

**M.A. RASULZADEH IN SEARCH FOR NATIONAL IDENTITY:
DEVELOPMENT OF THE NATIONAL IDEOLOGY FROM TURKISM TO
AZERBAIJANISM**

Sevda Sulaymanova

Professor of History Faculty, Baku State University

Baku, Azerbaijan

s.u.suleymanova@mail.ru

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Abstract: The article examines the struggle of leading public and political figures of Azerbaijan, especially M.A. Rasulzadeh, one of the founders of the first republic and the ideology of Azerbaijanism, in the field of national identity and understanding of the national characteristics of the country at the turn of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. These issues are interpreted on the basis of periodicals and archival materials.

The article indicates that the basis for the formation of the idea of Azerbaijanism, created by M.A. Rasulzadeh, it was because after the split between Russia and Gajarid Iran at the beginning of the 19th century, when the Azerbaijanis felt themselves to be a single social organism, a society bearing the seeds of a particular culture, that is, a separate nation from the Russians. It is further noted that as social forces developed and wider sections of the population joined the social movement, the national movement in Azerbaijan became more European-oriented than in other places in the Muslim East.

Keywords: *M.A. Rasulzadeh, National Identity, National Ideology, Turkism, Azerbaijaniism*

INTRODUCTION

The ideology of Azerbaijanism, the main ideologist of which was Mammad Amin Rasulzadeh, is one of the main priority directions in the state policy of the independent Republic of Azerbaijan. The question of determining this ideology's period of emergence, as well as transition of the ideology and its founder, Rasulzadeh himself, from Turkism to Azerbaijanism has often been raised, and discussions around it continue in historiography. According to Kamran Ismailov, in fact, the initial stage of the formation of the idea of "Azerbaijanism" began with the occupation of Azerbaijan by Tsarist Russia and covered the entire 19th century [İsmayılov (2019): 140]. Agreeing with this statement, this paper is based on the idea that it was during the tsarist colonial period that the formation of this ideology began. M.A. Rasulzadeh himself in his work "Siyavush of Our Century" mentions that the benefit of the Russian invasion was in the fact that the Azerbaijanis began to feel like a unique social organism, a society carrying within itself the seeds of a special culture, i.e., a nation that is different from the Russians [Rəsulzadə (1991): 34]. Regarding the evolutionary development of the ideology in the independence movement of Azerbaijan and rethinking its leader Rasulzadeh, Aydin Balayev believed

that “after the February Revolution, the process of transition from Turkism to Azerbaijanism was completed” [Балаев (2018: 46)].

The national movement in Azerbaijan, according to its origin of ideas, combines the ideas of national freedom of the East with the cultural-democratic tendencies of the West. Mirza Bala Mamedzade in his book “National Azerbaijani Movement” puts forward the opinion that the Turkic national movement in a broad sense began “to take shape in Azerbaijan at the beginning of the 20th century” and “moves from the period of the Turkic ethnicity to the nationality” [Məmmədzadə (1992): 22].

Remarkably, M.A. Rasulzadeh explains his opinion on this issue in the article “The Glorious Memory of the Azerbaijani Press,” written on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the *Ekinchi* newspaper that while the first expresses the environment created by the influence of linguistic, religious, racial, ethnic, historical, geographical, economic and political factors, and the other expresses the collective, created in this environment. In his opinion, language, history, customs, religion, the motherland and the people, who live in this environment, form an ethnicity, but the transformation of the ethnicity into a nation depends on the establishment of a common consciousness and collective will. He writes that it is possible only by creating a body that performs the task of “collective memory”. This body changes according to time. In the Middle Ages, this task was performed by the feudal class, and it consisted of the khan's palaces and knightly castles, which recorded and occupied the social life and traditions of the nation. Because time has changed, of course this body has changed. With the advent of the bourgeoisie, the feudal system collapsed. The spiritual center moved from the castles to the cities. The intelligentsia, raised in the cities, became a class representing the accomplishments and the will of common identity. The largest tool of this class is the press. Further, he states that a society publishing its first newspaper in the language it speaks means that it has begun to become a nation while it has been an ethnicity. People that has a media tradition in its life is already a formed nation. National consciousness is born when the leading group of a nation ensures permanent and organic relations with other groups and individuals. The role of newspapers in this regard is obvious [Rəsulzadə (1926): 351].

Linking this concept to the collective movement, M.B. Mamedzade wrote that collective will and collective consciousness would be born from a collective movement. The crystallized national movement, having acquired its own appearance, emerged from the Islamic label and acquired a national Turkic face. In his opinion, collective consciousness has long abandoned the Islamic essence, and language has taken the connecting place of religion in social relations. This, in turn, gave rise to conscious and collective Turkism [Mammadzade (1992): 23-24]. Ali Bey Huseynzade, who laid the foundations of Turkism and Turanism in Azerbaijan and theoretically developed the idea of Turkic unity, formulated it in the form of “Turkification, Islamization and Europeanization,” which was elevated to a principle and became the main motto of the Musavat party and formed the basis of the state flag Azerbaijan. This idea was an expression of the cultural nationalism that preceded it. The author of the three-term formula for the first time publicly put forward the slogan “Freedom and Equality.”

M.A. Rasulzadeh, who became the object of criticism in the Soviet historiography as an “ardent nationalist” and “pan-Turkist,” wrote in his book “Ideology of Independence

and Youth”: “Our sense of nationalism was not initially aimed at our own freedom and independence, and even for the salvation of all Turks, but showed sincere feelings and attitudes towards other Islamic and Turkic peoples living in independent and semi-independent states, and our political tendencies have never crossed this limit” [Resulzade (1925):6]. However, being a supporter of socialist party "Hummat", he approached the concept of nationality from a class point of view, like the Bolsheviks, and wrote in the *Tekamul* newspaper that those, who promote nationalism, are always turn a blind eye to classism and do not want to see it. When speaking of a nation, a nationalist does not take into account rich and poor, landowner and peasant, employer and workers, but only those who speak the same language and have the same customs. Later, he puts forward ideas such as nation is sacred, inviolable, its rights must be protected, it must be defended from any foreign attack [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1906): 2; Rəsulzadə (1992): 85]. He saw true patriotism in the opening of national schools and teaching in their native language.

Since M.A. Rasulzadeh considers religion as a first-class instrument, “playing the role of a fluid” for the formation and development of religious communities and peoples, the development of the national language, national customs and traditions, national way of thinking and everyday life, and he put forward the idea of the importance of translating the Quran and Hadith from Arabic into Turkish. In his opinion, “...if every people could use this holiness directly through their language, then... the Islamic world would live in a different condition than today, and would in any case be happy” [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1914); Mustafayev (1973): 216]. M.A. Rasulzadeh, who did not turn away from Islam while developing Turkism, on the contrary, tried to make it more effective by turning Islam into an integral part of Turkic nationalism: “Loyalty to Islam... saved our bodies from the dangers of those who went astray (adherents of another faith), and also became the reason for the birth of our national literature. ... No matter how much special people studied the Arabic or Persian language, refined it and widely used it, the common man still retained his originality, the son of a Turk remained a Turk. At the same time, this large Turkic mass remained backward” [Mustafayev (1973): 99].

In 1911, M.A. Rasulzadeh worked together with A. Huseynzadeh, A. Agaoglu, Ziya Goyalp, Yusif Akchura, Zaki Validi Togan and other prominent Turkish intellectuals in the "Turk Ocagi" (Turkish Hearth) founded in 1911 in Istanbul and developed the ideas of Turkism in the magazine "Turk Yurdu." His article "Iranian Turks" was of particular importance. Because many did not know about the suffering of the Turks on the other side of the Araz, and it was M.A. Rasulzadeh who was able to convey to the wider world the voice of the Azerbaijanis living south of the Araz. He studied the nationalism ideas of Sheikh Jamaluddin al-Afghani, the great thinker of the Muslim world, the founder of Islamic modernism, and translated his work "Philosophy of National Unity" from Persian into Turkish and published it in the magazine "Turk Yurdu".

Noting that he benefited from the idea of "Turkism," which Ziya Gokalp deeply analyzed and improved, M. A. Rasulzadeh wrote about it that we accepted Ziya's words as a slogan for the newspaper "Achik Soz." Later, this "slogan", uttered by Ziya in the form "I belong to the Turkish nation, I am Muslim, and I belong to the Western culture," found a place in the program preamble of the nationalist faction "Musavat", which was formed on the tasks of Turkism and populism" [Yaqublu (1991): 45].

M.A. Rasулzadeh's Concept of *National Viability*¹

With the outbreak of the First World War, the transformation of the South Caucasus into the front line had a serious impact on the economic and socio-political situation of Azerbaijan. The attitude of public organizations and political parties towards the war was ambiguous. It is interesting that the materials of the Police Department note that during the war years there was no revolutionary organization of Azerbaijanis in the Baku province [ARPIISSA, fund 276, list 8, file 476, v. 4]. However, M.A. Rasулzade, the leader of the underground Musavat party, expressed society's attitude towards the war as follows: "... we carefully followed the concepts and values that were overthrown by the World War that began in 1914. "The right of nations is sacred!" we listened carefully to this slogan. Although we did not believe in the sincerity of this slogan, which often sounded from the lips of *Düvel-i Muazzama*², who took part in that war, we believed that this great truth would inevitably win..." [Rəsulzadə (1990): 25].

In order to protect the identity, national quality and ensure the national revival of the people of Tsarist Russia, groaning under colonial oppression, M.A. Rasулzade in 1914-1917 published his opinions on the national issue in his articles "National Vitality", "The Road We Are Walking", "Village letters", "School and madrasah", "The path we are following" and "Our needs". In 1914, in the article "Village Letters from the Point of View of Religion, Nationality and Life," published by him in the Iqbal newspaper, he wrote that three foundations are necessary for cultural life: "Nationalism, internationalism and modernity. The basis of a nation is the mother tongue, the basis of internationalism is religion, and the basis of modernity is the teaching of languages related to the sciences and disciplines that dominate in the contemporary era" [Rəsulzadə (1914b): 3; ARPIISSA, fund 276, inventory 8, file 394]. In a series of articles "National Vitality" published in the magazine "Dirilik", M.A. Rasулzade wrote that perhaps in ancient times there was no difference between the words "ummah" and "nation". The word "millet", which denotes an ethnic identity and community, was mixed with the word "ummah", which is an expression of the community of Muslims, and the term "nation-Islam" became popular. If we understand "Millet" in the sense of a nation, it does not only mean religion. This notion requires linguistic unity rather than expressing religious community" [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1914a), Mustafaev (1973): 215].

During the Tsarist Russia, the ethnic identity of the people was deliberately mixed and distorted, calling them sometimes insultingly "Tatar", sometimes "Persian", and "Muslim". M.A. Rasулzadeh, with his concept, eliminated this confusion and returned the name of the people. He called a great achievement the usage of the words "Turk" and "Azerbaijan" contrary to the notions used by the Russian officials. Therefore, Turkism should be understood not as a reactionary and aggressive ideology, but in the sense of presenting self-identification of the people.

In his article "On Pan-Turanism," M.A. Rasулzade distinguished between European nationalism and Turkish nationalism and wrote that European nationalism is a politically

¹ *Milli Dirilik* in Azerbaijani. Most likely by the term "national viability" M. Rasулzadeh meant national revival. (Ed.)

² *Düveli Muazzama* means great states, great powers (Ed.).

aggressive ideology, while Eastern nationalism is defensive and plays a progressive role in the social movement [Rəsulzadə (1930): 67].

Turkism means the creation of Turkic literature and Turkic culture in the broadest sense of the word. M.A. Rasulzadeh attached special importance to the spiritual life and culture of the nation, and not to material progress and being spiritually deprived. First of all, he shows the difference between a nation and a religion and comes to the conclusion that language is the main characteristic of a nation. Language is the outer and inner part of a nation, and peoples differ from each other mainly due to it. Language is constant, however religion is a powerful factor in the sense that it has a great influence on the customs and morals of the people.

M.A. Rasulzadeh included two ideas in his concept: national consciousness and national faith. Here national consciousness means national identity. He connected the life of peoples with the development of their national consciousness. Thanks to national consciousness, national faith is formed. With the emergence of a national faith, peoples choose a glorious and honorable path for themselves: "... if an individual, taking into account the benefit of his environment, does something not for himself, but for his descendants or the nation, this can be called a great deed. Such people are also called great figures or ideologists" [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1914), Rəsulzadə (2001): 470]. Indeed, a nation in which there are few righteous people will not see happiness, but it will be trampled under the feet of others and destroyed.

Ziya Goyalp, the founder and ideologist of Turkic pan-Turanism [Zarevand (1930): 65], wrote that at one time it was believed that the ideology of pan-Islamism would ensure the independence of Muslim peoples and save them from the colonialism. However soon the ideology of Turkism came to the fore. Zarevand states that Yusif Akchuran's 1908 article entitled "Three Paths of Politics" provides a clear and comprehensive formulation of Turanism. [Zarevand (1930): 56]. M.A. Rasulzadeh denounced the Turkism of Y. Akchura as "Marxism of the Pan-Turanists" in his work "On Pan-Turanism" published in 1928. And analyzing his previous views in the annual collection "Turkic Year", he wrote: "If I could separate the Turkic politics from "Pan-Turanism" or Islamic politics from "Pan-Islamism", then, of course, it would be clear that pursuing a Turkic or Islamic policy within Turkey does not mean being a "Pan-Turkist" or a "Pan-Islamist" outside its borders." [Rəsulzadə (1991): 16; Расулзаде (1930): 67].

The First World War focused all forces and thoughts precisely on the national destiny of each people. Romanticism revealed the unity of Turkism and patriotism around the idea of Azerbaijan. On October 2, 1915, in the first issue of newspaper "Achig Soz" M.A. Rasulzadeh, in his main article "The Path We Will Take," wrote that the horrors of the great war that we are witnessing, proved the fact that our century is the century of nationalism. "The map of the world will be changed by the war" is a surprisingly confusing phrase now heard from many lips. Along with the sacrifice of citizens, the organization of states and the greatness of armies, there is no doubt that the national ideologies that appear on the world map have and will have a great influence on the new look of the world map. Each nations firstly must have self-awareness in order to live as a nation, uniting and acting around certain ideas. Because life will not be built on new foundations with the peoples who do not have a single spirit and a common goal, and nations deprived of such weapons will not be able to be heard" [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1915):

1; Rəsulzadə (2012): 183]. This brilliant political prediction of the leader of the national movement came true in 1918. The newspaper “Achik Soz” played an important role in preserving national identity and uniting the Azerbaijani people around the national ideology to gain freedom.

Interestingly, Rasulzadeh attempted to analyze works of the French sociologist Emile Durkheim concerning the role of religion and language in the society. People, who have the same language, customs, history, religion, homeland, and so on, form one nationality. However the transformation of nationality into a nation depends on the formation of a common consciousness and collective will. And this arises only with the creation of a body that performs the task of “collective memory” [Rəsulzadə M.E. (1952)].

Rasulzade, cheering to the victory of the revolution, wrote: “Long live the new and free Russia! Long live equality and unity of nations!” [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1917b): 1; Rəsulzadə (2013): 73-74]. The newspaper “Kaspi” wrote referencing to the M.A. Rasulzadeh's article in the “Achik Soz”: “All the peoples of Russia have achieved the goals that they cherished in their hearts. Despotism has fallen. Free Russia now promises and guarantees freedom for all peoples, despite the war era...” [О революции (1917): 2]. Indeed, with the overthrow of tsarism, a number of democratic changes took place in the country: underground parties were legalized, new political parties and public organizations emerged.

The Executive Committee of Muslim Public Organizations, created at the end of March, convened the First Congress of the Caucasian Muslims in Baku from April 15 to 20, 1917. The report of M.A. Rasulzadeh, who spoke on the first political issue, played a major historical role. Thus, the idea of federation formed the basis of the report. In his opinion, only a federal democratic republic could ensure the power of such a great state as Russia. M.A. Rasulzadeh stated that history has proven through the example of Tamerlane, Genghis Khan, Alexander the Great and the Roman emperors that no external force, except free will, is capable to create a state union and a strong unity of the different nationalities included in this state. ...” [Стенограмма Съезда... (1917a)].

Representative of Ganja Nasib bey Yusifbekov, speaking on behalf of the newly created “Turkic Federalist Party” in Ganja and for the first time at its rally putting forward the slogan “Long live the autonomy of Azerbaijan,” made a sharper speech, which perhaps others would not have dared to say, that it was the Turkic peoples who suffered most from the tyranny of tsarism [Suleymanova (2022): 340-341]. Regarding the speech of N. Yusifbekov, M. A. Rasulzade, in his report entitled “Musavat” in the Formation of Azerbaijan” said: “... the Ganja program, and Musavat’s proposal appeared in the same sense at the Caucasian Muslims Congress, demanding federation for Russia and autonomy for Azerbaijan” [Rasulzade (2013): 8]. Thus, as M.A. Rasulzadeh indicated, The First Congress of the Caucasian Muslim once again proved political maturity of the nation [Стенограмма Съезда...(1917b)].

From The Idea of Autonomy to The Independence

The overthrow of tsarism made it necessary to discuss the issue of the political structure of Russia. It was this issue that was included in the agenda of the First All-Russian Congress of Muslims, which was held in a building donated by Baku millionaire Shamsi

Asadullayev to Moscow Muslims from May 1 to May 11, 1917. Up to 600 representatives of all Turkic-Muslim peoples of Russia, including 100 Muslim women, were invited to the congress. The central issue of the congress was the question of the political state structure of Russia, as was the case with the congress of Muslims of the Caucasus. Chairman of the Congress A. Salikov and M. A. Rasulzadeh discussed draft resolutions on this issue. Akhmad Salikov put forward a proposal to preserve the unitary state structure by granting national and cultural autonomy to the peoples living in Russia. He believed that “the reorganization of the Russian state on a territorial-federal basis does not meet the interests of broad sections of the Muslim population” [Программные документы... (1985): 15]. According to A. Salikov, “the division of Russia into separate governments means the destruction of the Russian state” [Rəsulzadə (2013): 180].

M.A. Rasulzadeh more decisively defended in Moscow the idea that he put forward at the Congress of Caucasian Muslims in Baku. Basically, it reflected the idea of “a democratic republic created on the basis of the principles of a national-territorial federation” [Программные документы... (1985): 94, 11]. He rightly asks the question: “...can a country with a population of more than 170 million people and a state consisting of a variety of nationalities be governed from one center?” [İlqar (1990): 163-164]. Of course, this was impossible, and history has confirmed the truth of these words.

Rejecting A. Salikov’s statement that “a federal form of government will divide the Turkic-Muslim peoples,” M.A. Rasulzadeh answered him as follows: “We are the Turkic-Tatar race and the sons of the Turks, and we are proud of it. 29 million of the 30 million Muslims in Russia are Turks. One must ask: what is a nation? I believe that the basic quality of a nation is formed from the connections between language and history, customs and traditions. It is sometimes said that Islam took the form of a nation. Because when a Tatar Turk is asked what nationality he is, he answers Muslim. This is a false *telakki*...³ Just as there is no Christian nation, there is no Muslim nation. In this big Muslim house there should be separate sections for Turks, Iranians and Arabs... We want autonomy for Turkic peoples who have separate local autonomies like Azerbaijan, Dagestan, Turkestan etc. on the basis of national-local autonomy.” [Sünbül (1990): 67; Devlet (1985): 275; Məmmədzadə (1992): 77]. It should be noted that the full text of the speech is given in Volume IV of the works of M.A. Rasulzadeh, and its quotation by several authors represented in incomplete form. Thus, in the original speech it is written: “Out of 30 million Muslims in Russia, approximately 21 million belong to this nation” [Rəsulzadə (2013): 186].

After Rasulzadeh's speech, heated debate broke out between federalists and unitarists. Even the leader of the Kazan Turks, Sadri Maksudi Arsal, and the leader of the Dagestan Turks, Akhmad Salikov, were outraged, and some representatives left the hall. However, after discussing both projects, M.A. Rasulzadeh’s the idea of national local autonomy was supported by majority 446 votes, and against were 271 votes; in contrary, the A. Salikov’s project of a unitary state was supported by the 291 votes, and 422 voted against it. [Стенограмма Первого съезда (1917)].

One of the important events in the development of the Azerbaijani people’s social movement was the joint performance of the Muslim Democratic Party Musavat and the

³ *Telakki* means understanding, opinion, evaluation in Arabic (Ed.)

Turkic Federalist Party on June 17, 1917. Musavat leader M.A. Rasulgade himself wrote about this, stating that after a series of discussions, we decided to unite these two parties. Regarding the name of the party, Mr. Nasib proposed name to the party “Turkic Federalist Musavat Party”, and we accepted this proposal. During the conversation, Nasib Bey said: “Whoever would pronounce such a long word⁴, only at first it will sound like this... Over time, it will become shorter and take the name “Musavat,” he said. This really happened [Rasuloglu (1962); Yaqublu (1997): 59]. The Central Committee included Rasulgadeh, Hajinsky, Vakilov and Rafibekov from the Baku Musavatists and 4 members of the Federalist Party, Usubbekov, Rustambekov, Doctor Agazade and M.M. Akhundov” [ARPISSA, fund 276, list 8, file 62]. Branches of the Musavat party were created in all regions of Azerbaijan, even in Astrakhan, Stavropol, Moscow, Kiev, Kharkov, Tbilisi, Yerevan, Tashkent, Ashgabat, Tabriz, Rasht and Istanbul. Thus, this party has become a major mass political force with great influence among all Azerbaijanis.

Musavat, standing on the position of a strong revolutionary democracy, sharply criticized the August counter-revolutionary uprising of General L.S. Kornilov and called on all revolutionary democracies to unite, regardless of nationality and party affiliation. For this purpose, the party leadership appealed to the Executive Committee of the Baku Council with a request to provide him a place in the Counter-Revolutionary Bureau. The Executive Committee, headed by S.G. Shaumyan, allegedly rejected this appeal under the pretext that the Musavat party does not include broad Muslim democracy. However, the Baku Council understood perfectly well that without the help of Musavat, which has great influence, not a single government in Azerbaijan could continue to exist. The elections to the Baku Council on October 22 proved this: “Musavat won the votes of 10 thousand out of 25 thousand voters, that is, 40 percent of all voters. However, in these elections, which were held in conditions favorable to them, the Bolsheviks managed to collect the votes of only 4 thousand voters” [Həsənov (1993): 31]. More precisely, Musavat received 9617 votes, the Bolsheviks - 3823, the Social Revolutionaries - 6305, the Mensheviks - 687, Dashnaksutyun - 5288 votes [О результате выборов... (1917)]. If we consider that Musavat, which received 40% of the votes only in multinational Baku, has a unanimous vote in all Azerbaijani villages, then there is no doubt that this party was the political vanguard of the Azerbaijani people. Moreover, since Baku was considered the economic center of the entire South Caucasus [Bakhtadze (2023): 18], the results of elections were of great importance for all parties, demonstrating future perspective for whole region.

Not wanting to recognize this victory of the Musavat party, the Bolsheviks declared the results of the elections to the Baku Council on October 22 invalid. However, the Musavatists, led by M.A. Rasulgade greeted the Bolsheviks coming to power in Russia on October 25 with great joy. The reason for this was explained by M.A. Rasulgadeh that Lenin said: “The land belongs to the peasant, and autonomy belongs to the people!” and thereby ensured his success” [Rəsulzadə (1993): 42-43]. But the “Declaration of the Rights of the Peoples of Russia” and “Appeal to All Worker Muslim population of Russia

⁴ *Türk ədəmi-mərkəziyyət fırqəsi “Müsavat”* in Azerbaijani

and the East,” signed in in November-December 1917 by V.I. Lenin, Chairman of the Communist Party of Soviet Russia, remained on paper.

However, socio-political figures and parties of Azerbaijan, who did not lose hope of gaining autonomy, put this issue on the agenda at all meetings. Azerbaijan's autonomy became the central issue at the meeting held in Ganja on the eve of the October coup. According to the newspaper “Achik Soz” dated October 13, 1917, of the 48 representatives participating in the meeting, 11 were from the socialist faction. The socialist faction was divided into Social Democrats, Socialist Revolutionaries, Turkish Socialists, Muslim Socialists, Fugarai-Mudafiyya⁵, Hummet, Bolsheviks, Mensheviks, etc. The Musavat Party was represented by 24 representatives. The *Nijat* and *Difai* parties declared that their programs were compatible with Musavat and joined its faction [Gəncə müşavirəsi (1917): 2].

The Ganja meeting was attended by 1 participant from the Baku organization of the Muslims of Russia party, 2 people from the Ganja *Ittihad* party, and the remaining 10 participants were neutrals. The representatives agreed to accept the coalition program of the Azerbaijani social movement. The program presented by the Musavat faction was discussed. The program proposed a federal democratic republic as a government system in Russia based on local national autonomy. Here, along with political freedoms for all nations, cultural and national autonomy was provided for peoples without territories. The boundaries between the autonomous republics were to be determined by the Constituent Assembly.

M.A. Rasulzade stated at the Moscow Congress: “It is for this reason that we want autonomy for the Turkic peoples who have separate areas and characteristics, such as Azerbaijan and Dagestan, Turkestan, Kyrgyzstan, based on the idea of national-territorial autonomy...” [Rəsulzadə (2013): 186]. This idea was reflected in the program adopted at the first official congress of the Musavat faction, held in Baku from October 26 to 31, 1917: “Turkish countries such as Azerbaijan, Turkestan, Kyrgyzstan and Bashkirdistan should receive territorial autonomy. If this is not possible in some case these Turkic people must be granted cultural autonomy” [Müsavətin qurultayı (1990): 3]. In addition to the program, the congress adopted the blue flag as a symbol of the national ideal, liberation and ascension.

From Turkism to the Ideology of Azerbaijanism

At the congress, which opened during the days of the October coup, the leader of the Musavat party M.A. Rasulzade put forward a proposal to honor the memory of the victims of the Bolshevik coup with a minute of silence. According to the newspaper *Achik Soz*, at a party meeting scheduled for October 25, 1917, Muhammad Amin Rasulzade, one of the most active founders of the party, opened the meeting and spoke about the importance of this congress, which was met with thunderous applause. He stated:

“The first congress of Turk Federalist Musavat Party is of great importance for the entire Turkic and Eastern Islamic world. Because a nation without political parties cannot have

⁵ *Fugarai-Mudafiyya* means party for the Protection of Poor

political feelings and political thinking. Every nation is brought into the political arena by political parties, and political ideas find their way between the political party and the people. Only when a party has won the favor of the people can it assemble a nation on its own, when its organization is close to the community, carrying out a program consistent with national affairs and the aspirations of the community. A political party will succeed if it understands the natural path of a nation. This proves that our party is on the right path, that it has won the favor and sympathy of progressive part of the society, people, who live in poverty, democratic and impartial people..." [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1915): 1; Rasulzade (2013): 102].

He emphasized that the main reason for the decline of the Turkic people is the lack of ideas, and stated that the lack of a national idea has led to the absence of a political movement. This idea is to become a cultural and progressive nation together with all the peoples of humanity. It must be underline that Turkism does not mean attacks on other nations or opposition to Islam. Indeed, no nation can be free without national feeling and national thought. You need to fight for many years for freedom.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the national idea of Azerbaijanism, formed as the ideology of Turkism and national unity, actually served to develop the process of national self-awareness of the people. The implementation of the national idea meant national autonomy of the Azerbaijani people, and after the bloody events of March 1918, when thousands of civilians were killed under the leadership of the Baku Council [Azimova (2023): 55], this idea became the vehicle for the creation of an independent state.

It is known that for the development of the ideas of national freedom and national revival requires existence of certain historical conditions. The crisis of the colonial system, the weakening and collapse of empires usually give impetus to the national liberation movement. The national liberation struggle is developing in line with national ideology. Protest against national oppression unites different classes of one nation around a single national idea. This idea was to win the struggle for autonomy, and then independence, at a certain historical stage. M.A. Rasulzade saw the national idea in achieving the goal of building an independent state. In an article published in the issue of the newspaper "Achyg Soz" dated July 5 1917, he expresses his attitude towards to the article by N. Narimanov published in the first issue of the newspaper "Hummat" dated July 3, 1917, quoting part of the main article, that equal life, serious progress, purification and elevation of the soul depend only on the republican method of government. To which Rasulzadeh responds:

"Exactly. On this issue it is impossible not to agree with our new friend. As for the fact that real freedom depends only on the republican method of government, then they probably forget that what is the goal of the republic, firstly, the republic is a gift, and this republican gift is not a goal, but a means" [Rəsulzadə M.Ə. (1917a): 1].

In other words, according to Rasulzadeh, the goal of the republican system should be implementation of the national idea.

Undoubtedly, M.A. Rasulzadeh stood at the forefront of the struggle for the theoretical development of the ideology of Azerbaijanism. It should be noted that there is some unfounded opposition to the name of the republic Azerbaijan. The answer to these claims is all the works of Rasulzade and his concept of independent Azerbaijan. In his works "The Capital of Azerbaijan", "We and Iran" and "The Republic of Azerbaijan", the appearance of the toponym "Azerbaijan" and the coverage of issues of history and

ethnography of Azerbaijan are of great importance. The work of M.A. Rasulzade entitled “The Republic of Azerbaijan” was an important stage in the development of the theoretical foundations of Azerbaijanism. He wrote that the Republic of Azerbaijan is not a name invented by a group of “dreamy” young people and adopted by “irrational” old people, as Tehran newspapers write. The Republic of Azerbaijan is a government created by the Turkish nation of Azerbaijan, which wants to live an independent national life and understand its nationality [Rəsulzadə (2014): 308].

CONCLUSION

Thus, from the above analysis it is clear that the ideology of Azerbaijanism and its creator Rasulzadeh has gone through a long evolutionary path. Here we can show several stages: from the Ummah to social-democratic “Hummat”, from “Hummat” to ethnic nationalism, Turkism and, finally, to Azerbaijanism, to the creation of own independent national state. In other words, the socio-political movement, which began as Islamism and moved on to the social struggle against the colonial authorities. Then with the outbreak of the First World War, it gradually entered the stage of revolutionary humanism, “freedom for people, independence of nations”, and to ethnic nationalism, that is, Turkism. The February revolution and the October coup in Russia led to the propaganda of national autonomy, the collapse of the South Caucasus Seim, then to the propaganda of national independence and, as a consequence, to the creation of the first Azerbaijan Republic, where the ideology of Azerbaijanism became the state policy.

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