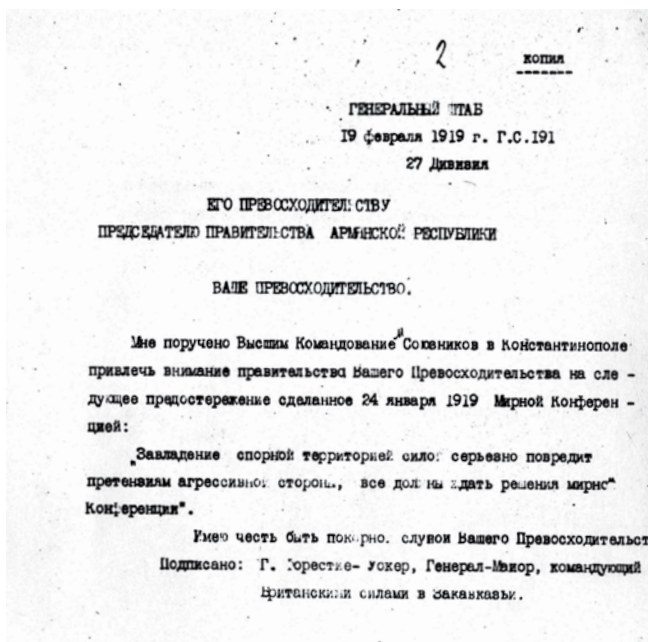


# BRITAIN'S "ARMENIAN POLICY" IN THE SOUTH CAUCASUS AND THE PLACE OF THE PROBLEM IN THE UK ARCHIVES (1917-1920)

*Continued. For the beginning, see IRS- Heritage 3 (27) 2016, 4 (28) 2016, 1 (29) 2017, 2 (30) 2017*

*Letter from the commander of British troops in Transcaucasia, General Forestier-Walker, to the Chairman of the Government of Armenia with a warning against armed incursions. 1919*



As can be seen, contrary to the British plan, the main desire of the Nakhchivan population was to join the Azerbaijan Republic. However, after five days, on 3 May 1919, a declaration was issued signed by Armenian commander Dro (Drastamat Kanayan) and General Devy. The declaration said:

### **Orders for the Nakhchivan region 3 May 1919, Iravan**

*The war is over. The people's sufferings must come to an end. Everyone must return home and start their work in peace. A period of peace is beginning for everyone regardless of religion and nationality. I came to Nakhchivan on orders from the Allies and the government. I appeal to the forces under my command: You are representatives of the government. You must protect the lives and property of all citizens of the republic without making any difference between nationalities. This is your duty. If any officer, soldier or militiaman breaks the order and uses weapons for personal*

*Letter from the ADR Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ambassador to Yerevan with a request to prevent Armenia's interference in the internal affairs of Azerbaijan. 1919*

reasons or sets one part of the people against another, he will be shot. In order for me to be able to mete out the most stringent punishment for culprits, all the illegal actions of the forces must be reported to local commanders by the people. Military courts must be established for bandits who hamper the establishment of a quiet life in any region. I warn every unit commander: I will hold them to account for any illegal action that is detected. Do not forget that our state is the Republic of Armenia. It is the republic of all peoples living in Armenia. The main target of the government is to establish a free life for all nations. Our laws are the same for Christians and Muslims. Anyone who breaks the law will be punished in the same way.

People of Nakhchivan! I appeal to you, too. On orders from the Allies and our own government, I came to Nakhchivan to bring Armenian and Muslim refugees to their homes. Our government will return all lands illegally confiscated in our region to their real owners. All citizens who oppose this legal desire of the working people will be punished regardless of whether they are Armenians or Turks. Villages who oppose this will be outlawed. Anyone who protects their homes must hamper ill-disposed people who want to become rich by benefiting from the property of the peace-loving people. I inform the entire people that this is compulsory for South Caucasus relations.

Unit commanders must understand these orders and protect law and order and quiet life everywhere. They must punish ill-disposed persons and receive help from any people without ethnic discrimination. Anything the forces need will be bought for money.

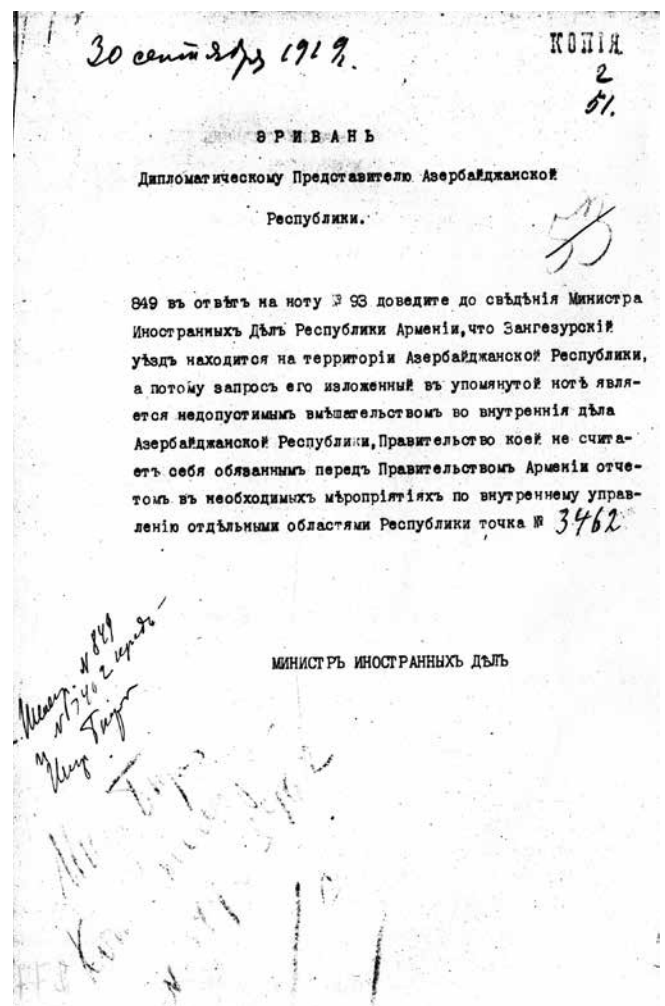
**British General Devy**

**Iravan military unit commander Dro,**

**Chief of the Iravan Detachment Headquarters, Muradyan** (1, p. 170)

Although this declaration, which was issued on orders from General Thomson, caused great dissatisfaction in Nakhchivan, the decision was not changed. At a meeting with members of the National Council, General Devy categorically said that Nakhchivan was handed over to Armenia and this was a special order from the Allies (1, p. 173).

A certain part of the population and influential persons gathered outside the government building and prepared a protest text. The protest text said: "A people



who has systematically and shamelessly beaten up our brothers, women and children, has been setting fire to and shelling hundreds of villages and plundering our property due to its inborn hate and chauvinism in the past two years is not capable of bringing us closer to itself and governing us as a fair judge.

From a cultural point of view, Armenians are not as developed as your government to govern us without hindrance on the basis of principles of justice and equality and to protect our interests as their own.

Since they declared their independence, they have been unable to establish a strong and unshakable government in areas populated by Armenians and to overcome the anarchy that has engulfed the Republic of Armenia. How can they govern different, but psychologically equal nations?

Agree that by obeying the Armenians, we humiliate and insult not just ourselves, but also our generations who will be cursing us all their lives. For this reason, we see the handover of our Nakhchivan, Sharur and Vedibasar districts to the Armenian government by His Excellency General Devy as

ПРАВИТЕЛЬСТВЕННОЕ СООБЩЕНИЕ .

В последнее время во обществах и во печати мусульман равные толку по поводу так называемых Зангезурских событий, причем некоторые органы печати, особенно " Слово ", издающееся в Тифлисе, помещая сообщения официального армянского телеграфного агентства, изображают эти события в форме каких то кровавых непрерывных боев между регулярными войсками, сопровождающими массой убитых и раненных и т.д.

Во изъяснение военных действий представлений Правительству считается необходимым сообщить следующее:

Во течение почти целого года во части Зангезурского уезда действовали различные вооруженные банды из местных бандитов настроенных армян. Банды, эти терроризовали население, и, не признавая власти Азербайджанского Правительства, нападая на мусульманские селения, предавая их уничтожению, разоряли мирное население, которое вынуждено было покидать свои насиженные места и бродить во поисках пристанища по соседним уездам. Свыше 60.000 мусульманских семейств продолжают и ныне еще оставаться под открытым небом, испытывая вой усаом голода и холода. Во течение шести месяцев администрация Карабаха принимала меры к мирной ликвидации этой анархии. Были отданы соответствующие обращения к населению во указание необходимости выдачи глазарей, не поддаваться преступной агитации, причем населению гарантировалась на основании законов Республики полная имущественная и личная безопасность.

Однако вой мирные способы воздействия не могли повлиять на глазарей этих банд, которые попрежнему продолжали свое преступное дело, получая взамя помощь деньгами и оружием. Этими были получены сведения, что Правительство Армении посылает во Зангезурский уезд регулярные войска и боевые припасы. Это вынудило Азербайджанское Правительство послать во распоряжение Генераль-Губернатора Карабаха небольшо войсковой отряд для восстановления порядка и защиты мирного населения, а также для воздействия на большевистски настроенных банд армян, тем больше, что представлялось крайне необходимым как можно скорее прекратить все продолжающееся разорение мусульманских селений, а также вернуть бандитов на свои места.

Во время передвижения посланной во Зангезур для восстановления порядка воинской части, перед выступлением ее во Зангезурское уезде на плато перед селением Дыгь, были замечены укрепленные позиции, занятые вооруженными людьми, начавшими внезапно обстрел шоссе, по которому двигались войска. На требование дать свободный проход отряду во Героси, засевшие на позициях банды ответили ружейными огнем, причем один из посланных со указанными требованиями солдат был ранен.

Одновременно со этим было получено донесение, что со стороны Ханавара движутся дисциплинированные армянские части со артиллерией во обход нашего отряда; это вынудило Начальника отряда поставить во с. Абдалларь заслон, который был обстрелян артиллерийскими огнем противника, на что со своей стороны, он ответил тем же и заставил армянский отряд отступить от сел. Ханаварь, причем от перестрелки во этом селении возник пожар. Также была обстреляна неприятельской артиллерией наш отряд во Забугь, и были отданы попытки к наступлению; но это движение было остановлено нашим артиллерийским огнем.

Во прошедших столкновениях наш отряд потерял во с. Ховнаверь 1 убитым и 4 ранеными, а во Ханаварь ранеными и убитыми всего 10 человек. Армянскими частями на поле сражения оставлено у с. Ховнавера и Кечаль-Дига 40 трупов и перед Дыгомь 30 трупов. Этими во дальнейшем со 8-го ноября с/г. по настоящее время никаких боевых действий не происходило.

Таковы действительные факты, происшедшие во Зангезуре.

Из этих фактов ясно, несколько тенденциозны и не соответствуют действительности вой эти сообщения, враждебной Азербайджанской Государственности прессы, которая старается представить Зангезурские события, как како то ряд непрерывных боев, сопровождающихся взятием планных захватом орудий, боевого снаряжения и продовольственных припасов."

*an act of violence over the freedom, wishes and tendencies bestowed by God on all the people of the region. Issuing a declaration about this, we add that we have no intention of opposing British rule and we will not and cannot do this, but we express our protest against this violence with all our power." (2, p. 67)*

The protest text was handed to the military governor of Nakhchivan, Lt-Col John Simpson, to be forwarded to General Thomson. In general, protests produced no results. On 14 May 1919, General Devy, Aleksandr Khatisyan and the newly-appointed Armenian governor of Nakhchivan, Gevorg Varshamyan, and people accompanying them arrive in Nakhchivan. Facing objections from the population, General Devy threateningly said, "People, from now on, Armenians are your rulers. The government has come as well. Everyone should obey him. Those who do not recognize and obey him do not recognize the Armenian government. Those who do not want to accept their rule will be considered our enemies". (1, p. 179)

The next day, General Devy and Khatisyan, who installed Governor Varshamyan in Nakhchivan, left the

region. After several days, Armenian refugees were also brought to Nakhchivan. (3, p. 123; 4, p. 246)

Thus, British plans were realized with the establishment of Armenian rule in Nakhchivan. Britain implemented some of its obligations regarding the Armenians. Nakhchivan was handed over to the Armenians and thus their duty was accomplished. The British army had now to withdraw from the region according to a decision taken earlier (4, p. 237). The British forces left Nakhchivan in early July (5, p. 14). It must be noted that along with Nakhchivan, the British also left regions of Armenia (6, p. 62). This issue led to a dangerous situation for the Armenians. The weakness of the Armenian government manifested itself. The Turkic population of the regions that the British had given the Armenians could take advantage of this weakness any time. It is no accident that in its report to the Military Department on the weakness of the Armenian government, the British Main Headquarters in Istanbul explained the real source of problems in the region by the extremely high number of Muslim Turks (7). As a result, although Dashnaks oc-



*Deputy Foreign Minister of the United Kingdom Ira Crow**General V. Thomson*

cupied part of Nakhchivan with the help of the British military circles and army in June 1919, the military units of the Nakhchivan National Committee attacked the Armenian troops and expelled them from Nakhchivan (5, p. 14). From this point of view, the withdrawal of the British army from the region and from the Caucasus in general was not desirable for the Armenians. However, Britain's decision was categorical.

**The withdrawal of the British army and its main consequences.** British plans on the Caucasus, the fate of the Armenians, the future of Armenia and issues related to the mandate were put on the agenda of the political circles of the United Kingdom and discussed at the end of 1918. Britain took advantage of the Armenians for its own interests at the appropriate level, but then it gradually distanced itself from the promises it once made on the future of Armenia. At the 40<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Eastern Committee of the Military Cabinet on 2 December 1918, Lord Curzon said: *"We want the establishment of an Armenian state as a barrier against the aspirations of Turkish Panturanism. However, there are two worries ahead related to the matter: Firstly, this is about the borders of the established Armenian state. Secondly, it is about a huge*

*mandate-power that is crucial for the establishment of this state. We are not interested in the responsibility concerning the future of Armenia. In any case, we have lots of things to do."* (8, p. 5-6)

As can be seen, Lord Curzon, who wished the establishment of an Armenian state as a barrier in the region, was in favor of placing this state not under British protection, but under the protection of a different state. The question of Armenia was not as simple as it seemed. British foreign policy chiefs confirmed that there was a need for moral and material support from a foreign power in order to establish an Armenian state. However, Britain did not want to undertake any commitments regarding the Armenian state to be established. In fact, grounds had been prepared for an Armenian state. It is true that Britain wanted to establish an Armenian state in the region, but they wanted to hand over the obligations they undertook before the war on the future of this state, which was going to be established in their interests, to others and aimed to involve France, Italy and the United States in this policy.

In the British Military Cabinet, Deputy Foreign Secretary Eyre Crowe issued a memorandum in 1918.

*Dro (third from the right) heading Armenian detachments on the Turkish front. 1915. The Entente countries supplied Armenian detachments with uniform, weapons and food*



According to the memorandum, the most realistic option for making France give up the Sykes-Picot Agreement was to give it the mandate over Armenia and the South Caucasus. The main purpose was to redirect France to the north and keep it away from the regions that were within the British sphere of interests. The memorandum also said that France would have a mandate over Armenia and the United States over Georgia and Azerbaijan (9). However, Lord Curzon said the following about the French mandate at the 40th meeting of the Eastern Committee of the Military Cabinet on 2 December 1918: *“Will France take such a kind of responsibility in the Caucasus? On the other hand, is this a proper choice for us? Eventually, is this appropriate to our interests to process the potent France into a power authority at this region?”* (8, p. 17)

Robert Cecil also shared Lord Curzon’s analysis and proposals on the French mandate. Describing the region as part of the Indian company, Cecil thought it more realistic to direct the United States to the region rather than France. He believed that the USA would not stay in the region (8, p. 21)

Thus, Britain’s decisions to withdraw from the Caucasus, considering its interests, caused a panic among the Armenians. Believing that Britain abandoned them, the Armenians strongly reacted to this situation. The British government began new political quests to calm the Armenians down and relied upon Italy as a power that would replace Britain in the region. The main goal here was to place the brunt of occupation on the weakest link of the imperialist alliance. However, the British govern-

ment refused to send it troops to the Caucasus to replace the British troops. (10, p. 253)

The British Foreign Office was preparing certain plans to eliminate the problems that would arise in the region as a result of the withdrawal of British troops from the Caucasus. Considering that Armenians were short of weapons and munitions, Arthur James Balfour of the Foreign Office suggested giving them some of the British weapons and munitions when they withdraw from the region (11). The War Ministry believed that in such a situation, the number of Armenian crimes against Muslims would increase (12).

At a meeting held at the British Foreign Office in August 1919, it was planned to send a British political mission led by Oliver Wardrop to the Caucasus to reduce the effects of the evacuation of the army and ensure communications with the region (10, p. 258). Wardrop’s mission also included certain measures to prevent likely attacks on the Armenians left alone and unprotected in the region following the departure of the British (13).

As can be understood from here, the extent of the crimes committed by Armenians against Turks was so horrendous that Britain took this step as they realized what the Armenians’ fate would be like because of their doings after the withdrawal of the British army from the region. However, British support had a temporary nature. Armenian Foreign Minister Aleksandr Khatisyan told the British that it was dangerous to abandon the Armenians who fought the Turks together with the British during the war (14). ❀



**Literature:**

1. Atnur İbrahim Ethem. Osmanlı yönetiminden Sovyet yönetimine kadar Nahçıvan (1918-1921). Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 2001, 488 s.
2. Hacıyev Aydın. Qars və Araz-Türk respublikalarının tarixindən. Bakı: Azərbaycan Dövlət nəşriyyatı, 1994, 124 s.
3. Əliyev Mirzə Bağır. Qanlı günlərimiz (1918-1920, Naxçıvan). Bakı: Azərbaycan Dövlət nəşriyyatı, 1993, 142 s.
4. Hovannisian Richard G. The Republic of Armenia, the first year, 1918-1919. Los Angeles: University of California Press, Volume I: Berkeley, 1971, 547 p.
5. Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyəti və Naxçıvan. (Tərtib edən və ön sözün müəllifi İsmayıl Hacıyev). Naxçıvan: "Əcəmi" Nəşriyyat-Poliqrafiya Birliyi, 2010, 384 s.
6. Hovannisian Richard G. The Republic of Armenia (1919-1920), from Versailles to London. Los Angeles: University of California Press, Volume II: Berkeley, 1982, 603 p.
7. PRO. FO. 608/78/17107, G.H.Q., Constantinople to War Office, no: I. 6607, July 28<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
8. PRO. CAB. 27/24, E.C. 40<sup>th</sup> Meeting, War Cabinet, Eastern Committee, Minutes of a Meeting of the Eastern Committee held in Lord Curzon's Room at the Privy Council Office, on Monday, December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1918, at 3 P.M., Annex.
9. PRO. CAB. 25/120, S.W.C. 1, Secret, "Note on the Military Situation in Armenia" by Supreme War Council, British Section, Versailles, December 3<sup>th</sup>, 1917.
10. Həsənov Cəmil. Azərbaycan beynəlxalq münasibətlər sistemində (1918-1920-ci illər). Bakı: Azərbaycan Dövlət Nəşriyyatı, 1993, 362 s.
11. PRO. FO. 371/3659/114087, Balfour, British Delegation, Paris to Foreign Office, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
12. PRO. FO. 371/3668/124570, "Memorandum on the Armenian Question", Foreign Office Minutes, September 1<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
13. PRO. FO. 371/3668/123464, Mr. Balfour to War Office, August 31<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
14. PRO. FO. 371/3659/118402, "Telegraphic Censorship-Constantinople, Daily Report, no: 138, July 30<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
15. PRO. FO. 371/3659/115082, Aharonian, President Delegation Armenian Republic to his excellency Lloyd George, August 11<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
16. "Armenia faced with massacre". "The Times", August 16, 1919.
17. PRO. FO. 371/3668/118562, The British-Armenian Chamber of Commerce to Arthur James Balfour, August 19<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
18. PRO. FO. 371/3668/122957, Foreign Office to Sir Henry Wilson, August 29<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
19. Abdullayev Mahir. Beynəlxalq münasibətlər tarixi (XX əsr). Bakı: ABU, 2006, 464 s.
20. Armaoğlu Fahir. 20. yüzilliy siyasi tarixi 1980-1990: 2 ciltte, II c., Ankara: Türkiye İş Bankası Kültür yayınları, 1991, 336 s.
21. Karadağ Raif. Petrol fırtınası. İstanbul: Truva yayınları, 2014, 328 s.
22. The Parliamentary Archives, House of Lord Record Office, Lloyd George Papers/F/24/1/10, M.P.A. Hankey to Lloyd George, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 1919.
23. Həsənlı Cəmil. Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyətinin xarici siyasəti (1918-1920). Bakı: "GARISMA" MMC, 2009, 551 s.
24. "British troops leaving Armenia: desire for American mandate". "The Times", August 12, 1919, Tuesday.
25. Robert L.Daniel. The Armenian Question and American-Turkish Relations (1914-1927) // The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, September 1959, vol: 46, №2, p. 252-275.
26. Yusifzadə Sevinc. Ermənistan-Azərbaycan münasibəti və İngiltərənin mövqeyi (1918-1920-ci illər) // Dirçəliş – XXI əsr, 2004, №76-77, s. 252-261.
27. Darabadi Pərvin. XX əsrin əvvəllərində Güney Qafqaz beynəlxalq geosiyasi münasibətlər sistemində / Azərbaycan Xalq Cümhuriyyəti və Qafqaz İslam ordusu. Bakı: Qafqaz Universiteti Qafqaz Araşdırmaları İnstitutu nəşriyyatı, 2008, s. 23-38.
28. PRO. FO. 371/3404/162745, Arthur James Balfour to Boghos Nubar Pasha, (12, Avenue du Trocadero, Paris), October 12<sup>nd</sup>, 1918.
29. Малевич Жорж де. Армянская трагедия 1915 года. Баку: Элм, 1990, 128 с.

**This work was supported by the Science Development Foundation under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan – Grant №EİF/MQM-3-Shusha-2014-7(22)-05/01/5**