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THE ARMENIAN MASSACRES IN ALEXANDRAPOL DISTRICT FROM MAY TO NOVEMBER 1918: A LITTLE-STUDIED EPISODE FROM THE HISTORY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Armen Hayrapetyan*

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1051-5078>

Shirak Center of Armenian Studies of NAS RA

Institute of History of NAS RA, Armenia

The article deals with the study of the demographic policy pursued by the Turkish authorities in the occupied Alexandrapol district. On the basis of newly discovered archival documents, scientific literature, memoirs of eyewitnesses and reports of periodicals it is shown that in the period from May to November 1918 Turkish regular troops with the support of local Muslims pursued a policy of genocide of Eastern Armenians, distorting the ethnic image of the population of the district.

The data obtained also show that the official statistics of the Turkish crimes in Alexandrapol district does not reflect the true scale of what happened and is significantly underestimated.

Keywords: *Alexandrapol district, demographic policy, Turkish crimes, Genocide, Khoyetsyan, Shirak, Pambak.*

Introduction: Turkish atrocities in Alexandrapol

The Armenian historiography addressed the issue of the first occupation of Alexandrapol district by Turkish troops mainly in the context of the heroic battles of May. Different views were voiced about the general military-political situation of the region: memoirs, scientific monographs and collections of documents were published. Meanwhile, the investigation of very important issues, such as the genocidal policy implemented towards the population of the occupied province, was mostly left out of the attention of Armenologists.

This article will undertake a comprehensive examination of the aforementioned issue, integrating newly discovered archival documents, scientific literature, eyewitness

* a.hayrapetyan@shirakcenter.sci.am

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accounts, and periodical press reports. This approach will facilitate the closure of a gap in the Armenian historiography.

In spring, 1918, the military-political situation on the Caucasian front of the world war changed dramatically. The shameful surrender of Kars on April 12 was followed by the unexpected fall of Alexandrapol on May 15 (Documents and Materials, 1919, D. 103, p. 225).

Realizing the limited nature of their success, the Turks, with the active support of local Muslims, embarked on the policy of physical annihilation of Eastern Armenians in the territory of the occupied province. After meeting organized resistance in Sogutli and neighboring villages, and then suffering a shameful defeat in Sardarapat and Bash Aparan, Turkish command turned its attention to the villages of Eastern Shirak and Pambak and began to exterminate the Armenians gathered here.

According to official statistics, from May 15 to December, 10,300 people died from the Turkish atrocities in 122 villages of Alexandrapol district (without the provincial center)- 5,086 were massacred, 4,660 were captured, 257 returned from captivity (exhausted, some of them died a few days later), 483 disappeared (NAA, F. 121, Op. 1, D. 91, p. 179; Institute of History of the NAS RA, F. Leo, Op. 1, D. 253, p.1).

In October 1919, those data were published in the newspaper “Yaraj” under the editorship and with comments by Armenian parliamentarian Hakob Ter-Hakobyan (Irazek) (Irazek, 17 October, 1919). They remained in Armenian historiography as absolute truth for approximately a century, despite the fact that contemporaries did not accept them. According to the RA diplomatic representative in Alexandrapol, G. Khoyetsyan, those data were reduced almost threefold. As early as October 1918, in his reports submitted to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Khoyetsyan stated that the Turks had killed approximately 20,000 people and taken another 10,000 prisoners only in the city of Alexandrapol and the villages of Eastern Shirak (NAA, F. 221, Op. 1, D. 89, p. 60-61).

Armenian historiography addressed this topic for the first time only 90 years later. In order to study the administrative and demographic policy pursued by the Ottoman authorities in May-November 1918 in Alexandrapol province, R. Grigoryan republished Irazek's article in the pages of the journal ‘Bulletin of Archives of Armenia’. He recalculated the lists and, finding several small numerical inaccuracies, concluded that they were the result of a journalistic omission (Grigoryan, 1996, p.111)¹.

Unfortunately, the respected researcher did not attempt to analyse the work of the commissions assigned to the district without identifying gaps and shortcomings by therefore accepting the official data on the scale of Turkish atrocities as the absolute truth.

Meanwhile, there were shortcomings and they had a significant impact on the acquisition and adjustment of accurate statistical information:

The first of them refers to the territory of the district, the concept of 'old and new district'.

In archival documents covering the events of 1918-1920 and in scientific literature one can often find the phrase 'Alexandrapol uyezd with its present reduced borders'. There is one explanation for this. The Ottoman Empire, defeated in the world war, started to withdraw its troops from the occupied territories from the end of autumn. After the Turks withdrew, new county governments were established in the provinces that had been ceded to Armenia. For example, the Bolshaya Karakilis region (Pambak) with 30 villages was temporarily withdrawn from Alexandrapol district by the decision of the RA Council of Ministers of 7 October and united with the districts of Dilijan and Karvansar into the newly formed Dilijan district. At the beginning of December the territory of Eastern Shirak was also cleared of Turks, but the territorial integrity of the former Alexandrapol district was not restored for some reasons (the new district had 4 districts and 129 villages instead of the previous 160) (NAA, F. 203, Op. 1, D. 4, p. 20-21). This gave an excuse to some of the commissions sent to Eastern Shirak and Pambak, and then to researchers to consider the statistical data on Turkish atrocities separately for Eastern Shirak (Alexandrapol district with new borders) and separately for Pambak, which, in our opinion, is wrong. At the time of the military occupation and during the following six months, the Alexandrapol district was a single administrative community, consisting of Eastern Shirak and Pambak district, governed from Alexandrapol, so the statistical data should be presented in one common format.

The second flaw in identifying the effects of Turkish rule was the way in which human casualties were accounted for. In the pages of the periodical "Yaraj", Irazek writes that by the time the commissions arrived on the scene, the villages already knew the extent of their losses. To avoid repeating themselves, the commissars simply gathered the people from the village and then 'the village elders counted the names of the victims, unless of course these victims were few' (Irazek, 1919).

In fact, the number of victims and captives was adjusted solely from the memory of the peasants and this method of accounting was considered successful for a century:

The question then arises: how was the census organised in those six dozen villages of Eastern Shirak and Pambak, whose population was exterminated by almost 80% in the first days of the occupation, how was the census organised in the once 52.000-strong Alexandrapol (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 92, 96, 105).

This method of counting human losses resulted in the omission of hundreds of names from villages. Furthermore, refugees (approximately 200.000 at the beginning of May) (Mshak, 1918) and Western Armenians (approximately 26.000 at the beginning of 1918, not including children from orphanages) (NAA, F. 57, Op. 2, D.

1311, p. 23-24) were not adequately accounted for. Additionally, data on the city of Alexandrapol were not published.

The reliability of official statistics was first questioned in the early 2000s. G. Melikyan rejected the point of view accepted, according to which only 10.300 people became victims of the genocide organised in Alexandrapol district. Instead, he attributed the statistical data published in the periodical 'Yaraj' to the period between July and November 1918 (Melikyan, 2005, p. 73).

It should be noted that G. Melikyan's point of view is not groundless. The study of more than a dozen documents kept in the National Archives of Armenia shows that the massacres in the province continued throughout the entire period of the Turkish rule. For example, the Armutli massacre took place on 25 september. Turkish military units, without prior warning, entered the village and perpetrated a massacre, killing 95 individuals, taking 85 prisoners, and forcing the remaining population to flee (NAA, F. 240, Op. 1, D. 326, p. 63-64). In early November, approximately 1.000 Horomas were killed following the discovery of the body of a Turkish soldier in the vicinity of the village (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 70).

So, what really happened in Alexandrapol district in May-November 1918, what facts allow us to reject the results of official statistics and, most importantly, what is the scale of Turkish atrocities in the district:

On the night of 14 May 1918, the Turks demanded in ultimatum form to hand over Alexandrapol to them, and the next morning, without waiting for an answer, stormed the city and most of the district of the same name (Melikyan, 1925, p. 134)².

In the first days of the occupation, the Turkish command was busy creating new local self-government bodies and cataloging state buildings and warehouses (Hayrapetyan, 2017, p. 21-22). Taking advantage of the opportunity, most of the urban population (including tens of thousands of Western Armenians, Kars and Sarighamish refugees), sacrificed their property and fled in the direction of Etchmiadzin and Metz (Greater) Kharakilisa, so that 5.000 people remained in the city with 52.000 inhabitants (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 91).

Later, the city's population recovered, but the Turkish presence had a heavy impact on the ethnic character of the city. Only 60 per cent of those who returned were Alexandrapolians. Instead, a large number of them were Tatars (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 96). According to G. Khoyetsyan, half of the city, the Russian quarter and all the most comfortable and beautiful buildings were taken over by the Tatars, and the city lost its purely Armenian appearance (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 12-13).

According to eyewitnesses, there were no massacres in Alexandrapol (the killings mostly took place at night and in silence). The Turks followed a 'bloodless' policy of exterminating the Armenians. On the third day of the occupation, the Turkish command demanded the surrender of soldiers serving in the Armenian army. Over the next two weeks, 4.000 young men arrested in the town and surrounding villages were

sent to Kars, and those who resisted were shot at the railway station (Hovsepyan, 8 June, 1918). Those who had military clothing at home were also sentenced to 101 years in prison and sent to Kars (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 95).

The second stage of the manhunt began on 20 May. Under the pretext of distributing bread and passports, the Turks took a census of the population, and a few days later collected men and sent them in groups to Kars, Sarigamish and Erzrum, ostensibly for 'paid' work. According to Atrpet's calculations, about 2.500 men (Atrpet, 25 December, 1918) from the city and neighbouring villages alone were collected in this way (in November their number reached 4.000) (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 92). After the Ottoman army left, all these people disappeared. According to the RA Ministry of Foreign Affairs, only 50 half-dead charioteers and 14 oxen returned from Turkish captivity (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, p. 135). Similarly, the medical personnel, comprising doctors, nurses, and 500 Armenian sisters of mercy, who had been dispatched to Kars, also vanished (Hovsepyan, 26 June, 1918).

According to the calculations made by G. Khoyetsyan, during the six-month period of Turkish rule, a minimum of 10.000 individuals were expelled from the town of Alexandrapol and the villages of Eastern Shirak to the internal provinces of Turkey. Of these, 4.000 were sent to Erznka to 'satisfy the local Muslims' sense of revenge' (NAA, F. 200, Op. 1, D. 126, pp. 46-47).

The enemy's treatment of the rural population of the county differed significantly. The actions of the Turkish troops and local Muslims in the villages of Eastern Shirak and Pambak constituted a direct continuation of the Armenian Genocide, albeit with greater 'uncompromisingness' and 'ruthlessness'.

Turkish atrocities against the rural population of Eastern Shirak

Following initial resistance in Sogutli and the surrounding villages, the Turks redirected their attention to the villages of Eastern Shirak. In excess of 50 villages were completely destroyed and their populations exterminated.

For the defeat in Sogutli, the Turks took revenge on the Armenian population of Adiyaman, Pirtikyan, Mastara and Muslugli villages. On 25 May, about 3.000 people were killed in Dzitankov. 500 of them were locked up in the Shahbazyan brothers' marags, then killed by throwing grenades from windows, firing machine guns, and burning the marags to throw off traces. The rest (about 2.500 people) were killed in the mountains northeast of the village (only two survived the massacre). About 200 Armenian girls, saving their honour, committed suicide in the lakes of Dzitankov (NAA, F. 121, Op. 2, D. 82, p. 17). The villages of Mahmudjug and Khilij-Yatakh (as of 1916 they had about 2.570 inhabitants of both sexes) were also deserted after resisting the Turkish troops (Korkotyan, 1932, p 111, p. 119). Only Molla-Gekcha suffered relatively small losses (160 killed, 40 prisoners). Under the leadership of

headman Ignatosyan, the villagers organised resistance and forced the Turks to leave (Davtyan, 1987).

During the Turkish occupation, the village of Ili Kharakilisa was almost completely destroyed. About 1500 people died on the spot (200 survived) (NAA, F. 227, Op. 1, D. 4, p. 1-12: Nersisyan, 1983, p. 536). The same thing happened in Pokr (Small) Kharakilisa. In a village of 5.000 people, the Turks killed about 3.000 people (NAA, F. 227, Op. 1, D. 4, p. 7).

According to the Alexandrapol Committee of the Patriotic Union, the villages of Gyurdzhiyol (Torosgyuh), Ortakilisa, Salut, Gullibulag, Khizlkilisa, Duzkharaba, Chiftali, Boziohush, Khizylgoch, Khazanchi, Titoykharaba and Korakhpyur also suffered heavy losses. More than 1.000 women and girls were captured, raped and forcibly converted to Islam. The population fled in fear towards Lori, but the Turks cunningly brought them back and massacred them (Simonyan, 2006, p. 59). For example, the inhabitants of Agin (1.112 people in 1916) (Korkotyan, 1932, p. 109). first scattered, but believing false promises from the enemy, they returned and were destroyed (about 1100 people) (NAA, F. 56, Op. 16, D. 475, p. 130-137, 206-212). Yezid villages in the Alexandrapol district were also completely destroyed. According to the Patriotic Union, the population of 15 Yezid villages was missing (NAA, F. 240, Op. 1, D. 326, p. 61).

As a result of the genocidal policy pursued against the peaceful rural population of Eastern Shirak, the villages of Artik, Kaps, Verin Khanlija, Nerkin Khanlija, Chrähli, Duzkend, Metz Kapanak, Kipchag, Arkhwali, Bashgug, Chlovkhan, Ilhiabi, Tomartash, Dagarli, Mejitli, Pokr Kapanak, Hajinazar, Jajur, Agkilisa, Derband, Samrli and Third Arkhwali were almost deprived of their male population. In Artik alone, 1.200 people (80%-men) were killed. Another 200 men were slaughtered as 'sacrificial animals' in the villages of Kaps, Verin and Nerkin Khanlija (NAA, F. 240, Op. 1, D. 326, p. 58-59). In other villages, men were chased into the mountains in groups and shot.

The last act of Genocide of the Armenian population: The Pambak massacre

The final act of genocide against the Armenian population occurred in Pambak. According to eyewitness accounts, in the first days of May 1918, approximately 200,000 individuals (9,000 from Basen, 4,000 from Kahzvan, over 60,000 from the Kars district and over 70,000 from the town of Alexandrapol and the villages of Eastern Shirak) gathered in the area. The immense multitude that occupied the area from Galtahci to Metz (Big) Karakilisa, encompassing approximately 40 versts (42.5 kilometres) (Elchibekyan, 1947, p. 57; Ghazaryan, 1918).

On the evening of 28 May, the vanguard units of the 11th Turkish Division entered the village of Metz Karakilisa. In a public address to the local population,

Cemal Javid-bey, the commander of the troops, reassured them that no violence would be inflicted upon them (Dallakyan & Marukyan, 2008, p. 112).

That same night, the massacre of the Armenian population began. Askars and local Muslims from the villages of Saral, Arjut and Ganjugaz attacked the Armenian village of Kishlag. Another Turkish detachment, together with residents of the villages of Vardanli and Hallavar, attacked the village of Mets Karakilisa. 156 people were killed here overnight. The place of their burial is known as 'Aslan Bey's pit' (Khaznadyan, 1998, p. 91-92).

And in total, in just one night in 9 villages of the Pambak region, in addition to Western, Shirak and Kars Armenians, the Turks killed 1269 Pambak residents (in Karakilisa - 156 people, in Kishlag - 250, in Darbaz - 43, in Bzovdal - 200, in Hajikara - 65, in Effendi-15, in Hamamli-350, in Yaghubli-40, in Parni-150) (NAA, F. 227, Op. 1, D. 4, p. 12: F. 240, Op. 1, D. 240, p. 36-37). Those who managed to escape the atrocities were lured back by the Turks, promising them safety and protection. However, subsequently they were all killed in the most cruel and inhumane ways.

According to the eyewitnesses, the massacre of civilians was provoked by the involvement in the conflict of the population of villages that had become the scene of hostilities. For example, M. Ghazaryan states that the residents of Kishlag fought against the Turks and heavy cannons were placed on the outskirts of the village (Dallakyan & Marukyan, 2008, p. 115).

In our opinion, it is wrong to explain the mass destruction of the Armenian population of Pambak only by their participation in the struggle. Even more devastating was the fact that the residents of Karakilisa and neighbouring villages did not leave their homes. Considering fleeing a 'sign of cowardice', the village heads forced people to stay put and did not even evict women and girls from the villages. No one has the right to leave the village, we will stay here and die here, and whoever does otherwise, we will burn down his house,' threatened Avetik, the headman of Kishlag village (Dallakyan & Marukyan, 2008, p. 115).

In their memoirs, contemporaries also addressed the problem of Armenianophobia, which manifested itself among the Muslim population of Pambak during the period of Ottoman rule. They tried to understand the reasons for this phenomenon. According to Mushegh Ghazaryan, an eyewitness to the events, and the priest Khoren Khaznadyan, the reason was the punitive raid organised by the Dashnaks on the Turkish-populated village of Vardanli. In late April, Dashnak 'flying detachments' carried out a brutal massacre here: they turned the village into a massacre, burned houses and slaughtered the population. 'When it became clear that the Turks were moving towards Pambak, these "leaders of the nation" fled towards Dsegh', writes M. Ghazaryan, and the survivors of Vardanli joined the regular Turkish troops and took revenge on the Armenians (Khaznadyan, 1998, p. 86).

Justifying the idea of organising ‘punitive’ raids against Turkish villages, Professor M. Santrosyan, who republished the memoirs of the priest Khoren Khanzadyan in 1998, wrote that the Dashnak ‘flying detachments’ in various settlements of Armenia tried in this way to deter the Muslim population, agitated by the Turkish attack, from taking short-sighted steps (Khanzadyan, 1998, p. 147-148).

Today it is difficult to say to what extent such tactics were justified. As for the Muslims of Pambak, only the inhabitants of Vardanli, who, according to reliable information, had accumulated a large number of weapons and were preparing to attack Karakilisa, were ‘punished’, but all the Turkish-populated villages in the area were characterised by extreme Armenianophobia.

On 29 May, the mass deportation and extermination of civilians became official: the entire Armenian population of the district was declared prisoners of war, and movable and immovable property was declared state property. Then, the askyars took out all the captured and arrested men, tied them up and chased them in different directions in groups of 400-500 people. The first group of prisoners was shot at Badalogli spring, the second group was shot south of Karaklis in a place called ‘Hot Springs Quarries’, the third group was shot near Vardali village, near ‘Brick Factory’, the fourth group was shot in Vanants-dzor forest, the fifth group was shot on the slopes of Maimekh mountain and in Yagubli village near S. Sarkis church, the sixth group was shot in cowsheds of Khajikara village (Dallakyan, Marukyan, 2008, p. 120).

Javid Bey conceived an ‘ingenious’ plan to exterminate the Armenians and rid them of the stigma of criminals. The prisoners were shot on the heights where the attacking Turks had encamped two days before. In other words, an attempt was made to show that there had been no massacre of civilians and that the retreating Armenian troops had left behind unburied corpses. Prisoners were shot in such a way that the number of victims on both sides was equal. For example, the sixth group was driven to Gadzhikara, as the number of Armenians killed on this section of the front was insignificant (“Copy of the report”, 1918, pp. 10-11)³. By killing local Armenians, the Turks created the illusion of a heated battle between equal sides (Khanzadyan, 1998, p. 92-93).

H. Avetisyan posits that the crime resulted in the shooting of approximately 4.000 individuals in the forests surrounding Hajikara. These victims included residents of Pambak and Shirak, captured Armenian officers and soldiers, and defenceless Western Armenian refugees (Avetisyan, 1998, p. 115). The Turkish command's plan would surely have succeeded if the executioners had released the wire-bound index fingers of the corpses or shot them in the trenches instead of the barns.

On 30 May, Javid carried out the next step in his diabolical plan. An announcement was made in Karaklis that railway workers were obliged to sign up and go to work within 24 hrs. About 500 men believed it, signed up and did not go home. The next morning, groups of 40-50 of them were driven to the heights of Maymeh and

Altuntakht, tied their index fingers with wire, forced to dig grave pits, and then shot in such a way that the back rows fell down, covering the first ones. According to contemporaries, many foreign labourers who witnessed this scene went mad (NAA, F. 114, Op. 2, D. 33, p. 52; F. 240, Op. 1, D. 240, p. 44).

On the seventh day of the occupation of the Pambak region, discipline in the Turkish army was restored, and massacres - at least during the day - ceased; instead, night-time attacks took over in a big way. 'Mysteriously' farmers and village heads returning from the fields began to disappear (the Turks demanded that they hand over to them the beautiful women and girls of the village, and killed them if they refused) (NAA, F. 121, Op. 2, D. 79, p. 15).

The abduction and rape of women and girls is particularly frequent. Khoren Khanzadyan recalls. 'The immoral Turk satisfied his animal passions by insulting the honour of an Armenian family' (Khanzadyan, 1998, p. 94). According to residents, many villages were subjected to 'total rape'. For example: Nalband. Men were expelled from the village and women were raped. Not only girls of 8-10 years old were raped, but also elderly women. Following the withdrawal of Turkish troops, commissions sent to Pambak also documented numerous cases of homosexual activity involving Ottoman army commanders and medical personnel, including the divisional doctor, Kamil Bey (NAA, F. 202, Op. 1, D. 1271, p. 48).

Today, as a hundred years ago, it is impossible to say exactly what the scale of this disgusting phenomenon was, because the population, especially the rural population, tried to hide the humiliation they suffered. In response to the shame threatening her, an Armenian woman resorted to the only form of self-defence - suicide. According to M. Ghazaryan, members of the famous Aghababyan family from Karakilisa behaved in a similar way: Mikayel, his wife Vardanush, daughters Zanazan and Horomsim, son Avetis with his wife and children, as well as sisters Astghik, Lusik and Javakhir from the Kishlag family of Mailians (Dallakyan, Marukyan, 2008, pp. 121-122), and girls Siranush and Arusyak from the Alexandrapol Tsataryan family committed suicide together with their mother (Irazek, 1956, p. 31).

After the May atrocities, the unburied corpses began to decompose, making Karakilisa uninhabitable even for a Turk. Only in mid-June did the Turkish authorities allow the dead to be buried in grave pits dug on the sides of the streets. Within the next week, the entire region was plagued by typhus and cholera. In addition, widespread starvation played a significant role. The lack of hospitals resulted in more than 1,000 deaths from the epidemic and starvation in July and August alone. According to M. Ghazaryan's calculations, the epidemic claimed 378 lives in Kishlyag alone, 125 in Darbaz, 286 in Hajigar, 35 in Bzovdal and 48 in Yagubli. In September, the number of deaths from infectious diseases reached a critical threshold. According to eyewitnesses, the number of deaths was so high that corpses left to rot in homes and on the streets poisoned the air and water for days (Dallakyan& Marukyan, 2008, p. 126, pp.134-135).

According to the armistice signed in Mudros on October 30, 1918, the Ottoman Empire was declared defeated in the world war and withdrew its troops from the occupied territories of Armenia. In December, special commissions were sent here to determine the scale of human and material damage caused by the Turks.

The Patriotic Union of Alexandrapol played an important role in this endeavour. In co-operation with the RA diplomatic mission in Alexandrapol and the administration of the city of Alexandrapol, it collected a considerable amount of material covering the scale of human and material destruction inflicted on the region by the Turkish army. These data were then compiled and presented on 16 December 1918 to the 'Central Council of Armenian Patriotic Unions' and 'The Representation of the Allied States in the Caucasus'.

This summary report found it fully proven that the massacres and violence organised by Turkish regular troops and local Muslims in the county were the result of a planned policy of physical extermination of the Armenian people at the state level. During the six months of occupation, about 20.000 people were killed in the town of Alexandrapol, the villages of Eastern Shirak and Pambak, and another 6.000 died of starvation and epidemic diseases. Under various pretexts, 15.000 people were captured and taken deep into the Ottoman Empire, of whom about 3-400 returned, more than 5.000 women and girls were kidnapped and raped. About 1.000 women were forcibly converted to Islam. Many of them committed suicide, unable to accept the shame (NAA, F. 227, Op. 1, D. 4, p. 1-12: F. 240, Op. 1, D. 240, p. 36-39, 44, 48-49).

The presence of the above-mentioned facts allows us today to reject the results of official statistics summarising the results of Turkish crime in Alexandrapol district.

Conclusion

The fact that the mass violence and massacres organized by the Turkish regular troops and local Muslims in the Alexandrapol uyezd in May-November, 1918, was the result of a state level policy planned beforehand with the aim to carry out the physical extermination of the Armenian population, has already been proven.

Unfortunately the work shortcomings and flaws allowed by the commissions which was sent to the uyezd didn't give the chance to fully unearth the complete scales of the Ottoman criminal policy.

In the modern Armenian historiography it is accepted to mention only about 10.300 victims of that genocidal policy while the simple combination of archival material documents, eyewitnesses' memories and the reports of the then periodical press, shows that the number has been extremely reduced.

The new study gave the following results: during the six months of the occupation, more than 60 villages were destroyed, some 20.000 were slaughtered, and another 6.000 became victims of famine and epidemics. More than 15.000 people were

captured and taken to the depths of the Ottoman Empire under various pretexts. About 5.000 women were abducted and raped.

The presence of the above-mentioned facts allows us today to reject the results of official statistics summarising the results of Turkish crime in Alexandrapol district.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no ethical issues or conflict of interests in this research.

Ethical standards

The author affirms this research does not involve human subjects.

Notes

1. As a result of incomprehensible calculations, researcher R. Grigoryan, having studied the documents kept in the National Archive of Armenia and the lists published by Irazek in the daily newspaper 'Yaraj', obtained the following picture: 4.745 killed, 4.596 captured, 263 returned and 370 missing.

2. In his memoirs, Hovakim Melikyan, one of the witnesses to the fall of Alexandrapol, states that no members of the fortress garrison were found to possess knowledge of Turkish. Consequently, it was decided to send an individual to the Turks in the morning to translate the ultimatum into French or Russian. These words of H. Melikyan are highly doubtful for us. Considering the fact that the ancestors of the vast majority of Alexandrapol residents migrated here from Western Armenia, knowledge of the Turkish language was a common phenomenon for the urban population. Even in the years 1970-1980, a large part of the population of the city of Leninakan had a fairly good command of that language.

3. The Turkish military commander Kyazm Karabekir, speaking about the failure of Turkish troops in Hadjikara in 1919. wrote. '...near the village, women and villagers armed with axes were slaughtering retreating Turkish soldiers'.

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**ՀԱՅԿԱԿԱՆ ԶԱՐԴԵՐԸ ԱԼԵՔՍԱՆԴՐԱՊՈԼԻ ԳԱՎԱՌՈՒՄ 1918 թ.
ՄԱՅԻՍ-ՆՈՅԵՄԲԵՐ ԱՄԻՄՆԵՐԻՆ. ՀԱՅՈՑ ՑԵՂԱՍՊԱՆՈՒԹՅԱՆ
ՊԱՏՄՈՒԹՅԱՆ ԹՈՒՅԼ ՈՒՍՈՒՄՆԱՍԻՐՎԱԾ ԴՐՎԱԳ**

Արմեն Հայրապետյան

Հոդվածի շրջանակներում առանձին քննության առարկա է դարձել զինագրավկած Ալեքսանդրապոլի գավառում թուրքական իշխանությունների վարած ժողովրդագրական քաղաքականությունը:

Արխիվային նորահայտ վավերագրերի, գիտական գրականության, ականատեսների հուշագրությունների և պարբերական մամուլի հաղորդումների համադրման արդյունքում կարելի է ապացուցված համարել այն փաստը, որ 1918 թ. մայիսից մինչև նոյեմբեր ընկած ժամանակահատվածում թուրքական կանոնավոր զորքերը տեղի մահմեդականների աջակցությամբ, գավառում իրագործել են արևելահայության ֆիզիկական բնաշնչման քաղաքականություն՝ ինչի

արդյունքում դիմախեղվել է վերջինիս ազգաբնակչության էթնիկ պատկերը:

Քննության արդյունքում ստացված տվյալները նաև թույլ են տալիս պնդելու, որ Ալեքսանդրապոլի գավառում թուրքական ոճարար-ծությունների արդյունքներն ամփոփող ՀՀ պաշտոնական վիճակագրական տվյալները, որ հայ պատմագրության մեջ արդեն մեկ հարյուրամյակ համարվում են բացարձակ ճշմարտություն՝ իրականում չեն արտացոլում տեղի ունեցածի իսկական մասշտաբները և ինչ-ինչ պատճառներով նվազեցված են գրեթե երեք անգամ:

Բանալի բառեր՝ *Ալեքսանդրապոլի գավառ, ժողովրդագրական բաղարականություն, թուրքական հանցագործություններ, ցեղասպանություն, Խոյեցյան, Շիրակ, Փամբակ:*