

RESEARCH ARTICLE		The political situation in South Azerbaijan during World War I	
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Abstract			
Southern Azerbaijan became a battlefield for Ottoman and Tsarist Russia during World War I. At the same time, foreign missions and missionary organizations of some Western states in the western region of South Azerbaijan organized a small number of Armenians and Aysors who had migrated and lived here in a scattered manner. After the October coup of 1917, the plan to create a united Armenian-Aysor armed group consisting of Armenians-Aysors living here and also newly taking refuge here in the western region of South Azerbaijan was accelerated. The weapons of the returning Russian army were also taken and given to the united Armenian-Aysor armed group that was organized. The created armed group began the mass genocide of Azerbaijanis in the western region of South Azerbaijan in February 1918. As a result of the mass genocide that lasted 6 months, according to the census conducted on the ground by the commission established after the genocide, up to 200 thousand Azerbaijanis became victims of the genocide.			
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Introduction

The tragic events that took place in South Azerbaijan during World War I were actually the result of steps taken after the radical changes that took place in the region several hundred years ago. The strengthening of the Ottoman Empire and its advance towards Europe led to the increased attention of the Gulf States in South Azerbaijan. Especially after the conquest of Istanbul by the Ottoman army, European countries became afraid and began to send their representatives and religious missionaries to Azerbaijan, located east of the Ottoman Empire.

From this period, European countries began to implement two strategic plans, short and long term, against the Turkish states that emerged in Azerbaijan and the Ottoman Empire. In the short strategic plan, in order to prevent the threat of this state in the east of the Ottoman Empire, they sought strong rulers like Amir Temur who could attack the Ottoman Empire from the east, and if necessary, the Europeans, together with the ruler they

¹ Daghfar R. 500 Years of Chalderan or The Link between Iran and Turkey in the Eastern Issue, Nabati Publications, Tabriz 2013, p.28

found, would attack the Ottoman Empire, thus ²preventing the Ottoman Empire from becoming even stronger and expanding into Europe. The Agoyunlu -Ottoman and Safavid-Ottoman wars occurred directly as a result of this sedition. In the long strategic plan, they undertook to instruct and organize the Armenians and Aysors who had migrated to the territory of Azerbaijan and Turkey from time to time and lived scattered. For this purpose, they sent their representatives and missionaries to the region. With the occupation of Azerbaijan by Tsarist Russia, Russian representatives and missionaries came to Azerbaijan and Turkey along with the West. As a result of their long-term activity here, Armenians and Aysors organized themselves and subjected the Turks to genocide at the beginning of the 20th century.

Although the activities of foreign missionaries in the western region of South Azerbaijan date back to previous centuries, their activities intensified at the beginning of the 20th century. As a result of their long-term activities, Armenians and Aysors took a hostile position towards the local Azerbaijani population at the end of the 19th century and from the 20th century. At the same time, as a result of the instructions of the missionaries, the idea of establishing a state for themselves in the territory of Azerbaijan was instilled in the Armenians and Aysors, who lived in small numbers in the region, as a result of the missionaries' instructions. The issue of training and organizing their personnel was also vigorously pursued by foreign missionaries, as well as by the representations of Tsarist Russia and Western states. As a result, the influence and actions of Tsarist Russia and the Western states increased in this region, and as a result of their activities, a serious unstable situation arose here. During the First World War, they had already committed rebellions in the Ottoman territory, and they had also begun to implement a plan to create united Armenian-Aysor armed groups against the Ottomans in the territory of South Azerbaijan. The created armed groups committed a terrible genocide against Azerbaijanis in South Azerbaijan.

Wars between Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire in Southern Azerbaijan

During World War I, South Azerbaijan became a battlefield for Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. On the eve of World War I, the Russians, under the leadership of Chernozubov, strengthened their forces in Azerbaijan under the name of the "Azerbaijani Army". In particular,

the outbreak of World War I created more excuses for the activities of foreign forces in the western region of South Azerbaijan. In fact, although the Qajar state declared its neutrality, the fact that Armenians became a tool against the Ottomans in the hands of Tsarist Russia and Western states, and the presence of Russian troops in South Azerbaijan made it inevitable that South Azerbaijan would become a battlefield. At the same time, South Azerbaijan was of great importance for both ³the Entente and the Triple Alliance ⁴in connection with the war. In addition, since the western region of South Azerbaijan was close to the battlefield of the countries participating in the war, it was inevitable that this region would become a war zone, especially between the Russians and the Turks. "The Ottoman state did not accept Iran's declaration of neutrality, protesting the presence of 10,000 troops of Tsarist Russia in Iran. However, the Russians and the British did not agree with the withdrawal of Tsarist Russian forces from South Azerbaijan." ⁵Therefore, the Ottoman state set itself the goal of expelling the Russians from Southern Azerbaijan by force.

When World War I began, South Azerbaijan was actually occupied by Tsarist Russia. At the same time, since that region bordered the Ottoman Empire, the Ottomans were thinking of expelling the Russians from their border areas, especially from South Azerbaijan. However, instead of withdrawing its troops from the territory of the country that declared its neutrality, Tsarist Russia concluded a new agreement between Russia and England in 1915 regarding the division of Iran. However, the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia did not allow this. ⁶

Another reason that prompted the Ottomans to enter South Azerbaijan was the desire of Azerbaijani devotees who had taken refuge in the Ottoman state. Thus, when the Tsarist Russian army entered South Azerbaijan in 1911 during the Constitutional Revolution, many devotees and constitutionalists who had left South Azerbaijan and taken refuge in the Ottomans were planning to fight the Russians and return to their homeland. However, the Iranian Central Powers were trying to prevent Tsarist

² History of Iran - Safavid Period, Research from Cambridge University, Jami Publications, Second Edition, Tehran, 2005, p.185

³ Nazmi T. Three Pages from the Bloody History of Azerbaijan , Special Issue : Azerbaijan and a Century of Armenians Crimes , Amir Kabir University Azerbaijani Students 'Journal , Tehran, 2004, p.8

⁴ Zare P. Azerbaijan of Iran and Azerbaijan of the Caucasus , Akhtar Publications , Tabriz , 2006, p.72

⁵ Aghazadeh J. and Bayat M. Exile of Iqbal al- Saltaneh Makui in World War I: Examples of Russian Interventions in Iran's Internal Affairs , Quarterly Journal of the Treasure of Documents No. 76, Year 19, Issue 4, Tehran 2009, p. 12-13

⁶ Fani K. World Wars I and II, Scientific and Cultural Publishing Company , Tehran, 1998, p.25

Russia and the Ottomans from clashing in South Azerbaijan. The Ottomans agreed not to attack on the condition that Tsarist Russia withdrew from South Azerbaijan. However, Tsarist Russia announced that it had withdrawn its troops from Iran and that only a small part remained to ensure the safety of Russian citizens. Thus, all of Iran's efforts in this direction were in vain.⁷

Amir Heshmet, one of the Azerbaijani mujahideen who took refuge with the Ottomans at the beginning of World War I. A large group of Azerbaijani constitutionalists living in the territory of the Nisari and Ottoman states attacked and defeated Russian positions in Mevane, located 2 farsakhs (each farsakh is 6240 m - *HS*) from Urmia. The troops of Tsarist Russia in South Azerbaijan retreated from the village of Anhar near Urmia to Urmia, where they began to consolidate their positions.⁸

Amir Hishmat, one of the South Azerbaijan mujahideen Nisari himself described the battle against Tsarist Russia as follows: "I, along with about 200 of my colleagues Haji Mirza Aghabuluri, Mirza Nurullah Khan Yekani, Hashim Khan, Nusratullah Khan, Farsalmalik and others, reached Ravanduz. We decided to attack the Russians at night. We entered from the Bazargan border and attacked the Russian army. In the battle that ensued, the Russians were defeated and retreated. Here, numerous Kurdish groups joined us and our numbers increased. We followed the Russian army. Another battle broke out in Mawana. The Russians resisted for 2 days. There were many deaths on both sides. We won. In Mawana (The area near Urmia - *HS*) Aysor and Armenians massacred Muslims (Azerbaijanis - *HS*). They did not even spare children and women and created a very miserable situation..."⁹

the pressure of Russian troops on Urmia by the Mujahideen and the siege of the city, the Ottoman army under the command of the Governor of Van, Cevdet Bey, approached Urmia and besieged Urmia on December 29, 1914. However, the Ottomans were defeated by the Russians and retreated. The Ottomans retreated along the Urmia road to the village of Anhar and the famous Juhudlar Mountain, where the Jewish cemetery was located. The Russians, on the other hand, fired artillery at

Juhudlar Mountain from the city's tower. The situation continued like this for about a month.¹⁰

Armed the Aysors and Armenians, who were in competition with the local population in the face of the attack of the Azerbaijani mujahideen and the Ottomans. Tsarist Russia also ordered Shuja-ad-Dovla to return to South Azerbaijan and gather troops to fight against the Turks. Thus, "in the fall of 1914, the former head of Azerbaijan, Samad Khan Shuja-ad-Dovla, the commander of the cavalry army, who lived in Tbilisi, returned to Maragha without the permission of the Iranian government. Upon arrival, he began to lead the Muqadam tribe. He intended to participate in the battles against the Ottoman army in southwestern Azerbaijan together with the Russian army. When the Iranian government appealed to Russia, they replied that coming to Iran was Shuja-ad-Dovla's personal initiative." "However, Tsarist Russia intended to use the population of South Azerbaijan against the Ottomans through Shuja-ad-Dovla. Thus, Shuja'ed-Dawla, who returned to South Azerbaijan, organized "Izagi, Sili, Emiriye and other regiments to fight the Ottomans. He did not hesitate to appropriate even state property in this direction. In order to equip the regiments he had gathered, S. Shoja'ed-Dawla forcibly took 60 horses from a person named Haji Taghi, who controlled the state's reserve horse herds in the Binab and Maragha regions, into his army."¹¹

However, after the Ottomans entered South Azerbaijan, this regiment (the regiment organized by Samad Khan Shuja'ed-Dawla - *HS*), which consisted mostly of Azerbaijanis, refused to fight against the Turks, and the Russians were defeated in the battle with the Turkish army. Soon, the strong Ottoman army units clashed with the Russians. They defeated the Russians in a fierce battle and advanced. Thus, Shuja'ed-Dawla's army could not stand against the Ottomans and was defeated. He himself barely escaped capture. The Russians were frightened by that defeat and "decided to evacuate Tabriz and Urmia so that the troops or Russian citizens would not be besieged by the Ottomans. First, "on January 1, 1915, the military forces of Tsarist Russia evacuated Urmia and

⁷Dehghan A. The Land of Zoroaster Rezaieh, Ibn Sina Publications, Tehran, 1969, p.463

⁸Dehghan A. The Land of Zoroaster Rezaieh, Ibn Sina Publications, Tehran, 1969, p.463

⁹Kasravi A. 18-Years History of Azerbaijan, Amir Kabir Publications, Tehran, 1971, p. 601

¹⁰Melikzadeh T. Ten Thousand-Year History of Salmas and Western Azerbaijan, Eldar Publication, Tabriz, 2005, p.289

¹¹Aliev M. History of Iran 20th century. Moscow: Iv ran - Kravt+, 2004, p. 66-67

¹²Safari H. South Azerbaijan: The Genocide of 1918, Baku, Araz Publishing House, 2016, p. 31

¹³Babak H. Face of Bonab, Homazar Publishing, Tabriz, 2005, p.256

¹⁴Kasravi A. 18-Years History of Azerbaijan, Amir Kabir Publications, Tehran, 1971, p. 603

Salmas and retreated towards Kars. The Armenians and Aysors, who were hostile to the Azerbaijanis along with the Russians, were also alarmed by the unexpected retreat of the Russians and acted hastily. Many of them set out in the cold of winter, without any preparation and without any means necessary for life. In fact, the Armenians and Aysors were afraid and fled, even though there was no danger, but simply because they had betrayed the Ottoman and Azerbaijani Turks. It is also evident from the report No. 710 dated September 26, 2014, of the clerk of the Iranian central government appointed to Urmia, which is in the archive documents of the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that in fact there was complete calm during the days when the Ottomans arrived in Urmia and there was no reason for the Armenians to be afraid and flee.¹⁵

At the same time, despite the Armenians and Aysors siding with the occupying Russian army and committing massacres and robberies against the local population, Azerbaijanis always protected them from any possible and probable danger. Thus, during times of tension, most of the Christians living here stayed in the houses of Muslim Azerbaijanis. For example, in the village of Tulatepa in Urmia, 500 Aysors settled in the house of Sadralfuzala. In the village of Heydarli in the Nazlichay region of Urmia, 250 Aysors lived in complete peace in the house of Sarim Nezam. In Salmas, such situations were also characteristic both in the villages and in the city of Dilman and in Kohneshahr. The rulers of the cities of Urmia, Salmas, Maku, and Khoy took upon themselves the responsibility of ensuring peace in their territories and worked for the well-being of the city population.¹⁶

Retreated for a short time, when the Tsarist Russian army returned to the city of Urmia, "the Armenians - Aysors returned to Urmia. The situation became tense again, the population of Urmia again faced murder, robbery and anarchy. The Armenians and Aysors are demanding compensation for the injuries they allegedly suffered during their emigration. Under the protection of Tsarist Russia, they did not hesitate to commit any crime¹⁷ they could in the city and in all the villages."

After the Tsarist Russian army withdrew from most parts of South Azerbaijan, "on January 14, 1915, the Ottoman

army entered Tabriz, almost without resistance."¹⁸ At that time, Sardar Rashid, the governor of Urmia, had solemnly welcomed the Ottomans entering South Azerbaijan. He even went far outside the city with the mujtahids of Tabriz to welcome the Turks with bread and salt, and then gave a grand banquet in honor of their chiefs.

After the Ottoman army entered South Azerbaijan, it tried to use the common ethnic and religious factor with the local population to expel the Russians from South Azerbaijan. Thus, the head of the volunteer group, Ahmad Mukhtar Bey, appealed to the local population and claimed that friendship had been established between the last Qajar Shah, Ahmad Shah, and Sultan Mehmet Rashad and an alliance had been concluded to expel the Russians from Iran and South Azerbaijan. They even posted notices on the streets, stating that the reason for their arrival in South Azerbaijan was to pave the way for an attack on Russia. Later, a meeting of the Turkish army and representatives of the population was held in the Gecil cemetery of Tabriz. At this meeting, the leaders of the army, Ibrahim Fovzi Pasha, Ahmad Mukhtar Bey, and Haji Mirza Agha Billuri and Huseyn Agha Fishangchi, who were supporters of the Turks in Tabriz, spoke and called on the population to wage a "holy" war.¹⁹

Part of the territory of South Azerbaijan was already in the hands of the Ottomans, and the other part was under the occupation of Tsarist Russia. At that time, the northern parts of South Azerbaijan up to Salmas and Tabriz were in the hands of the Russians, and Urmia and the southern parts of Azerbaijan were in the hands of the Ottomans. However, many of the military operations carried out ended with the defeat of the Ottomans. At such a time, "Khalil Bey entered Azerbaijan with a complete army and began to fight the Russians in Salmas. However, he was defeated by the Russians and retreated. Thus, all of Azerbaijan again fell under the influence of Tsarist Russia."²⁰

On January 15, 1915, the 100,000-strong Ottoman army under the command of Enver Pasha was defeated by the Russians in Sarıqamış, Erzurum, and Kars due to severe weather conditions. The Ottoman army was gradually pushed out of South Azerbaijan and Eastern Anatolia, and "on January 17, the city of Tabriz was reoccupied by the Tsarist troops." From the beginning of the spring of

¹⁵ Iran and World War I, Documents of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, edited by Kaveh Bayat, National Documents Organization Publications, Tehran, 1980, p.218

¹⁶ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide. Baku: Baku Printing House, 2010, p.18

¹⁷ Tamadon M. Iran's Situation in the First War or the History of Rezaieh, Tamadon, Tehran, 1971, pp. 125-126

¹⁸ Modern Iran, Ed. BN Zakhoder. Moscow: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1957, p.209

¹⁹ Safari H. South Azerbaijan: The Genocide of 1918, Baku, Araz Publishing House, 2016, p. 33

²⁰ Malekzadeh T. History of the Urmia - Darul Nishat, Yaz Publishing, Urmia 1999, p.83

1915, the Ottomans directed all their forces to capture the city of Khoy and push the Russians back from Azerbaijan. To this end, on January 9 and 15, 1915, Ottoman forces attacked Russian positions in Khoy. On January 12, they attacked Marand from the vicinity of Tabriz, keeping Khoy under pressure. " However, the Ottomans were defeated in the Battle of "Marand." After this defeat, the army units of Tsarist Russia advanced further. Thus, the Russian army, which won the Sarikamış operation, broke the resistance of the Ottoman army on the Caucasus front and began to push the Ottomans out of there from January 1915.²²

In February 1915, Ismayilagh, the leader of the Shekkak Kurdish tribe, who fought against the Ottomans on behalf of the Russians, along with Samad Khan Shuja'ed-Dawla, Simitgo sided with the Ottomans and joined the jihad they had declared. Thus, one of the important strongholds of Tsarist Russia in South Azerbaijan was lost. Nevertheless, the troops of Tsarist Russia continued to advance. On February 17, Russian forces advancing in the Tabriz- Salmas direction occupied the Tasuj area. Later, on February 20, the Gotur region was occupied by the Russians. On February 25, the Ottomans withdrew from the Qizilchay region of Salmas and concentrated in the Berkishlu mountains north of Dilman, the center of the Salmas area.²³The forces of Tsarist Russia advanced and occupied Dilman and Kohneshaher in early March 1915. New forces were constantly coming to Khoy and Salmas from the East Bayazid to help the Russians. The Ottomans, under the command of the governor of Van, took up positions in the Kohneshaher-Deyr-Başqala direction and tried to prevent Russian attacks on Van. However, the Armenians who fought in the Russian army against the Ottomans in Van and Eastern Anatolia aggravated the situation in that region. As a result of their betrayal and assistance to the Russians, the Ottomans were gradually losing their positions. At that time, the number of Armenian²⁴ volunteers alone fighting against Turkey in the Russian army was about 10,000. In general, more than 250,000 Armenians living in the Russian Empire were mobilized.²⁵

As World War I began, "when the Russian Caucasian army began its offensive in the direction of Van, the American historian Stanford Shaw wrote that the main part of this army was made up of volunteer Armenians." Armenians did not fight only in the Russian army. All the armies fighting against the Ottomans were joined by volunteer Armenian units. These armies "were joined by volunteers from various parts of the world, from Bukhara to America, from wherever Armenians had set foot."²⁶

In the continuation of the events, "On March 17, 1915, a large Ottoman army led by Khalil Pasha reached South Azerbaijan and entered Urmia within a few days. After Khalil Bey's army entered Urmia, peace reigned in the city again. Khalil Bey prevented the murder and plunder of Kurds and other robbers. The population was able to breathe a sigh of relief, albeit temporarily.²⁷The local population, tired of the oppression of the Russians, Armenians and Aysors, welcomed them with joy. Khalil Pasha's soldiers were disciplined, educated and cultured. However, Russian officials collected money from the population, came to the battlefield and hurt the people. The more the people were fed up with the Russians and the Armenians who were in league with them, the more they rejoiced at the arrival of the Ottoman army. At this time, the city of Salmas had fallen into the hands of the forces of Tsarist Russia, and General Nazarbekov He occupied Salmas and Khoy and stationed Russian troops there. The army under the command of Nazarbekov also included the 1st brigade, headed by Andranik. Then this brigade was sent to the vicinity of Tabriz and Sofyan to reinforce the Russian forces in South Azerbaijan. On March 2, the brigade was called to the city of Khoy and was again placed under the command of Nazarbekov.²⁸

Shortly after Urmia was captured by the Ottoman forces on March 17, 1915, the Ottoman forces gathered information about the Russian gathering places and prepared to move towards Salmas. "The forces that set out started moving from Urmia on April 11 with abundant supplies and reached the village of Kahriz, located between Urmia and Salmas, on the evening of April 12. Here, the 19th Border Battalion set off towards the village of Istisu, and the Ravanduz Battalion towards the village of Gushchu. On the evening of April 13, these forces reached the

²¹ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide . Baku : Baku Printing House , 2010, p.19

²²Modern Iran, Ed. BN Zakhoder . Moscow: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1957, p.291

²³ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide . Baku : Baku Printing House , 2010, p.21

²⁴ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide . Baku : Baku Printing House , 2010, p.21

²⁵ Rahimoglu H. Indelible names, incurable wounds. Baku: Azernashr , 1997, p. 33

²⁶ Perinchek M. The Armenian Question in 120 Documents from Russian State Archives. M.: Laboratory of Books, 2011, p. 67

²⁷ Ashrafi G. The Looters - The Bloody Events of Urmia in the First World War, Akhtar, Tabriz 1387, p.32

²⁸ Gahramanov N. The Armenian factor on the Caucasus front in World War I. Baku: "EL" Publishing and Printing Company LLC, 2008, p. 77

south of the Gushchu pass and on April 14, near the village of Dalikan (Gushchu pass) on the Urmia- Salmas road.” “The Azerbaijani commander ²⁹Majdussaltane and a group of mujahideen also participated ³⁰in that military expedition to free Salmas from Russian occupation.”

On April 16, 1915, the Ottoman military forces began to advance according to the previously agreed plan at 6:00 a.m. The advancing Ottoman army encountered Russian military forces stationed at Shorgöl. The Ottoman military forces first sent tribal forces to the region to weaken the Russians. However, the Russian artillery, located in the Dirish village of Salmas and capable of long-range fire, fired on the Ottoman troops gathered at Shorgöl. In contrast, the long-range firing level of the Ottoman artillery was low. Russian cavalry units had gathered in the Khantakhti region behind the infantry stationed at Shorgöl. The Ottomans sent more than 300 Ottoman cavalry units to Khantakhti to fight against the Russian cavalry units. In the battle that took place between the cavalry forces of the two countries at Khantakhti, the Russians were able to withstand the Ottoman attack.

³¹First, the 19th Ottoman Border Battalion was sent to help these forces. Following this, the Russians also brought additional auxiliary forces to this region. In Khantakhti, the Ottomans captured Dirish Hill to confuse the Russians and approached the positions of the Tsarist Russian army in that village. However, Russian infantry and cavalry units were sent to this region. Since the Ottoman forces did not have an additional strong regular army, they could not send new forces to the hill. In the end, the Ottoman cavalry units were forced to retreat from their positions on Dirish Hill, and this hill fell into the hands of Russian forces. In this clash, the Russians inflicted serious blows on the Ottoman 19th border battalion. However, after the clash, the Tsarist Russian forces withdrew from both Khantakhti and Dirish Hill. Thus, on April 15, 1915, the Battle of Salmas ended and the field forces stopped around ³²Shorgöl. However, following the first battle, a second battle took place in the Dilman region between the troops of Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman troops. After the 9th battalion of the Ottomans in the region started moving from the Shorgöl region, the Russians, who were positioned south

of the village of Dirish, fired on the Ottoman troops. The Ottomans returned fire and fired on the Russian forces positioned on Dirish Hill. First, the Ottoman infantry and then the artillery launched a rapid attack. The Russian troops also took the guns they had placed on Dirish Hill and withdrew to Dilman. On April 16, 1915, the fighting between the troops of the two countries continued sharply in the Salmas region of South Azerbaijan. The telegram sent by the Russians to Tehran after the capture of Salmas states that the number of Ottoman casualties was 9,500. ³³That night, Russian artillery sporadically fired on Ottoman positions. Due to the small number of Ottoman forces, they were unable to conduct reconnaissance of the positions of Tsarist Russian troops.³⁴

In the western part of South Azerbaijan, where the genocide later took place, the battle between the Tsarist Russian and Ottoman troops continued in this way. However, in fact, the heavy defeat of the Ottoman army units at Sarıqamış in the second half of January 1915 led to the weakening of the Ottomans on this front. With the advance of the Tsarist Russian troops, the Ottoman army units decided to withdraw from South Azerbaijan. Thus, the advancing forces left the Salmas plain on April 29 and 30. Thus, Russia, taking advantage of the weakening of the military power of Turkey in South Azerbaijan, which had mobilized all its forces to the front battle front, again penetrated South Azerbaijan with the help of its allies.

The situation after the Ottomans withdrew from South Azerbaijan

The defeated retreat of the Ottoman Empire to South Azerbaijan was the beginning of the processes leading to the creation of an Armenian-Aysor armed group there and the creation of genocide against Azerbaijanis. During a period of tense events in Azerbaijan, “In April 1915, Crown Prince Muhammad Hasan Mirzajan arrived in Tabriz at the invitation of the Azerbaijani population. The Azerbaijani population welcomed him in an unprecedented way. Everyone hoped that with the arrival of the Crown Prince to Tabriz, state power in Azerbaijan would be restored. One of his initial decisions was to change the laws imposed by the Russians. It was planned to send Prince Imamgulu Mirza to the city of Urmia.

²⁹ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide . Baku : Baku Printing House , 2010, p. 29

³⁰ Ashrafi G. The Looters - The Bloody Events of Urmia in the First World War, Akhtar, Tabriz 1387, p.47

³¹ Melikzadeh T. Ten Thousand-Year History of Salmas and Western Azerbaijan, Eldar Publication, Tabriz, 2005, p.296

³² Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide . Baku : Baku Printing House , 2010, p. 31

³³ Malekzadeh T. Salmas in the History and Culture of Azerbaijan, Volume 1, 1999, Eldar , Tabriz, p.169

³⁴ Melikzadeh T. Ten Thousand-Year History of Salmas and Western Azerbaijan, Eldar Publication, Tabriz, 2005, p.297

However, the Russian consul in Urmia objected to his appointment. Taking this into account, he was assigned to the city of Maragha.”³⁵ Some time later, “Muhammad Hasan’s uncle, Muhammadhuseyn Mirza Yaminaddovla, was appointed governor of Urmia. This choice was unsuccessful and his rule did not last more than a month. During this time, with the help of the Russian consul, the Armenians and Aysors took everything they could from the Azerbaijanis. Later, Muazziddovla was appointed to this position. He went under the protection of the Russians in order to remain in power.”³⁶ However, the decision of the Russian protection was canceled after the Azerbaijani clerk Sharifaddovla met with the responsible employee of the Russian consulate. Finally, as the head of the palace organization of the crown prince in Azerbaijan, the head of internal affairs and the minister, Prince Muazziddovla left for Urmia in mid-July 1915. Muazziddovla was also the mayor of Tabriz.³⁷

If in South Azerbaijan there were previously secret preparations for the genocide against Muslim Azerbaijanis and the establishment of a Christian-Armenian state on their territory, after the withdrawal of the Ottoman army from South Azerbaijan, open preparations began for the realization of that plan and, as a result, the genocide against Azerbaijani Turks. Tsarist Russia, especially the consul of Tsarist Russia in Urmia B. Nikitin, England, the USA and France played a major role in this matter. However, since South Azerbaijan was actually occupied by Tsarist Russia, Tsarist Russia directly created conditions for the genocide to be committed in the western region of Azerbaijan, namely in Urmia, Salmas and the surrounding areas. It can be said that for almost 9 years, until the revolution in Russia in 1917 and the fall of Tsarist Russia, the events taking place in Urmia and in South Azerbaijan in general were under the control of Tsarist Russia.³⁸ In order to ensure order in Urmia, the Iranian Central Government appointed Yaminaddawla, Mohammadssadiq Mirza Muazziddawla, and Etimaddawla as the governors of Urmia. However, the Russians managed the situation in Urmia through both the military com-

mand and the Russian consulate, which was reopened after the Ottomans withdrew, headed by Basel³⁹ Nitikiti.

defeat of the Ottoman army in the battles in the Salmas region and the retreat of the Ottomans, the troops of Tsarist Russia carried out a series of operations to take full control of South Azerbaijan. They began to advance from the southern part of Lake Urmia to the north and towards the city of Urmia. On May 12 and 13, 1915, the forces of Tsarist Russia crossed the Jigati River and stopped near Miandab. They sent reconnaissance forces in the direction of Sayingala and Mahabad. On May 15, 1915, they advanced towards Mahabad with their cavalry and clashed with Kurdish groups near Amirabad. They pushed them back and captured Mahabad that day. Almost no one remained in Savujbulag or the city of Mahabad. The burned-out building of the Russian consulate was still burning. A few days before the occupation of Savujbulag, the Russian consul Colonel Yas, who was staying there, was killed by the Kurds, and his head was displayed on spears in villages and towns. After⁴⁰ entering the city, they began to massacre the remaining population. On May 16, Russian cavalry units stopped in the Savujbulag area. They began to conduct reconnaissance in the direction of “Sardasht and Ushnaviyya. Then, on May 18, their cavalry units advanced to Ushnaviyya. They approached. They captured it by fighting. The Tsarist Russian army that captured Ushnaviyya “stopped here on May 19, 1915, and conducted reconnaissance work in the western and southern directions.”⁴²

Ushnaviyya, the military units of Tsarist Russia moved north along difficult mountain roads and occupied Urmia on May 24, 1915. They stayed in this city for about a week. “Later, a large corps led by Sherbantiye, consisting of soldiers, Cossacks and Armenians, entered Azerbaijani territory. They occupied “Miandab and Savujbulag from Sofian to Tabriz with Cossacks called Dragoons, most of whom were spearmen.”

The entry of the Russians, followed by the Aysors and Armenians into Urmia again aggravated the situation. The people of Urmia faced massacres, robberies, confusion and danger. When the Aysors and Armenians fled,

³⁵ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide . Baku : Baku Printing House , 2010, p. 50

³⁶ Melikzadeh T. Ten Thousand-Year History of Salmas and Western Azerbaijan, Eldar Publication, Tabriz, 2005, p.306

³⁷ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide . Baku : Baku Printing House , 2010, p. 50

³⁸ Malekzadeh T. Salmas in the History and Culture of Azerbaijan, Volume 1, 1999, Eldar , Tabriz, p.183

³⁹ Urmia Letters, edited by Kaveh Bayat , Foruzan Rooz Publishing and Research, Tehran 1380, p.17

⁴⁰ Kasravi A. 18-Years History of Azerbaijan , Amir Kabir Publications , Tehran, 1971, p.616

⁴¹ Kasravi A. 18-Years History of Azerbaijan , Amir Kabir Publications , Tehran, 1971, p.616

⁴² Gholimajd M. The Great Famine (1917-1919), Institute of Political Studies and Research, Tehran, 2008, p. 49

⁴³ Gholimajd M. The Great Famine (1917-1919), Institute of Political Studies and Research, Tehran, 2008, p. 43

they demanded compensation for the damage inflicted on them by the Azerbaijani and Ottoman Turks. This "aggravated the situation of the local population, who were already living in unbearable conditions. They made false claims against the population and appropriated their property.

Since the spring of 1915, battles between the Ottoman army and the Tsarist Russian army have been ongoing in the Ottoman territory. With the beginning of 1916, the Tsarist Russian army inflicted a heavy defeat on the Ottoman army in Erzurum. After that, the retreat of the Ottoman army from South Azerbaijan allowed Russia and the Western powers to implement their plans to create an Armenian state in that region. Therefore, work was accelerated in this direction to create a united Armenian-Aysor armed group consisting of the Aysors who had taken refuge in the territory of South Azerbaijan, as well as Armenians.

Creation of the Armenian-Aysor armed group

the creation of a united Armenian-Aysor armed group began at the end of 1917. Western states and Russia incited the Aysors, along with the Armenians, to fight against the Ottoman state. In the ensuing battle, they were defeated and migrated en masse to the west of South Azerbaijan. In September 1915, the first group of Aysors, consisting of 25 thousand people, took refuge and settled in Salmas and the surrounding areas.⁴⁵ S.A. Kasravi wrote that the Jilos consisted of 12 thousand families⁴⁶. However, the total number of Aysors who came to the western part of South Azerbaijan from Ottoman territory was recorded as 40 thousand people.

The Aysors' taking refuge in the west of South Azerbaijan, the arrival of Armenians, also known as fugitive Armenians, to the region, and the joining of Armenians and Aysors who had previously settled in this region, created conditions for the creation of joint Armenian-Aysor armed groups played a major role in preparing the Armenians and Aysors for war in the western region of South Azerbaijan. They arrested Azerbaijanis who opposed this and generally "everyone they suspected and sent them to the dungeons of Iravan and Tiflis. They even arrested and imprisoned some of their supporters, including Haji Hasan Tacirbashi and Gulamalikhhan

Agha. The Russians also arrested the Kurdish Simitgon and took him to Tiflis. However, knowing that he was useful for the future plans of Tsarist Russia, they released him, and even determined a monthly salary. "The Russians also "arrested six Azerbaijanis "with a beard who opposed Russian and Armenian crimes and hanged them at the Askerkhan gate of Urmia."⁴⁸

During the First World War, the Russian consul in Urmia, B. Nikitin, in his work "The Iran I Knew", describes the Kurdish leaders as immoral people who did not keep their word and were not loyal to their word. However, despite this, the Russians did not include the Kurdish leaders in their plans against the Turks, including the leaders of Bitlis. He notes that a lot of money was given to the leader of the Shahmanish tribe, but no results were achieved. He also states that I. Simitgo was given many gifts and medals by the presentation of the consul of Tsarist Russia in the city of Khoy.⁴⁹

I. Simitgo became a tool in the hands of the Russians who defended the Armenians and Aysors and played a close role in the capture and execution of Azerbaijanis who fought against the Russian occupation. Thus, Bakhshalikhhan, the brother of Kochali and Shirelikhan, who went over to the side of the Ottoman army and fought against Tsarist Russia and was executed by the Russians for their fighting Yekani was also captured by I. Simitgon and sold to the Russians. The incident happened so that Bakhshalikhhan After the Ottomans retreated, Yekani remained in South Azerbaijan and one day visited I. Simitgo's house. I. Simitgo welcomed him well, but in order to please the Russians, he caught him while he was sleeping at night, took him to Khoy and handed him over to the troops of Tsarist Russia. The Russians hanged him in the square of the city of Khoy.⁵⁰

In general, the Entente countries planned to use the Armenians. They promised the Armenians that if the Armenians fought against the Turkish states, they would be granted autonomy.⁵¹ The missionary organizations and

⁴⁷ Riahi M. History of Khoy , Tehran, No Publications, Tarhe , 1999, p.454

⁴⁸ Ghasemzad Sh. History and Culture of the Kure Sunlis , Yaz Publishing, Urmia , 2012, p.44

⁴⁹ Nikitin B. Memoirs and Travelogue of Monsieur B. Nikitin , Former Russian Consul in Iran, Kanoon Marafet Publications, Tehran, 1998, p.229-230

⁵⁰ Riahi M. History of Khoy , Tehran, No Publications, Tarhe , 1999, p.455

⁵¹ Mammadova H. The political situation in Upper Karabakh during the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic: the strengthening of Armenian terrorism (1918-1920). Baku: Nagyl Home , 2006, p. 18

foreign diplomatic representatives of the Russian and Western countries in Urmia also incited the Christians in this direction, promising them that they would help establish a state in the territory of the Azerbaijanis. On the other hand, they set themselves the goal of turning them against the local population and creating united Armenian-Aysorian armed groups. Their work in this area was also acknowledged by them.⁵³ The consul of Tsarist Russia in Urmia, B. Nikitin, wrote about the activities of the Christian groups to be organized in Urmia that this new organization should provide for the Christians, and in addition, it should also participate in the operations of the Turkish front. The creation of the united Armenian-Aysorian armed group was the most important task of Tsarist Russia and foreign missionary organizations. B. Nikitin writes in his memoirs about the organization of the united Armenian-Aysorian armed group: "The disorder and anarchy in the Russian army put the Christian front in a dangerous situation. Out of desperation, a delegation went to Tiflis in October 1917 and asked for help from state representatives. After this delegation arrived, General Lebedinsky immediately informed me that a decision had been made to organize a combined Armenian-Aysorian armed detachment in Urmia. Of course, the Allied military attaches, Colonel Chardigny, Captain March, Major Stacks and Colonel Pyke, also agreed with this decision."⁵⁴

Financial and technical assistance was also promised by the Entente bloc. Three French officers immediately began to organize. The British High Commission in Hamadan, Mr. Mack Mac Murray, as well as General Karpov, who was in Urmia, had also sent a telegram regarding the payment of the necessary aid when the Christian army began to be organized.⁵⁴

In January 1918, Captain Gracy came to Urmia under the pretext of protecting the Armenians and held a meeting. He also organized a large rally to establish contact with the Aysors. The leaders of the Aysors approved his statement and plans. It was decided to send 250 Russian officers to Urmia and organize the Aysors (a Christian armed group consisting of Armenians and Aysors)...

They were insisted on sending them the necessary money and military equipment.⁵⁵

However, the Western states' plan to establish an independent Aysor (Armenian-Aysor-HS) state in western Azerbaijan with Urmia as its center was exposed and reached the ears of officials in Tabriz. The Democratic Provincial Committee sent information to Tehran by telegraph and demanded that this issue be prevented. The provisional government in Tehran began discussions with the United States and England. The result of this was only that the US embassy published the following response in the newspapers: "The US government has not sent money to create an army for Christians. The US embassy considers this to be a lie." In fact, the issue was that the money was sent from the United States not by the state, but by some religious mission. The money that the mission sent in a certain amount under the guise of donating to the poor was spent by the missionaries to organize a united Armenian-Aysor armed group. In Urmia, the city's ruler, Ajalal Almulk wrote letters to various foreign consulates, expressing his concern about Christians forming armed groups, but to no avail.⁵⁶

On the other hand, after the October coup of 1917, most of the Tsarist Russian troops stationed in the western region of South Azerbaijan sold their weapons to the Armenians and Aysors at cheap prices when they returned to Russia. The leaders of the Armenians and Aysors, who were encouraged to establish a Christian state in the west of South Azerbaijan by the instigation of the British, Russians and other foreign countries, were able to easily arm all the Christians who came to the region or lived here in a short time. "Although all religions command to refrain from massacre, the leader of the Aysors, B. Marshimon, "He encouraged Christians (Armenians-HS) and Aysors to buy weapons to prepare for war and arm themselves, even though he should not have consented⁵⁷ to the massacre."

that the forces participating in the organization of the joint Armenian-Aysorian armed group in Urmia consisted of the following :

⁵³ Nikitin B. *The Iranian I Have Known*, Marefat Publishing House, Tehran 1941, p. 218

⁵⁴ Nikitin B. *Memoirs and Travelogue of Monsieur B. Nikitin*, Former Russian Consul in Iran, Kanoon Marafet Publications, Tehran, 1998, p. 236

⁵⁵ Kavianpour A. *History of Urmia*, first edition, Tehran 1999, p.243

⁵⁵ Safari H. *The role of missionary organizations in the genocide in the western region of South Azerbaijan in 1918*, "South Azerbaijan: History and modernity", Baku, Zardabi Publishing House, 2014, p. 14

⁵⁶ Azadi M. *History of the Massacre of the Muslims of Azerbaijan by the Front*, Hesameddin Chalabi Publications, Urmia, 1980, p. 35

⁵⁷ Azadi M. *History of the Massacre of the Muslims of Azerbaijan by the Front*, Hesameddin Chalabi Publications, Urmia, 1980, p.37

1. "About 12 thousand Cilo (Aysor) families from Turkey;
2. About 20 thousand Armenian and Aysor families from Urmia and surrounding areas;
3. About 5-6 thousand Armenians who came to help from Yerevan and Russia;
4. 800 Russian officers who did not go to Russia and remained here;
5. 75 French officers who assisted the Christian army that was created;
6. American consul Dr. A. Shed, who played a leading role in the massacre politically and militarily, and Gujel, the head of the French hospital in the region ;

Those who led the massacre were Bunyamin "Marshimon, Agha Petros and Melik Khushabe were ⁵⁸." Another source mentions the Armenians who came from Yerevan and Nakhchivan to Urmia and Salmas and joined the combined Armenian-Aysor armed group and were called fugitive Armenians. The number of their armed forces is recorded at 6 thousand. Among their leaders The names of Artush, Khartun, Yaqurt, Hambarsun, Petros, Dichag, Sumbat and others are mentioned ⁵⁹. Thus, the combined Armenian-Aysorian armed forces that committed genocide against Azerbaijanis in the Gheb region of South Azerbaijan were created.

The genocide committed by the joint Armenian-Aysorian armed group in South Azerbaijan

The Armenian-Aysor armed group formed in the western region of South Azerbaijan took action to implement the previously outlined plan for the creation of the "Greater Armenia" state. Since the majority of the population here consisted of Azerbaijanis and the small number of Armenians who moved here from time to time lived in scattered conditions, there were no real conditions for the creation of an Armenian-Christian state. Therefore, it was decided to achieve demographic change solely through the genocide of the local Turkish-Muslim population. In this direction, the united Armenian-Aysor armed groups attacked villages and settlements every day from January 23, 1918, killing peaceful Azerbaijanis. ⁶⁰On February 16, 1918, the united Armenian-

Aysor armed groups were already obstructing the population on the streets of Urmia and even attacking them. ⁶¹On February 19, 1918, a shootout broke out between the local police forces of the city and the united Armenian-Aysor armed groups. One of the Jilos died and while they were running away, they killed 4 innocent people. On Wednesday, February 20, about 100 people from the Muslim population were killed outside the city by Armenian-Aysor armed groups. Their bodies were left on the ground due to the dangerous situation. The city's ruler asked the leaders of the Armenian-Aysor armed groups to send a part of their forces to create security so that the Muslims could take the bodies of their killed and bury them. They did not even agree to this. Despite all the discussions, the bodies of about 100 killed Muslims remained in the square. Therefore, on Friday, February 22, two fearless residents of Urmia named Qardash and Dadash decided to bring the bodies of the killed to the city themselves and bury them. At sunset, as they were leaving the city, they encountered several Jilos near the Hazaran gate. A conflict broke out between the parties. As soon as the gunshots were heard, the combined Armenian-Aysorian armed groups located all over the city began to open fire. It turned out that they had decided among themselves in advance that they would start the massacre as soon as they heard the first shot. they will start. ⁶²

Muslims had no enmity with Christians, nor did they intend to fight them. They did not expect that they would be subjected to mass genocide. They did not have weapons in their hands. Only a very small number of people were secretly sold weapons by a number of Russian soldiers while they were going to their own countries. The population of the city was caught unaware and by surprise. Thus, on the evening of Friday, February 22, 1918, the first 3-day genocide of the population began in Urmia. On the orders of Agha Petros, the head of the united Armenian-Aysor armed groups, an armed group from the Askerkhan neighborhood attacked neighboring apartments where Muslims lived. Muslims, who did not expect such a swift and brutal attack, were caught by surprise. After attacking the house, the Armenian-Aysor armed group killed the owners, robbed the house of its belongings, and then burned it. A large group of Muslims from Novgeçer, Yurtşah, and other neighborhoods es-

⁵⁸ Azadi M. History of the Massacre of the Muslims of Azerbaijan by the Front, Hesameddin Chalabi Publications, Urmia , 1980, p. 48-49

⁵⁹Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide. Baku: Baku Printing House, 2010, p. 98

⁶⁰ Dehghan A. The Land of Zoroaster Rezaieh , Ibn Sina Publications, Tehran, 1969, p.449

⁶¹ Azadi M. History of the Massacre of the Muslims of Azerbaijan by the Front, Hesameddin Chalabi Publications, Urmia , 1980, p.51

⁶² Dehghan A. The Land of Zoroaster Rezaieh , Ibn Sina Publications, Tehran, 1969, p.500

caped death and took refuge in neighborhoods inhabited by Muslims.⁶³ Within a few hours, the city of Urmia was surrounded by the combined Armenian-Aysorian armed groups from all sides, and artillery shells and bombs began to rain down on the population from all sides of the city. The helpless population surrendered and was forced to open the gates. Before the population surrendered, the religious leader of the combined Armenian-Aysorian armed groups, B. Marshimon, had ordered the armed groups to massacre the population within a few hours. Therefore, after the population surrendered, the Armenian-Aysorian groups that entered the city killed everyone they saw, including women, men, and children (6, p. 589). This was not enough, they also attacked the houses of the population, robbed them of their property and cash, and then brutally murdered the people in the houses. Very terrible and bloody events took place. Everywhere was full of the bodies of the murdered innocents, and the city resembled an open cemetery.⁶⁴

Gulamkhan, who was a living witness to the events resulting from the genocide that took place in Urmia on the last Wednesday of 1918 (March 20), Hishmat noted that ⁶⁵10-12 thousand people were subjected to genocide. Some sources put the number of Azerbaijanis killed that day at 10 thousand, while others put the number of Azerbaijanis killed in Urmia at 15 thousand.⁶⁶

The genocide of Azerbaijanis in Urmia, which began on February 22, 1918, continued until August of that year. With the entry of the Ottoman army into Urmia in August, the united Armenian-Aysor armed groups left the western region of South Azerbaijan and went to Iraq with the help of the British. However, even when they left Urmia, they did not hesitate to massacre the peaceful Azerbaijani population. Thus, on August 2, 1918, the united Armenian-Aysor armed groups subjected 2,000 Azerbaijanis to genocide while leaving Urmia. In addition to Urmia, all the surrounding settlements and villages of the Urmia district were also subjected to brutal genocide. In these events, 880 villages were destroyed in the Urmia

district alone ⁶⁷, and their population was brutally massacred.

planned to attack the Kohneshahr settlement of the Salmas region and Dilman, which was considered the center of Salmas, in addition to Urmia. However, Tabriz and Sharafkhan Since armed forces were sent from their cities, the Armenians and Aysors did not dare to attack. They also gathered forces from other areas and increased the pressure on the population of Dilman. Later, one of the Armenian commanders of the combined Armenian-Aysor armed groups that attacked Dilman Samsun made a condition to the frightened city dwellers that if they surrendered without resistance, they would be massacred. will not be done. ⁶⁸The population, frightened ⁶⁹by the cruelty of the Armenians and Aysors, was forced to surrender. On April 3, 1918, the combined Armenian-Aysor armed group entered Dilman, the center of Salmas. First, the Armenian Samsun attacked the city with its armed groups, and then the Aysor armed groups entered Dilman. Unlike Urmia and Kohneshahr, they kept their word at first and did not start a massacre. They only engaged in looting the markets and houses, and in the streets they robbed the population of their clothes and valuables. ⁷⁰A small number of the population was massacred. Most of the population, who did not believe the Armenians and fled the city, died of the cold on the snowy and icy roads. A few days after the center of Salmas was captured, Agha ⁷¹Petros, who led the combined Armenian-Aysor armed groups, placed a small number of Aysor armed groups in the city and moved to Urmia with an armed group. As a result, the number of the combined Armenian-Aysor armed groups increased and a fierce battle broke out. They blocked the road from all sides and attacked the city. They fired on the city with the large cannon they had captured. As a result of the fire, one building at a time was reduced to ruins. The Saidiye Madrasah of Salmas was also destroyed in that attack. The helpless population tried to defend themselves in the towers. In the evening, the defense issue became more difficult and the population gathered behind the Sedagian Gate and waited for an opportunity to escape.

⁶³ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide. Baku: Baku Printing House, 2010, p. 117

⁶⁴ Developments in Western Azerbaijan as Narrated by the Documents of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Third to Fifth Periods, by Ali Tatari , Rahim Nikbakht , Museum Library and Documents Center of the Islamic Consultative Assembly, Tehran, 2011, p.590

⁶⁵ Heshmat Gh . The groans of a strange city, Yaz Publishing House, Urmia , 2008, p.63

⁶⁶ Salimifard A. A Look at the History and Geography of Shabestar , Tasuj and Sufi ian , Sib Sorkh Publishing House, Tehran, 2003, p.162

⁶⁷ Azadi M. History of the Massacre of the Muslims of Azerbaijan by the Front, Hesameddin Chalabi Publications, Urmia , 1980, p.11

⁶⁸ Kasrav A. 18-Year History of Azerbaijan, Amir Kabir Publications, Tehran, 1971, p.731

⁶⁹ Malikzade T. Southern Azerbaijan during the First World War - genocide. Baku: Baku Printing House, 2010, p. 117

⁷⁰ Dehghan A. The Land of Zoroaster Rezaieh , Ibn Sina Publications, Tehran, 1969, p.523

⁷¹ Malekzadeh T. Salmas in the History and Culture of Azerbaijan, Volume 1, 1999, Eldar , Tabriz, p.190

However, the combined Armenian-Aysor armed groups completely isolated the city and blocked the roads leading to the city. The Armenian-Aysor armed groups, which blocked the entrance and exit roads, fired on the city with heavy artillery.⁷²

the Salmas region, as well as Kohneshahr, the population of all large and small settlements and villages of the region from Urmia to the Khoy region was subjected to genocide. The combined Armenian-Aysorian armed groups committed genocide in the cities, settlements and villages of the Salmas region. As a result of the genocide, the region was completely depopulated. Therefore, after the genocide, the Iranian cabinet of ministers even prepared a project to relocate a group of immigrants and residents from the north of the Araz, including the Lankaran region, to Salmas, as well as Urmia.⁷³

The ethnic cleansing plan against the Turkish population was halted with the re-entry of the Ottoman army into South Azerbaijan. However, according to the report of the commission established by the Qajar state,⁷⁴ up to 200,000 innocent Azerbaijanis were victims of genocide in the massacre committed against Azerbaijanis by the Armenian-Aysor armed group in the western region of South Azerbaijan.

Conclusion:

Representations of Western countries and Tsarist Russia in South Azerbaijan led to tragic results during World War I. Moreover, during World War I, South Azerbaijan became a battlefield between Tsarist Russia and the Ottoman Empire. After fierce battles, the defeat of the Ottoman Empire at Sarıqamış and its retreat from South Azerbaijan, as well as the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, accelerated the plan to create an Armenian-Aysor armed group that had already existed in South Azerbaijan. A united Armenian-Aysor armed group was created with the participation of the former ambassadors and officers of Western countries and Tsarist Russia who had not left Urmia, and as a result of the 6-month genocide carried out by this armed group, 200 thousand local residents in South Azerbaijan became victims of genocide. The region suffered very serious damage. Only with the return of the Ottoman army to South Azerbaijan did the united Armenian-Aysor armed group leave South Azerbaijan.

⁷²Kavianpour A. General History of Azerbaijan, Asia Publishing Institute, Tehran, 1967, p.261

⁷³ Melikzadeh T. Ten Thousand-Year History of Salmas and Western Azerbaijan, Eldar Publication, Tabriz, 2005, p.73

⁷⁴ Motamed Al-Wazareh R. Urmia in the War of the World-Scorching, Pajouh Shirazeh Publishing, Tehran 1990, p.230

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