

# MASSACRE OF THE AZERBAIJANI TURKIC POPULATION (1918-1920) ACCORDING TO THE DOCUMENTS OF THE BRITISH DIPLOMATS

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**Abstract:** *This article investigates the military campaign of the Republic of Armenia against the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic in 1918-1920, and the massacres of the Azerbaijani Turkic population on the territories of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic as documented by the British diplomats of the time. Within this framework, it examines the reports of the diplomats, who were involved in the formulation of the British policy towards South Caucasus in 1918-1920. It can be seen that these documents are of great significance for revealing the massacres against the Azerbaijani Turkic people between 1918 and 1920 by armed Armenian gangs with the connivance and direct support of the government of the Republic of Armenia. Furthermore, these documents conclusively help to determine the scale of the massacres conducted by the Armenian forces against the Azerbaijani Turkic population in these years.*

**Keywords:** *South Caucasus, Azerbaijan Democratic Republic, Britain, Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict, Zangezur, Karabakh, Massacre.*

## BRİTANYA DİPLOMATİK DOKÜMANLARINDA AZERBAJCANLI TÜRKLERE KARŞI GERÇEKLEŞTİRİLEN KATLIAMLAR (1918-1920)

**Öz:** *Bu çalışma, 1918-1920 yıllarında Ermenistan'ın Azerbaycan'a karşı yürüttüğü askeri harekati ve bunun neticesinde Azerbaycan Demokratik Cumhuriyeti topraklarında Azerbaycanlı Türk nüfusa yönelik gerçekleştirilen katliamları Britanyalı diplomatların kaleme aldıkları belgelere dayanarak ele almaktadır. Bu çerçevede, 1918-1920 yıllarında Britanya'nın Güney Kafkasya politikasını şekillendiren*

*diplomatların raporları incelenmiştir. Bahse konu raporların, Ermenistan Cumhuriyeti hükümetinin dahli ve dolaysız desteği ile silahlı Ermeni çetelerin 1918-1920 yıllarında Azerbaycanlı Türklere karşı giriştikleri katliamları ortaya koyması açısından büyük öneme sahip oldukları görülmektedir. Bunun yanında, bu belgeler, 1918-1920 yılları arasında Ermeni güçlerin Azerbaycanlı Türklere karşı gerçekleştirdikleri katliamların boyutları kati surette belirlenmesine yardımcı olur niteliktedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Güney Kafkasya, Azerbaycan Demokratik Cumhuriyeti, Britanya, Ermeni-Azerbaycan Çatışması, Zangezür, Karabağ, Katliam.*

## **Introduction**

The years 1918-1920 are one of the most pivotal in the history of Azerbaijan due to rapid flow of changing circumstances – both significant and tragic – each crucial for the Azerbaijani people. These events culminated on May 28, 1918 – declaration of the state independence of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (ADR). It was the first democratic state in the entire Moslem world – the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Another great and historical success achieved by the ADR was the establishment of parliament in December 1918. The parliament of the ADR consisted of not only different political parties, but also of different ethnic groups. The new proclaimed state managed to create the main governmental institutions, financial system, military forces, etc. However, these momentous events of 1918 were preceded by the tragedy of the Azerbaijani Turkic people to cast doubt on the very existence of the nation. The article aims to examine the war between Armenia and Azerbaijan in 1918-1920, which was accompanied by mass killings and ethnic cleansing of Azerbaijani Turkic population, on the basis of reports of the British diplomats.

To understand the causes of these events, one should consider the historical background and causes of the Armenian -Azerbaijan contradictions in the region. As every problem, Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict also has its roots. In order to reach a better understanding of its essence, it is necessary to shed a light on the core of the conflict, for which we have to go back to the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, as the very origins of the conflict lay there. The basis for its start with the first quarter of 18<sup>th</sup> century military and political expansion of Russia in the South Caucasus, where the Armenian element was assigned the role of social support for Russia in the region as well as the Christian outpost in the fight against Muslim Turkey and Iran. After winning two Russo-Iranian wars (1804-1813; 1826-1828) and Russo-Turkish wars (1828-1829) Russia ultimately augmented its power in the South Caucasus. Thus, the special article of Turkmanchay (article XV) and Adrianople treaties (article XIII) created a favorable atmosphere for the mass resettlement of Turkish and Iran Armenians to the South Caucasus territories, which started the process lasting for a century. Resettling Armenians implied various political and economic purposes but, ultimately, it overlapped with the desire to Christianize the region, which was carried out not only for the sake of pure religion but also in order to increase the loyal population on the Muslim-dominated frontiers. The geopolitical consideration, the expansion

into Qajar Iran and Ottoman domains was the important factor in this regard.

Thus, demography was gradually turning into a political instrument. The implementation of demographic engineering policies resulted in the mass resettlement of Armenians onto the Southern Caucasus lands within a very short period of time. These events started a lengthy process which led to forming Armenian numerical dominance on the territory of the present Armenian Republic created on the lands of former Irevan Khanate. Despite this flagrant illegality and Azerbaijani Turks' protests, the Russian administration's policy in the Caucasus did not practically change. The most affected people in the Southern Caucasus were Azerbaijani Turks, whose landownership as well as economic and social development was hindered by the Russian conquest and subsequent policies, including resettlements. So the nationality policies of Russian empire intensified the ethnic conflicts and was a reason for the major conflicts between the two nations during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>1</sup>

It is important to note that the bloody events of 1918-1920 are vividly echoed in official documents of the Parliament and various ministries of the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic; documents of the local executive power, materials of an ADR government extraordinary commission of investigation, etc. At present, a greater part of these archival materials are open for the general public, published in collection of archival documents or accessible at electronic libraries.<sup>2</sup> However, in the research for this article, I focused directly on the reports of British diplomats in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of these bloody events. It is no mere coincidence that the British archives have scores of *top secret* reports and correspondence signed by the highest rank officials of the British Empire. These reports and internal correspondence of British officials produced a real assessment of the

1 For more detail see: РГИА, Ф. 383, оп. 29, Д. 539 (1828); АКАК, т. VII, с. 642-64, 845-847; IOR/L/PS/8.89, Translation of statement made by lieutenant Shee (8 may 1828); Özcan, Besim. "1828-29 Osmanlı-Rus Harbi'nde Erzurum Eyaleti'nden Rusya'ya Göçürülen Ermenilerin Geri Dönüşlerini Sağlama Faaliyetleri" *A.Ü. Türkiyat Araştırmaları Enstitüsü Dergisi* [TAED] 46, (2011): 195-204.

2 Азербайджанская Демократическая Республика. Внешняя политика. (Документы и материалы). (Баку: «Азербайджан», 1998); Куба. *Апрель-май 1918 г. Мусульманские погромы в документах*, (Составитель: д.и.н. Солмаз Рустамова-Тогиди, Баку, 2010); *Март 1918 г. Баку. Азербайджанские погромы в документах*, (Составитель: д.и.н. Солмаз Рустамова-Тогиди, Баку: Индиго-пресс, 2009); Yusuf Sarıнай, ed. *Azərbaycan Belgələrində Ermeni Sorunu (1918-1920)*, (Ankara: Başbakanlık Devlet Arşivleri Genel Müd. 2001); Халилов, А. *Геноцид против мусульманского населения Закавказья в исторических источниках*. (Баку: Азернешр, 2000).

situation in the region, especially as these confidential top secret documents reports were not intended for public consumption. As a great power with traditionally key, strategic positions and influence in the world politics and specifically with serious regional interests in South Caucasus, Great Britain made a detailed record of the regional developments. The reports of British diplomats are particularly valuable, especially as they are utilized in a scholarly work for the first time.

### **Armenian factor in the policy of the United Kingdom in the South Caucasus (December 1917 - August 1918).**

The beginning of the First World War, particularly the February Revolution of 1917 and the collapse of the Russian Empire saw the aggravation of the situation in the Caucasus where interests of world powers involved in the war came into collision. A secret British-French Convention on the division of spheres of influence in Russian Empire was concluded in December 1917. The British trusteeship included the south-eastern part of Russia where Britain would act as a guarantor of “stability and counteraction to bolshevism” and was to take measures to consolidate its position in the region. The South Caucasus was declared a sphere of influence of the Great Britain.<sup>3</sup> Note that Britain’s initial plans to invade the south of Russia were attributable to the Caucasus and its strategic location as a springboard to intrude upon the Iranian territory. It was no mere coincidence that two British military missions fortified their position in the country earlier 1918: one in Meshed to start intervention in the Trans-Caspian region; another – in Qazvin to intervene in the Caucasus and the Caspian zone. The first of them was subordinated to the British army command in India and headed by Gen. W.Malleon; the second one headed by Gen. H. Densterville and was controlled by London and based on the Mesopotamia front army.

A secret report to the British Foreign Office of January 4, 1918 refers to British strategic plans in the Caucasus. As Sir P.Cox’ report noted:

Bare scheme for propaganda among Mahometans in Caucasus suggested itself. That we should move king of Arabia to send influential deputation to Caucasus to invoke assistance of all

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<sup>3</sup> Юсиф-заде, С.З. *Азербайджано-британские отношения в начале XX века*, (Баку: Тахсил, 2008),12; Glenn E. Curtis, ed. *Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia: Country Studies*. (Federal Research Division, Library of Congress, Washington, 1995), 91.

Mahomotans there and in Crimea in struggle of Arabs to liberate holy places from Turkish yoke, and urging them therefore to continue war and retain maximum number of Turks on Caucasus front.<sup>4</sup>

On the eve of the invasion of the Caucasus, the British government set its hopes on local Christians and, first of all, Armenians<sup>5</sup> who, in British government's view, were capable of stopping the Turkish offensive in the South Caucasus. In turn, Armenian politicians were engaged in pro-British propaganda, that's why in late February 1918 the Moslem *uyezds* (districts) lodged their petitions to the Transcaucasian *Seim* (parliament) protesting against the invasion of the British troops into the territory of the Caucasus and demanded to cease talks with British representatives.<sup>6</sup>

In a report dated January 22, 1918 Captain Noel Chevasse mentioned that the attitude towards British government in Azerbaijan changed from bad to worse. He wrote:

While at the region 6 weeks ago, the leaders of the Tatar<sup>7</sup> community were quite friendly to us. Now, upon my return to Baku I discovered that they tempered friendliness with suspicion, poorly concealed hostility. This is explained as being due to the following: 1) a generally recognized opinion is that we're giving preference to the Armenian interests; 2) the fact that Armenians do strengthen this impression and are profiting from this; 3) as for priority given to the formation of the Armenian national regiment, I believe that our support of Armenians and disbelief in Moslems

4 N.A. Maxwell, ed. Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain's Archivals Documents. (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 183; Гасанлы, Дж. Мартовский погром в Баку и геноцид азербайджанцев, accessed January 17, 2018. <http://myazerbaijan.org/index.php?p=history/19>.

5 On December 2, 1918, Lord Curzon cited three reasons for British policy towards Armenia stating :”1) to provide a national home for the scattered peoples of the Armenian race. 2)we want to set up an Armenian state as a palisade, if I may use the metaphor, against Pan-Turanian ambitions of the Turk. 3)an effective barrier against aggression... of any foreign powers, impelled by ambition or by other motives, to press forward in that direction”. (Terry Stavridis. The Armenian Question 1918-20: Empty Promises, Survival and Soviet Absorption, accessed January 17, 2018. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279556219\\_The\\_Armenian\\_Question\\_1918-20](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/279556219_The_Armenian_Question_1918-20)

6 Дж. Гасанлы, Мартовский погром в Баку и геноцид азербайджанцев, accessed January 17, 2018. <http://myazerbaijan.org/index.php?p=history/19>

7 The term Tatar was primarily used to identify Turkic population of South Caucasus by Russian Empire to oppose them to the Turkic population of the border Muslim states-Qajar Iran and Ottoman Turkey. All Russian sources refer to them as Tatars or Muslims. Thus, the term colonizers established in official documents until the collapse of Empire.

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is equitable to the Russian headquarters' interests. In my opinion, this policy is erroneous to result in disaster. Moslem interests are too strong to be ignored, especially at a time when expectations for rapid revival of the Russian army are unlikely to become true...Tatars (Azerbaijani) will form their national detachments to spite Russia, so it'd be better if this happens under our protectorate.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the British archival documents note that in the reviewed period the British commander began to realize that the support to Armenians greatly damaged Great Britain's policy towards of the Azerbaijani Turkic population. He became firmly convinced of this view following the bloody events of March 1918 when Bolshevik-Dashnak armed formations committed massacre of the Azerbaijani Turkic population in Baku province. On July 20, 1918, in a secret telegram to London, Chief Commander of the British troops in India W. Malleeson wrote that:

“The Armenians have greatly injured our cause in Caucasus amongst the Tatars by openly boasting that they were appoint protégés of the British. This give rise to the pernicious belief that British had deliberately adopted an anti-inhumation policy inasmuch as Armenians massacred large number of Tatars”.<sup>9</sup>

According to the Extraordinary Investigation Commission, the number of Moslems killed in Baku and other districts of the Baku in March-April 1918 was 30,000 people. According to British brigadier general R. Horton of December 8, 1918, about 180 villages were destroyed and scores of Azerbaijani Turkic population killed. The document says nothing of total casualties; however, if assume that 25 families each consisting of 5 people lived in each village, the approx number of Azerbaijani Turkic population killed exceeds 20,000.<sup>10</sup>

British armed intrusion into the South Caucasus started straight after the Russian troops of the Caucasian front's Iranian section were pulled out from North Iran at the end of summer 1918. The first attempt of armed intrusion of the British troops into the South Caucasus was made in early

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8 N.A. Maxwell, ed. Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain's Archivals Documents. (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 178.

9 N.A. Maxwell, ed. *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain's Archivals Documents.* (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 169.

10 N.A. Maxwell, ed. Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain's Archivals Documents. (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 83.



August 1918. In early August a leading detachment of G. Dunsterville's group landed in Baku<sup>11</sup>; the main forces of the 39<sup>th</sup> infantry regiment led by the General Dunsterville arrived on August 17. But the British detachments immediately retreated towards the port of Enzeli in mid-September due to the inevitable fall of Baku and the united Turkish-Azerbaijani army liberated Baku.<sup>12</sup> But after the defeat of the Turkish-German alliance in World War I, the Turkish troops had to leave Azerbaijan. In accordance with terms and conditions of the Mudros Armistice signed on October 30, 1918, Turkish troops left the South Caucasus. Under the terms of the Mudros armistice treaty between the Ottoman Empire and Great Britain, representing the Allied powers, British troops was to return to Baku. The South Caucasus was declared a sphere of influence of Great Britain.

Having evacuated from Baku, Densterville was recalled from Iran and, on the basis of his mission and new contingents of troops that had arrived from Mesopotamia, was interventionist group called "NorPerForce" (North Persian Force) led by Gen. Wilfred Thomson.

### **Massacre against the Azerbaijani Turkic Populations of Nakhchivan, Zangezur and Karabakh (January 1918-April 1920)**

W.Thomson - commanded the British troops, which entered Baku on November 17, 1918 following the withdrawal of the Turkish troops. Upon his arrival in Baku Thomson declared a state of martial law and proclaimed himself General-Governor of Baku. Shortly after, the British troops occupied the whole South Caucasus. A total of 30,000 British soldiers and officers were stationed in the South Caucasus at the time. The aim of the British policy in the South Caucasus was to establish Britain's complete control over the region and thus maintain its long-term influence there. Another important task was to provide support, including armed support, to local national forces in an effort to overthrow the Soviet power in Russia and get Russia's territorial dismemberment. It was the principles above that contributed to the formation of Britain's policy regarding the national state formations that had arisen in the south of Russia after May 1918.<sup>13</sup>

11 For more detail see - L.C. Dunsterville, *The Adventures of Dunsterforce*. (London: E. Arnold, 1920).

12 С.З. Юсиф-заде, *Азербайджано-британские отношения в начале XX века*, (Баку: Тахсил, 2008),14. The Azerbaijani National Government moved from Ganja to Baku.

13 Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920, the Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 140-141.



The establishment of three national states in the South Caucasus in May 1918 was followed by the inevitable delimitation of their borders. It should be noted that the desire of the newly established independent republics to demarcate their territories by restoring the borders of “Great Armenia”<sup>14</sup> or those of the medieval Georgian dukedoms, faced retaliatory claims of a neighboring state over the same territories. In terms of the historically established, ethnically mixed settlements across the South Caucasus, attempts of the parties to demarcate territories through negotiation were doomed to failure. So, the only way out the impasse was to establish borders between the republics by force. Such an approach led to perpetual outburst of political confrontation that subsequently grew into armed clashes or internecine wars with enormous casualties. Precisely it was this sort of countless conflicts that constituted the core of the political history of the South Caucasus in 1918-1920.<sup>15</sup>

It should be noted that territorial conflicts between the three South Caucasian states disturbed the British occupation authorities forcing them to send troops to various destinations in the South Caucasus to reconcile the conflicting parties. As an authority to maintain “law and order” in the South Caucasus, Great Britain partook in resolving practically all international and other conflicts in the region. A Tiflis-based headquarters of the British occupation troops and sometimes the Chief Commander of the “Black Sea Army” in Constantinople were responsible for identifying a party to the conflict to be backed. After the troops were pulled out, the British government established a post of Tiflis-headquartered High Commissioner for South Caucasus. Gen. O. Wardrop was the first British High Commissioner since July, 1919.<sup>16</sup>

Further research is necessary to establish the criteria or political reasons behind the British military command’s decision to support one of the conflicting parties (or keep neutrality). But, apparently, the

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14 “Great Armenia” is an irrational political goal in modern Armenian society, aimed at unification with the Republic of Armenia of the “historical Armenia lands”. According to the idea, “Great Armenia” should include: Western Armenia (Eastern Anatolia (Turkey), Eastern Armenia (Karabagh, Ganja, Nakhichevan districts of Azerbaijan Republic), Javakhk (Georgia).

15 See more detail Beşir Mustafayev, “Rezultade Hükümeti Dönemi Ve Yaşanan Terör Olayları (1918-1920),” *Avrasya İncelemeleri Dergisi*, II/1 (2013): 206-231.

16 Tadeusz Swietochowski, *Russian Azerbaijan, 1905-1920, the Shaping of a National Identity in a Muslim Community* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 157; Andersen, Andrew and Egge Georg. *The Second Phase of Territorial Formation: Insurgencies, Destabilization and Decrease of Western Support*, accessed January 17, 2018.

<http://www.conflicts.rem33.com/images/Armenia/restoration%20and%20terr%20issue/T4.html>

British command was consistently governed by political and other interests of its own country.

From the date of establishment of the first Armenian state - the Ararat Republic<sup>17</sup> - in the South Caucasus toward the end of May 1918, its government got down to implementing plans for the establishment of "Great Armenia" at the expense of neighboring Turkey, Azerbaijan and Georgia. Thus, the myth about "Great Armenia", warmed up by the Dashnak government,<sup>18</sup> became national idea of all Armenian people. The territory of independent Armenia accounted for only 9 thousand sq. km. of high ground and desolate district. The Dashnaks put forward definite territorial claims to Azerbaijan districts (Nakhchivan, Zangezour and Karabakh) that had already been part of the Azerbaijan Republic, as well as to Georgia (Borchaly, Akhaltsikh and Akhalkalaki districts).<sup>19</sup>

The government of the Ararat Republic believed that implementation of their plans about "Great Armenia" depended on support and aid from allies, especially, Britain and the USA. The former was expected to provide direct military support and political recognition while the latter was expected to provide financial aid and adopt a mandate to rule the country.<sup>20</sup> The British government considered that the Armenians were the only barrier between Turkey and the Turkic world. For this reason, the Armenians were the preferred nation in order to defend the Caucasus from Turkic armies. The well-known British historian and one of the

17 Ararat Republic was often used by Ottoman Armenians because the country "was only a dusty province without Ottoman Armenia whose salvation Armenians had been seeking for 40 years." (Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 272-273.) It has also been known as the Dashnak Republic due to the fact that the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, better known as Dashnaksutun or simply Dashnak was the dominant political force in the country. (Ronald, G. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat: Armenia in Modern History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 131) Other names of the country include also Democratic Republic of Armenia.

18 In 1890, leaders of Armenian nationalists in Tiflis made decision of creation of Armenian national party. The publishing organ of the party became newspaper issued in Geneva – "Droshak" ("The Banner"). Then the title "Dashnaksutun" was given to the party. Total title of the party meant "Union (Federation) of Dashnaksutun's Armenian Revolutionaries". It is sometimes deciphered as "Armenian Revolutionary Federative Party". Already at that time, i.e. at the stage of its raising, "Dashnaksutun" was discerned by radical extremism, of what the motto elected for the Armenian nationalist movement testifies: "Freedom or death". The "Dashnaksutun" was one of the most prominent political forces around which the history of the first Ararat Republic (1918-1920) revolved.

19 Guram Markhulia, "'Dashnaksutun' and its politics in 1918-1920," accessed January 17, 2018, <https://iberiana.wordpress.com/armenia-georgia/markhulia-6/>

20 Guram Markhulia, "'Dashnaksutun'."

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famous representatives of the Propaganda Bureau at the War Ministry during the First World War, Arnold Toynbee, wrote to Mr Kidston, one of the authoritative diplomats of the British Foreign Office, that “*our policy is to liberate Armenians from the Turks. We must effectively break the Turanian movement*”.<sup>21</sup> However, shortly after the Armenians would be disappointed. It turned out that the aims of the British policy were inscrutable and that the British government could not decide on whether to provide support to Armenia or its political rivals.

At that time the British did much to ensure the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan. On the issue of Karabagh, Zangezur and Nakhchivan, Gen Thompson directly supported Azerbaijan. Particularly, a Memorandum of October 28, 1918 drafted by the Britain’s Foreign Office’s Political Intelligence Division reads the following:

In solution of the Armenian question, it would seem to be advisable to consider the further centre of Armenia gravitating towards Southern Asia Minor, rather than towards the Caucasus, whither the Armenians have come in past decades mainly as refugees from Turkey during the Russian rule, and been used in part (as, indeed, were the other nationalities likewise by the Russian Government) to promote discord between the Georgians and Tatars.<sup>22</sup>

In the meanwhile, the regular armed forces of Armenia launched a military campaign against the Azerbaijani Republic through intruding into Zangezur, Nakhchivan and Karabakh. During Armenia’s military campaign against Azerbaijan, the British leadership was forced to interfere with the conflict to remedy the situation. The situation in Nakhchivan in earlier January 1919 made it necessary to send a British officer, captain of the 2<sup>nd</sup> battalion of the Scottish regiment and a British infantry company in order to seize control over the situation.<sup>23</sup> The situation was so critical that on behalf of the Qajar government Prince Ala-es-Sultanei<sup>24</sup> submitted a protest to the British commandment due to the annihilation of Moslem civilian population and atrocities

21 Emin Shikhaliyev, “Britain’s “Armenian policy” in the South Caucasus (1917-1920),” *IRS-Heritage* 4, no. 27 (2016): 39.

22 N.A. Maxwell, ed, *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain’s Archivals Documents*. (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 110.

23 For more detail see N.A. Maxwell, ed, *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain’s Archivals Documents*. (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008).

24 Prince Ala-es-Sultaneh, Minister for Foreign Affairs in Qajar Iran in 1917 and 1918.

committed by Armenian armed forces in the territory of Nakhchivan.<sup>25</sup> “Moreover aggressions on the part of the Armenians into those districts where the majority of the inhabitants are Moslems is bound to produce great commotion which may have disastrous results”.<sup>26</sup> The Memorandum notes that the population of Nakhchivan, after having found itself in a no-way-out situation, asked Iran for help and protection against Armenians. In his report to Lord Curzon, P. Cox enclosed a translation of this memorandum which he received from the Qajar Government, charging the Armenians with committing atrocities upon Moslems population at Irevan, Nakhchivan and Kars and holding the Allied Governments responsible for redressing these wrongs.<sup>27</sup> A telegram of the Foreign Ministry of Qajar Iran to the diplomatic mission of Britain of October 21, 1919 noted:

No doubt the British legation is informed of the recent event at Irevan, Nakhchivan, Kars and on the whole border of Armenia, atrocities committed by Armenians on the Moslems in those parts, by massacres and plunder.

The Foreign office has also received information that the Armenians have spared no acts of violence against the Moslems of those parts irrespective of their nationalities. Families of the Moslems have been scattered, innocent men and children have been massacred, women violated, properties plundered and villages destroyed without any provocation....

The Foreign office is sure that these atrocities committed by the Armenians, which are most repugnant to equity and justice, will not remain unpublished.

Since the representatives of the Great Powers are witnesses of the barbarous practices of the Armenians they are expected to take measures for the prevention of the atrocities and for the punishment of the perpetrators.<sup>28</sup>

In connection with Armenia’s military campaign against Karabakh in December 1918, it became necessary to send to Shusha a British military

25 IOR/L/P&S/11/147, Memorandum from Persian Government (January 25, 1919).

26 IOR/L/P&S/11/147, Memorandum from Persian Government (January 25, 1919).

27 IOR/L/P&S/11/160, Decipher from Sir P. Cox (Tehran, October 25, 1919).

28 IOR/L/P&S/11/160, Decipher from Persian Foreign Office to. Massacres of Muslims by Armenians. (Tehran: October 21, 1919).

mission with small contingents under the command of Col. Lieutenant Gibbon of Worcester regiment. The official position of the British commandment appeared to be supporting the Azerbaijani side, condemning the Armenian aggression, and maintaining the peace in the region. At Gen. W. Thomson's initiative, a mixed Anglo-Armenian-Azerbaijani delegation was sent to Karabakh; telegrams were sent to Armenian chieftains calling them to refrain from aggressive actions towards the Azerbaijani Turkic population. A similar letter signed by Thomson was submitted to Armenian military commander Andranik,<sup>29</sup> as well. Particularly, under an order №640 of November 19, 1918, Andranik notified his subordinates saying: "a letter delivered to me by representatives of the allies reads that from now on any hostile actions may negatively affect the solution of the Armenian question".<sup>30</sup> However, in summer 1918 Andranik-led detachment of Armenian irregular forces launched a target-oriented campaign to annihilate and expel the Azerbaijani population of Zangezur. According to N. Mikhailov, a member of the Extraordinary Investigation Commission formed by the Azerbaijani government, 115 villages, that practically means all the Azerbaijani villages in the region, were destroyed and ruined in Zangezur in summer and autumn of 1918 alone. Thus, on the basis of fragmentary information from several reports of British diplomats, it can be concluded that 7,729 Azerbaijani Turkic populations were killed in these villages; 50,000 Azerbaijani Turkic populations had to leave Zangezur and become refugees.<sup>31</sup>

To resolve the Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict over Karabakh and Zangezur, in mid-January 1919 the British command chose a model of territorial isolation of the conflict area through establishing here a special administration of the Governor-General led by Dr. Khosrov Bey Sultanov.<sup>32</sup> The British commanders controlled him through their military representative who was a member of the administration leadership and retained a strong right of vote. However, alarming

29 Andranik Ozanian, the commander of the Armenian armed detachments, who was later declared an Armenian national hero, and others known for their radical enmity against the Turks such as Njdeh, Dro, Dolukhanyan and others.

30 С.З. Юсиф-заде, *Азербайджано-британские отношения в начале XX века*. (Баку: Тахсил, 2008), 48.

31 И.М. Маммадов & Т.Ф. Мусаев, *Армяно-азербайджанский конфликт: История, Право, Посредничество* (Баку: 2008), 32-33.

32 Khosrov bey Sultanov was appointed the Minister of Defense in the first government of Azerbaijan Democratic Republic (May 28 - June 17, 1918). In January 1919, the British forces commander General William M. Thomson approved Sultanov's appointment as provisional Governor General of Karabakh and Zangezur.

reports from Karabakh continued even despite the measures taken. The Chief Commander of British troops in Tsesaloniki, Gen. J.F. Miln reported on February 6, 1919 to London to the head of the Imperial Headquarters the following:

“at the time of our occupation of Baku by two Turkish battalions, and was almost to be attacked by Andranik’s Armenian army. It has now been overrun by Armenians, who are murdering the Tatars, who are naturally retaliating, though their Government is trying its best to keep order. It has been necessary to send a company of British infantry to maintain order, but a battalion would be safer”.<sup>33</sup>

A weekly report of the Intelligence Bureau of April 10, 1919, as well, noted:

“The situation in the Shusha district is stated to remain unsatisfactory owing to attitude adopted by the Armenians, who comprise the majority of the population of the district. They are obstruction the local Tartar administration and hold the view that Sultanov, the Tartar Governor General, is Turkish agent.

The Armenian government has been warned that no good is gained by obstruction, and it has been pointed that both Sultanov and the Azerbaijan Government are responsible to the British for the situation in the Shusha district”.<sup>34</sup>

However, the measures taken by the British command were ineffective and ceased atrocities of the Armenian gangs only temporarily. The British troops left Shusha at the end of June 1919 while a British representative stayed till the end of August.

Later reports of British mission’s representatives to the South Caucasus who were sent to the region on a special mission by the British government noted that the Armenian armed forces were disdainful, used most insidious methods to annihilate civilian Azerbaijani population of the Karabakh, Zangezour and Nakhchivan districts of ADR. Reports of Britain’s High Commissioner in the Caucasus, Sir Oliver Wardrope to

33 N.A. Maxwell, ed, *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain’s Archivals Documents.* (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 236.

34 N.A. Maxwell, ed, *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain’s Archivals Documents.* (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 390.

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his government were full of such observations. In a report submitted to London on October 2, 1919, he noted: “*Quite recently Armenians have destroyed 60 Mussulman villages in districts of Novo Bayazid, Alexandropol, Erivan*”.<sup>35</sup> In his report from December 11, 1919, Sir O. Wardrope noted:

“Governor general Karabagh states on December 1<sup>st</sup> regular Armenian troops with two guns and 6 machine guns attacked 9 Tatar villages in Kigy pass and burnt and looted them.

On November 26<sup>th</sup> peaceful Mussulmans of Okhchi district were collected and all men military age blown up with dynamite and others including women and children slaughtered in mosque.

Zangezur Mussulmans fleeing in panic”.<sup>36</sup>

In an attachment to his report Wardrope submitted to Lord Curzon a letter of the Prime Minister of the ADR of November 16, 1919 indicated the following:

“Zangezur is inalienable part Azerbaijan republic and was always considered, not only by us, but by Allies of British Command and Colonel Haskell, high commissioner, peace conference reorganizing our inalienable right to Zangezur district in one of points agreement”.<sup>37</sup>

In a response to a note of the Foreign Ministry of the Republic of Armenia, Foreign Minister of the Republic of Azerbaijan A. Akhverdov through his diplomatic representative in Armenia noted:

“Inform the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Armenian Republic that the district (uezd) of Zangezur is in itself part of the territory of the Azerbaijan republic, and therefore the question of Armenian Government expressed in the note mention is an inadmissible intervention into the inner life of the Azerbaijan Republic the government of which does not consider itself obliged to give an answer to the government of Armenia about necessary

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35 N.A. Maxwell, ed, *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain's Archivals Documents.* (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 265.

36 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 196 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 11, 1919).

37 IOR/L/P&S/11/147, Telegram from ‘en clair’ Mr. O. Wardrop to Earl Curzon (November 18, 1919).



measures into the administration of different provinces of the republic".<sup>38</sup>

In a report of December 3, 1919, Wardrop wrote that Prime Minister of ADR complained that Armenian Government despite the agreement of November 23<sup>rd</sup> were continuing military operations, and had destroyed nine villages.<sup>39</sup> In his report sent the next day he notes that Azerbaijan Government inform him about situation in Zangezur and Deralagauz and recent action by regular Armenian troops culminating in massacre of hundreds and destruction of fifteen villages.<sup>40</sup>

In a report of Wardrop of December 15, 1919 he mentions that Prime Minister of Azerbaijan sent him a long telegram accusing Armenian Regular troops with artillery of massacre and destruction of villages in Zangezur. Azerbaijani Prime Minister Nasib Yusifbeyli noted that on December 9 the villages of Kedeklu, Askerlu and Perchevan south-east of Gerus, were destroyed and that besieged Azerbaijani villages in Ohchi and Kigy Glens south-west of Gerus have been ruined by artillery majority of inhabitants slaughtered. He further said that Azerbaijan has no single soldier in Zangezur, and asks that neutral officers be sent at once to disarm Armenians in Zangezur otherwise Azerbaijan government will be forced to take measures to enforce good neighborliness.<sup>41</sup>

In a report of December 30, 1919,<sup>42</sup> Wardrop mentioned that according to various reports Armenian government on 21 December opened warfare against population of Zangibazar district, destroyed the village of Kargabazar and on 22<sup>nd</sup> December also Ulukhanlu. Fighting now was proceeding to the villages of Chobanker Karakishlasch. Wardrop concluded that Armenia had undoubtedly been violating the agreement of 23<sup>rd</sup> November.<sup>43</sup>

38 IOR/L/P&S/11/159, Decipher № 46 from Mr. O. Wardrop (October 8, 1919).

39 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 173 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 3, 1919).

40 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 179 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 4, 1919).

41 IOR/L/P&S/11/161, Decipher № 202 from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 15, 1919).

42 IOR/L/P&S/11/166, Telegram from 'en clair' from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 30, 1919).

43 In the middle of November US and British representatives in the Caucasus Sir Oliver Wardrop and Colonel James Rhea addressed the governments of Azerbaijan and Armenia and demanded that the undeclared war between the two republics should be stopped immediately. Peace talks started on November 20 in Tiflis (Georgia) and came to an end three days later with no breakthrough. On November 23, 1919 the Prime Ministers of the two countries (Alexandre Khatisian and Nasib Bey Yusifbeyli) signed an agreement that was in fact nothing more but a declaration of intent. Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Republic of Armenia*. Vol. II: From Versailles to London. 1919-1920 (London: University of California Press, 1982), 223.

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In a report dated January 25, 1920, Grundy, another British representative, mentioned that Azerbaijan Government had been reporting further destruction of twenty-four villages and large scale massacres in Zangezur by Armenian columns with artillery. Moreover, he mentioned that public opinion in Azerbaijan was violently agitated and the government was being accused for inaction inaction during negotiations with Allies.<sup>44</sup>

In a report on January 28, 1920, Wardrop noted that continued reports of Armenian aggression in Zangezur created a strong public feeling and Government of Azerbaijan has been pressured to take action immediately Azerbaijan has been threatened if it does not take action immediately.<sup>45</sup>

Also, the reports of Wardrop provide information about the tragic situation of the Moslem population of the Kars region, administration of which had been left to Armenia in May 1919 after the Britain abolished the South-Western Caucasian Republic.<sup>46</sup> A report by Wardrop from March 11, 1920 notes: “Azerbaijan representative here communicated March 5<sup>th</sup> to his Government report that the Mussulmans of Chaldyr, Zarushat, Shuunalel districts (group omitted) ordered to leave their villages by the Armenian authorities also that (group omitted) March 1<sup>st</sup> inhabitants received ultimatum to disarm and villages surrendering are destroyed. He asked that petition of refugees to enter Azerbaijan may be granted”.<sup>47</sup>

From these reports of the British diplomatic mission covering a period of December 1919-March 1920 it can be seen that about 69 villages were destroyed and the whole civilian population of these villages was exterminated in Zangezur, Karabakh and Nakhchivan within only four months. Given that residing in each village were about 25 families consisting of 5 people each (i.e. 125 people per village), in all the 69 villages the number of total population must have been around 8625. These data obtained on the basis of fragmentary information from

44 IOR/L/P&S/11/167, Decipher (№50) from Mr. Grundy (January 25, 1920).

45 IOR/L/P&S/11/168, Decipher (№52) from Mr. O. Wardrop (January 28, 1920).

46 The first republic founded in Anatolia but also one of the shortest-lived states in world political history (December 1, 1918- April 19, 1919). The republic contained the province of Kars as well as the provinces of Ardahan, Nakhichevan (located in modern day Azerbaijan) and Batum (located in modern day Georgia).

47 IOR/L/P&S/11/175, Decipher Mr. O. Wardrop (March 11, 1920).

several documents make it possible to recreate the scales of a disaster of the Azerbaijani Turkic population in Zangezur, Karabakh and Nakhchivan, in the regions where Turkic populations made up majority, when unarmed civilian population was exterminated by Armenian armed gangs. As a result, within four months more than 8625 civilians were mercilessly killed, around 69 settlements were wiped off the map, and the number of refugees forced to leave their historical lands remains unknown.

At the same time, correspondence of British diplomats of this period are an eloquent testimony of the failure of the British command to resolve territorial conflicts in the South Caucasus, particularly, the ones between Armenia and Azerbaijan. Simultaneously with the Britain's active involvement in a negotiated solution to the conflict, the correspondence of British diplomats confirm that Andranik had received his weapons and military ammunition for these crimes from the British. Britain's High Commissioner in the Caucasus Oliver Wardrop wrote in a report he sent to the British Foreign Office that Andranik had distributed all the weapons he had received from British Army Major Gibbon among Armenian detachments.<sup>48</sup> In another report it is noted that, it has been suggested that 200.000 roubles should continue to be paid to Andranik monthly until the force is disbanded, since the Allies previously financed his forces.<sup>49</sup>

Notwithstanding though, British governmental circles gradually got firmly convinced that the Armenian propaganda was a lie, as it tried to blame neighbors for its own crimes. British officers believed that "All these talks about a Great Armenia are fanning flame of the national movement, by playing into hands of the extremists, and, are strengthening the forces of Pan Islamism by bringing Kurds back into line with Turks".<sup>50</sup> Upon receipt of reports on numerous atrocities committed by Armenian armed formations in the Azerbaijani lands, Grundy wrote: "I have telegraphed to Armenian Prime Minister demanding cessation of attacks and withdrawal of troops, threatening him that in case of non-compliance I will recommend to His Majesty's government to stop helping Armenia".<sup>51</sup> Wardrop in his report noted:

48 IOR/L/P&S/11/166, Telegram from Mr. O. Wardrop (December 17, 1919).

49 N.A. Maxwell, ed, *Azerbaijan Democratic Republic. Great Britain's Archival Documents*. (Baku: Chashiogly, 2008), 217.

50 IOR/L/P&S/11/145, Decipher Admiral Calthorpe (Constantinople) (July 29 1919).

51 IOR/L/P&S/11/167, Decipher (№50) from Mr. Grundy (January 25, 1920).

“The main purpose of my visit to Erivan was to push Armenian prime Minister to withdraw regular troops and artillery from Zangezur and to punish culprits. I already telegraphed to His Excellency, that if Armenian government does not cease the aggression, I will have to recommend to His Majesty’s government to not to help them”.<sup>52</sup> In a ciphered telegram of Grundy of January 29, 1920, Wardrop is instructed as follows: “You should carefully investigate the accusations of the Azerbaijani government and in case you find out the proves to the facts stated by you, you must address a strong reprimand to Armenian Government and demand the immediate cessation of the attacks. You must also inform the Azerbaijani Government that you have been instructed by His Majesty’s Government to address a strong protest to the Armenian Government”.<sup>53</sup> After becoming familiar with the events at place, the British mission had to change its assessment of the March 1918 events as well. Wardrop wrote about this as follows: “As to the Armenian government, I want to point out that Mussulmans unanimously believe that the Bolshevik excesses in Baku of March 1918, were organized by Armenians”.<sup>54</sup>

Besides, Britain’s stance on the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic underwent changes due to the lack of a strict plan to decide on the fate of the South Caucasus and thus reflected confusion within the political circles of allies. “The lack of clear, definite policy became apparent in the actions of allies in respect of the frontier states in the Caucasian front as well. Here, like in other locations, the policy of allied powers varied between recognition and polite indifference,” W. Churchill<sup>55</sup> admitted.<sup>56</sup>

In March-July 1920 the armed fighting with Armenia’s military forces occurred in Karabakh, especially, Shusha, Nakhchivan and Ordubad. Battles expanded in to Khankendy, Terter, Askeran, Zangezur, Jebrail, Nakhchivan and Ganja provinces, when dozens of Azerbaijani villages were razed to the ground.

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52 IOR/L/P&S/11/168, Decipher (№52) from Mr. O. Wardrop (January 28, 1920).

53 IOR/L/P&S/11/168, Cypher № 54 telegram to Mr. Grundy (January 29, 1920).

54 IOR/L/P&S/11/172, Decipher from Mr. O. Wardrop (April 1, 1920).

55 Winston Churchill - was a British statesman, army officer, who served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 1940 to 1945 and again from 1951 to 1955.

56 Черчилль В. *Мировой кризис*. (Москва: Государственное военное издательство, 1932), 159.

## Conclusion

The reports of British diplomats illustrate that the Azerbaijani population survived the hardest ever tragedy during the 1918-1920 events in the South Caucasus. The reports of British diplomats collected in our article are of great importance to state the fact of massacre against the Azerbaijani people in 1918-1920 by armed Armenian gangs with the connivance and direct support of the government of the Ararat Republic.

Despite all obstacles, the ADR had managed to advocate the national interests and convinced the world community of its commitment towards democratic principles and peaceful co-existence with all people and the states. With the establishment of the first parliament in the Muslim East and the recognition in the Paris Peace Conference, the ADR government demonstrated its aspiration to be an inseparable part of the democratic world. The ADR government did everything possible to protect the independency of the ADR, but despite the “de facto” recognition of the ADR at the Paris Peace Conference, it had fallen as a result of the invasion by the Soviet Union. In this regard, in a report by Mr. Wardrop on April 1, 1920, (i.e. shortly before the Soviet troops occupied North Azerbaijan), it was noted: “...I understand that Bolshevik army now at Petrovsk contains large number of Armenians”.<sup>57</sup> The 11th Red Army largely made up of officers and soldiers of Armenian nationality that invaded the territory of ADR on April 28, 1920 and put an end to the Azerbaijan Democratic Republic through committing numerous acts of violence against civilians.

The Paris Peace Conference of 1919 did not satisfy the Armenians’ hopes of creating a government “from sea to sea.” The attempt to get a final decision from the world powers regarding the so-called ‘Armenian Question,’ which mainly contained maximum satisfaction of the territorial demands from Ottoman Turkey and its neighbors in the South Caucasus, was unsuccessful. Numerous visits by representatives of world powers to the South Caucasus region, with the goal of familiarizing themselves with the situation on the ground and the conclusions drawn from them, did not clarify the situation completely.

Following the occupation of South Caucasus by Soviet Russia in 1920-1921, the borders between republics ceased to be state ones, and had an administrative character. This allowed Armenian SSR to expand its

<sup>57</sup> IOR/L/P&S/11/172, Decipher from Mr. O. Wardrop (April 1, 1920).

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borders at the expense of the territories of Azerbaijan SSR. Usually, this policy was conducted under the pretext of economic necessity at the expense of lands bordered by Soviet Armenia that had belonged to Azerbaijan SSR. At the same time, decisions were made administratively by the highest authorities of the USSR. In the 1920's, the territory of Armenian SSR increased as a result of the annexations of western Zangezur, lands around Lake Goycha, Daralagez, the upland part of Kazah, parts of the territories in Karabakh and the Nakhchivan Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic.

Having failed to annex Karabakh and Nakhchivan completely to the Armenian SSR, the Armenians attempted to change the demographic situation in these areas by way of resettling Armenians who had been forced to leave the area earlier due to international clashes, and now wanted to return to "their lands."

By multiplying their population in this way, the Armenians tried to lay the foundation for the justification of their new claims to Nakhchivan and Karabakh in the future. At the same time, the retaliatory operations of the armed forces of the Ararat Republic in the territories where the Azerbaijani population lived, as well as the military aggression against Soviet Azerbaijan, caused a huge humanitarian catastrophe. Accompanying the death of many people (children, women, and elderly) of the peaceful Azerbaijani population, a huge wave of refugees migrated primarily to regions of Azerbaijan SSR that bordered the Ararat Republic, creating there sharp socio-economic tensions. Even after the Sovietization of Armenia, only a small part of the Azerbaijani refugees were able to return to their ancestral lands, as the Armenian communist government purposefully populated these territories by Armenians from other countries.

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