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
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 to 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
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 Khatsiyant 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 Khatsiyant, 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-
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 40th 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.
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 government 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:


8. PRO. CAB. 27/24, E.C. 40th 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 2nd, 1918, at 3 P.M., Annex.


13. PRO. FO. 371/3668/123464, Mr. Balfour to War Office, August 31st, 1919.


15. PRO. FO. 371/3659/115082, Aharonian, President Delegation Armenian Republic to his excellency Lloyd George, August 11th, 1919.


18. PRO. FO. 371/3668/122957, Foreign Office to Sir Henry Wilson, August 29th, 1919.


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