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THE FRENCH POLICY IN THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA AND TRANSCAUCASIA IN 1919 *

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Introduction

In 1919 the French policy in Armenia, in the whole Transcaucasia and on the Armenian Question generally was determined by several factors. First, during the Paris Peace Conference, on 18 January – 28 June 1919, it was mainly implemented in the sphere of multilateral diplomatic relations. Second, when the British forces quitted Transcaucasia in July – August of 1919, the Paris-based statesmen began to implement their own program of establishing in the Republic of Armenia, taking into consideration the main conflicts and facilities of the Transcaucasia. Third, on 22–23 December 1919, when the US withdrew from the negotiations and the British

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evacuated their Army from Transcaucasia, France acquired more space to act with a free hand at the bilateral London Conference. Analysis of the insufficiently explored stand, which had been taken by France and its partners in the constantly changing environment, as well as its correlation with the Big Game of 1919–1920 has both scientific and practical political significance.

The Republic of Armenia in the French Policy at Paris

At the Paris Peace Conference of 1919–1920, France sought to settle down in Syria and Cilicia, even though Cilicia with its Armenian population and its strategic and economic advantages, had been regarded as a safety buffer for Syria. When the Prime Minister G. Clemenceau directed his High Commissioner J.-A. DeFrance to Constantinople on 5 January 1919, he assigned him to become a mediator between the Commander of the national squadron in the Mediterranean and Commissioners of other Powers, who would supervise C. M. F. Georges-Picot, the regional High Commissioner in Syria-Palestine and Armenia, and would also receive in Constantinople all the information from the Military Attaché to the Caucasus, Colonel P.-A. Chardigny¹. Here, on the shores of Bosphorus, DeFrance had to ensure the performance of the Mudros requirements and to suggest the specific clauses for the final Peace Treaty with Turkey. In his note of 10 January entitled “On a liquidation of the Ottoman Empire and constitution the Turkish State” the French Foreign Ministry had envisaged an institution of Armenian States – in Cilicia together with an enlarged Republic of Armenia (abbreviated – RA). Such a creation had been substantiated by “the general reprobation of the domination, that

¹ Documents diplomatiques 2014, 609.

had been put into effect by the means of periodic massacres, promoted to the system of government”².

At first France was very watchful towards the Republic of Armenia. The Delegation of the latter failed to attend the Paris Peace Conference till 4 February³, and on 20 January the French President R. Poincare made written excuses to the Chairman of the Armenian National Delegation Boghos Nubar and explained why he did not mention Armenians in his speech at the inauguration of the Congress. Poincare wrote that his government “gave enough evidence of sympathy and friendship with Armenians, so that you would not have any doubt in invariability of these feelings. I have done it myself recently and repeated to you my assurances in response to your amiable telegram, sent to me to Alsace. I am very far from consigning Armenians to oblivion”, that’s why I gave an instruction to verify the wording in the «Journal official”. Now the fragment of the inauguration speech sounds as follows: “Yugo-Slavs, Armenians, Syrians and Lebanese, Arabs, all oppressed peoples”⁴. The very same days Chardigny informed counsellor-to-be of the Armenian Republican Delegation Major General G. Korganian of the first steps of the international forum⁵.

The next action took place on 26 January. Now the Armenian community of Paris gathered in their church on av. Jean Goujon

² Archive du ministère de l’Europe et des Affaires étrangères, Centre des Archives diplomatiques, La Courneve, France, Correspondance politique et commerciale, Série A – Paix (1914–1920), Cote 4 Affaires générales, article 170 (following – AMAE, 4CPCOM170); Documents diplomatiques 2014, 640, citation 641.

³ National Archives of Armenia, fund 200, reg. 1, file 193, f. 55, 59 rev. (following: NAA 200/1/193/55, 59 rev.).

⁴ “La Voix de l’Arménie” 1919, 69.

⁵ NAA 200/1/193/36 rev.

under the guidance of A. Chobanian. Manifestants appealed to the Congress and demanded to recognize their people as a belligerent nation, to confirm their independence and to admit their Delegates to the Conference as plenipotentiary members, so that “the solution of the Armenian Question would be carried out by a consent” of their subjects. Two days later this meeting was supported from Marseille. Then Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia Sahak II (Khabayan) appealed from Paris to the Minister of Foreign Affairs S. Pichon: “I have visited Adana just now. Continuation of the Turkish civil administration is an insult to the memory of our martyrs, in regard to whom it is officially established, that their death, caused by this administration, is a crime against the Justice. I protest with all the strength of my soul in front of God and the Powers, who are protectors of the Justice. Sahag II”⁶.

On 31 January Pichon had to apologize to Boghos Nubar and explain, that the Conference would invite the prominent figures from the neutral countries and from the States in the process of formation to listen their oral and written addresses. Such a procedure does not prejudice the future decisions, nor does it diminish enormous sympathy of all its members towards the Armenian cause. “Therefore, I would not fail to remind the Conference, when we start to discuss the questions of interest to Armenians, about the necessity to convoke and listen their qualified representatives”⁷.

Despite this Presidential omission, the Prime Minister of France and its Minister of War G. Clemenceau actively discussed at the Conference the issues of the new border for the Republic of

⁶ “ La Voix de l’Arménie” 1919, 88–89.

⁷ “ La Voix de l’Arménie” 1919, 70.

Armenia, formed by the joining Western Armenian provinces to it. The latter lands were subjected to liberation from the Ottoman yoke, as the Ottoman Empire had lost the First World War, was a perpetrator of the Genocide and an enemy of the Entente. A new state was obviously regarded as politically and economically oriented to the West, therefore its new capital could move to Erzerum, though public administration and state machinery should be provided precisely by the RA. As far as a mandate for a new state had been offered to the USA, militarily Transcaucasia was controlled by Great Britain, the French Foreign Ministry complained that London ignored pan-Allied interests, without bringing their dispute to a clash.

Strategically, Clemenceau defined himself the role and place of the RA in the World War and international diplomacy. Following the publications by Maurice Prax, the writer and journalist of *Le Petit Parisien*, on 2 and 11 January 1919⁸, the General Staff of the French Army compiled in its 2nd bureau a report for Clemenceau and Pichon, dated 11 March and entitled “On the events in the Caucasus, extended since March 1917 till June 1918”. Its authors recorded no separatism in the Transcaucasia till November 1918.⁹ This document, fed by the testimonies of the direct eyewitness of the events, adequately described those tasks, that arose for the three republics since May 1918. Georgians had to defend Tiflis in co-operation with 5,000 German soldiers, who had Artillery and Aviation, and to fix their state borders. Tatars got an opportunity to destroy and plunder Armenian villages under the auspice of the Turkish Army. Armenians had the main part of the Erevan Province, part of the Elizavetpol Province, Alexandropol district

⁸ Reprinted in: “*La Voix de l’Arménie*” 1919, 103–104.

⁹ AMAE, 117CPCOM626/f. 206–207.

(Uezd) and previously liberated Western Armenian Provinces now occupied by the Ottoman Armies. Bolsheviks did not recognize Armenian independence, the Quadruple Alliance considered her an adherent of the Entente, and such evaluation brought Tatar and Georgian hostility. The General Staff's report shared this assessment. Its Officers considered that England- and France-oriented Republic of Armenia got under the Turkish occupation and could not continue its resistance¹⁰.

Later on, French Military representative in the RA, Captain A. Poidebard sent to Clemenceau on 28 April 1919 a review "Caucasian Armenians during the War of 1914-1918"¹¹, which derived from the memorandum by the Captain Astvatsatur Eghiazarian (Bogdan Eghiazarov), Chief of Staff of the Detached Cavalry Brigade within the Armenian Corps, written on the same 28 April, together with a report of 14 February 1919 by the General Lieutenant T. Nazarbekian, Commander of the said Corps¹². Their records, together with a report by the Armenian Commission in Tiflis, were compiled at the request of Poidebard for transmission to Paris. The review gives a detailed account on the regional relations and general assessment of the French policy concerning new Armenian Republic. Like M. Prax, the Captain stressed the unfriendly attitude of the Transcaucasian Republic, and afterwards of the independent Georgia and Azerbaijan to the Allies. The Transcaucasian Government did not support Armenian resistance to the Ottoman offensive in 1918, Georgia eagerly adopted German, and Azerbaijan – the Turkish protectorate. Their attitude towards Armenian self-defense was openly hostile, including lots of wrecking

¹⁰ AMAE, 117CPCOM626/211.

¹¹ Les Grandes Puissances 1983, 737–742.

¹² NAA 121/2/92/6-12 rev.; AMAE, 117CPCOM626/12–18.

in the military and food depots, together with frequent blockades of high roads and railways.

The main idea, expressed by M. Prax, separately by Poidebard and maintained by Clemenceau was that the Republic of Armenia was not a partner of the Quadruple alliance or of her neighbours, when they collaborated with this antagonistic block; Armenia signed the Treaty of Batum in 1918 as an ultimatum, oppressed by a merciless military dictate. However, her resistance at the Caucasus Front in February–June 1918, genocidal strategy of the Ottoman Army and following Armenian self-defense in Nakhijevan, Baku and Artsakh put the Yerevan Government into the rank of the Entente's small partners, with all political consequences, emanating from the given fact. This conclusion, made by Clemenceau, separated the RA from other Transcaucasian Republics and was fully accepted by all victorious Powers, including British and Americans.

The negotiations in Paris culminated in May 1919, when Clemenceau handed over the whole of Cilicia to the US President, W. Wilson, in an attempt to stimulate his guardianship over the RA. On 2 May W. Wilson complained, that “the French Government had not given the necessary authorization” for the arrival of the Azerbaijani representatives to Paris¹³. At the same time, he did not permit Italians to enter Transcaucasia, supported by weak objections of the British and French Prime Ministers. On 2 May they made provisions in the the Treaty of Versailles for “inalienable independence of all the territories which were part of the former Russian Empire”, as well as for annulment of the treaty of Brest-Litovsk and “of all treaties or arrangements, [concluded since November 1917] ... with any Government or political groups formed

¹³ Armenia in Documents 2020, 89.

on the territory of the former Russian Empire”¹⁴. On 5 May the partners heard that one and a half British divisions would be withdrawn from the Transcaucasia, American soldiers were invited into this region, and the French could place their troops in Syria.

These days the Republic of Armenia had become an object, rather than a subject of the most dangerous and complex, multilateral and multicomponent negotiations at this stage of the Conference. Now officials simultaneously exchanged political, economic control and deployment of troops in the Republic of Armenia or in the Caucasus generally, including the oil fields in Grozny, Baku or port facilities of Batum. These questions were discussed in common with matters of Syria and Cilicia, Constantinople with its Straits and of the Western Armenia. With plenty of regions at their disposal, the trade went between France, Britain, U.S. and Italy. Each could obtain whatever he wanted; his gain depended on might of his army and economic resources. However, the war-torn British replaced their expansion with a departure, feeling anxious of the future of Russia. And France, much more weakened than British, could find soldiers only for Syria. This country became established in the RA and Transcaucasia only in a political-diplomatic and economic spheres.

The French took the second position in the hierarchy, they led discussions without bringing them to a break; though they allied more often with the British Prime Minister D. Lloyd George, observing and carefully limiting the U.S. interests. Thus, on 13 May Clemenceau openly allotted the Armenian mandate to the United

¹⁴ United States National Archives, Washington D. C., Record Group 256 Records of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace, class 180.03401/doc. 138/Appendix III (following: US NA, RG). The Treaty of Brest Litovsk was violated by Germany on the very same day of its conclusion: Papers Relating 1931, 442.

States. This country would keep under its supervision political and legislative activity of the new state, but all countries obtained equal trade-economic rights in the whole area. W. Wilson declaimed this proposal very eloquently. The next day he invited the French into the northern Anatolia, which was perceived as a region to the west of the Armenian Highland, commencing from Cappadocia. By 14 May the parties agreed on two resolutions. According to the first of these papers, the Allies gave to the USA a mandate on the Straits and Armenia, fully separated from the Ottomans¹⁵. According to another one, France, Greece and Italy came into Anatolia. Though on 16-17 May the statesmen began diplomatic rollback. Now they announced the Russian-Turkish borderline to be not ethno-geographical, but mere political one before the war of 1877-1878. Yes, this was true, since Armenians lived on both sides of this frontier. Then it was suggested to extend all rules of government, advised for Armenia, located “in the Eastern provinces of Turkey, the north-eastern provinces of Turkey and the south-western provinces of the Caucasus”, to all Muslim peoples, including the Kurds, who were active participants of assaults on Armenia villages, and the Caucasian Tatars – close ally of the Ottomans¹⁶.

On 19 May 1919 the Anglo-Saxon partners confirmed that they would preserve the French supervision of the Sultan in financial and commercial sphere, as well as the priority in Anatolian concessions. Clemenceau wanted to include the political and administrative control in his powers, which would made his country almost a mandatory. On 21 May it was said that America could substitute Armenia for Anatolia in her complex mandate; then the RA, enlarged by the Western Armenian Provinces, could be subordinated to France. We

¹⁵ US NA, RG 256, 180.03401/13½ /App. I; 180.03401/15½ /App.

¹⁶ US NA, RG 256, 180.03401/18; Armenia in Documents 2020, 108.

should record that after 19 November, when the USA had withdrawn from the Big Game, France really took the leader's position in the Transcaucasia. But now, on 21 May, Clemenceau decided to cede his positions in the Caucasus and Cilicia to the U.S. He scolded his Anglo-Saxon "fiercest friends"¹⁷, thanked them for the common victory, but clearly distinguished the future Armenia from the zone of the Straits and demanded to reserve him a place in the region. Wilson's phrase about the United States' unpreparedness to deal with the Asia Minor and even to dominate in Armenia defused this furious dispute. This was said at the moment, when the Europeans provided to Americans «a provisional mandate over Russian Armenia, Azerbaijan, and the whole Caucasus region pending a solution of the Russian problem»¹⁸. Wilson gave up everything in his reply, making the single stipulation in regard to Constantinople.

21 May became the day of the Paris Peace Conference, when France secured its second place in the Armenian issues by compelling the USA to assume the third role. Clemenceau itemized on 31 May that he would bring his troops or install politically only when the British withdrew. And the latter had clearly announced since April 1919 about their evacuation from the Transcaucasia through the lack of military contingents and money. At the same time, the British did not cooperate with Paris and well understood the inability of France to master the whole region single-handed and to resist the Russian and Turkish activity.

¹⁷ US NA, RG 256, 180.03401/13½; in detail: Papers Relating 1946, 761-762, 765; Armenia in Documents 2020, 116-118.

¹⁸ Armenia in Documents 2020, 118-119.

Republic of Armenia at the First London Conference of 22-23 December 1919

The general pattern had changed radically and simplified since the middle of November 1919, when the USA had completely withdrawn from the Middle East politics and the British evacuated their troops from the Transcaucasia, leaving merely a small garrison in Batum, with two French battalions next to them. Now only two countries discussed the future of Armenia, and Director of political and commercial affairs in the French Foreign Ministry Ph. Berthelot presented his own project for a Transcaucasian arrangement to G. Curzon, the chief of the Foreign Office. Tactically, the French spoke first and the British accepted their settlement generally, inserting amendments, which they judged to be necessary; then the French accepted their objections.

Let's note that the memo by Berthelot was based on the regular influx of the accurate and cool-headed information, produced by the French Political Mission in Tiflis under P.-A. Chardigny, in common with the data from Captain A. Poidebard, who worked in Yerevan. The latter sent his reports to the War Minister and head of the Cabinet Clemenceau. Berthelot received accounts from Chardigny and copies of various Transcaucasian documents from the Ministry, guided by Clemenceau.

Making use of these but taking as a basis of the policy, formulated by his Government, Berthelot sent a note to his British colleagues, dated 12 December¹⁹. This message was accepted on 22 December 1919, the very first day of the Anglo-French conference in London, as a bedrock of negotiations. Its "Armenia" section

¹⁹ Great Britain Foreign Office Archives, Public Record Office, London, Class 371/vol. 4236, doc. 166415/file 151671/ind. 44/App. (following: FO 371/4236, 166415/151671/44/App.).

stated: “after the systematic massacres, by means of which the Young Turks in accord with Germans tried to make her disappear”, she must be organized separately, as an independent nation. Giving tribute to appalling demographic losses, «it is more sensible to attribute the Armenians a country, when they consisted a majority before 1895 or 1914, more precisely – those neighbouring districts, where they represented a considerable share of the whole population. Access to the sea will be guaranteed to them on the one hand by the Batum railway, and on the other hand by two railways, leading to Constantinople and to the Mediterranean»²⁰.

Berthelot wrote about the Republic of Armenia, that “the new State must incorporate most of the land, disputed with Azerbaijan and Georgia (namely the Mountainous Karabakh, Zangezour, several mountainous regions)”, and its eastern frontier “goes along the mountain range of the Armenian Highland to the valleys of Araxes and Kura”²¹. With regard to the Western Armenia, the author added to the Republic the Eastern part of the Vilayet of Erzerum without its main city, the plain of Mush and the basin of the Lake Van up to the Persian border. Berthelot penciled a border line from Olty to Hasankale, farther along the massif of Bingel, adjoining Mush in the East and embracing its plain, then along the shore of the Lake Van and South to Adamakert (called Bashkale).

To create such an Armenia, 20 thousand troops would be

²⁰ Documents on British 1952, 952-954.

²¹ Documents on British 1952, 954. Their partners also sympathized with the desire to incorporate Karabakh with its “large Armenian majority” “in the Armenian State of Erevan”. Though they pointed out how it would be difficult to defend this district against Azerbaijan, owing to the lots of Tatar and Kurd villages all around. That’s why the British substituted this region for the city of Erzerum and a district, next to it in the West. What was the reason to consider Erzerum more accessible and defensive than Artsakh – the British did not explain. *Ibid.*, 954-955.

required to protect dwellers of the already existing Republic “from very hostile Tatar and Kurd inhabitants», and then to repatriate refugees into Western provinces, guarding them “from the Kurdish-Tatar population, who have already divided the lands”²². The list of the tasks supplemented food supplies for at least 2 years in common with huge investments to restore destroyed villages and the railway from Erzerum to Maku. Finally, Berthelot pointed out the danger of absorption of the new State by the reconstituted Russia, since the Caucasus would long serve as the main area of Armenian communications. As far as Batum was the nearest port fit for international trade, the author proposed to complete the construction of the railway Tabriz–Julfa–Shahtakht–Bogdanovka, and thus to connect the Northern Persia with the Black sea.

The next day, on 23 December, Berthelot agreed with all British amendments. They included the city of Erzerum with a district immediately to the West into the enlarged Armenia. The entire frontier of the new State, including its Transcaucasian segment, should be drawn by an inter-Allied expert commission. Berthelot asserted the data sent by Chardigny from Tiflis, that maintenance of peace and order in all its territories, be it in the West or in the East, would require 20 thousand European soldiers, who could be recruited as volunteers for Franco-British-Italian or American money; otherwise, these means could be provided, if needed, by the League of Nations²³.

A high degree of hostility of the Kurds and Tatars, who lived in the RA, towards the central republican authorities had been underlined in the aforesaid memorandum by Chardigny, entitled “What are the necessary conditions for creating this Armenia?”.

²² Documents on British 1952, 955.

²³ FO 371/4236, 166415/151671/44; Documents on British 1952, 962.

The Colonel reminded, that as soon as the British detachments leaved (on 1–7 June 1919) Nakhijevan, the local Muslims raised (on 20–25 July) a mutiny, expelling the Armenian administration with her 2,000 fighters²⁴. Let's add that 3,000 soldiers of the Ottoman 11th Caucasus infantry division were quartered in the villages of this region; the mutiny itself was carried out under the command of the Ottoman Colonel Halil bey and 30 officers, commissioned from Erzerum. Baku had allotted 25 million gold Rubles of the Tsar period. As a result, 45 Armenian villages were ruined with 10 to 12 thousand souls massacred²⁵.

Since the situation in the Western Armenia had been even worse, the presence of the foreign troops was absolutely necessary for the successful establishment of the State. “Local organization of Armenian troops under the guidance of the European instructors would obviously be insufficient”²⁶. A quarter of the European contingent should be deployed in Nakhijevan–Zangezur, Ararat–Igdirdir and Kars. The rest should stay at Bayazet, Bitlis, Berkri, Khorasan–Kyoprikyoy (Vagharshavan), Van, Khnus, Alashkert, Mush, Manazkert. These foreign occupation troops could be united into Mountain Brigades equipped with Artillery, Cavalry, telegraph, motor transport and railways workers. First of all, they were sent to keep communications and to drill local contingents. Communications were generally considered as the most important and vulnerable factor of the Armenian Statehood.

The First London Conference confirmed the whole series of important decisions, doing it in well-minded partnership. The

²⁴ Documents on British 1952, 965.

²⁵ NAA 200/1/212/114; file 427–II/252–252 rev.; 275/5/183/81 rev.–82.

Հոհրաբյան 2002, 152-168:

²⁶ Documents on British 1952, 966.

parties agreed to demilitarize Turkey completely, putting her gendarmerie under the international control; they decided to establish a special Free state around Batum under the aegis of the League of Nations. They assigned Anatolian economic concessions to Italy, outlined the zone of influence and the substance of partnership with Greece. Besides, Berthelot – unlike his stance in January – gave up Cilicia and preserved the Turkish sovereignty in it. Though he informed about French intention “to offer a home and protection in Cilicia for those Armenians who wished to settle there”²⁷. Contrary to the French opinion, Erzerum was included in the new Armenia, and all its frontiers were to be delimited by the Europeans. France had specially emphasized the independence of the existed RA and tried to strengthen her in the fierce interethnic war with Azerbaijan, as well as in the disputes with Georgia. Unlike the British, who worked out regional policy in London and then sent out directives to the Army, who carried out these instructions with a great deal of freedom and initiative, the French took the data and considerations of the field Officers and Diplomats as a basis. The main theses of these actors were for the most approved by the Foreign Ministry or by the Prime Minister. The bottom-up mode ensured the realism and pragmatism of their course, indicating that they had just began to devise their global approaches to the East.

Practical Policy of France in the Republic of Armenia and Transcaucasia in 1919

As soon as on 1 January 1919 the Captain Poidebard, being the sole plenipotentiary Allied Field Controller of the Ottoman 9th Army evacuation from the Kars Region (Oblast), wired to Tiflis for the

²⁷ Documents on British 1952, 962.

Major General G. Forestier-Walker, the Commander of the British 27th Division and to the Colonel C. E. Temperley, the newly appointed Military Governor of Kars, about his attempts to resist the Ottoman plunder of the RA²⁸. The French described his interview of the same day with the Chief of Staff of the 9th Army Husni Bey, who was ordered to return into Alexandropol electric mills, which were indispensable in winter, together with electric equipment for lighting the city. The Turks exported all available grain and generously fed their 11,000 horses and mules in front of the terribly starving population. Poidebard demanded to make strong remonstrance to Ali Rifat Bey, the commandant of the Ottoman troops in Kars, who made up false reports, and to force him and the Commander of the 9th Army Shevki Pasha to stop the pillage of the local population and to obey the Allied orders rigorously. The Captain insisted on immediate seizure of the grain surpluses from the Turks and on supply of the food available in the Kars Region to the city dwellers, as well as on the military investigation and guarding of all armory and grain stocks, stretched from Erzerum to Karaugan.

In a response, Forestier-Walker arrived on 6 January with Temperley to Alexandropol, where he issued on 7 January a written order to Shevki Pasha. On 8 January Forestier-Walker, as a Commander of the British Forces in the Western Transcaucasia, presented to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Armenia S. Tigranian a letter on the creation of his own administration. They signed together a memorandum which was an agreement on the Armenian civil administration of the Kars Region under

²⁸ NAA 200/1/92/94–94 rev.

supervision of the British Military Governor²⁹. Although the Great Britain built its relations with the Transcaucasia on the the basis of its military force, the French entrepreneurs had demanded as soon as in the mid-February more activity from their government.

The famous mining engineer, geologist and archeologist Jean-Jacques de Morgan, who managed a copper mine in Akhtala in 1887-1889, recalled the necessity to intensify the French commerce in Persia, Armenia and Georgia, since Batum and Trapezund were so convenient for the transportation of Persian goods to Marseille. This business was carried out by the steamers of the “Le Courier maritime” line, owned by Société N. Paquet et C^{ie}. De Morgan reminded: “Striving to provide outlets for their goods, our excellent friends Russians had banned a transit into Persia through the Transcaucasia, thus either you had to pay a double customs duty for the French output in Batum and Enzeli, or you should sent them via Trebizond and Erzerum, you could also reach the Persian Gulf, ... arriving at Teheran long months ago”³⁰. As a result, commodities went through Turkey and the Transcaucasian path had been used only for urgent parcels.

However, the revolution has liberated Armenia with Georgia from the Imperial control, and the trade route through these countries could be put in motion now. France only had to support their full independence, especially the Armenian one, and to open the routes via Batum–Tiflis–Erevan–Julfa and Batum–Tiflis–Baku.

²⁹ In detail: NAA 199/1/32/15; 200/1/22/7–8; f. 92/451–457; 200/2/39/1–13; FO 608/78, 342/1/6/3681; US NA, RG 256, 184.021/2.

³⁰ “La Voix de l’Arménie” 1919, 80. An enterprise established by the co-director of the *Companie de navigation marocaine et arménienne* Nicolas Paquet had inaugurated its line Poti–Marseille in 1875, the line Batum–Marseille in 1891. In 1913 it had been transformed into *Companie de navigation Paquet: La C^{ie} Navigation Paquet 2014*, 1, 38.

There is also a road Trebizond–Baberd–Erzurum–Khoy. The actual situation gave France new and vast market, while maintaining the British positions in Mesopotamia and Southern Iran. According to de Morgan, the power vacuum south of the Caucasus range made its mineral resources accessible; the only one thing needed were French, Turkish or Russian investments. Russia, “contrary to its assurances, was unlikely to have more favourable attitude towards foreign industry than Turkey. ... To return the Transcaucasia to Russia and Armenian Vilayets to Turkey in whatever form would mean to renounce the most attractive branches of our commerce and industry in the East”³¹. Meanwhile, Armenians are capable of development, they can become self-sufficient and organize with the support of Europe a strong and prosperous country. That’s why, de Morgan continued, we have to support and declare an entire Armenian sovereignty from Turkey, to save this part of civilization from the most infamous plunder.

While the French clarified the economic foundations of their Armenian policy, the Republic of Armenia was fighting against cold, famine, epidemics, overflow of refugees, lack of transport and security, medicine and State apparatus, combined with Tatar and Kurdish assaults within the State and on its borders. Poidebard informed Temperley on 28 February that the Muslim Council of the Kars Region, who disregarded his order, had been instituted by Shevki Pasha on German prompt. This gathering was established by the retreating Ottoman army, who gave weapons, Officers and instructors to the Council (Shura), and also sent everywhere its allegedly demobilized officers and privates. The Commander of the 12th Ottoman Division Ali Rifat bey personally acknowledged this

³¹ “La Voix de l’Arménie” 1919, 81.

fact. It was urgent necessity to expel these folk, to diminish the 9th Army, which reinforced on the borders of Kars, to repatriate Armenians into Erzerum and to co-operate with the Armenian government in military measures against the Kurdish-Tatar assaults that threatened Yerevan. Tatars would obey only imperative orders. Besides, the famine activated Bolsheviks in Alexandropol, it was necessary to cut off their movement drastically³².

Conforming the data supplied by Poidebard, S. Tigranian also revealed to the Colonel Chardigny on 20 March the basic militarization of Tatars by the Ottoman soldiery, when the latter declared General Governorships in Sharur, Nakhijevan, Artsakh and Surmalu. A serious collision became inevitable, so the Foreign Minister demanded that the Allies fulfill their peacekeeping mission, open communications for the Western Armenians and commit pressure on Baku, forcing it to restore contacts with the Cabinet in Yerevan³³. Moreover, the Chairmen of the Delegation of the Republic of Armenia A. Aharonian and of the Armenian National Delegation Boghos Nubar let Clemenceau know in Paris, that the RA was ready to place its Army under the Allies' command and to raise new regiment with their help, enrolling thousands discharged soldiers and refugees, who took asylum in the Caucasus³⁴.

Thereby, when, on 6-8 April 1919 the British began to handover their governorships in the Kars Region, Sharur-Daralagyaz, Nakhijevan and Surmalu Districts up the border of 1914 to the administration of the RA, on 6 and 8 April Poidebard and Chardigny visited A. Khatisian, the Armenian Minister of Interior, who was in Tiflis on a business trip. Both Frenchmen stood up for the Armenian

³² NAA 200/1/92/88.

³³ The Karabagh File 1988, 16.

³⁴ NAA 200/1/193/241.

Karabakh and urged Khatisian to remain firm. Their negotiations also included the repatriation of refugees and the political set-up of the future expanded State. If the British Generals W. Beach and W. Thomson spoke on 8 April about the future Armenia, composed of six vilayets with Trebizond and Erzerum as its capital, although deprived of Karabakh, then the Franco-American tandem lead by Chardigny strongly objected to this approach.

Khatisian also asserted the previously sanctioned position of his Cabinet “that the mountainous part of Karabakh, inhabited by Armenian, be declared outside the Azerbaijani Governorship General of Karabakh and its management remain in the hands of the National Council in consent with the will of population, and the Azerbaijani troops were immediately withdrawn from the bounds of the Armenian Karabakh. The Armenian Government considers this area an integral part of Armenia. Control over the government, which would be established by the British Command, could be exercised only by an ethnic Englishman, who would become a Governor General in both parts of the Karabakh – in Armenia one and in Muslim”. On 8 April Khatisian affirmed this thesis in a particular letter to Chardigny³⁵.

Since the British side proposed a complete division of the Transcaucasia among three republics, Chardigny sent three reports for Clemenceau on 7, 12 and 20 April. He noted that, contrary to British allegations, Armenia and Georgia did not accept the borders, and moreover, on 14 April the RA declared its discord by a special note to the British. Chardigny recorded, that General Thomson was talking just about trying to establish peace and order, though “the proposed solution would lead to completely diverse

³⁵ NAA 1021/2/962/45–48; 200/1/212/189–190. Cited from: NAA 199/1/12/88.

results. Neither the nation, nor the Armenian Government will never accept the provisional reunion of the administration of Karabakh–Zangezur into the Governorship General, appointed by Azerbaijan. Therefore, you have to be afraid of troubles in this region”³⁶. Chardigny added that during a personal meeting with Thomson on 18 April Khatisian had definitely rejected this solution even as provisional one, pending a decision of the Paris Peace Conference. The British replied he did not insist on this question, though Thomson reserved its settlement not for Paris, but rather for the Commander of the Army of Black Sea, General G. Milne, quartered in Constantinople.

At the same time, in Paris, Aharonian responded to an article in the London “Times” of 6 May about refugees, who were eating corpses. On 9 May he sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs Pichon, where he described desperate situation in the RA. Aharonian blamed the inaction of Europe, asked to accelerate the recognition of Armenian independence; if the Allies were unable to send troops, they should at least allocate a loan and distribute weapons among these people for their self-defense.³⁷ The Military Adviser of the Republican delegation, Major General G. Korganian, who was on a way to Paris, fully shared this anxiety. The latter one reported to Tiflis and Erevan about his interview in Constantinople on the same 9 May with the Chief of Staff attached to the Commander of the Allied Army of the Orient, Colonel Bouchet.³⁸ Korganian summarized their talk and reported that the British troops would withdraw from the Transcaucasia soon, they might be

³⁶ AMAE, 117CPCOM626/268.

³⁷ AMAE, 46CPCOM5/32; **Mouradian** 2015, 479–480.

³⁸ This name was recorded in Russian, the author did not get other pertinent documents in French or English.

substituted by Italians, however, the French “cannot provide any help in any matter”; they limit their activity by the mode of Russia’s further conduct³⁹.

In fact, chairmen of three Transcaucasian delegations led by H. Ohanjanian really appealed to Clemenceau on 28 August 1919 and asked him to adjourn the withdrawal of the Allied troops, since their evacuation would produce grievous consequences⁴⁰. Meanwhile, the French politicians took the departure of the British as an opportunity to revive and streamline their own regional politics. On 10 September the member of Parliament André Lebey submitted a note to the Foreign Ministry on “the French Interests in Armenia”, approved by the Government on 16 September. The deputy emphasized economic activity, including private enterprise. He requested the Ministry’s approval for the establishment of the private Franco-Armenian Research Bank (Banque Franco-Arménienne d’Études) and Franco-Armenian Import–Export Society (Société Franco-Arménienne d’Importations et d’Exportations).

With official support received, the “Société du Manganèse” was set up as soon as on 23 September. Its main task was to expel the German assets from the Transcaucasia. The Franco-Russian “Société Commerciale Industrielle et Financière pour la Russie” was established in Paris at the end of November, having 50 million francs as a fixed capital. It paid its shareholders 8% of annual interest, imported industrial goods to Russia and financed the purchase of French weapons by A. Denikin. The “Union Commerciale Franco-Russe”, “Banque Commerciale Russe pour le Levant”, the trading houses “Chabrières, Morel & Cie”, “Panassié”, “Société Industrielle et Métallurgique du Caucase”, “Société du Manganèse de Paris”, the French “Optorg”, “Amper” and others made their

³⁹ NAA 200/1/92/279.

⁴⁰ AMAE, 168QO.

business in our region and in Armenia particularly⁴¹.

At the same time, the new Chief of the French Military Mission in the Caucasus, Ch.-M. de Nonancourt, demanded from Clemenceau to reinforce his staff by the Trade Attachés in Tiflis and Baku, in common with Consuls in a number of spots, including Batum. He required to sustain local Governments and to send students to France, to open and fund French schools, to improve communications, to dispatch him a bacteriologist and economic mission⁴².

Let's record, that even with the absence of soldiers the French diplomats carried out dynamic economic and political work, defending the Armenia identity of Artsakh and Zangezur. Thus, on 17 November de Nonancourt visited the RA Mission in Tiflis and proposed S. Tigranian, V. Papazian and T. Bekzadian to convoke all foreign representatives to demand all together to cease the Azerbaijani assault on Zangezur. His attitude to this district was "perfectly sincere and warm, though powerless"⁴³. The Nonancourt's comprehension of the regional problems echoed with the report, which he received from the Captain Poidebard on 22 November 1919. The Military Representative of France in Yerevan gave an analysis of all separations, completed by the British in Transcaucasia according to their pan-regional and all-embracing plan. Poidebard wrote that the British gave to Armenians what was difficult to control and deprived them of demographically reliable areas (Kars and Nakhijevan instead of Zangezur, Artsakh, Akhalkalak and Lori).

Contrary to the Englishmen, the French made Eastern Armenia

⁴¹ AMAE, 46CPCOM7/87; Documents diplomatiques, 1999, II, 217–218; NAA 200/1/85/107; Jevakhoff 2011, 204–213.

⁴² AMAE, 117CPCOM628/8–9.

⁴³ NAA 275/6/10/20 rev.

stronger but reduced the frontiers in the Western vilayets (Artsakh and Zangezur instead of Erzerum). The British saw the main enemies in Russia and weakened her positions in advance, before she would return. The French were more concerned about the Bolsheviks and their growing intimacy with the Turks. Poidebard specially accentuated that the main problems of the security of the Republic of Armenia caused fast withdrawal of the British detachments, absence of State functionaries and the large-scale managerial efforts of the Ottoman army. With no money, officers and weaponry from Erzerum, the Kurd and Tatar population of Armenia lived peacefully and did not accept the pan-Turkish propaganda⁴⁴.

Conclusions

When the Great Britain based its Transcaucasian expansion on military power and the U.S. practised humanitarian intervention, the French regional policy was built on economics and pragmatism. Thus, the British strongly opposed to the Russia's comeback, the U.S. evaded a future collision, and France admitted collaboration with non-Soviet administration and constructed its policy, judging the actions of the northern Power. The Englishmen endeavoured a sole power, but the French demanded the Allied united decisions; they quickly increased their economic positions and were not afraid to argue with the British, defending regional delimitation, favourable for the RA. The European partnership regarding the Armenian Question did not exist, because first of all, policy is a rivalry of partners. When this rivalry loses convenient, legal forms and reaches the state of contest, it produces wars. So, the British knew fairly well that the French would not hold out here alone, but

⁴⁴ AMAE, 117CPCOM628/120-122.

viewed them only as rivals. In its turn, France rejected the Turkish bias of the Russian and British policy, wondering about the trade route from or via Persia and Armenia.

Generally, collaboration with the new Power was more beneficial for the RA: working with a less powerful partner who did not bother of losing its previous gains or status, was not highly dangerous for a minor State. Meanwhile, in 1919 France clearly formulated the main tasks of the Armenian Statehood. These were the issues of defense, of the formation of the State machinery in common with the external, Turkish threat.

The evacuation of the British troops from the Transcaucasia between 7 June and 28 August 1919 only stimulated the French policy in the whole region and in Armenia. On 21 May France assumed the second role in the Entente's Eastern policy, taking this position from the USA. The French began energetic economic penetration since September, and on 22 December they commenced to form the Armenian-Turkish frontier, considering it necessary to compensate for the huge Armenian losses, inflicted during the Genocide, carried out by the Ottomans. At the same time the French did not argue the British leadership in the Armenian question. Their strictly pragmatic course was shaped from the bottom up, being based on the field reports. France consolidated the independence of Armenia all-round and played a major role in recognizing the Republic of Armenia as a Small Ally of the victorious Powers.

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Ամփոփում

Մինչև 1919 թ. հունիսը Ֆրանսիան Հայաստանի Հանրապետությանը և Անդրկովկասով զբաղվում էր գլխավորապես Փարիզի վեհաժողովում, որտեղ նա երրորդ, իսկ մայիսի 21-ից երկրորդ ջութակ էր, Մեծ Բրիտանիայից հետո: Հենց վարչապետ Ժ. Կլեմանսոն էր, որ ՀՀ-ն հաղթած տերությունների կրտսեր դաշնակից որակեց: 1919 թ. ամռանը տարածաշրջանից բրիտանական զորքի հեռանալուց հետո, Ֆրանսիայի քաղաքականությունն ուղղված էր Հայաստանի անկախության ամրապնդմանը, նրա հետ տնտեսական կապերի զարգացմանը և Երևանի համալսարանի ու Փարիզի համանման կրթօջախի կապերի ստեղծմանը: Ֆրանսիացիները պաշտպանում էին Արցախի և Զանգեզուրի հայկական պատկանելիությունը, պարսավում օսմանյան

բանակի պանթուրքական գործունեությունն Անդրկովկասում ու հակառուսական ուղղվածություն ունեցող բրիտանական բաժանումները: Ֆրանսիական քաղաքական գործիչներն ամեն կերպ հակազդում էին բոլշևիզմին և առաջիններն էին, որ նշեցին ՀՀ-ին սպառնացող խորհրդա-քեմալական մերձեցումը:

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Резюме

До июня 1919 г. Франция активно участвовала в вопросах, связанных с Республикой Армения и Закавказьем, прежде всего на международных переговорах Парижской мирной конференции, где она играла третью, а с 21 мая – вторую роль после Великобритании. Именно премьер-министр Ж. Клемансо охарактеризовал РА как младшего союзника держав-победительниц. После ухода британских войск из региона летом 1919 г., французская политика была нацелена на укрепление независимости Армении и развитие экономических связей, на создание административного сотрудничества между Ереванским и Парижским университетами. Французы отстаивали армянскую принадлежность Арцаха и Зангезура, осуждали пантюркистскую деятельность османской армии и британские разделы Закавказья в антирусских целях, а также быстрый вывод британских войск из региона. Французские политики всемерно противостояли большевизму и первыми отметили опасность советско-кемалистского сближения для РА.

Ключевые слова: Республика Армения, Закавказье, французская политика, Парижская мирная конференция, Арцах, Зангезур, капитан А. Пуадебар.