “the Wild Division”, but the correct translation reflecting also heroism of this military unit and its unbreakable fighting will should be “the Iron Division”.

24 “Dikkat Olunacak İki Mesele”, *İkbal*, No: 820, 22 December 1914, Vol: 2, p. 512-514.

Attitudes of Muslims after the Ottomans Declared War against Russia

At the end of October, Baku newspapers received news telegrams that the Ottoman army composing of one hundred thousand soldiers, mostly Arabs, was ready to fight in the Nile delta against the British. Resulzade also commented on this news. Giving a long history of how the British occupied Egypt and controlled the Suez Canal, he stressed that the British would defend the arable lands around the Nile by all means.²⁵ But when it became clear that the Ottomans would participate in the war on the side of Germany and Austria-Hungary, Russian Muslims declared their loyalty to Russia. Especially the official Muslim clergy stated that Ottoman Empire's involvement in the war on behalf of Germany was not convenient to religious principles. It seems that the Russian authorities expected a Muslim mutiny; therefore, some Russians were surprised by the patriotic ovation of Muslims.

Meanwhile, Resulzade, on the one hand, tried to eliminate suspicious approaches by the Russian authorities and public opinion against Muslims. On the other hand, he reminded Muslims together with other minorities (Jewish, Polish etc.) to not forget about their national needs while fighting on the fronts for the motherland they felt sorry for, because of the lack of some fundamental rights.²⁶ Giving two examples of Russian citizens who participated in the war, he illustrated how ethnically non-Russians lacked the same elementary rights. One of these citizens was a German, whose children could not study German language in primary school, another one was a Jew, whose family fled to the internal regions from the German occupation in the Baltics, but was later forced to return to the same place because Jews could only live in certain areas on the periphery of the Russian Empire.

Resulzade hoped that Russia would protect the rights of all minorities as well as Muslims. After four months of battles, in November 1914 he stated that the war demonstrated the civil maturity of Russian citizens. All nations in Russia proved their loyalty to their motherland by going to serve in the army or supporting it materially. For this reason, it was now a right time to talk about reforms and making conditions equal between the internal regions and the periphery. Especially, Caucasians, who were more distrusted, vitally needed *zemstvo*, regional self-government councils.²⁷ He returned several times to the *zemstvo* issue for the Caucasus in the next year.

25 "Mısır Tarihinden Bir Sayfa", *İkbal*, No: 774, 27 October 1914; No: 775, 28 October and No: 776, 29 October, Vol: 2, p. 396-405.

26 "Müharibe ve Milletler", *İkbal*, No: 782, 5 November 2014, Vol: 2, p. 420-422.

27 "İslahat Ümidinde", *İkbal*, No: 794, 21 November 1914, Vol: 2, p. 447-449.

Humanitarian Aid to the Ottoman Civil and Military Victims of the War: *Qardaş Kömeği*

At the end of December 1914, Resulzade for the first time mentioned the civil victims of the war who fled from the neighbouring areas next to the Caucasian front.²⁸ According to Resulzade, before there were Armenians, but now Muslims, *Molokans*²⁹, and Greeks were among these victims. He called people to help these victims irrespective of their nationalities. Resulzade also drew attention to the poor conditions of Muslim victims and urgently proposed to establish a special unit within the Muslim Charity Organization (*Müslüman Cemiyet-i Hayriyesi*) to deal with the victims who ran away from the front lines. At the beginning of January 1915, he published the letter of Kars Governor-General (Zuyev) addressed to the Baku Muslim Charity Organization in which the governor-general described the difficulties faced by local Muslims and called for help.³⁰ Resulzade believed that the Muslim community which had already fulfilled its patriotic duties to Russia and the tsar would extend its hand to Kars, too. He appealed to all Muslims to help “their brothers” who became victims of the war. It seemed that some Christians (probably, Armenians) tried to take advantage of the war situation and made civil Muslims suffer. Resulzade warned them that the war was temporary but neighbourhood was permanent; therefore, neighbourhood rights should not be violated.³¹

However, according to the report prepared by the Kars Governor-General Zuyev, some armed Christians were attacking civil Muslims, killing or wounding them and many Muslim villages were looted and for the last twenty days these kind of revenge attacks could not be prevented.³² Winter circumstances exacerbated the conditions of Muslim war victims. Hence, Resulzade called Muslims to demonstrate solidarity with their co-religionists and compatriots in the border regions, namely, Sarıkamış, Kars and Ardahan; and to mobilise all their efforts to help.³³ He always kept this issue on the agenda of his writings. In March 1915, during the *Nevruz* holiday, Resulzade, reminded his readers several times to donate to this year’s holiday expenditures for the charity organisations so that these organisations could provide the required help for the Muslim victims of the war.³⁴ He called to turn the *Nevruz* festival to the aid campaigns for then

28 “Dikkat Olunacak İki Mesele”, *İkbal*, No: 820, 22 December 1914, Vol: 2, p. 512-514.

29 Russian settlers who were settled in Kars district after the 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War.

30 “Milli Bir Vazife Karşısında”, *İkbal*, No: 838, 13 January 1915, Vol: 3, p. 40-43.

31 “Tarihi Vakalar Karşısında Komşuluk Münasebeti”, *İkbal*, No: 839, 14 January 1915, Vol: 3, p. 44-47.

32 “Endişeli Alametler”, *İkbal*, No: 843, 20 January 1915, Vol: 3, p. 58-60.

33 “Bayramın Yakınlaşması Münasebetiyle”, *İkbal*, No: 869, 19 February 1915, Vol: 3, p. 78-80.

34 “Nevruz”, *İkbal*, No: 884, 9 Mart 1915, Vol: 3, p. 88-90;

internally displaced people. Massive killings and mistreatment of Muslim civilians around Kars were one of the frequent topics in Resulzade's writings. He defined crimes conducted in Kars and its neighbouring region as a national catastrophe. This catastrophe encouraged local press members to establish a newspaper which would call attention to this issue. Through the joint efforts of local journalists as well as Resulzade, *Qardaş Kömeyi* (Brother's help) was published in March 1915. It had unprecedented circulation, that is, 10,000 copies, and its price was 10 piastre (*kopeks*).³⁵ The youth organised "a special day" and disseminated this newspaper in Baku. All proceeds were sent to Kars to meet the needs of local Muslims. In May, Resulzade gave notification of the success of the *Qardaş Kömeyi* project in which not only men but also Muslim women participated in the gathering of material funds.³⁶ Resulzade, returned to the humanitarian aid issue many times in his war-time writings.³⁷ Lastly, along with the humanitarian aid, some doctors and medical servants were mobilised to be sent to places to meet the needs of war victims.³⁸

Apart from this, many theatre performances were conducted to collect money for the sake of Muslim war victims. For example, on 18 January 1915, "Leyla and Medjnun" national opera was performed in the Zeynel Abidin Tagiyev Theatre.³⁹ Several operas were performed for charity purposes in February and March 1915.⁴⁰ It seems that many segments of the Muslim community were involved in humanitarian aid campaigns to support war victims.

Meanwhile, one can find many calls to organise fund-raising campaigns for the Ottoman war prisoners in Resulzade's war-time writings. As it is known, just after the war began, a number of Ottoman war prisoners were taken hostage and sent to the internal districts of the Russian Empire.⁴¹ Many of them suffered from malnutrition and diseases. It seems that local Caucasian Muslims tried to gather humanitarian aid to these

35 "Qardaş Kömeyi Neşri Münasebetiyle", *İkbal*, No: 885, 13 March 1915, Vol: 3, p. 91-93.

36 "Qardaş Kömeyi'nin Muvaffakiyeti", *Yeni İkbal*, No: 11, 10 May 1915, Vol: 3, p. 159-162.

37 For example, "Bayram Teessürlerinden", *İkbal*, No: 890, 19 March 1915, Vol: 3, p. 94-96; "İkbal İdaresi Tarafından", *Yeni İkbal*, No: 4, 1 May 1915, Vol: 3, p. 146; "Qardaş Günü", *Yeni İkbal*, No: 8, 6 May 1915, Vol: 3, p. 155-156; "Bu Gün", *Yeni İkbal*, No: 9, 7 May 1915, Vol: 3, p. 157-158.

38 "Tabib Kömeği Gerek", *Yeni İkbal*, No: 12, 11 May 1915, Vol: 3, p. 163-164.

39 "Harbzedede Müslümanlar Üçün", *İkbal*, No: 841, 18 January 1915, Vol: 3, p. 52-53.

40 "Tanrıquliyevin Benefisi", *İkbal*, No: 865, 15 February 1915, Vol: 3, p. 77 and "Müslim Beyin Benefisi", *İkbal*, No: 881, 5 March 1915, Vol: 3, p. 84.

41 For an excellent work about the war-prisoners see: V. V. Poznakhirev, *Turetskie Voennoplennnye i Grazhdanskije Plennnye v Rossii v 1914-1924* [Turkish Civil and War Prisoners in Russia 1914-1924], Petersburg, Nestor-Istoriia, 2014. By the way, thousands of Ottoman war prisoners were sent to the Nargin Island near Baku. For more information see: Akif Aşırılı, *Nargin Adasında Türk Esirleri*, Baku, Elm ve Tahsil, 2011.

war prisoners. Once they applied to the government to get permission to open a hospital for Ottoman war prisoners, but their application was declined. In order not to attract the wrath of the Russian official authorities, aid campaigns were not large-scale until February 1917. And even when the Muslim press sometimes cited news about the poor living conditions of prisoners from the Russian newspapers, they were accused of being sympathetic towards Turks.⁴² However, Resulzade, tried to always keep this issue on the agenda of local Muslims. After the February Revolution, when the Russian Muslims organised their fifth congress in Moscow in May 1917, one of the issues that Resulzade mentioned in the sessions was the condition of Ottoman/Turkish war prisoners. He noted that because of massive mistreatment, which was a violation of international laws, thousands of Turkish war prisoners died in the Samara and Syzran *gubernias*. By saying that “we cannot accept this kind of violation and enforcement towards people who belong to our nation (*millettaşlarımız*)”, Resulzade proposed to give more attention to such cases and to organise aid to prisoners. His proposal was unanimously accepted by the participants of the Congress.⁴³ Later, Resulzade two times called local Muslim people to help the Turkish war prisoners who were kept on Nargin Island, located in the Baku bay.⁴⁴ Under winter conditions, more than 3900 Turkish war prisoners needed warm clothes and food. For their needs, one charity foundation (*Muhtaclara Kömek Cemiyeti*) twice organised a campaign in Baku.

“The Straits Issue” and Sympathy towards the Ottomans

It can be said that during the war, the Straits issue may have been seen as a clear demonstration of sympathy towards the Ottoman Turks. After the Ottoman state became involved in the war, the Russian government warned the Allies that Istanbul and its surroundings should be declared an international zone in case of a victory. When the Allies started the Gallipoli operations, all the Russian newspapers claimed that in the case of victory, Istanbul and the Straits had to be surrendered to Russia. It was interesting that Resulzade devoted a long and exclusive article on this topic during the Gallipoli operations. Written just after the first Gallipoli defeat of the Allies, it is an illustrative piece, demonstrating the feelings of (as later reactions indicated after the February Revolution 1917) probably most Russian Muslims. He made a historical evaluation of the struggle for the Straits among the great powers. The Russians especially, tried to capture Istanbul

42 “Delil ve Sübut Arkasında”, *İkbal*, No: 900, 31 March 1915, Vol: 3, p. 104-107.

43 “Dokuzuncu Meclisin Devamı”, *Açık Söz*, No: 491, 7 June 1917, Vol: 4, p. 212.

44 “Hamiyyet Günü”, *Açık Söz*, No: 636, 24 December 1917, Vol: 4, p. 411 and “Esirler Günü”, *Açık Söz*, No: 659, 19 January 1918, Vol: 4, p. 432.

and the Straits because they were believed to be “the doors to Russia” and “keys to these doors should be owned by Russians.⁴⁵ Resulzade highlighted many turning points in history in which Russians were on brink of capturing Istanbul, but it never materialised as a result of the other great powers’ involvements. Also, regardless of the massive campaign by the Russian press in propagating the idea that the Straits should be given to Russia, Resulzade stressed the difference between the attitudes of the Russians (who demanded the capitulation of Istanbul) and the other Allies (who thought that the Straits should be declared an “international free-zone”). In this sense, he was trying to say that the struggle for the Straits would be on going and it was not guaranteed that the Russians would be the new owners. It can be assumed that in his comment Resulzade could not clearly express his feelings because of military censorship but one can think that even writing a comment after the first defeat of the Allies was also a “positive reaction” made by the author. Though some Muslim intellectuals thought that the Ottomans had made a strategic mistake in allying with Germany, it seems that the Straits and Istanbul issue was a very sensitive one for many Russian Muslims.

After the February Revolution 1917, when censorship was almost eliminated and a more flexible atmosphere arrived, the Straits issue again returned to the agenda of Russian Muslims. Pavel Milyukov, a foreign minister of the Provisional Government and the leader of Cadet Party, made Russia’s new war aims clear, among which was capturing Istanbul and the Straits. The reaction given to Milyukov’s declaration by the Russian Muslims was severe. Resulzade openly criticised the Cadet Party’s position several times.⁴⁶ He called the Cadet Party “imperialist” and stated that while defending the idea of the freedom of nations the Cadets had double standards towards Asian nations, especially Turkey. He openly declared that Russian Muslims could not welcome the victory resulting from the capture of Istanbul and the Straits. It was contrary to the idea of the freedom of nations. According to him, many Russian Muslims sacrificed themselves in the battles to defend the independence of Russia. And in doing this, they did not want to bring humiliation and defeat to other nations, no matter if these nations were located in Asia or Africa. Therefore, in internal politics, Russian Muslims would ally with political parties which had democratic equality ideas and respect for freedom of other nations whether these nations lived in Europe, Asia and Africa. This was the unanimous stance of all Russian Muslims, stated Resulzade. This common attitude could be seen in the

45 “Boğazlar Meselesi”, *İkbal*, No: 904, 5 April 1915, Vol: 3, p. 112-115.

46 For example, “Kadet Fırkası ve Müslümanlar”, *Açık Söz*, No: 440, 3 April 1917, Vol: 4, p. 127-128; “Milyukov Hakkında”, *Açık Söz*, No: 440, 3 April 1917; “Maksudov’un Faciası”, *Açık Söz*, No: 441, 4 April 1917, Vol: 4, p. 130-131 and “Rus Emperyalizmi Hakkında”, *Açık Söz*, No: 485, 31 May 1917, Vol: 4, p. 226-228.

protests of delegates towards the speech of the Cadet Party representative Prince Dolgorukov in the Fifth Congress of Russian Muslims, held in Moscow in May 1917.⁴⁷

Sympathy towards the Ottomans could be found in many other writings of Resulzade during the war. Though until February 1917, he could not freely express his feelings and ideas because of official censorship, but one can detect some points in his comments. For instance, in August 1916, Resulzade stated that although aid campaigns were organised for the victims of war around Kars, Batum and their surroundings, there were also many people who were sent into exile to Siberia, therefore, he warned that they should not forget the fate of these people who thoroughly lacked support from charity foundations.⁴⁸ In November of the same year Resulzade conveyed a letter sent from the Anatolian front, probably written by an officer or a soldier. The letter described a poor situation in occupied Anatolian cities, thousands of homeless children suffering from hunger and starvation. After conveying a message written in the letter, Resulzade again called Caucasian Muslims to expand and intensify their aid to Anatolian Muslims. The title of the comment was also instructive demonstrating the feelings of local Muslims: “The Anatolia’s Appeal for Help” (*Anadolu’nun İstimdadı*).⁴⁹

Besides this, it should be noted that several times in 1915, Resulzade cited the name of the Ottoman Minister of Defence, Enver Pasha as “Turkey’s Napoleon”.⁵⁰ Though these were not direct citations, they may show latent sympathy towards Ottoman officials. Another example, which can be interpreted as a sign of latent sympathy was a detailed memoir written during Ramadan in Istanbul.⁵¹ Not being a pious Muslim⁵², Resulzade liked the cultural and spiritual atmosphere of Ramadan in Turkey. In this sense, he described almost all details of daily life of Istanbulites: fasting, the solidarity of people, *iftars* in the streets, *namaz* prayings attended by thousands of people in the mosques, theatre performances, speeches given by clergy and intellectuals, culturally lively Ramadan nights etc. One can find many interesting points in his memoir pieces like the names of Turkish intellectuals Mehmet Akif (Ersoy), Rıza Tevfik (Bölükbaşı),

47 “Altıncı Meclis”, *Açık Söz*, No: 485, 31 May 1917, Vol: 4, p. 195-205.

48 “Unudulmuş Sürgünler”, *Açık Söz*, No: 251, 5 August 1916, Vol: 3, p. 489-490.

49 “Anadolu’nun İstimdadı”, *Açık Söz*, No: 318, 3 November 1916, Vol: 3, p. 550-551.

50 “Qurama”, *İkbal*, No: 837, 12 January 1915, Vol: 3, 36-39 and “Qurama”, *Yeni İkbal*, No: 19, 19 May 1915, Vol: 3, p. 165-168.

51 “Oruçluk Hatıratı: İstanbul’da Ramazanlık”, *Açık Söz*, No: 220, 24 June 1916, Vol: 3, p. 471-473 and *Açık Söz*, No: 221, 26 June 1916, Vol: 3, p. 474-476.

52 This might be an ambitious claim considering that his father was a member of local clergy in Baku. Nevertheless, Resulzade’s biographers, who underline generally his nationalist and secular ideas, have not yet mentioned about his religious practice.

Mehmet Emin (Yurdakul), Hamdullah Subhi (Tanrıöver) who were giving speeches in which solidarity and patriotism were propagated. Even Resultzade cited the caliph (*halife hazretleri*) who came to the Ayasofya Mosque to pray together with people. Admiring the Ramadan days in Istanbul, he might have given latent messages to local Muslims and might have revived their minds and feelings. It should not be forgotten that these short memoir pieces were published under censorship in June 1916, that is, during the war, when the Russian army fought against Turkey. Lastly, it is noteworthy to state that Resultzade did not directly call the Ottomans enemies in his war-time writings whereas in some places he defined Germans and Austrians as “enemies”.

After the February Revolution, Resultzade defended the immediate end of the war and the conclusion of peace without indemnity and territorial gains. He welcomed the February Revolution by defining it as “a great revolution”.⁵³ Also, he intensified his criticism against Russian imperialism. According to him, non-Russian nations especially, together with Turks-Tatars and Muslims (*Rusya Türk-Tatarları, Müslümanlar*), had suffered the most from the old Russian regime. He stated that “in the old Russia there were no citizens, only subjects. If all the Russian nations were the subjects of blind tsars, non-Russian nations were subjects subordinated to subjects (*reayanın reyası*). To be a slave for slaves: that was the tragedy of Muslims, Jewish, Armenians, Georgians and other “*inorodets*” (non-Russian) nations living in Russia”.⁵⁴

However, here it should be noted that regardless of all the sympathetic messages regarding the Ottomans and criticism against the Russian regime, he did not adopt any separatist stance even at the end of 1917. In this sense, he looked for a joint future together with Russians as well as other subjects of the former Russian Empire. But as a representative of people who had suffered from Russian colonialism, he demanded the reconstruction of Russia in accordance with the modern circumstances. He called all Muslim intellectuals to support the Russian progressive forces because these forces would guarantee their existence as a nation. According to Resultzade, there was not a big disagreement among Muslims to be considered Russians (*Rusyalı*) and to live in Russia. Muslims wanted to live in and to be part of a great and powerful Russia, provided that their national and religious characteristics and individual freedoms would be protected.⁵⁵ After the February Revolution, a democratic federal republic recognising territorial autonomous rights for nations was the principal demand of Russian Muslims.

53 “Büyük İnkılap”, *Açık Söz*, No: 418, 5 March 1917, Vol: 4, p. 73-74.

54 “Bir Büyük Bayram Daha”, *Açık Söz*, No: 433, 26 March 1917, Vol: 4, p. 110-111.

55 “Bazı Yazılar Münasebetiyle”, *İkbal*, No: 891, 20 March 1915, Vol: 3, p. 97-99.

Concluding Remarks

Taking into account all of the points mentioned above, several concluding remarks can be made. First of all, Resulzade's writings revealed the continuing interest of Russian Muslims towards the Ottomans. This interest ranged from open or latent sympathy with the changes in Turkey to concerns regarding the future of the Ottomans. Secondly, before the Great War, they were excited by the news about the modernisation efforts and successes of the Young Turks. Thirdly, during the war, regardless of the fact that the Russian army was fighting against the Ottomans, Russian Muslims were not indifferent to the problems that arose in the occupied Anatolian cities or the mistreatment of Ottoman war-prisoners. For these purposes they organised many aid campaigns. Fourthly, though Russian Muslims were loyal to Russia, they were not happy about fighting against the Ottomans or their possible humiliating defeat. Before the February Revolution, because of censorship, it was almost impossible to openly defend this position, but one can find indirect messages in Resulzade's writings in this regard. After the February Revolution, Russian Muslim intellectuals openly supported a peaceful end to the war. The reaction given to the Straits issue was illustrative in this sense. Also, peace should be accomplished without indemnity and territorial annexations. This indirectly meant that the Ottoman state would survive. Lastly, it should be noted that during the war years despite the latent sympathy towards the Ottomans and concerns about their future as well as criticism against the old Russian regime and imperialism, Russian Muslims looked for a joint future together with the Russians as well as other subjects of the former Russian Empire. In this context, they demanded their equal rights and the immediate democratic reconstruction of Russia after the war.

Of course, it is impossible to give a full account of the voluminous writings of Resulzade in one article. In this sense, this article does not claim to cover all the topics and issues mentioned in Resulzade's war-time writings. It just tried to touch on his attitude towards the Ottomans and the Russians. One can find more insights with further inquiry. Also, it will be interesting to make an inquiry into the writings by other (Russian) Muslim intellectuals to compose a comprehensive view.

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