

The Place of Constantinople and the
Straits in British Foreign Policy:
1890 - 1902.

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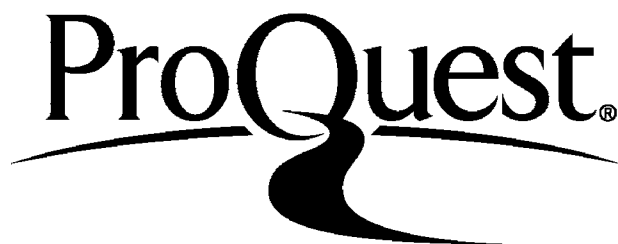
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Abstract of M.A. thesis, "The Place of
Constantinople and the Straits in
British Foreign Policy: 1890-1902",
by Margaret M. Jefferson

When Salisbury and Rosebery directed Britain's foreign policy in the early 1890s they were convinced of the importance of defending the Straits against Russia and of maintaining a strong diplomatic position at Constantinople. As British power alone was no longer sufficient to counter Russian influence, Britain went into partnership with Germany and her Triple Alliance allies. Their collaboration was successful until the confidence of the three Continental Powers was undermined by the policy which Britain pursued in other parts of the world and then in the Near East itself - regarding the Armenian question.

In spite of suspicions to the contrary, Salisbury in 1895 upheld his former views on the importance of maintaining the status quo at Constantinople. It was not until November, when the Cabinet refused permission to send the fleet through the Straits, that Salisbury had serious doubts about Britain's ability to defend them; but, even then, he continued publicly to adhere to his former policy, believing it essential to retain Austria-Hungary's friendship. Although the real turning point came in October 1897 when Salisbury privately acknowledged that Britain must gradually withdraw from her responsibilities at Constantinople

and strengthen her position in Egypt - a decision made easier by the Austro-Russian agreement to maintain the status quo in the Near East, in 1901 Lansdowne attempted to recreate the old grouping of Powers in order to check Russian activities in the Straits; but it proved impossible to restore the confidence which had been the basis of the old relationship; Austria-Hungary now relied upon her agreement with Russia to maintain the status quo. The way was open for the Anglo-French agreement over Egypt.

LIST of ABBREVIATIONS

- A.A. : Austrian Foreign Office Archives.
- A & P. : Accounts & Papers (Blue Books).
- D.D.F. : Ministère des Affaires Étrangères: Documents Diplomatiques Français, 1871-1914.
- F.O. : Public Record Office: Foreign Office Papers.
- Foundations : Temperley, H.W.V. and L.M.Penson:
Foundations of British Foreign Policy, from Pitt to Salisbury. (Cambridge, 1938).
- B.D. : G.P.Gooch and H.W.V.Temperley: British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914. (London 1926-1938).
- G.P. : Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914. (40 vols. Berlin 1922-1926).
- D.N.B. : The Dictionary of National Biography.

CHAPTER I.

"The Duel of the Whale and the Elephant"

Napoleon, when he said that the Power which possessed Constantinople could rule the world, ⁽¹⁾ was paying tribute to the supreme strategical importance of the former capital of the Ottoman Empire. It was the focus of a great ellipse of land, bound on the one side by the Black Sea and on the other by the Aegean and cut in two by the Straits of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. ⁽²⁾ The Bosphorus, although only seventeen miles long and between half a mile and two miles wide (less than the Thames at Gravesend) derived immense importance from its position as sole outlet from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean; while the Dardanelles, guarded by two fortresses known as the first and second castles of Europe and Asia, given by the Turks the names Set-el-Bahr - Barrier of the Sea and Koum Kalessi - Land Castle - was equally important ⁽³⁾ as the gateway from the Mediterranean.

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- (1) R.W. Seton-Watson, The Rise of Nationality in the Balkans (London, 1917), p.1.
- (2) For a good account of the strategical importance of Constantinople c.f. L.A.F. Beaujour, "Voyage militaire dans l'Empire Othoman" (Paris, 1829), vol.II, pp.502-546.
- (3) E. Hertslet, Memorandum on the Right of the Sultan of Turkey to Exclude Foreign Ships of War from and to Restrict the Passage of Foreign Merchant Vessels through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, 12 Nov. 1877; F.O. Vol.17 Confid, No.421.

Since both shores of the Straits were within the territories of Turkey, it was recognized by universal agreement that Turkey exercised full sovereignty over the waterway and other countries had no rights except such privileges as the Porte chose by treaty to accord to them. Thus there arose the practice of attempting to influence the Porte by negotiation, force or bribery as to the manner in which it should exercise its rights of sovereignty. (1)

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the sovereignty of the Sultan extended over territories which stretched far beyond Constantinople: to the west, it embraced the countries of the Balkan peninsula (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Bulgaria, Montenegro, Albania and Macedonia) and - to the south - the territories of North Africa (Egypt, Tripoli, Tunis, and Morocco); to the east, the Sultan's rule extended from the shores of the Persian Gulf, along the Tigris and Euphrates rivers to the borders of the Russian Empire.

Russia, as the Power which, since the time when Peter the Great captured Azov, possessed territories bordering on those of Turkey, was, of all the great European Powers, the most vitally interested in Constantinople and the Straits.

(1) J. Headlam-Morley, Studies in Diplomatic History, (Methuen, 1930), p.212.

For her, arose the questions of the defence of her southern frontier and the access of her ships to the Mediterranean. The most certain way to gain her ends seemed to Russia either to place herself strategically in such a position that it would be easy to dominate Constantinople or to force the Sultan to grant her exclusive privileges respecting the Straits. Such actions invariably aroused the hostility of other European Powers, for no great Power could allow another to possess such influence, Britain repeatedly took the lead in opposing any forward movement on the part of Russia. She was motivated by the necessity to keep the Sultan's authority over the least extensive area which would keep open the over-land route to India. (1) In the 1830s interest was centred on the route across Northern Syria to the Euphrates. In the 1850s the Syrian route again found favour when discussions began as to the possibility of building a railway through the Euphrates valley. There was also the question of maintaining British sea power in the Levant and the question of prestige: that of the British Government at home and in India traditionally depended upon the maintenance of the Sultan at Constantinople.

Lord Palmerston was only continuing the policy of Pitt

(1) W.N. Medlicott, The Congress of Berlin and After (Methuen, 1938), p.6.

and Canning when he insisted that the fate of the Ottoman Empire was of vital importance to all Europe and that any change in it should be worked out around the conference table and not produced by the unilateral action of one Power.⁽¹⁾ His great achievement was to force Russia to give up the position which she had gained by the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi as sole protector of Turkey with the privilege of sending her war ships through the Straits and to acknowledge with the other signatories of the Convention of 1841:

"It has at all times been prohibited to the ships of war of foreign Powers to enter the Straits of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus; and that, so long as the Porte is at peace, his Highness will admit no foreign ships of war into the Straits." (2)

In 1853 the British Cabinet decided upon war because of the necessity of having a "Power at the Bosphorus to hold the keys of the Mediterranean from the east" which should not be Russia and because they could not "allow Russia to encroach upon or undermine the Power" which was there necessary to them.⁽³⁾ The Treaty of Paris, which ended the war, was in a sense the high water mark of achievement on the part of

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- (1) C. Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston. 1830-1841. (London, 1951), vol.2, p.790.
- (2) E. Hertslet, The Map of Europe by Treaty (London, 1875), Vol.II, pp.1024-1026.
- (3) Account of the Cabinet meeting of 8 Oct. 1853 by Sydney Herbert; quoted by H. Temperley, England and The Near East: The Crimea, (London, 1936), p.358.

Britain, Austria-Hungary and France. The neutralisation of the Black Sea seemed to ensure that theirs would in future be the upper hand. But it was a false security and when Russia, in 1871, revoked the Black Sea clauses, the allies of the Crimean War had to be content with simply maintaining the closure of the Straits, with the important exception that the Sultan should have the power "to open the Straits in time of peace to vessels of war of friendly and allied Powers, in case the Sublime Porte should judge it necessary in order to secure the execution of the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris of 1856".⁽¹⁾

A new element in the old problem appeared in the 1870s with the flaring up of nationalism as a vital factor, dominating the policies not only of Russia and Turkey but of the Balkan peoples, who were finding a new consciousness of their identity. In Russia, Panslavist doctrine as expounded by Fadejev, Nicholas Danilevski and General Ignatiev
(2) revived again the idea of the ancient mission to Constantinople. It is difficult to be certain how far those in control of Russian policy were influenced by the prevalent doctrines. When the rising of the Christians in Bosnia and Herzegovina

(1) E. Hertslet, op.cit. Vol.III, p. 1921.

(2) W.L. Langer, European Alliances and Alignments, (New York, 1950), pp.66-68.

first began the conflagration, the Tsar and Gorchakov were afraid of the enormity of the complications that would ensue if the situation in the East got out of hand. (1) They therefore, played for safety by ranging themselves with Austria-Hungary and Germany, a policy made easier by the continued existence of the Three Emperors' League of 1873. Russia's attempts to beat down the flames of insurrection in the Balkans, as demonstrated by her participation in the Andrassy Note and the Berlin Memorandum, were probably genuine. She was determined not to repeat the mistake of the 1850s, but to have other Powers on her side. It was the relentless sequence of events rather than any deep laid scheme which led to the Russian declaration of war on 24th April 1877. "La Turquie", wrote Gorchakov, "a fermé toutes les voies de conciliation". (2) Even now the Tsar declared that his object was solely to secure the execution of the decisions of all Europe.

Opinions, even in highest Russian Councils, differed as to what should be the precise military object of the campaign.

Before the ultimatum to Turkey was sent, at a war council in Livadia, the Grand Duke Nicholas, designated Commander

(1) Ibid, p.72.

(2) S. Gorjanow, Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles (Paris: 1910), p.342.

in Chief, was told that the goal of the campaign would be Constantinople. ⁽¹⁾ Faced by the determined opposition of England, Russia gave promises that she would not occupy the city. But it is doubtful how far she regarded herself as really bound by them. Dascovici draws attention to a despatch of the Tsar authorising the occupation of Constantinople and concludes that Russia was prevented from doing this simply by an "insuffisance de munitions". ⁽²⁾

There was a similar uncertainty as to Russia's real intentions regarding the Straits. In reply to a British enquiry of May, Gorchakov simply said "cette question fut réglée d'un commun accord sur des bases équitables et efficacement garanties". But in a private memorandum for the information of his ambassador in London he stated clearly that the Straits' Agreement should be revised in such a way to guarantee Russia against attack in the Black Sea in time of war. ⁽³⁾

It can be argued that the deeper motivations of the

(1) W.L. Langer, op.cit., p.104.

(2) N. Dascovici, La question du Bosphore et des Dardanelles (Geneve, 1915), p.250.

(3) S. Gorianow, op.cit., p.347.

policies of the Tsar and Gorchakov were finally revealed in the Treaty préliminaire of San Stefano, actually negotiated by General Ignatiev and called by Andrassy an "Orthodox Slavic sermon".⁽¹⁾ Montenegro and Serbia were to be independent and considerably enlarged. But by far the greatest increase of territory was to go to Bulgaria, which would be made a state far larger than any other in the Balkans.

Up to this time the creative element in the policies of the Great Powers had come from the members of the Dreikaiserbund. British policy was very largely a reaction against this. Disraeli, in spite of his high sounding words at the Guild Hall on 9 November 1875:

"The interests of the Imperial Powers in the Eastern Question were more direct but they were not more considerable than those of Great Britain".⁽²⁾

was unable at this time to do more than clear the ground for future action. His policy was influenced by two interacting motives: on the one hand the desire to break down the alliance of the three Continental Powers; for unless Britain went out of her way to act with them, they could act without

(1) W.L. Langer, op.cit., p.138 ff.

(2) G.E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli (London, 1920) vol. VI, p.16.

her, which was not agreeable for a state like England; and, on the other hand, the conviction that the Sultan should be maintained in a Constantinople which should not be dominated by Russia.

It might be expected that, even now, Egypt might play a large part in Disraeli's policy. When he bought for Britain the Khedive's holdings of Suez Canal stock, in 1873, he declared:

"It is impossible to separate in our thoughts the purchase of the Suez Canal shares from the question of England's future relations with Egypt or the destinies of Egypt from the shadows that darken the Turkish Empire. Should insurrection or aggression from without ... bring a political as well as financial collapse of the Turkish Empire, it might be necessary to take measures for the security of that part of the Sultan's dominions with which we are most nearly connected". (1)

Yet, when the eventuality here foreseen did take place, Disraeli was adamant "Constantinople is the key of India and not Egypt and the Suez Canal": it was no use talking about Egypt, for Russia could advance by way of Constantinople and Asia Minor and attack the Suez Canal from Syria. It was mere moonshine to talk (as Bismarck did) of England having Egypt or Crete as compensation for "if Constantinople [was]

(1) Quoted by T. Rothstein, Egypt's Ruin (London, 1902), p.8; also quoted by W.L. Langer, op.cit., p.256.

Russian, they would only be an expensive encumbrance".
 Again, he wrote: "I am surprised that Bismarck should go on harping about Egypt ... I don't see it would at all benefit us, if Russia possessed Constantinople. I would sooner have Asia Minor than Egypt."⁽¹⁾

Even the timid Derby used bold language to Shuvalov about Constantinople:

"The British Government would not witness with indifference the passing into hands other than those of its present possessors of a capital holding so peculiar and commanding a position".⁽²⁾

They also had serious objections to any material alteration of the existing arrangements regarding the Straits.

To the vital question, "would Britain fight?" no conclusive answer can be given. It was true that Disraeli was able to write to the Queen, on 21 July 1877, that the Cabinet had agreed unanimously that, if Russia occupied Constantinople and did not arrange for her immediate retirement from it, the Queen should be advised to declare war against Russia.⁽³⁾ But when it came to the point in 1878, the Cabinet showed deplorable indecision. Orders and counter-

(1) G.E. Buckle, op.cit., Vol.VI, pp.100, 104.

(2) Derby to Shuvalov, 6 May 1877; F.O. 65/986; Foundations p.358.

(3) G.E. Buckle, op.cit., Vol.VI, p.154.

orders, regarding advance through the Straits, were sent to the fleet and it was not until February that it finally passed through the Straits. It was becoming an object of ridicule rather than a weapon of war. ⁽¹⁾ On the British Embassy at Constantinople was placed the notice: "Lost - between Besika Bay and Constantinople - one fleet. Reward to anyone furnishing information". Continental statesmen were not convinced that Britain would fight. Bismarck said that, if he had made such brave speeches as Disraeli, he would have drawn the sword long before.

Disraeli was, however, active in promoting measures for the preservation of British interests in the Mediterranean. In the light of future events the most interesting was an attempt to enter into an understanding with the Governments of Italy, Austria-Hungary, France and Greece providing that they should agree "to consider the maintenance of their commercial and political interests in the Mediterranean and the Straits and any act tending to the violation of those interests, as questions of general concern and they will from time to time ... come to an understanding as to the measures which may be necessary for the maintenance of those

(1) Quoted by W.L. Langer, op.cit., p.136.

interests". A change of Cabinet in Italy was immediately responsible for the failure of what was at best only a half-⁽¹⁾hearted attempt at co-operation.

It was not until the Treaty of San Stefano had been signed and Derby had resigned from the British Cabinet that the Government was able, in any real sense, to take the initiative in bringing about a combination of Powers hostile to Russia. The new foreign Minister, Salisbury, at once made the British position clear in a Circular to the Powers of 1 April. He was chiefly concerned with the combined effect of the stipulations of the Russian Treaty: they would depress, almost to the point of entire subjection, the political independence of the Government of Constantinople, "even its independent action and existence [⁽²⁾would be] almost impossible". He, therefore, insisted that every article of the Treaty should be submitted to the Congress. Salisbury's clarification of the issue earned the respect of Continental statesmen, who came to look to him as a champion against Russia. The Circular was, in a sense, symbolical of the stand that Salisbury was henceforth to take:

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- (1) Dwight E. Lee, "The Proposed Mediterranean League of 1878". Journal of Modern History, III, March 1931; pp.33-45.
- (2) Salisbury's Circular to the Powers, 1 April, 1878; printed in Foundations, p.372 ff.

often suspicious of too close reliance on anything but British power, he yet recognised that identity of interests made for sure co-operation among Powers.

The key-note of his future policy was sounded in a letter to Layard of 2 May:

"The Porte must recognise that it needs protection; that protection must be given by some Power that has an interest in avoiding the anarchy which would follow on its fall and must be facilitated by a willingness on the part of the Porte to make the necessary arrangements." (1)

Salisbury considered that Austria-Hungary was as vitally interested as Britain in maintaining the Sultan with sufficient power at Constantinople. From this time, right until his retirement, he had only limited faith in the Dual Monarchy, frequently deploring her weakness and want of trust in her own power. (2) But he was forced to depend on her to guard the dyke that must be built in the Balkans to maintain for a little longer the Sultan's power. He was not sanguine of its ultimate efficacy; "sooner or later the greater part of [the Turks'] European Empire must go". (3) He only hoped for a breathing space. Austria-Hungary, now as later, was reluctant to undertake the onerous duty. It was only

(1) Salisbury to Layard, 2 May 1878; quoted in Lady G. Cecil, Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury, Vol. II, p. 266.

(2) Ibid, pp. 247-257.

(3) Ibid, p. 267.

after Salisbury had come to a separate agreement with Russia that Austria-Hungary took her place in forcing Russia to reduce the Big Bulgaria.

It was clear that she would give no help in forcing Russia to give up her conquests in Asiatic Turkey; Ardahan, Kars and Batoum - strategic keys. ⁽¹⁾ Salisbury was convinced that it was in this region that the strength of the Sultan must in future lie. Yet, if he had his own strength alone to trust to, no one would believe in his ability to defend himself. The presence of Britain would be necessary to stem the encroaching power of Russia. His efforts were, therefore, directed towards neutralising the benefits which Russia might derive from her Asiatic Conquests and providing for the presence of Britain. Two methods were used. First, by an Anglo-Turkish Convention, England was granted permission to occupy Cyprus. ⁽²⁾ She engaged to defend by force of arms the Asiatic provinces if Russia attempted to take possession of any other territories than Kars, Batoum and Ardahan and in return the Sultan engaged to introduce the necessary reforms into the Government of the Christian and other subjects of the Porte in those territories. The latter stipulation reflected the problem which had for decades

(1) Ibid, p.261.

(2) For text of Convention of 4 June 1878 cf. E. Hertslet, The Map of Europe by Treaty (London, 1891), Vol.IV, p.2722.

troubled British statesmen: if the Sultan were to receive support, he must appear "respectable" to the electorate and the criterion of that respectability was the way in which he treated his Christian subjects.

The second method was to bring about new arrangements regarding the Straits. The Sultan could be defended by Britain only if he could be reached. During the Russo-Turkish war there had been a time when the Sultan was so intimidated by Russia that he considered opposing by force the proposed passage of the British fleet. When Admiral Hornby eventually took the risk he "passed the Straits without encountering any other obstacle than the presentation by the Commandant of the Dardanelles of the Porte's protest against his proceedings"⁽¹⁾. But the incident had left a deep imprint upon Salisbury's mind. Writing to Beaconsfield on 21 March 1878, he suggested that Britain should strive for "effective securities for the free passage of the Straits⁽²⁾ at all times, as if they were the open sea".

In June, influenced by the premature disclosure of his agreement with Russia (which contained the British acquiescence in her possession of Batoum), he considered the possibility

(1) Layard to Derby, 14 Feb. 1878; F.O.78/4271, No.228; printed in Foundations, p.362.

(2) Quoted in Foundations, p.366.

of concluding an agreement with Turkey, according to which the Sultan "will not offer forcible opposition to the passage at any time of the English fleet through the Straits" if England should consider the presence of her naval force expedient for the protection of his interests. ⁽¹⁾ The effect would be that England could provide for the security of the Porte without putting upon them the burden of summoning her under the Treaty of 1871. Salisbury considered that the advantage of entry into the Black Sea would be sufficient to outweigh the disadvantage of the inevitable throwing open of the Straits, for Britain had the stronger naval power. But his proposal alarmed his colleagues. It meant a complete change of front on the part of Britain, who had made the maintenance of the 1871 Treaty one of her conditions of neutrality in May, 1877. Philip Currie, a member of the British delegation to the Berlin Congress owned that it rather made his hair stand on end. ⁽²⁾ The Cabinet felt that the opening of the Straits would be dangerous and unpalatable to Turkey and considered that, with the Anglo-Turkish Convention, Britain "should possess a leverage which would at any time force Turkey

(1) Salisbury to Layard, 16 June, 1879; printed in Foundations, p.388.

(2) Currie to Tenterden, 17 June 1878; quoted in Foundations, p.382.

to open the Straits to England, even were the rule of 1871
 (1)
 to be continued".

Salisbury, therefore, stated on 6 July at the fourteenth session of the Congress that, considering Batum was declared a free and commercial port, England would agree to the maintenance of the status quo regarding the Straits. (2) A protocol was drawn up which eventually appeared in the treaty as Article LXIII: The treaties of Paris and London "are maintained in all such of their provisions as are not abrogated or modified by the preceding stipulations". (3)

After this session, further forebodings as to the possible adverse effects on British prestige in the East of unopposed Russian influence in the Black Sea and dissatisfaction with the Asiatic clauses of the Treaty, were responsible for turning Salisbury's thoughts back to his earlier ideas on the Straits. (4) The most the British Cabinet would authorise was the very vague statement which Salisbury made on 11 July:

(1) Cross to Salisbury, 25 June 1878; F.O.363/4, tel, (Tenterden papers); quoted by W.N. Medlicott, The Congress of Berlin and After (London, 1938), p.105.

(2) Ibid., p.110.

(3) E. Hertslet, op.cit., vol.IV, p.2798.

(4) W.N. Medlicott, op.cit., pp.111, 116, 121.

"Considering that the Treaty of Berlin will modify an important part of the arrangements sanctioned by the Treaty of 1856 and that the interpretation of Article 2 of the Treaty of London, which is dependent on the Treaty of Paris, may thus become a matter of dispute, I declare on behalf of England that the obligations of H.M. Government relating to the closure of the Straits do not go further than an engagement with the Sultan to respect in this matter H.M.'s independent determinations in conformity with the spirit of existing treaties". (1)

There appeared to be an inconsistency between Salisbury's action of the 6 July, when he seemed ready to stand by the collective engagement regarding the Straits and his action of the 11th when he seemed to imply that Britain acknowledged an engagement towards the Sultan only. The protocols of the Conference offer no explanation of this. It was not until 1885, when questions were asked in the British Parliament as to the meaning of the declaration, that an explanation was given. It was admitted that the object had been to establish the principle that British engagements in respect to the Dardanelles were not engagements of a general European or international character, but were engagements towards the Sultan only. The practical bearing of the declaration, however, was considered to be:

"that if, in any circumstances, the Sultan should not be acting independently, but under pressure from some

(1) E. Hertslet, op.cit., Vol.IV, p.2727.

other Power, there would be no international obligation on [Britain's] part to abstain from passing through the Dardanelles". (1)

This corresponds with what has already been shown to be the direction of Salisbury's thoughts before the sessions of July. His declaration could be justified legally by the argument that the Treaty of 1871 would be valid only if the Sultan were free to make an independent judgement as to admitting foreign vessels. But international lawyers are agreed that there could be no legal justification for

"Une déclaration unilatérale insérée au protocole après coup, sans qu'il se soit produit aucune circonstance qui pourrait justifier le retrait d'un consentement donné, ne saurait altérer l'unanimité du congrès, constatée par le président, sur ce point". (2)

The most far-reaching implications of Salisbury's declaration were not to be found in law, but in politics. It will be seen that Britain derived little practical benefit from it. Indeed, the air of vagueness and doubt which resulted from the statement but non-clarification of the opposing views of Britain and Russia at the Congress was responsible for many of the difficulties of future diplomatic activity concerning the Straits. But most important of all were the effects on

(1) Parliamentary Debates, 3rd series, vol.279; Colls.1818-27.

(2) E. Nys, Droit International (Bruxelles, 1912), vol.I, p. 509. For a discussion of the legal aspect of the declaration of. C. Phillipson and N. Buxton, The Question of the Bosphorus and Dardanelles (London, 1917), p.156 ff.

Russian policy of the fear she now felt that a British squadron would appear in the Black Sea when - as Saburov put it - it seemed good to her to send it. ⁽¹⁾ In the 1880s this fear was, more than anything else, responsible for the movement of Russia towards Germany - the only Power who could prevent Britain gaining Continental allies to help her to further her ends. Throughout the negotiations leading up to the formation of the Dreikaiserbund of 1881, the one subject on which Saburov was immovable was the question of the Straits. He eventually secured from Germany and Austria-Hungary the acknowledgement of

"The European and mutually obligatory character of the principle of the closing of the Straits".

The three Courts would take care that Turkey would make no exception to this rule and should an infringement occur, they would inform Turkey:

"that they would regard her, in that event, as putting herself in a state of war towards the injured party and as having deprived herself thenceforth of the benefits assured to her territorial status quo by the Treaty of Berlin". (2)

This development lay in the future and the immediate importance of the Berlin Congress for British policy was to be

(1) Saburov to Bismarck, 5 Feb. 1880; G.P.III, No.512.

(2) A.F. Pribram, The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary (Cambridge, U.S.A. 1920-21) Vol.I, pp.36-50.

seen in the inauguration of a working partnership between Britain and Austria-Hungary. It was first demonstrated to the world in a dramatic way at the second sitting when Austria-Hungary openly supported Britain in her demands for the reduction of the Big Bulgaria. (1) It was continued after the Congress when difficulties were felt in putting into operation the stipulations of the Treaty. In February 1879 the issue was the reluctance of Russia to evacuate the Balkan peninsula: Salisbury declared his willingness to exchange notes with Andrassy, "expressing readiness to assist the Sultan in case the Russians should refuse to abide by the Treaty in the matter of evacuation". (2) In May, the fear that Britain was wavering in her support led Andrassy to attempt to bind her more closely. He was so far successful that Salisbury undertook "that no diplomatic step touching the Balkan peninsula in its widest sense" would be taken vis-a-vis Russia without its having been previously communicated to the Austro-Hungarian government. (3) Andrassy responded by expressing his satisfaction "À l'idée de nous concerter sur toute

(1) W.N. Medlicott, op.cit., p.53.

(2) Salisbury to Elliot, 6 Feb. 1879; Austrian Foreign Office Archives, copy. Quoted by W.N. Medlicott, British Foreign Policy in the Near East from the Congress of Berlin to the Accession of Ferdinand of Coburg; M.A. thesis for the University of London, 1926, p.76.

(3) Salisbury to Karolyi, 8 May 1879; Austrian Foreign Office Archives; quoted by W.N. Medlicott, The Congress of Berlin and After, p.376.

démarche diplomatique concernant la peninsule des Balkans".⁽¹⁾
 This was a much greater undertaking than the former - yet Salisbury did not demur when the words were read to him by the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador. The explanation of his attitude is to be found in the conviction that it would be difficult for Britain not to go to Austria's assistance, if she were seriously attacked by Russia. He developed his ideas fully in a speech at Manchester on 18 October:

"The danger was that Russia would threaten the independence of Constantinople or the shores of the Black Sea to the Adriatic. The remedy we have applied depends, in the first instance, on the Turk ... If the Turk falls, remember that Austria is now at Novi Bazar and has advanced to the latitude of the Balkans and that no advance of Russia in the Balkans ... can now be made unless the resistance of Austria is conquered ... I believe that in the strength and independence of Austria lie the best hopes of European stability and peace".⁽²⁾

He therefore welcomed the news of the strengthening of Austria-Hungary by her alliance with Germany as "good tidings of great joy".

This speech was in sharp contrast to the one made by Gladstone early in the following year. Aroused by the fever of his electioneering campaign, he said:

(1) Andrassy to Karolyi, 20 May 1879; Austrian Foreign Office Archives. The correspondence is quoted in extenso in the appendix of W.N. Medlicott's M.A. thesis for the University of London, 1926.

(2) The Times, 19 Oct. 1879; p.10.

"There is not a spot on the whole map where you can lay your finger and say: There Austria did good."

It might be expected that when he came into power at the head of a Liberal Government there would be a great change in British policy. But as far as the central features of Britain's Eastern policy - Constantinople and the Straits - were concerned, it is probable that the change was not so far-reaching as has been generally considered. Even Gladstone accepted the maintenance of Turkey as a means of protecting the route to India. In a Memorandum of May he expressed his views in a characteristic manner:

"We desire the maintenance of the Turkish Empire compatibly with the welfare of the people and think that, where autonomy has or may be granted, the Suzerainty of the Sultan might still be useful and conducive to the peace of Europe". (1)

He never demanded the extinction of the Sultan's rule over his Moslem subjects or even over the Christians of Macedonia. As to Constantinople itself, his views were described by his Foreign Secretary in a letter to the British ambassador at Berlin:

"I doubt whether there be any statesman at home or abroad who is more opposed to [Russia] having any paramount power at Constantinople". (2)

Lord Granville might be relied upon to know the views of his

(1) Memorandum on "The proposed language of Mr. Gladstone to Musurus Pasha, 23 May 1880; printed in Foundations, p. 398.

(2) Granville to Odo Russell, 13 Oct. 1880; quoted by E. Fitzmaurice, The Life of the Second Earl Granville (Longman, 1905).

chief and he could have little reason for misrepresenting them to Lord Odo Russell. A second testimony to the same effect was given in 1887 by Philip Currie, then Permanent Under Secretary, when he told Bismarck that he thought that even Gladstone would be prepared to join with Austria-Hungary, in opposing a Russian occupation of Constantinople. (1)

The Liberals would say that the difference between their policy and that of Salisbury and Disraeli simply lay in their refusal to exploit "abuse and nagging at Russia" as a means of popularity. There was, of course, a basic difference in the European situation which confronted the Liberals in 1880. By that time the Great Powers were ready to find a modus vivendi for themselves and to concentrate common attention on the one Power who had failed to carry out her obligations under the Berlin Treaty. They, therefore, responded willingly to Gladstone's invitation to unite in concert to require Turkey to fulfil her obligations to Greece, Montenegro and Armenia. (2)

By 1885 it had become evident that British statesmanship was greatly inferior to that of Bismarck, who had succeeded in

(1) Lady G. Cecil, op.cit., Vol.III, p.259.

(2) Foundations, p. 394.

disrupting Gladstone's Concert by winning over Austria-Hungary and Italy to his side in new European groupings. This was all the more serious since Britain had incurred onerous obligations through her entry into Egypt in 1882. The dangers of her position were strikingly demonstrated in the Spring of 1885 by the Pendjeh crisis. At first sight it might seem to be only a matter affecting Central Asia: Russia had defeated Afghan troops on the borders of Afghanistan, a country which Britain had promised to defend from unprovoked attack. Britain had watched with alarm the Russian advance through Central Asia, fearing for the safety of her rule in India. The threat was to her prestige rather than to her strategic position. Public opinion forced the Government to arm and make the incident a trial of strength between Britain and Russia. It then became clear that, for each country, the issue would be decided not in central Asia, but in the Near East: British forces must pass through the Straits, if Russia was to be attacked in the Caucasus - the only satisfactory ground for operations. The diplomatic struggle became centred on Constantinople. Britain attempted to maintain her interpretation of the rule of the Straits as expressed in 1878. Russia now called upon the members of the Dreikaiserbund for fulfil their obligations under that Treaty. Bismarck was true to his word and took the initiative in

making the views of the three monarchies known at Constantinople: the Sultan could maintain his neutrality only if he kept the Straits closed. The German Chancellor was consciously opposing Britain in what he called "le duel de la baleine et de l'éléphant".⁽¹⁾ He was making use of the occasion to demonstrate to the world the solidarity of the Three Emperors' alliance, recently renewed at Skieŋevic. In the face of this combination Britain was helpless and unable to impress her views upon the Sultan, who kept the Straits closed.⁽²⁾

Although the crisis quickly passed, when Russia and Britain submitted their claims in Central Asia to arbitration, its effects were far reaching. The Sultan was confirmed in his admiration of Germany. He sent von der Goltz and Ristow, German officers in the service of the Porte, with a commission to examine the defences of the Dardanelles. A report was drawn up to the effect that "neither the batteries nor the torpedo defences could deter a British fleet from passing through". Salisbury always saw in this the origins of the Sultan's decision to make the fortresses of the

(1) C. de Freycinet, Souvenirs 1878-93 (Paris, 1913), p.303.

(2) C.L. Smith The Embassy of Sir William White at Constantinople 1886-1891. (Oxford, 1957) pp.8-13.

W.L. Langer, op.cit., pp.309-315.

(1)
Dardanelles really effective.

Salisbury himself, when he came into power in June, was confirmed in his belief that Britain must draw closer to the Central Powers, if her policies were to be successful. On 2 July he wrote a private letter to Bismarck, stressing the "supreme importance" he attached to a good understanding between Britain and Germany. (2) He also revived the plan of exchanging information with Austria-Hungary concerning Russian activities in the Balkans, when he sent to Kalnoky reports received from Lascelles, of revolutionary activities. (3)

When, in September, peace in the East was threatened by a revolt in Eastern Roumelia and the union of the two parts of Bulgaria which had been separated at Berlin, his first instructions to William White (British Minister Plenipotentiary to the Porte) were: "as a general rule, you may associate yourself with any advice in which your Austrian and German colleagues join". He considered that Britain's interests were not sufficient to justify her acting alone, but she was prepared" to act with the other Powers in upholding the Treaty of Berlin". (4)

(1) Marschall to Hatzfeldt, 19 May 1890; G.P.IX, No.2090.

(2) Salisbury to Bismarck, 2 July 1885, G.P.IV, No.782.

(3) Memorandum forwarded from British Embassy, dated Vienna, 27 June 1885; Austrian Foreign Office Archives, quoted by W.N. Medlicott, op.cit., pp.252-253.

(4) Salisbury to White, 22 Sept. 1885; F.O.78/3757, No.58 A; Foundations, p.429.

Yet in fact Britain did again stand alone among the Great Powers and Salisbury had to change his formula to preserving the sanctity of the treaty by an "act of veneration".⁽¹⁾ When he wrote to White he did not know of Austria-Hungary's commitments under the terms of the Three Emperors' Alliance or of her Treaty with Serbia. Bismarck, true to his words to Malet - minor questions in the East were left to Austria-Hungary, but when the peace of Europe was seriously threatened, "he took the reins into his own hands and was able to hold them"⁽²⁾ - became the dominating figure. His chief object was to divert Russia's hostility away from Austria-Hungary to Britain.

His task was not difficult, since Britain's attitude to the Bulgarian problem was still diametrically opposed to Russia's; although changed circumstances had led each country to change her ground. At Berlin, Salisbury objected to the Big Bulgaria because he thought it would be a strong-hold through which Russia would menace Constantinople. In 1885, he recognized that a united Bulgaria would be anti-Russian and would be a more effective barrier against a Russian advance

(1) Salisbury to Pauncefote, 4 Dec. 1885; F.O.64/1075; Ibid., p.433.

(2) Malet to Salisbury, 22 Sept. 1885; F.O. 64/1079, No.436 Secr.; quoted by C.L. Smith, op.cit., p.19.

through the Balkans than the mountain range which the Sultan had failed to fortify in 1878. Therefore, he advocated a personal union of Bulgaria and Eastern Roumelia, under Prince Alexander.⁽¹⁾ Russia, although sympathising with the union, objected to the method of its achievement and the rule of Prince Alexander and demanded a return to the status quo ante.⁽²⁾ It was with reluctance that Salisbury agreed to the Russian suggestion that a conference of ambassadors at Constantinople should attempt to find a solution to the problem. In reality, Britain was now as isolated as she had been earlier in the year. But she marked time until the victory of Prince Alexander over the Serbs at Slivnitsa enabled her to press her views strongly. She was so far successful that, in a Turco-Bulgarian agreement of April 1886, Prince Alexander was named Governor General of Eastern Roumelia for a period of 5 years.⁽³⁾ Her prestige at Constantinople and in Europe was immensely increased: she had been raised "from contemned singularity to applauded leadership".⁽⁴⁾

(1) G. Cecil, op.cit., Vol.III, pp.239-42; C.L. Smith, op.cit., pp.22-25.

(2) W.L. Langer, op.cit., pp.345 ff.

(3) C.L. Smith, op.cit., pp.30-37.

(4) Lady G. Cecil, op.cit., III, pp.256-7.

But the realisation that this success was due to the Battle of Slivnitsa and to clever diplomacy rather than to any real increase of strength was impressed on the world in July 1886 when Russia notified Britain that the privileges of free port status would be removed from Batum. Although Britain had, at Berlin, made an issue out of the status of Batum, the Foreign Secretary, Lord Rosebery, was unable to do anything more effective than to write a blistering Blue Book dispatch. The severity of his language only served to emphasize Britain's
(1)
isolation.

When Salisbury returned to office in August - to be confronted by a second Bulgarian crisis - resulting from the enforced abdication of Prince Alexander, he was more determined than ever to win the support of Austria. His Foreign Secretary, Lord Iddesleigh, put the issue clearly to her in a Memorandum of 30 September:

"It is to be feared that Russia may so influence the Balkan people ... that they may practically give themselves up to her. In that case the influence would be exerted not only over the Balkan states but over Constantinople itself. The Sultan, in the hands of Russia, would be a very formidable power and it could not be long before England would find herself in a position from which she would hardly be able to extricate herself without a serious war ... For a clearly defined object, such as the defence of Constantinople, England

(1) Foundations, pp.436-441.

no doubt would fight. Whether she would do so to obviate the danger of an attack is very questionable unless she had the full support of some other Powers ...

We must prepare for a long diplomatic struggle. We (1) cannot work at once at Constantinople and Bulgaria ..."

The implication was obvious: Salisbury and Iddesleigh wanted to return to the partnership of the Berlin Congress period: Austria-Hungary was to be responsible for the Balkans, Britain for Constantinople. But Austria-Hungary was even less willing now than formerly to do this. In 1886 she had serious doubts as to whether Britain would in fact carry out the policy she professed. It was well known abroad that the British Cabinet was divided. Lord Randolph Churchill, supported by W.H. Smith and Lord George Hamilton, favoured the idea of an understanding with Russia, by which, in return for support in Egypt and an abandonment of her pressure upon Afghanistan, Britain would allow Russia to settle Balkan affairs as she wished. Churchill thought that "any anti-Russian policy which involved Britain taking the lead ostensibly on the side of Turkey about Constantinople would place the Unionist party in great peril."⁽²⁾

(1) Ibid, p.442.

(2) W.S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill (London, 1951) new edition, pp.515-16.

His views called forth from Salisbury a clear statement of ideas:

"The possession by Russia of Constantinople will be an awkward piece of news for the minister who receives it. The prestige effect on the Asiatic populations will be enormous and I pity the English party which has this item on their record. They will share the fate of Lord North's party."

In October he repeated the same sentiments:

"I consider the loss of Constantinople would be the ruin of our party and a heavy blow to the country and I am anxious to delay by all means Russia's advance to that goal". (1)

The fundamental disagreement between Salisbury and Churchill on foreign affairs was probably as much responsible for the submission and acceptance of his resignation from the Cabinet ^(to Salisbury?) as the ostensible reason given - the rejection of the Chancellor of the Exchequer's proposed economies at the Admiralty and War Office.

But his resignation in December came too late to reassure Austria-Hungary; who continued her "attitude of observation". Disappointment as to Austria-Hungary's attitude and Germany's attitude (whose interest at this time was centred on France - so much so that she would not promise to rescue Austria-Hungary from Russian aggression in the East) and growing

(1) Ibid.

concern about the Egyptian question led the British Government to turn to Italy, who, as a naval power, might be expected to be useful to Britain in the Near East. Bismarck, faced by a deadlock in the negotiations for the renewal of the Triple alliance, envisaged a new arrangement by which Germany would support Italy as before, but Italy would secure further support by an arrangement with Britain, so that Austria-Hungary need incur obligations towards Italy only in the matter of her Balkan policy. ⁽¹⁾ Bismarck and Salisbury alike looked to an Anglo-Italian understanding as a means of giving Austria-Hungary increased support in the East. ⁽²⁾ Salisbury wrote that he was confident of his ability to prevent Russia acquiring "any foothold on the Aegean and the Straits" but a conflict would menace Austria-Hungary too and England alone can do nothing effective to save Austria. Yet it is of great importance to her that Austria should ⁽³⁾ not succumb".

The basic principle involved in the notes exchanged between England and Italy on the 12 February 1887, was the

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- (1) W.N. Medlicott, "The Mediterranean Agreements of 1887", The Slavonic Review, Vol.V, 1926, p.67.
- (2) Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 6 Feb. 1887; G.P. IV. No.885. Bismarck to Henrich VIII; ibid, No.893.
- (3) Salisbury to the Queen, 30 Jan. 1887; Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd series (London, 1930), p.265.

preservation of the status quo in the Mediterranean, Adriatic and Black Seas - with the additional promise of Italy to support British policy in Egypt in return for the British promise to support Italian policy in North Africa. (1)

Salisbury expressly stated to the Italian ambassador that "England never promised material assistance in view of an uncertain war of which the object and cause were unknown". He thought that the agreement was "as close an alliance as the Parliamentary character of British institutions would permit". (2)

From the beginning, Salisbury meant the agreement with Italy to be a starting point to a closer understanding with Austria-Hungary. Even before the exchange of notes, Paget, the British Ambassador in Vienna, had again asked Kalnoky how England could help Austria-Hungary, in the event of a war between Austria-Hungary and Russia. Kalnoky had again replied that Britain must defend the Straits and Black Sea, but expressed doubts as to whether any Parliamentary Government could be permanently bound. Salisbury admitted that no British Government could pledge itself to military co-operation

(1) Text in B.D. Vol.VIII, pp. 1, 2.

(2) Salisbury to the Queen, 2 Feb. 1887; Letters of Queen Victoria, op.cit., Vol.I, pp.268-70.

But in reporting this to Kalnoky, Karolyi expressed his private belief that the "political agreement" would be an important step to an eventual military alliance. (1) When, on 24 March, there were exchanged between the two Governments notes which contained an expression of their mutual desire to maintain the status quo in the Mediterranean and neighbouring seas, it was clear that the Austro-Hungarian Government regarded them not as important in themselves, but as a promise of better things. (2)

Salisbury emphasized again that the question of material assistance had been carefully put aside. He said openly that the agreements had been adopted to a great extent by the advice of Germany, who appeared to attach great importance to them. Salisbury hoped that the Agreements, which gave Britain a link with the Central Powers, would draw to Britain's side the support of German diplomacy.

The testing ground for the new friendship was found not in the Bulgarian but in the Egyptian problem. As early as 1885, when Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was sent on a special mission to Constantinople "with special reference to the affairs of Egypt", Salisbury had defined his policy: to work

(1) W.N. Medlicott, The Slavonic Review, Vol.V, op.cit., pp.72-73.

(2) Text in B.D., Vol.VIII, pp. 2, 3.

"for evacuation, but with certain privileges reserved for England". In that year negotiations failed. But in May 1887 Wolff succeeded in signing with the Porte a Convention, which provided for evacuation under certain conditions. Then the storm broke. France, supported by Russia, objected to the conditions and pressed the Sultan to refuse to ratify the Convention. It was now vitally important that Britain should have the support of the Central Powers if she were to win the diplomatic battle, which had been transformed from an Anglo-Turkish struggle over Egypt to a more comprehensive struggle, involving the balance of power in the Mediterranean. But Bismarck was at this time involved in the last stages of negotiating with Russia the Reinsurance Treaty, in which he promised to Russia "moral and diplomatic support", should the Tsar "find himself under the necessity of assuming the task of defending the entrance of the Black Sea, in order to safeguard the interests of Russia". The German Chancellor was unwilling to jeopardise these negotiations by coming out openly on the side of England. The Sultan refused to ratify the Convention and Britain, lacking the necessary diplomatic support, was unable to make her wishes prevail. Her new friends had failed her.

But Salisbury, from the beginning of the year, had been careful to find further safeguards for Britain's position by

attempting to conciliate Russia over Bulgaria. In January he had laid down three points as the basis of his policy there: the recognition of British obligations under the Treaty of Berlin, the necessity to consider the wishes of the Bulgarian people and the legitimate desires of Russia. (1) The air of vagueness had increased the air of conciliation. When, in July, an agreement was also reached with Russia over the Afghan boundary dispute, the Russian Foreign Minister, Giers, became convinced that there was no longer any major cause of antagonism between the two countries. He was concerned with the dangers of a Franco-German war - since Germany's attention was still focused on France, where the Boulangist movement was at its height. He went so far as to suggest an understanding between Britain and Russia, which he thought would be a starting point for a general understanding between all the Powers. (2) This suggestion came in the summer of 1887, just after the diplomatic defeat of Britain at Constantinople: that Salisbury considered it is proved by the conversation he had with Hatzfeldt

(1) Foundations, p.445.

(2) Morier to Salisbury, 17 Aug. 1887; F.O.65/1298, No. 287 Secr. Quoted by C.L. Smith, op.cit., p.86.

on 3 August, in which he attempted to sound the German attitude to the idea. ⁽¹⁾ But it was almost a foregone conclusion that Salisbury would ultimately reject it. He gave his principal reason in a despatch to his ambassador at St. Petersburg:

"As long as Russia moves, however slowly, towards Constantinople, her actions will be watched jealously here ... The real cause of friction, which may be durable, is the Stamboul sentiment in Russia. I doubt if the Englishman will for a long time reconcile himself to seeing the Black Sea a Russian lake, and I therefore look upon any cordial friendship with Russia as problematical." (2)

The lesson learnt from the failure to ratify the Wolff Convention was not that Britain should look for support to another Power, but that she should seek to strengthen the ties which she already had with the Powers who had exchanged Notes with her in the Spring. This was made easier by the existence of a wish on the part of Italy and Austria-Hungary to change that vague understanding into a more definite agreement.

In July the Italian ambassador at Constantinople, Baron Blanc, had drawn his own conclusions from Britain's diplomatic defeat and presented them to the British Government in

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- (1) Hatzfeldt to Bismarck, 3 Aug. 1887; G.P. IV, No.907; cf. C.L. Smith, op.cit., p.87 and W.L. Langer, European Alliances and Alignments pp.430-1.
- (2) Salisbury to Morier, 2 Aug.1887; Morier Papers; Quoted by C.L. Smith, op.cit., p.87.

the form of a Memorandum. He suggested that Britain should make her Convention the foundation of an immediate agreement between Italy and Austria-Hungary: a general scheme for the administration of Egypt should be prepared. It would inspire the confidence of Germany, who would co-operate with the Powers long after the completion of the arrangements for Egypt.⁽¹⁾

The suggestion was not immediately accepted by Britain, who had a horror of international interference in Egypt. But the idea was borne in mind. A further contribution to it was made by Austria-Hungary, who was becoming alarmed at Bismarck's support of the Russian attempts to establish General Erenroth as Regent in Bulgaria. In spite of the formal acceptance of the Bulgarian throne given by Prince Ferdinand, the Porte continued to concede the substance of the Russian demands. In August the Austro-Hungarian ambassador at Constantinople, Calice, wrote that he had consulted with his British and Italian colleagues concerning the basis of ideas which should preserve the interests of the Powers in the East.

Salisbury still held back, wishing this time to secure

(1) Wolff to Salisbury, 12 July 1887; F.O.78/4059, No.113 Most Secr. and Confid. Quoted by C.L. Smith, op.cit., p.79.

from Bismarck a definite assurance of support. His waiting game was ultimately successful, for Bismarck, becoming aware of his failure to conciliate Russia, once again decided that the possibility of war in the East would be lessened if he came out more openly on the side of the Mediterranean Powers. On 22 November Salisbury received from him a letter which gave the desired assurance as to the future lines of German policy. (1)

The British Prime Minister then set about revising the draft of an Agreement which had already been drawn up by Austro-Hungary and Italy to make it conform more closely to the direction of British policy. The changes which he made are significant as indications of Salisbury's ideas at this time. Article 5 was revised so that it stipulated that:

"Turkey, constituted by the Treaties guardian of the Straits, can neither cede any portion of her sovereign rights nor delegate her authority to any other Power in Asia Minor."

In Britain it was considered that a threat to the Straits could come from Asia Minor as well as the Balkans. Articles 7 and 8 were revised so that they recognized specifically that the maintenance of "the independence of the Ottoman

(1) Bismarck to Salisbury, 22 Nov. 1887; G.P. IV, No.930.

Empire and the integrity of its territory" should be the purpose of the Agreement. In the event of a threat to that independence the Powers "will immediately come to an agreement as to the measure to be taken"⁽¹⁾. It is important to notice that, once again, Salisbury had refused to commit Britain to action: the only commitment was to concert with the signatory powers as to the measures to be taken.

When agreement was finally reached, on 16 December, Salisbury sent a separate answer to the two identic notes of Italy and Austria-Hungary, instead of signing three identic notes.⁽²⁾ His object was to make it clear that Italy and Austria-Hungary were to be in the front line, with Britain behind them. Although he fully admitted Britain's interest in the maintenance of Turkey's domination over her present Empire and over the Straits, it was not so "imperative and vital" as theirs.

In the same vein, he attempted to belittle the importance of the Agreement, saying that it guaranteed nothing which had not been secured by more formal treaties. But this depreciation of the value of written agreements was

(1) W.N. Medlicott, The Slavonic Review, Vol.V, op.cit., p.85.

(2) Text in B.D., Vol.VIII, pp.12-13.

habitual with Salisbury. In reality, Britain's position at Constantinople was immensely strengthened. Even before the notes were exchanged, her ambassador there had written jubilantly: "Now, we are four sentries at their posts".⁽¹⁾ Behind these sentries was the shadow of Bismarck, whose promise to support the Mediterranean Powers gave the coup de grâce to the Three Emperors' Alliance.

The plan, vaguely formulated by Disraeli in 1887 for preserving Britain's interests in the Mediterranean was now realised. The idea of protection for the Sultan, envisaged by Salisbury at Berlin, was developed to its logical conclusion. How closely and for how long the Powers, thus united, could continue to work together to maintain what in 1887 were common interests were questions to which only future events could reveal the answers.

Although Salisbury regarded it as of vital importance for Britain to maintain a strong diplomatic position at Constantinople, such a position was becoming increasingly difficult to achieve in the last years of the nineteenth

(1) White to Salisbury, 18 Oct. 1887; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 75, No.56.

century; for, as Salisbury himself observed, the Sultan hated Britain. (1) The British occupation of Egypt and Cyprus was in itself sufficient to account for this feeling, because, in each case, Britain had made herself mistress of a Moslem community. She had shown that she could govern Moslems and make them prosperous. To the Sultan, to whom his position as the first Moslem of the world was everything, this rivalry was exasperating and alarming. (2) Abdul Hamid was also alarmed by the desire which the Liberal Government of 1880 had shown to introduce some form of constitutional control over his arbitrary power. Sir Austen Layard (British ambassador at Constantinople) had written on 27 April 1880:

"The Powers have a right to demand that the National Assembly should be called together. If H.M.'s Government were disposed ... they would, I believe, be supported by the most intelligent and enlightened liberal public opinion in the Empire. An adequate control might, in this case, be placed on the arbitrary power of the Sultan". (3)

To Abdul Hamid, to whom absolute authority in his dominions was of subsidiary importance only to his position as Caliph, the idea was anathema. Personal pique and a general

(1) Salisbury to White, 14 Sept. 1891; Ibid, Vol.76, No.122.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Quoted in Currie to Salisbury, 21 Oct. 1894; Salisbury Papers, Currie file.

conviction that Britain's "friendship" was almost as costly to Turkey as Russia's hostility, combined to concentrate the Sultan's hostility upon Britain.

Russia, who had been forced by the Treaty of Berlin, to give up her gains in the Balkan peninsula, turned her attention to Constantinople itself and attempted, by means of vigorous diplomacy to dominate the scene. The proximity of Russian frontiers, the Russian army and the Russian navy (the Black Sea fleet was greatly strengthened in the 1880s) all combined to give Russia great influence at Constantinople. Sir William White (British ambassador from 1887^{to}1891) very soon became convinced that British influence was not in itself sufficiently strong to counteract the effects of Russian influence: "British influence must either perish or go into partnership". (1)

The partners chosen were Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany. The latter Power was the most important; for, at the very time when the Sultan was becoming increasingly ill-disposed towards Britain, so he was becoming more disposed to favour Germany. Turco-German intimacy increased after the Congress of Berlin, which abrogated many of the heavy

(1) C.L. Smith, op.cit., p.40.

conditions which had been imposed upon the Sultan by the Treaty of San Stefano: it was Bismarck who had presided over the Congress and the Turks received the impression that Bismarck was favourable to Turkey. ⁽¹⁾ Moreover, the Turks were impressed by the newly-acquired power of Germany in Europe, which was based on military prowess. The isolation which Turkey felt after her defeat in the Russo-Turkish war made her all the more anxious to seek the assistance of Germany - the great military power - in the reorganisation of the Turkish army. In 1881 a group of German army officers, headed by General Kochler, took up service in the Turkish Army. Two years later General von der Goltz became the leader of what was in fact a German military mission - a mission which eventually succeeded in reorganising the Turkish army and making it into the fine fighting force which defeated the Greeks with such ease in 1897. Germany gave the Turks material assistance and, unlike the other European Powers, Germany was willing to give such assistance without demanding concessions in the form of territory or better treatment for the Christian subjects of the Sultan. Of all the European Powers, Germany was the only one in whose disinterestedness as regards Turkey, the Sultan still

(1) Mahmud Mukhtar Pasha, La Turquie, l'Allemagne et l'Europe (Paris, 1924), p.24.

believed. Consequently, the Sultan was more ready to listen to the advice of Germany than to the advice of any other Power. There were rational grounds for the belief of Salisbury and White that, if Britain went into partnership with Germany and her allies of the Triple Alliance, British influence on the Golden Horn would not be negligible.

CHAPTER II"Four Sentries at their Posts."
1890-92

When Sir William White first went to Constantinople in 1885 he found himself alone in his struggle to prevent the Sultan from falling into the hands of Russia. The Russian ambassador, Nelidov, aided by his French colleague, Montebello, was tireless in his efforts to achieve dominance over the mind of the Sultan. The non-ratification of the Drummond-Wolff Convention demonstrated the success of the partnership. But the exchange of Notes between Britain, Austria-Hungary and Italy, which took place in December 1887, with the approval of Germany, marked the formation of a new "alliance".⁽¹⁾ At Constantinople, the ambassadors of Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance drew together for the purpose of combatting and checking Russian influence at the Palace. The issue was clearly joined. Even questions of minor importance formed a battle ground over which the two groups fought. A victory for one or other of the groups on even a minor point had importance in the East where

(1) This term was used by the British ambassador at Constantinople. White to Salisbury, 29 Nov. 1887; Salisbury Papers, Vol.76, No.65.

prestige was synonymous with power.

In 1890, Salisbury was well aware that British prestige was not high at Constantinople. But the Turks had great respect for Germany. As long as Britain could associate Germany with her in the execution of her policy at Constantinople, Salisbury thought that Britain would be able to maintain her position. In the latter years of his second Ministry, as in the earlier years, the basic assumption behind Salisbury's policy was the paramount importance of keeping Constantinople and the Straits out of Russian hands. To him the Dardanelles still represented a "great prize".⁽¹⁾ He thought that the Russians would make an open attempt to seize the Straits only if they were confident of acting "on the weak nerves of the Sultan", confident that they had made Bulgaria "tolerably safe" and confident that Britain's chances of passing the Dardanelles were poor.⁽²⁾ Salisbury worked with the object of demonstrating that Russia could not afford to be confident on any of these points.

Salisbury believed that Russia would not expose herself to the risk of sending an expedition to the Bosphorus as

(1) Salisbury to Sir John Linton Simmons, Confid. 30 Sept. 1891, F.O.358/6.

(2) Salisbury to Simmons, Private 21 Sept. 1891 and 25 Sept. 1891; F.O.358/6.

long as she thought there was a real chance that British ships might pass the Dardanelles before Russia had time to man the forts of the Dardanelles. The problem, he thought, would present itself to Russia in this way:

"Unless we (The Russians) are able to be first at the Dardanelles ... or are able to make the Turks keep the English out ... unless, in view of these two ways, we can cork up the Dardanelles, our expeditionary force to the Bosphorus will be prisoners of war". (1)

Time was the important factor. A Russian expeditionary force in the Black Sea, steering for the Bosphorus, would require certain preparations. Britain had organised her "watchmen" in the Black Sea so that she would receive early notice of any important movement there. She observed closely the movements of the Russian Volunteer Fleet and other steamer ships up and down the Straits, so that any undue agglomeration of ships would at once be known. (2) If there were indications that Russia was preparing for hostile action a telegraphic message could quickly be sent to the Eastern squadron of the British Mediterranean Fleet, which had orders always to remain to the East of Cape Matapan and within forty-eight hours steaming of the Dardanelles. (3)

(1) Salisbury to Simmons, Confid. 30 Sept. 1891. F.O.358/6.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Secret Memorandum from 1st Lord of Admiralty to Commander in Chief in Mediterranean 10 June 1890, Adm.I R 7122. cf. A.J. Marder, British Naval Policy 1880-1905 (London, 1940), p.154.

The chances in favour of the British ships arriving before the Russians were good. Articles in Russian newspapers showed that Russia was aware of this fact. The chances of British ships being able to pass the Dardanelles depended upon the Sultan's temper, on the fidelity of the Dardanelles' commander and on the skill and courage of the English Admiral. Salisbury thought that these chances also were sufficiently good to give Russia pause. He had complete confidence in his country's ability to defend her vital interest in the Straits; he gave to the German Foreign Minister the assurance:

"Vous pouvez compter sur nous, tant que le Gouvernement actuel est au pouvoir, nous y serons à temps". (1)

He did not, however, fail to point out that the greatest difficulty in the way of Britain would be the fortifications of the Dardanelles, which had been undertaken by the Sultan on the advice of Germany. If Germany really desired to serve their common interests in the Near East, she should take back her advice and ensure by every possible means that Britain would not find the door shut when the time came. (2)

(1) Memorandum by Marschall, Windsor Castle, 6 July 1891. G.P. IX. No.2111.

(2) Hatzfeldt to Caprivi, 8 May 1890; G.P. IX, No.2086.

Unknown to Salisbury, Germany had already gone so far as indirectly to advise the Turks to strengthen the fortifications of the Bosphorus, so as to encourage Britain in her support of Turkey against Russia.⁽¹⁾

When the men who had taken over from Bismarck the task of conducting the foreign affairs of Germany decided not to renew the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia, because the spirit of the provisions of the Treaty could not be harmonised with the Triple Alliance or with the influence which Germany exercised upon England, they had considered especially those provisions referring to the Straits.⁽²⁾ In the event of an Anglo-Russian war, Germany would have been forced by the provisions of the Reinsurance Treaty to press for the closure of the Straits, that is - she would have been forced to act against the interests of England. But, in order to keep Italy within the Triple Alliance, Germany needed the support of England; in order to keep England with her, Germany must regulate her Eastern policy so that it would be in harmony with the interests of England. Such was the reasoning

(1) Hatzfeldt to Caprivi, 2 May 1890; G.P. IX, No.2083.

(2) Memorandum by the Chancellor, Caprivi, 28 March 1890, G.P. VII, No. 1369. Memorandum by Holstein, 20 May 1890; G.P. VII, No.1374.

of the Kaiser, Caprivi, Marschall and Holstein. Once Germany had broken the wire to St. Petersburg, she was forced to come down on the side of England in the Near East. Her change of attitude was very soon made apparent. On 29 March 1890 the German under Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Count Burchem, had with Malet a conversation in which he seemed to wish to impress upon the British ambassador that Germany would be more ready to enter into action with Austria-Hungary, Italy and Britain than had been the case when Bismarck was Chancellor.

"His whole conversation", reported Malet, "was a bid for a closer alliance with us than heretofore and indicated a less unbending attitude in regard to the pretended disinterestedness of Germany in Eastern Affairs". (1)

Thus it happened that Germany was anxious to support Britain in the Near East at the very time when Britain needed German support in order to carry out her policy. The value to Britain of German support was demonstrated when a new phase of the ever-recurring Bulgarian question presented itself to the Powers. Early in 1890, the Bulgarian Government began to press strongly for Prince Ferdinand's recognition by his suzerain, the Sultan, and this matter

(1) Malet to Salisbury, 29 March 1890; Salisbury Papers, Vol.63, No.29.

became linked with the equally difficult one of the rights of the Bulgarian bishops in Macedonia. Bulgarian opinion was very strong on the question of recognition and on the ecclesiastical question. Unless the Stambulov Government achieved some satisfaction, it was likely that it would be defeated in the approaching elections. The Government was friendly to Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance. They thought it essential for their interests that it should remain in office and that friendly relations should be re-established between Bulgaria and Turkey. By this means only could a safe bulwark be maintained against a Russian advance. Naturally, the interests of Russia were directly opposed: they dictated that no satisfaction should be given to a Bulgarian Government which was hostile to Russia; every effort should be made to rid Bulgaria of that Government and to establish friendly relations between Bulgaria and Russia. At Constantinople, Nelidov, supported by Montebello, worked towards this end; while White, supported by Radowitz, Calice and Blanc (the ambassadors of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy) worked to press his views on the Sultan. In this way, the Bulgarian question became a test question of influence on the Bosphorus. Which group of Powers would prevail?

The struggle began in March when Dr. Vulcovitch, the

Bulgarian Agent at Constantinople, held strong language to the Sultan, based on a memorandum from Stambulov. He recounted the considerations which ought to induce the Porte to recognize Prince Ferdinand. ⁽¹⁾ At first it seemed that the Grand Vizier would take some action. White thought that it was intended that a special Commission should be sent to Sophia to report on what was going on there and to employ moderate and persuasive language to Stambulov and Prince Ferdinand. But Nelidov devoted himself to seeing that even so small a gesture as the sending of a special Commission should not be made. He was successful. When White sent Sir Alfred Sandison to question the Grand Vizier, the latter denied ever having "had such an appointment in view". White concluded that he must have met with insurmountable difficulties in carrying out his intentions. ⁽²⁾ Nelidov had won the first round.

The second round began in June, when Dr. Vulcovitch presented to the Porte a very determined Note from the Bulgarian Government. It declared that, unless the Porte satisfied its claims, it would be forced to consider that

(1) White to Salisbury, 3 March 1890; F.O.78/4274, No.104
Secr.

(2) White to Salisbury, 15 March, 1890; F.O.78/4274, No.
120 Confid.

the suzerain Court had withdrawn its protection from its vassal principality and that Bulgaria must henceforth depend upon her own strength for the means of escaping from her uncertain and perilous position. ⁽¹⁾ Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance believed that it would be fatal for Turkey (and also for Bulgaria) if Stambulov carried out his threat of the principality breaking away from its suzerain. It was essential that Bulgaria should be given satisfaction at least on the ecclesiastical question.

The rights of the Bulgarian Church had been a matter of dispute since 1870, when the Bulgarians had obtained from the Sultan a firman, granting them an independent Exarch. The Greek Patriarch thereupon excommunicated the Bulgarian branch of the Greek Church. The Bulgarians refused to recognize the decree and continued to regard themselves as part of the Metropolitan Church, although, at the same time, they claimed to manage their own Church affairs. In 1890, they asked the Porte to grant Berats to Bulgarian bishops visiting their flocks in Macedonia. The Greek Patriarch opposed the request and he was supported by the Greek and Servian Ministers: intermixed with the religious question was the question of nationality - of Greek and

(1) White to Salisbury, 20 June 1890; F.O. 78/4280, Tel. No. 40.

Servian propagandism against Bulgarian propagandism in Macedonia. ⁽¹⁾ In the background was the immense weight of the Russian embassy.

The opposition to Bulgaria was strong at Constantinople. Nevertheless, the British chargé d'affaires, Fane, received instructions to advise the Porte to be as favourable as it properly could to Bulgaria on the ecclesiastical question and to communicate with Calice on the subject. ⁽²⁾ The Italian ambassador told Fane that he had instructions "pour déférer au désir exprimé par le Comte Kalnoky" to join with the British and Austro-Hungarian representations. But Fane thought that the representations of the three Embassies would fail without the strong support of Germany. He was, therefore, overjoyed to learn that Radowitz had officially informed the Grand Vizier that his Government, while desirous of maintaining its reserve on the Bulgarian question, could not but express its approval in the general interests of European peace of the advice which the representatives of Britain, Austria-Hungary and Italy had given to the Porte. Radowitz had added as his personal opinion that the Porte would commit a very grave error if it neglected to adopt the

(1) Fane to Salisbury, 7 July 1890; F.O.78/4276, No.305
Confid.

(2) Salisbury to Fane, 7 July 1890; F.O.78/4280, Tel.No.47.

wise counsel given to it by the three Governments.

For the first time Germany had come forward openly on the side of Bulgaria. This prominent fact attracted much attention and "produced a deep impression at the Palace of Yildiz"⁽¹⁾. It proved decisive. On 16 July, Kiazim Bey, one of the Sultan's secretaries, announced to the German ambassador that the Sultan had decided to sanction the grant of the Berats, but that he was desirous of receiving some assurance that the Bulgarian Government would be content with this concession and would not put forward further demands. Radowitz gave general assurances. The Sultan placed so great a confidence in Germany that he was reassured, and on the next day sent the Grand Vizier an irade⁽²⁾ authorizing him to issue the Berats.

The intensive diplomatic activity of the friendly ambassadors took place within eight days. During that time the Russian ambassador had been away on Princes Islands. When he returned and learnt of what had taken place in his absence, he went straight to the Porte and used menacing language as to the effect of Russian resentment should the Berats be granted. The Turkish Council met to consider

(1) White to Salisbury, 2 Aug. 1890, F.O.78/4277, No.352
Secr.

(2) Fane to Salisbury, 18 June 1890; F.O.78/4276, No.319
Confid.

Nelidov's formal protest and decided that it was inadmissible. Thereupon Nelidov sent his First Dragoman to the Grand Vizier with a "communication verbale", in which appeared violent language:

d/ "Nous considerons la remise des Berats ... comme le resultat immediat de la Note de Stambouloff et de la pression des Puissances qui ont pour but de consolider le Gouvernement chancelant de Coburg. Ce Gouvernement etant illegale et ouvertement hostile a la Russie le Sublime Porte, en prenant une mesure humiliante pour sa propre dignite commet un acte hostile a l'egard de la Russie". (1)

It is probable that Nelidov made the communication on his own responsibility, in a fit of desperation. He was trying the same tactics, which he had employed with Montebello, three years before, on the Egyptian Convention. On this occasion no effect was produced on the Sultan. Nelidov had lost the second round. He had bungled the affair. He received from his Government a telegram en clair telling him that he was at liberty at once to avail himself of the permission, ^{which} he had had for some time, to go away on leave of absence. (2)

Although the struggle at Constantinople had been short, it was noteworthy in several respects. The Bulgarian

(1) The communication was dated 22 July 1890. A copy is enclosed in Fane to Salisbury, 24 July 1890; F.O. 78/4276, No.326, Secr. and Most Confid.

(2) Fane to Salisbury, 26 July 1890; F.O.78/4276, No.333 Confid.

Government, by the success which it had gained in the ecclesiastical question, had proved that Sophia was the real centre for the protection of Bulgarian interests and not St. Petersburg. It had "broken the monopoly". The hands of M. Stambulov were greatly strengthened. (1) At the same time the Government was aware that it owed much to the support given by Britain and her friends. No progress was made in the matter of Prince Ferdinand's recognition because these Powers, knowing how sensitive the Tsar was on the subject, refused to press it, in case their action might produce war. Britain could not fail to realise that the decisive factor in the struggle at Constantinople had been the action of Germany. Without the strong support of Germany, the representations of Britain, Austria-Hungary and Italy would not have prevailed against the Russian efforts to intimidate the Sultan. The success in the ecclesiastical question represented a triumph for the working partnership of Britain and Germany in the Near East.

But the testing time was not yet over. Nelidov left Constantinople for two months only. When he returned his

(1) Caillard to Salisbury, 21 July 1890; Salisbury Papers, Caillard file; the report of a conversation Caillard had with Dr. Vulcovitch.

thoughts were of revenge. He was more than ever convinced that he must break down the united Front presented by Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance, and that he must secure the dismissal of the Grand Vizier, Kiamil Pasha, who had been instrumental in frustrating his efforts to intimidate the Sultan in July.

In order to gain the former object, Nelidov sought to utilise the situation created by a crisis in Crete. For some time there had been ferment between the Mahomedan and Christian populations of Crete, dissatisfaction with the Government and a movement for liberation from Turkey and

(1)
union with Greece. In the summer of 1891 the situation became dangerous when M. Tricoupis, a Greek ex-Minister, openly avowed his intention, if he came into office again, of taking advantage of the movement in Crete to attack

(2)
Macedonia. The Greek Ministers in office asked that the Cretan question should be taken up by the guaranteeing Powers, les anciennes Grandes Puissances: Britain, France and Russia. The last two Powers accepted the invitation with enthusiasm and urged that Britain should join them in advising the Porte to make changes in the Government of

(1) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism (New York 1956) Vol.I, p.316.

(2) Salisbury to Fane, 23 July 1891; F.O.78/4349, Tel.No.45.

Crete. Their motive was quickly perceived by White. He realised that it suited Nelidov and Montebello to see the three Powers acting at Constantinople without any reference to the Triple Alliance proper:

"It was a clever move, calculated to impress the Sultan."⁽¹⁾
 Salisbury discerned another motive: France seemed to be trying to induce Britain to join with Russia in advising the Porte as to Crete, not so much for the sake of the Cretans, but to pacify French opinion by exhibiting Britain as acting with those two Powers to the exclusion of the Triple Alliance. "Britain had no desire to assist in this design."⁽²⁾ On the other hand, Britain did not wish to show apathy in regard to the welfare of all classes in Crete. Salisbury decided that Britain must make her own representations to the Sultan and inform the friendly Powers of her action. He instructed Fane to call the Grand Vizier's attention to the dangerous increase of crimes of violence in Crete and the possibility of the troubles being made an excuse by M. Tricoupis, should he return to power, for attacking Macedonia.⁽³⁾ Kiamil Pasha explained the perils of the situation to the Sultan. The

(1) White to Salisbury, 31 Aug. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Vol.76, No.71.

(2) Salisbury to White, 20 Aug. 1891; F.O.78/4349, No.57 Secr.

(3) Salisbury to Fane, 23 July 1891; F.O.78/4349, Tel.No.45.

whole question was discussed at a Council of Ministers. No time was lost in dispatching to the island sufficient reinforcements to re-establish order between the Mahomedan and Christian populations. (1)

Britain achieved her end without appearing to act with France and Russia. For a time there was quiet in Crete and Nelidov could do no more. But, already, the climate of opinion at Constantinople was turning in favour of France and Russia. News of the review of the French and Russian fleets at Cronstadt on 24 July soon reached the Turkish capital. (2) The Sultan was always impressed by a show of force. Nelidov made full use of the event as he worked to achieve his second object: the dismissal of the Grand Vizier. It was generally considered that Kiamil Pasha pursued a policy of benevolent neutrality towards Britain and her friends. (3) His fall would represent a check to their influence. Moreover, Kiamil Pasha was a man of firm character

(1) White to Salisbury, 28 July 1891; F.O.78/4366, No.311.

(2) W.L. Langer, The Franco-Russian Alliance, op.cit., p.184.

(3) White to Salisbury, 7 Sept. 1891; F.O.78/4347, No.379.

White to Salisbury, 9 Sept. 1891; F.O.78/4347, No.390; enclosing a Memorandum drawn up by M. Alvarez.

and large views. As long as he was Grand Vizier the Porte played an important part in the direction of the foreign affairs of Turkey. If he lost his position, it was likely that his successor would be more subservient to the Palace where Russian influence was still strong.

When the Sultan dismissed Kiamil Pasha and appointed a new Cabinet on 3 September, Nelidov and Montebello were noisy in their triumph. The French military attaché, an active and unscrupulous agent, went about calling the new Ottoman Cabinet "Notre Ministre".⁽¹⁾ In actual fact there was no evidence that the new Grand Vizier, Djevad Pasha, was particularly friendly to France and Russia.⁽²⁾ Fane thought he was "an honest man anxious to do his duty".⁽³⁾ But the Turks were more impressed by appearances than facts and the appearances were in favour of those two Powers. Certainly, under the new regime, Palace influence as opposed to that of the Porte, would be far more supreme than it had been latterly.⁽⁴⁾

The British ambassador was very much discouraged by the

(1) White to Salisbury, 13 Sept. 1891; F.O.78/4347, No.399.

(2) Under Secretary at German Foreign Office to Hatzfeldt, 19 Sept. 1891; G.P. IX, No.2113.

(3) Fane to Salisbury, 17 Jan. 1892; F.O.78/4412, No.25.

(4) White to Salisbury, 9 Sept. 1891; F.O.78/4347, No.390.

situation. He thought that matters were going from bad to worse in the Ottoman Empire. The Palace clique was getting all the judicial and administrative appointments in the Provinces into their hands exclusively:

"Since I came here as Ambassador in October 1886, we have never been in such bad odour with the Khalife or blackguarded so much by his entourage as we have been these last two months. I am afraid I do not feel at all humiliated at the Padishah's personal displeasure with us and with me". (1)

The concluding note of defiance reflected the new mood of the ambassador. When White first came to Constantinople he was in good health and anxious to show himself worthy of his promotion from the consular to the diplomatic service. He had vigorously asserted British interests. By 1891, as a result of his masterly handling of the major Balkan crises, White's position was assured. (2) His health was less good and his understanding of the current problems (the Straits and the Egyptian questions) less deep. He no longer showed the same energy in pressing the interests of Britain and her friends. The Italian ambassador complained that he found in White

(1) White to Salisbury, 31 Aug. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Vol.76, No.71.

(2) C.L. Smith, op.cit., Chapter III.

"a smaller degree of co-operation and a smaller desire for an intimate exchange of views concerning questions touching their common interests in the Mediterranean". (1)

Kalnoky thought that White's new attitude looked like a return to Gladstone's "Orientpolitik". (2) Radowitz reported that White had

"expressed himself in such a manner concerning the validity of the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887 that he had no further desire to discuss the matter with the English ambassador". (3)

The German Government became concerned when it heard that the character of the British representative on the Golden Horn seemed less adapted for an increased activity in British policy than had been the case a few years ago. (4) Influence at Constantinople could be maintained only by constant activity. As a result of the failing energies of her ambassador, British influence was diminishing and it was not long before anxiety grew in Germany, lest her influence should suffer a corresponding decline.

So great was the concern of the German Government that

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- (1) Radowitz to Caprivi, 6 Sept. 1891; Foreign Ministry Archives, Berlin, quoted by von Ludwig Israel, England und die orientalische Dreieck (Stuttgart, 1937), p.39.
- (2) Kalnoky-Schiessl, 22 Oct. 1891, H.H. u.St. A. Wien. Pol. A. Rot. 465, Geheim, XXVIA.
- (3) Radowitz to Caprivi, 6 Sept. 1891; Foreign Ministry Archives Berlin; quoted by von Ludwig Israel, op.cit., p.39.
- (4) Marschall to Hatzfeldt, 13 June 1891; G.P.VIII, No.1794.

it decided upon the momentous step of taking the lead in Near Eastern policy. In October, the Foreign Office summoned Hatzfeldt (their ambassador in London) to Berlin to confer on the measures to be taken to retrieve the situation at Constantinople. Caprivi and Marshall - the new men of the post-Bismarckian regime - had little experience in foreign affairs. At this critical time they looked for guidance to Hatzfeldt who, during a former residence at Constantinople, had been on terms of intimacy with the Sultan and who, since his appointment to the London embassy in 1885, had also been on intimate terms with Salisbury. Hatzfeldt was well qualified to assume an authoritative role. ⁽¹⁾ He was glad to take the initiative. He suggested two lines of action. First, he thought an exchange of ideas should take place between the Governments of Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance which should have as its object the eventual communication to the Sultan of the accords of 1887. He thought that, if the Sultan knew that these Powers had in their possession not only force, but also a common decision for action in the event of a crisis in the near East, the

(1) Both Salisbury and Kalnoky thought that Hatzfeldt "very often" took the initiative in proposing the course Germany should adopt in the Near East. Paget to Salisbury, 13 Dec. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 4-8. No. 127. In October 1891 Hatzfeldt "showed great activity and appeared to be taking an independent line, so much so that Lord Salisbury thought he was making a push for the Chancellorship". Memorandum by Sir Philip Currie, 14 Nov. 1892. F.O.78/4463.

Sultan would not only be restrained from going over to France and Russia, but he might be persuaded to undertake certain obligations to the opposing group of Powers. In the meantime action could be taken to remove from France and Russia the means which they continually used to incite the Sultan against England, by the achievement of an Anglo-Turkish understanding over Egypt. It could be brought about on the basis of English recognition of the Sultan's suzerainty over Egypt and Turkish renunciation of the demand for a date of English evacuation. Hatzfeldt considered that through his confidential relations with Salisbury and the Sultan he might be able to bring about an agreement which would be to the advantage of both. (1)

Neither Salisbury nor Kalnoky received with enthusiasm the first part of Hatzfeldt's dual programme. Salisbury's attitude was that of an elder statesman humouring the less experienced. He was convinced that any system of diplomatic defence which was based on the influence they might now establish on the Sultan's mind, by whatever means, was fatally untrustworthy. It would be built on a character and

(1) Notes of Hatzfeldt, 28 Oct. 1891; G.P. IX, No.2117.
Deym to Kalnoky, 16 Dec. 1891; H.H. v St. A. Wien,
Pol.A. Rot. 465, Geheim XXV/A, No.49B, Geheim.

disposition which had no element of stability in its composition. He believed that the German Government and those who were guided by it, were relying too much on precautions of this evanescent character. ⁽¹⁾ Kalnoky doubted the expediency of pressing the frightened Sultan to take a decisive attitude towards either of the groups of Powers. It would mean setting in motion a whole series of actions which would involve many complications. It had to be borne in mind that Germany did not occupy the same position or have the same vital interests in the East as Austria-Hungary or Britain. The latter Powers had to keep in mind all kinds of considerations, with which Germany, because of her less prominent position, had no need to concern herself. ⁽²⁾

This expression of ideas by Salisbury and Kalnoky revealed in an interesting way their views on the respective positions of the friendly Powers vis-à-vis Eastern affairs. Although at that time Germany did in fact have more influence at Constantinople than any of the Powers adhering to the

(1) Salisbury to Malet, 29 Oct. 1891; F.O.64/1252, No.250
Most secr.

(2) Kalnoky to Schiessl, 22 Oct. 1891; H.H. v St.A. Wien, Pol.A.Rot, 465, Geheim, XXV/A.
Kalnoky to Calice, 24 Oct. 1891; Ibid.
Kalnoky to Deym, 23 Dec. 1891; Ibid.
Paget to Salisbury, 11 Oct. 1891; F.O.7/1171, No.205, Most
Confid.

Agreements of 1887, Britain and Austria-Hungary still expected to take the lead on decisions of policy. The universal regard in which their two Foreign Ministers were held, allowed them to carry their wishes. Their cautious attitude did not mean that they were less concerned than Germany about the position at Constantinople. It was the reflection of greater experience and the knowledge that, in the past, those Powers who had played a waiting game had often achieved the greatest success.

Salisbury's attitude towards the Egyptian question was influenced by similar considerations. There is no real evidence to support the theory, sometimes put forward, that, at this early date, Egypt was already assuming more importance than Constantinople in Salisbury's view of the Near Eastern question. (1) In 1891, Salisbury still regarded Constantinople and the Straits as the central factors in the problem: the prestige of the British Government, at home and abroad, was irretrievably tied up in their defence. (2) Britain had gone into Egypt to save the country from internal anarchy and foreign aggression. Sir Evelyn Baring was, every

(1) C.L. Smith, op.cit., p.139.

(2) cf. p. 32. .

year, achieving greater success in his efforts to put the finances of the country on a stable basis ⁽¹⁾ but time was needed to ensure that his work would be lasting. There could be no question of Britain's evacuating Egypt as long as there was a possibility that France might step in and take her place. On the other hand, at this date, Salisbury had not yet conceived the policy of strengthening and consolidating Britain's position in Egypt so as to make that country a new centre for British power in the Near East. In 1891, Salisbury's attitude towards the Egyptian question was simply one of caution: nothing should be done to compromise Britain - the way must be left open for any action which Britain might decide to take in the future; but, at the same time, everything possible should be done to conciliate the Sultan. Salisbury was ready to defer to the wishes of Germany in this matter. He was willing to conduct negotiations with the Sultan as long as the question of evacuation was not raised. He wrote to White:

"If we should find any formula in respect to the Egyptian question which does not involve evacuation, but which he (the Sultan) thinks will add security to the permanence of the rights which legitimately

(1) The Marquess of Zetland, Lord Cromer (London, 1932), pp. 168-78.

The Earl of Cromer, Modern Egypt (London, 1908), Vol. II, pp. 443-55.

belong to him under the firmans and treaties, I think we ought to consider such propositions with very great care". (1)

White was very reluctant to take part in any kind of negotiations with the Sultan on the subject of Egypt. He remembered that, in 1887, the failure to achieve the ratification of the Drummond Wolff Convention had been regarded at Constantinople as a diplomatic defeat for Britain and a triumph for France and Russia. He thought that, even in 1891, the Sultan, in the way in which he wished to treat with Britain in the question, would be likely, knowingly or unconsciously, to play into their hands. There was some justification for his view. On 26 June, the Grand Vizier told White that he thought he could persuade the Sultan to come to a direct understanding with England on the basis that the question of evacuation should be dropped, provided that England recognized the Sultan's sovereignty over Egypt by a solemn compact. Kiamil Pasha hoped to keep this secret from everyone except M. Radowitz. White knew that, even at that time, the Sultan had, without the knowledge of his Grand Vizier, appealed again to the French Government. France had

(1) Salisbury to White, 9 Nov. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Vol.76, No.123.

agreed to cease to oppose Britain's right of re-entry into Egypt if Britain would agree to a date for evacuation. The Sultan was encouraged to press for an understanding on these lines.⁽¹⁾

In October, the new Grand Vizier, Djevad Pasha, took up the subject with White. The latter gave it as his personal opinion that an essential condition for the success of the negotiations was that no date of evacuation for British troops should be proposed by the Sultan. The Grand Vizier demurred and, when he saw that his arguments had no effect, had recourse to strong language:

"Alors vous nous jetez dans les bras de la Russie".

White promptly replied:

"Allez, allez. My country will find means of adapting itself to this new situation, but your sovereign and master is too wise to adopt such a course and could never have employed such language, which can only be due to Y.E.'s inexperience".⁽²⁾

It was unlikely that negotiations conducted in such a manner would lead to any satisfactory result. There was more to hope for from the mediation of Germany. The Sultan readily accepted the suggestion that Hatzfeldt, as "amicus

(1) White to Salisbury, 26 June 1891; F.C.78/4350, Tel. No.36, Very Secr. Radowitz to German Foreign Office, 26 June 1891, Cipher Tel. No.80. Confid. G.P.VIII, No.1797.

(2) White to Salisbury, 31 Oct., 1891; F.O.78/4348, No.462, Secr.

amice", should ascertain from Salisbury what terms would be acceptable to Britain. ⁽¹⁾ Hatzfeldt presented to Rustem Pasha (the Turkish ambassador in London) a memorandum of fifty-three pages, written in French and sent "from himself, personally". He advised the Sultan:

"de remettre à une époque future la question de l'évacuation ainsi que celle d'en fixer le terme".

He considered that Britain would, in return, agree to a declaration of the Sultan's suzerainty. He strongly advised that an agreement should be reached as soon as possible, at any rate before the next elections in England: the Liberal Government would be no more compliant over the Egyptian question than the Conservative one. ⁽²⁾ During an audience with White, the Sultan admitted that he had been led, as a result of interviews with Sir Charles Dilke and other persons in close relations with Gladstone, to believe that the Egyptian question could be settled in a more favourable manner with the Liberal Government. But Abdul Hamid now declared that he hoped that, through the good offices of Hatzfeldt, a solution could be found with the Conservative Government. ⁽³⁾

(1) White to Salisbury, 12 Oct. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Vol.76, No.72.

(2) E.T.S. Dugdale, German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914, II, p.88.

(3) White to Salisbury, 6 Nov. 1891; F.O.78/4348, No.463; Incl. No.2.

It is difficult to determine whether or not the Sultan was sincere. Certainly, no further progress was made towards solving the Egyptian question. By February 1892, the German Government had lost patience. It sent to Radowitz a terse message, recounting the history of the negotiations and concluding:

"We wish to make it clear that the responsibility is not ours if his [the Sultan's] hesitation introduces a new situation, entailing disadvantages for Turkey". (1)

Salisbury had never been sanguine about the negotiations. He appreciated the German anxiety as to the position at Constantinople and sympathised with the effort to promote an understanding on the principal subject of difference between England and Turkey; but he himself believed that:

"no combination is at present possible, which would at once satisfy the Sultan and the English people". (2)

A new situation was created in January 1892 by the death of the ruling Khedive and the succession of Abbas Hitmi Pasha, who was only eighteen years old. (3) For many years he would be strictly under the guidance of his Ministers.

(1) Marschall to Radowitz, 4 Feb. 1892; G.P.VIII, No.1809.

(2) Salisbury to White, 9 Nov. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 76, No.123.

(3) Fane to Salisbury, 9 Jan. 1892; F.O.78/4412, No.10.

Salisbury thought that the governing body among Mahommedans in Egypt valued their independence more than their connection with the Sultan. If once the connecting and mediating influence of the English occupation was withdrawn, this feeling of independence would show itself. Some occasion would arise which would place the Egyptian Government at issue with the Sultan. Any resistance or claim of supremacy on his part would lead them to seek some other protector. They would look to France, whose traditional policy since 1839 had been to accentuate the independence of Egypt and minimise the connection with Constantinople. ⁽¹⁾ Salisbury was convinced that this was a real danger. If the Sultan could be made to recognize the reality of the danger, a very different feeling might be created in his mind towards Britain. Salisbury instructed Sir Clare Ford, who replaced White as British ambassador at Constantinople in January ⁽²⁾ 1892, to set to work to influence the Sultan in this way. Salisbury never under-estimated the mental capabilities of the Sultan. The Foreign Minister recognized that Abdul

(1) Salisbury to Fane, 16 Feb. 1892; F.O.78/4411, No. 42.

(2) Salisbury to Ford, 1 March 1892, Salisbury Papers, Vol.46, No.1241.
G. Cecil, op.cit., IV, p.391.

Hamid's policy was dictated purely by self-interest. The Sultan gave his favour to one or other of the groups of Powers according to the advantages he could gain in return. Imbued with the notorious cunning of the Turk, he realised that his safety lay in playing off one group of Powers against the other. All that Britain could hope to do was to show the Sultan that he would derive certain positive advantages from an attitude of consideration towards Britain.

Nevertheless, Salisbury was as worried as the Germans by the way in which France and Russia seemed to be gaining the upper hand at Constantinople in October 1891. The increased activity of these two Powers was a reflection of their increased confidence, as a result of the understanding reached by the two Governments in July and August. ⁽¹⁾ The other Powers did not know the contents of the Notes exchanged between the French and Russian Governments. They only knew that, at Cronstadt, on 24 July, the Tsar had stood bare-headed while the Marseillaise was played. More than anything else, this demonstration signified the determination of

(1) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., Vol.I, p.22.

Tsarist Russia and Republican France to present a united front to the world. The other Powers could only ask the question: what comes next? No one could say with certainty and the uncertainty gave rise to rumours and fear. The British press assumed an alarmist tone and magnified out of all proportion the importance of small incidents in its endeavour to demonstrate the perils of the European situation.

It seized upon the negotiations which were being conducted between Russia and Turkey with reference to the passage through the Straits of ships of the Russian Volunteer Fleet. ⁽¹⁾ It confused the special question under discussion, as regards the passage of particular vessels, flying the merchant flag, belonging to the Volunteer Fleet and carrying soldiers on board, with the general question of the rights of ships under the Straits Treaties. The Standard announced:

"Russian diplomacy has achieved a complete victory on this question and henceforth the Straits will be open to her vessels, whilst closed to those of other nations". (2)

Although Salisbury thought that, in the matter of the passage of the ships of the Russian Volunteer Fleet through

(1) Cf. pp 132-144.

(2) The Standard, 31 Aug. 1891.

the Straits, the Sultan had conceded nothing essential and was only playing with Russia,⁽¹⁾ he did not shut his eyes to the dangers inherent in the situation. The condition of Europe was unsettled. France and Russia were over-confident. Russia was concentrating her attention upon the Straits.

Salisbury believed that "circumstances have tended and still tend, to increase the probability of Russia being involved in war":

"The unabated thirst of the French for their revenge: the fact that a war between them and Germany would remove the principal military check on Russian ambition: the growing weakness of Turkey: the approach of Russian armaments to their full development: all these things seem to point to an early effort on the part of Russia to make herself mistress of the Straits". (2)

Salisbury was determined to frustrate that effort and was confident of his ability to do so. In October 1891, he was less concerned with possible defects in British preparations for the defence of the Straits than with the possibility of a defect or gap in the defences of the North West frontier of India. He wrote to Lansdowne, warning him that Russia, in order to paralyse Britain's resistance on the Bosphorus, might try an expedition against India. Salisbury thought the

(1) Salisbury to White, 14 Sept. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Vol.76, No.122.

(2) Salisbury to Lansdowne, 21 Oct. 1891; Salisbury Papers, Lansdowne box.

Government of India had neglected to give aid to Persia in order to encourage that country to resist Russian aggression. (1)

Salisbury's confidence as to Britain's ability to defend the Straits against Russia was not shared by the Directors of Naval and Military Intelligence. It was true that they believed that a Russian attempt on the Straits could be frustrated by the British Fleet, if warned in time and if the Dardanelles were occupied by at least 10,000 British troops. (2) But a study of more general questions of naval strategy led them to express serious misgivings as to the advisability of employing the British Fleet at a remote corner of the Mediterranean. Since France had reorganised her Fleet in 1888, so as to concentrate her main forces at Toulon, Britain had ceased to be the undisputed mistress of the Western Mediterranean. (3) The ships, detached from the British Mediterranean squadron to steam to the defence of the Straits, would be at the extreme end of "somewhat precarious communications":

(1) Ibid.

(2) A.J. Marder, op.cit., p.159.

(3) Ibid., p.146.

"Detaching them would hand over, certainly for a time, the maritime preponderance in the Western basin to the French and, if the detached ships were long delayed in the neighbourhood of Constantinople, not only the Western basin, but also the neighbouring Atlantic and even the English Channel might be open to a naval combination, which would be a grave menace to this country".

The conclusion was reached that unless Britain had the concurrence of the French, which, at that time, was impossible, or, unless Britain first destroyed the French Fleet at Toulon, which was a remote contingency, it was not legitimate for Britain to employ her Fleet at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean. (1)

It was not until 18 March 1892 that these ideas, embodied in a joint report of the Director of Military Intelligence and the Director of Naval Intelligence were communicated to Lord Salisbury. He was completely taken aback. In a Memorandum for the Cabinet, he described the report as a "tragic declaration". (2) The Defence Department on the one hand and the Foreign Office on the other had been proceeding on lines as far divergent as it was possible for lines of policy to diverge:

"The protection of Constantinople from Russian conquest has been the turning point of the policy of this

(1) *Ibid.*, pp 159-60. Joint Report of D.M.I. and D.N.I. 18 March 1892.

(2) Memorandum of Salisbury, 4 June 1892. Printed for Cabinet 8 June 1892, Salisbury Papers. *Cf. Appendix II.*

country for at least forty years and, to a certain extent, for forty years before that. It has been constantly assumed, both at home and abroad, that this protection of Constantinople was the special interest of Great Britain".

Salisbury gave the reasons for this assumption: if Russia possessed Constantinople and the influence which went with it, the route to India through the Suez Canal would be endangered; the effect of a Russian possession of Constantinople upon the Oriental mind and upon the British position in India, which was so largely dependent upon prestige, would be extremely harmful. It was at present assumed that the fall of Constantinople would represent a great defeat for England. According to the opinion of the Defence Department, that defeat was not a matter of speculation, but of absolute certainty. If this opinion were correct, Salisbury wrote:

"Our policy is a policy of false pretences. If persisted in, it will involve discomfiture to all who trust in us and infinite discredit to ourselves".

The whole question of British policy in the East would have to be reconsidered: all that England or India could furnish of naval or military strategic knowledge would have to be examined and the real facts ascertained. Unless new facts emerged to modify the opinion of the Defence Department, British Foreign Policy would have to be speedily and avowedly revised.

Salisbury evidently wrote the Memorandum of 4 June when

he was still suffering from the effects of shock. It proves, beyond a shadow of doubt, that, up to this date, at least, Salisbury considered the protection of Constantinople and the Straits from Russian aggression as crucial factors in British policy; British prestige had become bound up in their defence; upon their protection depended Britain's ability to use the Suez Canal, freely, at all times. There was no thought of the British occupation of Egypt being sufficient in itself to guarantee the use of the Canal.

The Memorandum does not by itself prove that there would necessarily be a change in British policy. Even before Salisbury left office in August, the effects on his mind of the communication from the Defence Department had diminished. Salisbury had only a layman's knowledge of naval affairs. He had always placed great faith in what could be accomplished if British Admirals showed courage and skill and the Directors of Naval and Military Intelligence's report did not destroy that faith.

The report had taken no account of political considerations. A Russian attack on Constantinople and the Straits would create serious international complications. In those circumstances, it was probable that Britain would have the support of the Powers of the Triple Alliance, whose assistance

could be utilised to hold the French in check. When once the dreaded crisis occurred, all kinds of factors and considerations, now unforeseen, might influence the situation. The Defence Department's report, far from leading Salisbury to revise British foreign policy, in the long run confirmed his belief in the wisdom of the policy hitherto pursued. The key to the problem lay in Britain's "position towards Italy and, through Italy, to the Triple Alliance"⁽¹⁾. As long as Britain associated herself with those Powers, she could expect diplomatic and, if necessary, armed support, to forestall or to meet a situation which would be dangerous to them all.

The policy of close association with the Powers of the Triple Alliance at Constantinople had been vindicated over and over again. The friendly Powers finally succeeded in preserving the balance there and preventing France and Russia from gaining too much power. The Sultan grew alarmed at the pressure of the latter Powers and issued an "official communiqué" to the "Agence de Constantinople", which, towards the end of December, 1891, was furnished to the principal newspapers in Europe. It stated:

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 18 Aug. 1892. Cecil, op.cit., Vol. IV, p.404.

"Il y a des journaux qui affirment qu'un rapprochement a déjà eu lieu entre la Turquie et ces deux puissances (France et Russie).

Toutes ces feuilles prennent leurs désirs pour des réalités. Stricte impartialité ... neutralité loyale a toujours été la règle de conduite de^u Gouvernement Ottoman". (1)

In reality, the Sultan had merely returned to his old policy of running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. But the semblance of neutrality was restored. The four *sentries* (the ambassadors of the friendly Powers) had kept in check the opposing Powers. The action of Germany, who, for the first time, had put herself prominently forward at Constantinople was largely responsible for the achievement. Indeed, the most hopeful sign for the future lay in the increased interest Germany was taking in the policy of Britain and her friends in the Near East.

As Salisbury prepared to hand over the Foreign Office to his Liberal successor, his greatest fear was that the Liberals might attempt a too hurried rapprochement with France, which would result in the abandonment of the Triple Alliance by Italy and a reconstruction of the Dreikaiserbund. The inevitable result of the latter occurrence would be -

(1) Fane to Salisbury, 16 Jan. 1892; F.C.78/4412, No.18 Conf.

"Russia on the Bosphorus". Salisbury was convinced that this disaster could be prevented as long as Britain maintained her "position towards Italy and, through Italy, to the Triple Alliance". Such was "the key of the present situation in Europe".⁽¹⁾

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 18 Aug. 1892, Cecil, op.cit., Vol. IV, p.404.

CHAPTER III

Uneasy Friendship

The news that Gladstone had returned to power for the fourth time as head of a Liberal Government was a source of alarm to Turkey and the Powers of the Triple Alliance: Gladstone had spoken sharply against them. (1) They could only hope that the new Foreign Minister, Rosebery, who had often spoken of the necessity of conducting foreign policy on a non-party basis, (2) would prevent too great a departure from the lines of policy which Salisbury had laid down. In this, their hopes were justified: Rosebery's aim was to continue Salisbury's policy. The Liberal Minister also believed that "the central keystone of the situation in Europe was England, through Italy, to the Triple Alliance". (3) England should

(1) Morley, Life of Gladstone, II (1922) p.654; Contemporary Review, Oct. 1889.

(2) cf. Rosebery's speech at Leeds on 11 Oct. 1888: "I have always held and I hope I have proved by action and also by want of action that my belief is that the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs should speak as often as possible, with the united voice of the English nation, without distinction of party".

(3) Salisbury to Currie, 18 Aug. 1892; Cecil *op.cit.*, vol.IV, p.404. Rosebery to Malet, 6 Jan. 1895; F.C.343/3.
Malet Private Papers, Secr.

maintain her entente with the Triple Alliance in European questions, more especially in the Near East where the support of the central Powers was essential to Britain if she were to maintain her position. Unfortunately, Rosebery was hampered by his chief and other members of the Cabinet who leaned towards France and Russia: he could pursue his aim only by working unobtrusively.

It was debateable how long the Powers of the Triple Alliance would be content with such conduct. In October 1891 Kalnoky had been satisfied with the Mediterranean Agreement of December 1887. He thought that the "harmless agreement", which contained only "certain fundamental and general theoretical promises", had fulfilled its purpose in that it had assured "the principle of collaboration of the participating Powers in those questions regarding Eastern Europe" and would also assure them for the future. At that time he believed it inadvisable to put to the test the binding powers of the "theoretical accord" because he was convinced that, if it came to a discussion of the value of the agreement, which did not have the character of a contract, Lord Salisbury himself would reduce it in Parliament to a minimum. ⁽¹⁾ Kalnoky's views were conditioned by the confidence

(1) Kalnoky to Ritter von Schiessl, 22 Oct. 1891; H.H. v St. A. Wien. Pol.A. Rot. 465, Geheim XXV/A.

he placed in Salisbury. The Austrian Minister did not place the same confidence in his successor; throughout the Liberal administration, he sought to bind Britain more closely. At first the response seemed satisfactory. Although Rosebery sought to safeguard his position by refusing to read the notes which Britain had exchanged with Austria and Italy in 1887, within a month of taking office he gave to the German ambassador a memorandum which acknowledged Britain's promise to come to Italy's support, should the latter be the object of unprovoked attack by France. (1) Rosebery told the Austrian ambassador that the intimate reciprocal relations of Britain and Austria "must rest exclusively on reciprocal confidence". (2)

It was unfortunate that, at the very time when the return of Gladstone to office tended to diminish the confidence of the Powers of the Triple Alliance in British policy, there should be at Constantinople a new British ambassador, who also did not inspire confidence. When the Liberals came to power, Sir Clare Ford had been at Constantinople for eight months. Formerly a Minister at Madrid, he had not the experience of Oriental affairs which had been of such value

(1) Rosebery's Memorandum of 5 Sept. 1892; printed in B.D. VIII, p.4.

(2) Deym to Kalnoky, 14 June 1893; W.S.A. Geheim XXVb. printed in Foundations, Dec. 1886, p.473.

to White. Ford was not of the same calibre as Nelidov who had represented Russia at Constantinople since 1883 or Cambon, the new French ambassador. Unused to Oriental intrigue, he allowed himself to be deceived by the manoeuvres of the Turks and the more capable diplomats.

He showed himself particularly gullible when the question of appointing a Governor for the Lebanon came up for discussion. At first he advocated the candidature of Melharmé, a Maronite. Even the permanent officials of the British Foreign Office knew that the appointment of a native had always been considered objectionable. (1) A second candidate, Nasri, had formerly been opposed by Britain on the grounds that he was a French nominee. When Ford discussed Nasri with the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, the latter admitted he intended to propose Nasri, saying that it was a "grave error to suppose he was biased in favour of France". Ford seemed ready to accept the Minister's word. Again it was left to an official of the British Foreign Office to raise an objection: the Turkish Minister had obviously been "squared" by Cambon. (2) The Foreign Office eventually sent

(1) Cadogan's Minute on Ford to Salisbury, 16 July 1892; F.O.78/4419, Tel. No.85.

(2) Cadogan's Minute on Ford to Salisbury, 23 July 1892; F.O.78/4419, Tel. No.89.

Ford explicit instructions to seek the co-operation of his German colleague in order to secure the appointment of a certain Maom.⁽¹⁾

The importance of "the principle of collaboration" between Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance in the Near East, which Kalnoky had thought assured, was not sufficiently appreciated by Ford. Nor was it appreciated by the new German ambassador, Radolin. His prime objects were to maintain an intimate footing with the Palace and to promote the commercial interests of German subjects.⁽²⁾ Under these circumstances, the united front, so well preserved by the "four sentries" of former years, was easily shaken. The extent to which it could be shaken was demonstrated when the question of railway concessions came, like "a storm in a clear sky", to trouble the Powers.

The major role in the fight for concessions was occupied by Herr Kaulla, a representative of the Deutsche Bank. The Sultan summoned Kaulla to Constantinople and asked him to construct a railway line from Angora to Bagdad. The Germans

(1) Salisbury to Ford, 20 July 1892; F.O.78/4418; Tel.No.44.

(2) Currie to Kimberley, 27 March 1895; F.O.78/4609, No.207 Confid.

thought that it would be impossible to count upon the Bagdad line proving a financial success and they therefore asked, as compensation for their prospective losses, that they should be allowed to construct a branch line from Kutaya to Konia. (1) British interests were represented by the Smyrna-Aidan and Smyrna-Cassaba railways which ran almost parallel to each other and would be at right angles to the projected Kutaya-Konia line. The latter would cut off the former from further extension East and would also take over the transporting of the produce from the Kutaya-Konia districts. The resulting loss of trade would cut the revenues of the Smyrna Companies by about one third. (2)

The British ambassador at Constantinople took the steps he thought necessary for the protection of British interests. He brought to the serious consideration of the Porte and the Palace:

"The great prejudice which would be inflicted on British interests were new railway concessions in certain parts of Asia Minor to be given to a German

(1) Ford to Rosebery, 11 Jan. 1893; F.O.78/4477, No.13 Confid.

(2) Ford to Rosebery, 26 Dec. 1892; F.O.78/4417, No.386 Confid.
 Ford to Rosebery, 6 Jan. 1893; F.O.78/4477, No.6:
 forwarding a copy of a memorandum from Mr. Purser,
 representative of Smyrna-Aidin railway.

Company ... The Interests of certain railways which were actually being worked by British Companies would be seriously affected". (1)

Ford reported home that Kaula appeared to be backed by the German Government, (2) and that the Kaiser was said to have expressed, through his ambassador, his personal desire to see railway lines in Asiatic Turkey constructed by German Companies. Indeed, the German embassy in Constantinople was credited with great activity in pushing on the enterprise. (3) But it never occurred to Ford that he ought to discuss the Kaula project with Radolin. Nor did Rosebery quickly think of suggesting such action. On 29 December 1892 he simply instructed Ford to continue to do what was in his power to prevent the concession for the branch line being granted. (4) It was Sanderson of the Foreign Office who first suggested the correct course of action:

"Our two ambassadors (the British and German) should endeavour to come to some agreement about lines of railway in Asia Minor". (5)

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- (1) Ford to Rosebery, 26 Dec. 1892; F.O.78/4419, Tel.No.116.
 (2) Ibid.
 (3) Ford to Rosebery, 26 Dec. 1892; F.O.78/4417 No.387 Confid.
 (4) Rosebery to Ford, 29 Dec. 1892; F.O.78/4411, No.271.
 (5) Minute by Sanderson, 7 Jan. 1893 on Ford to Rosebery, 26 Dec. 1892; F.O.78/4417, No.387 Confid.
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But the advice came too late to prevent a serious misunderstanding between Britain and Germany. Radolin, not being properly informed of the objective of Ford's representations, reported that the British ambassador had protested in the name of his Government against a concession being given to a German house for the construction of a railway from Angora to Bagdad. (1) Now it happened that there were two other rival schemes in the field for the construction of a railway to Bagdad: an English one, which lacked solidarity and had little hope of success, and an Anglo-French one. The German minister, and perhaps also the Kaiser, immediately concluded that Ford was working with Cambon against Radolin. Without waiting for explanations, they took reprisals by requesting their agent at Cairo to inform Lord Cromer that, in consequence of the British ambassador having worked with France against Germany at Constantinople, he, Herr von Leyden, had been instructed to withhold his consent to the proposal for an increase in the Egyptian army. (2)

This drastic action was taken by the German Government

(1) Malet to Rosebery, 6 Jan. 1893; F.O.64/1296, No.1 Confid.

(2) Rosebery to Malet, 12 Jan. 1893; F.O.64/1292. No.17A
 Secr.

because they thought that Ford had made a political question out of the question of railway concessions in Asiatic Turkey. Marschal told Malet:

"It became a serious matter when the ambassador of a friendly Power protested against a concession being granted in this manner. It removed the matter to a political ground". (1)

It brought the British Government into play against the German government and would have the unfortunate effect of leading the Porte and the Sultan to believe that the two Governments were in contention and not, as hitherto, united:

"It was a blow to the Triple Alliance ... The French were already jubilant over the incident". (2)

When the opinions and actions of the German Government were brought to the attention of Rosebery he immediately sent an assurance that nothing could be further from Britain's wishes than to take any step inimical to German influence and interests at Constantinople. (3) Ford had only been watchful over his countrymen's interests, which involved some two millions sterling. Rosebery maintained that he had no reason

(1) Malet to Rosebery, 6 Jan. 1893; F.O.64/1296, No.1 Confid.

(2) Ibid. cf. also Malet to Rosebery, 14 Jan. 1893; F.O.343/13

(3) Rosebery to Malet, 7 Jan. 1893; F.O.64/1296; Tel.No.1.
Rosebery to Malet, 12 Jan.1893; F.O.64/1292, No.17A Secr.

to believe that the German Government was interested in the matter until he learnt of the instructions which had been sent to the German agent at Cairo. Indeed, Rosebery had thought of Kaula merely as an adventurer, acting in concert with a German commercial company. (1) The Foreign Secretary expressed privately to Malet his feelings of disgust at the German outburst. The Germans accused Britain of having struck a blow at the "entente cordiale". But the Germans had never sought any "entente" on the subject:

"Surely we may well ask ourselves what is the cordiality of an understanding that is carried on in such a fashion? I agree that this transaction has dealt a blow to our good understanding, but not in the way Baron Marschall intended it". (2)

Rosebery was aware that a considerable section in the Liberal Party would gladly seek a close understanding with France. It would greatly facilitate their views if they knew of this sort of proceeding. The German "blackmail" deeply impressed Sir Edward Grey who, in later years, listed it as an instance of "the rough side of German friendship", which provided an incentive for freeing Britain from dependency on Germany. (3)

(1) Rosebery to Malet, 11 Jan. 1893; F.O.143/3. Private.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Sir E. Grey, Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916 (London 1925), Vol.I, p.11.

In 1892, however, the support of Germany was essential to Britain if she were to maintain her position in Egypt. Britain ceased to press the claims of the railway companies. Rosebery contented himself with giving to the German ambassador a serious warning:

"If the good understanding between Great Britain and Germany were to be translated into this, that when a German financial agent applied for a concession in any country, Englishmen were to stand aside at whatever sacrifice to their own interests, and vice versa, it would have to stand a very serious strain". (1)

The whole incident served to illustrate the extent to which the good understanding between Britain and Germany depended upon the careful collaboration of their representatives abroad. If White and Radowitz had still been at Constantinople there might never have been an incident at all. The British Foreign Office, which had for some time been afflicted with doubts as to Ford's ability to manage affairs, sent out Arthur Nicolson as Secretary of the Embassy. It was hoped that Nicolson might make good the defects in British diplomacy which arose from Ford's lack of perception and energy. (2)

Britain's disquietude as to the state of affairs at

(1) Rosebery to Malet, 17 Jan. 1893; F.C.64/1292, No.23 Secr.

(2) Harold Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson, Bart. First Lord Carnock (London, 1937), p.81.

Constantinople increased in the summer and autumn of 1893 as it became clear that the attention of France and Russia was becoming more and more focused upon the Mediterranean. In August Admiral Avellan was appointed commander of a Russian squadron which was to be established permanently in the Mediterranean. (1) Then, in October, there took place a great parade of the French and Russian fleets at Toulon. Even if the French and Russian military agreement, concluded at the turn of the year, was directed primarily against the Triple Alliance, the naval demonstration at Toulon was certainly aimed at the Power which had once exercised a dominant influence in the Mediterranean. The Sultan was confirmed in his belief that there had taken place a change in the balance of power in favour of France and Russia. (2)

From Britain's point of view the situation was rendered more critical by the dissensions which were becoming apparent in the Triple Alliance. Salisbury and Rosebery had always considered that the alliance formed the best guarantee of European peace. But at this time Italy, because of her insoluble financial problems, was unreliable and Germany,

(1) A.J. Marder, op.cit., p.175.

(2) Nicolson to Rosebery, 13 Aug. 1893; F.C.78/4481, No.39C
Confid.

because of the lack of leadership and confusion in the Foreign Office, was not to be trusted. Rosebery expressed his misgivings to Malet:

"The Triple Alliance is in a somewhat parlous condition, which I most truly deplore. It is mutually suspicious, which is the worst of signs". (1)

What could Britain do?

"We could of course enter the Triple Alliance or enter into a new treaty with Italy. Neither of these, however, is in the range of practical politics for a British minister at this time". (2)

The fact that Rosebery considered these two possibilities at all is an indication of his concern about the European situation. But the conclusion he reached was typical of the more usual lines of his thought:

"our hands must be free: we must co-operate, but not be hand-cuffed to any-one". (3)

The only sure policy for Britain was to strengthen her fleet. The attention of the public had been drawn to the weak state of the British fleet as compared with that of her two rivals in the Mediterranean and a furious campaign was started for the establishment of a long-term ship-building programme. (4)

(1) Rosebery to Malet, 3 Jan. 1894; F.O.343/3.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) A.J. Marder, op.cit. Chapter X, pp.174-205.

Rosebery was so convinced of its necessity that he was prepared to resign if the Cabinet did not sanction at least the minimum programme demanded by the sea lords. ⁽¹⁾ In the event, it was Gladstone who resigned: refusing to acknowledge the necessity for so much expenditure, he left with the words, "it is the Admirals who have got their knife into ⁽²⁾ me". Adequate provision was made for the strengthening of the fleet. Rosebery became Prime Minister and Kimberley, Foreign Secretary, but the former still played an important part in the direction of foreign policy.

Rosebery believed that the news that Britain had determined to maintain a strong naval force would suffice to reassure Italy as to her own position in the Mediterranean and keep her faithful to the old policy of co-operation with Britain and alliance with the central Powers. ⁽³⁾ It remained to reassure Kalnoky, whose fears as to the probable adverse affects of the Franco-Russian alliance on Austria's position in the Near East were aggravated by his knowledge that

(1) Deym to Kalnoky, 29 Dec. 1893. W.S.A.VIII/1/2 England III. Printed in Foundations, Dec. 188, p.478.

(2) Algernon West, Private Diaries (1922), p.238; quoted by A.J. Marder, op.cit., p.202.

(3) Deym to Kalnoky, 29 Dec. 1893. Foundations, Dec.188, p.478.

Germany had resolved on a policy of absolute reserve in that region. (1) Kalnoky thought that the immediate threat would be against the Straits. He argued that Russia could now count upon the support of France in matters affecting the Mediterranean and that she would not be so foolish as to wait for any abatement of France's enthusiasm, but would quickly raise the Straits question - either by calling on the Sultan to take measures for its discussion and settlement or by addressing herself to the Great Powers. If Russia once obtained free passage for her ships through the Straits, she would establish her influence in the Eastern Mediterranean and would embark on a policy of intimidation of all countries bordering on the Aegean and contiguous seas. The policies of Austria, Italy and Spain would depend upon the policy of the British Government. Kalnoky repeatedly pressed these views on that Government and refused to be satisfied with general assurances as to Britain's determination to maintain her traditional policy. He stated unequivocally that, unless Austria could be certain that Britain would protect Constantinople and maintain the status quo in the question

(1) Monson to Rosebery, 29 Dec. 1893; F.C.7/1199. No.267
Secr. and Conf.

of the Straits, Austria would be compelled to leave them to their fate and confine herself to safeguarding her interests in the Balkans. (1)

For some time Rosebery had given his serious attention to the Straits question. In November, 1893 he read a memorandum by Goltz Pasha on the means at the disposal of Turkey for resisting a Russian attack on the Bosphorus. The only conclusion that could be drawn was that, when war broke out, Russia would be in possession of the Bosphorus. Rosebery commented:

"I am afraid the case is very bad". (2)

He was familiar with the Directors of Naval and Military Intelligence's report of 4 June 1892 as to the powerlessness of the British Mediterranean fleet against France and Russia. (3) He concluded that the maintenance of the British Levant squadron had become a policy of "bounce" or bluff. (4) But he was

- (1) Monson to Rosebery, 13 Dec. 1893; F.O.7/1199, No.245 Most Conf.
 Monson to Rosebery, 19 Dec. 1893; Ibid, No.255 Conf.
 Monson to Rosebery 24 Jan. 1894; F.O.78/4592 No.17 Secr.
 Deym to Kalnoky, 7 Feb. 1894; W.S.A.VIII/172, England III. Printed in Foundations, Doc.189, p.481.
- (2) Draft from Foreign Office to Admiralty transmitting Gosselin's despatch No.272 of 17 Nov. 1892 which contained an extract of a report by Gottz Pasha. Minute by Rosebery of 26 Nov. 1893; F.O.78/4592 Secret (no number)
- (3) cf. pp 77-80.
- (4) A.J. Marder, op.cit., p.219.

not unduly dismayed. He agreed with the first sea lord, Sir Frederick Richards, that "bounce counts for a good deal, if the other party is not sure that it is 'only Bottom the weaver'."⁽¹⁾ Rosebery argued that nothing prevented Russia from taking possession of Constantinople (and the Straits) but fear of the consequences - that is, the possibility of war with one or more of the Great Powers. Russia could not want to fight Britain. As long as Britain showed, by the presence of her squadron in the Levant, that she was awake, it was unlikely that Russia would attempt to gain her ends by violent means.⁽²⁾ The new naval programme would afford Russia additional evidence that Britain did not intend to stand aloof. Currie, the Under-Secretary of State, and Rosebery did not believe that Russia, even if she were allied to France, would be able to count on active support from that Power for an advance against the Straits and the resulting break-through into the Mediterranean. France had no interest in making Russia all-powerful in the Near East,

(1) Memorandum for first lord, 15 April 1894 (Spencer MSS.) quoted by A.J. Marder, op.cit., p.221.

(2) Rosebery to Spencer, 22 April 1894, (Spencer MSS.) quoted by Marder, p.223.

where she had always jealously guarded her role as protector of Christians and in sharing with Russia control over the (1) Mediterranean.

Rosebery must have felt that it was quite safe to give to the Austrian ambassador the personal assurance he did give on 31 January 1894. He chose his words carefully:

"Je suis parfaitement décidé à maintenir le status quo actuel dans la question des détroits et ... je ne reculerais pas devant le danger d'entraîner l'Angleterre dans une guerre avec la Russie; mais je dois vous dire franchement que si la France se trouvait à coté de la Russie, il ne serait pas possible à l'Angleterre de défendre Constantinople contre les deux puissances; en tout cas nous ne pourrions laisser notre flotte dans la Méditerranée courir le risque d'une catastrophe, se trouvant entre la flotte Russe et la flotte française. Dans ce cas il nous faudrait l'assistance de la triple alliance pour tenir la France en échec". (2)

Rosebery made this statement only after he had convinced himself that it was unlikely that Russia would attempt hostile

(1) Hatzfeldt to Caprivi, and Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 30 Dec. 1893; G.P.IX, Nos.2142-2143. This opinion was ultimately proved correct. Hanotaux, who became Foreign Secretary in France shortly after the signing of the Franco-Russian alliance later wrote: "Il fut toujours stipulé que l'alliance laissait en dehors de ses engagements les affaires d'Orient, Constantinople et les Balkans, qu'elle (France) s'opposait expressément à toute entreprise de la Russie dans cette region".

(2) Deym to Kalnoky, 7 Feb. 1894, No.7A-E Secr. W.S.A.VIII/172, England III. Printed in Foundations, Doc. 189; p.480

action against the Straits because of the danger she would incur of war with Britain. The motives which prompted him to make the statement were mixed. Undoubtedly, he wished to reassure Kalnoky as to his determination to maintain the traditional British policy regarding the Straits; but the last part of the statement was a calculated bid to obtain for Britain an assurance that the Triple Alliance (in fact, Germany) would put pressure upon France to prevent her taking part in a struggle with Russia against the Straits. Such an attempt is understandable if one remembers the joint report of the Directors of Naval and Military Intelligence; (1) but, if one also remembers the doubts which Rosebery felt as to France's willingness to assist Russia in her Near Eastern designs, (2) one can only conclude that Rosebery was using the subject as a means towards another end: the inducement of Austria to secure a better disposition of Germany towards Britain.

(3)
 Since the Siam crisis of July 1893, a noticeable coolness had developed between Britain and Germany. When the

(1) Cf. pp 77-80.

(2) Cf. pp 102-103.

(3) A good account of the effect of the Siam crisis on Anglo-German relations is to be found in von Ludwig. Israel, op.cit., pp.50-53.

prospect of securing Britain's adhesion to the Triple Alliance had appeared only to disappear with provoking suddenness, the Germans had become more than ever convinced that Britain's policy was to seek "lightning conductors rather than alliances". All Kalnoky's efforts in spring 1894 failed to convince the Germans that Britain's attitude had changed. Caprivi pointed out that, in case of a conflict with Russia, Rosebery was free to decide not only the time but also the opportuneness of fighting Russia; but Germany was to pledge herself to go to war to hold France in check. (1) Germany would not give such a pledge: Kalnoky was told to treat (2) Rosebery's proposal dilatorily.

It is unlikely that Rosebery seriously expected Germany to give a definite pledge. His object was rather to promote co-operation upon the Straits question in order to use that co-operation as a basis from which a return could be made to the old policy of co-operation in all matters involving mutual interests. The extent to which he failed was demonstrate

(1) Caprivi to Marschall, 4 Aug. 1893; G.P.VIII, No.1757.

(2) Szögyény to Kalnoky, 10 March 1894; summarised by W.L. Langer, The Franco-Russian Alliance, p.383.

when Germany sided with France in protesting against the Congo Treaty which Britain signed with Belgium in May 1894. (1) Then Rosebery revealed to the Austrian ambassador his view as to the place which British policy towards Constantinople held in relation to the larger issues of British foreign policy. The assurances which Rosebery had given Austria-Hungary on the subject of Constantinople and the Straits had brought about an entente between Britain and the Triple Alliance on European questions. But Germany was a party to the Triple Alliance. If Germany continued to follow in Africa a policy hostile to Britain, it would be impossible for Britain to maintain her entente with the Triple Alliance on European questions:

"If Germany continues to show herself so hostile to the Cabinet of St. James, I shall feel obliged to take back the assurances I have given on the subject of Constantinople". (2)

The maintenance of the latter were to be conditional upon the assumption by Germany of a more friendly attitude towards Britain.

At the same time as Rosebery was attempting to re-establish between the Governments of Britain and the Powers

(1) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., vol. I, pp.132-141.

(2) Deym to Kalnoky. 13 June 1894; W.S.A.VIII/172, England III, No.29 Sec. Printed in Foundations, Doc. 192, p.492.

of the Triple Alliance the friendly co-operation which had once existed in the treatment of Near Eastern questions, a similar attempt was being made by the new British ambassador at Constantinople in his efforts to reconstitute the quartet of the ambassadors of Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance as it had existed under White, Calice and Radowitz. Rosebery sent Sir Philip Currie as ambassador to Constantinople, in 1894, in order to demonstrate to Kalnoky that he was determined to continue Salisbury's policy in the Near East: Currie was a man of the Salisbury school; he had been Salisbury's secretary at the Constantinople Conference of 1876 and at the Congress of Berlin in 1878. (1) Currie believed that the confidence of the Powers of the Triple Alliance in British policy could be restored if Britain increased her influence at Constantinople. After surveying the situation there, he concluded that this could be done if Britain could persuade the Sultan that she wished him well and that he would receive from Britain fair treatment and scrupulous regard for his ancient rights. (2) When, in

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- (1) D.N.B. 1901-1911, p.455; Foreign Office List 1907, p.397. Kalnoky to Calice, 8 Feb. 1894; W.S.A. VIII/172, England III, Priv. letter; recounting a conversation with Currie who passed through Vienna on his way to Constantinople. On 31 March Monson reported: "Kalnoky is evidently much relieved by the knowledge that his Ambassador at the Porte no longer stands alone but is supported by the courage and firmness of a really strong British colleague, holding views and assuming an attitude identical with his own." Monson to Kimberley, 31 March 1894; F.O.7/1213, No.82 Secr.
- (2) Currie to Kimberley, 22 Aug.1894; Kimberley Papers C/3a.

August 1894, the Sultan re-opened discussions, which had taken place in the previous summer, concerning a proposed Anglo-Turkish understanding about Egypt, Currie thought that, if such an understanding could be brought about, it would be the best point of departure for the improvement of Anglo-Turkish relations.

The discussions of summer 1893 had as a centre a proposal which Rosebery had put forward as "absolutely personal to himself" that the objects of the British and Turkish Governments could be secured by a Convention of which the main part would be:

"L'Angleterre qui n'occupe l'Egypte qu'à titre provisoire, s'étant déjà engagée à retirer complètement ses troupes de cette contrée, les deux Parties Contractantes s'engagent à arrêter et à conclure dans l'espace de cinq ans à partir de l'échange des ratifications de présente Acte, ou plus tôt si faire se peut une Convention fixant la date et les conditions de l'évacuation". (1)

The authority of the Sultan in Egypt would be fully recognized by the British Government and one more proof would be given to the Sultan of Britain's readiness to evacuate Egypt when evacuation was practicable. In the meantime, Britain would

(1) Rosebery to Nicolson, 13 Sept. 1893; F.O.97/601, No.243 Very Conf.

obtain the expressed or implied sanction of the Sultan to her occupation and the whole question would be placed upon a legal and authoritative footing. The words "et conditons" would reserve all other articles as well as the right of re-occupation. In the summer of 1893 Rosebery had believed that it would be advantageous to Britain to conclude such a Convention, if it were concluded quickly. He argued that it would not really bring Britain nearer to the evacuation of Egypt as, after five years, Britain could begin to discuss the conditions upon which she would evacuate and the discussions could occupy many years. In view of the rumours which circulated at that time of impending Franco-Russian naval demonstrations in the Mediterranean, Rosebery had been anxious to anticipate the possible course of events by placing Britain's relations with the Sultan upon a more satisfactory footing. The Turk was, however, almost constitutionally incapable of acting rapidly and, in spite of Rosebery's insistence that Rustem Pasha should speedily obtain permission to sign the Convention, no answer had been received from Constantinople by 20 September 1893. Accordingly, Rosebery had informed Rustem Pasha that his private proposal was at
(1)
an end: circumstances had changed when a Russian squadron

(1) Rosebery to Nicolson, 15 Sept. 1893; F.O.97/601, No.247
Secr. Rosebery to Nicolson, 20 Sept. 1893; Ibid, No.
247 A.

had entered the Mediterranean with a view to altering the
 balance of power there. (1)

When the Sultan attempted to reopen the negotiations, in August 1894, there was some evidence that he was sincerely anxious to reach an understanding. For the first time, he put forward a practical proposal, asking for an additional article which would provide for Turco-British co-operation to prevent the occupation of Egypt by any other Power after it had been evacuated by Britain. (2) Currie believed that the Sultan was "likely to be in a more yielding mood than usual" and the ambassador suggested that, if the British Government wished to conclude a Convention on the lines of Rosebery's proposal of 1893, they should inform him "with the least possible delay", so that he could strike while the iron was hot. (3) The British Cabinet deliberated upon the draft Convention as it then stood. Certain amendments were suggested, but, at first, there was a desire to sign some such Convention. Kimberley, now Foreign Secretary, thought that there were some advantages in the Convention: the

(1) Rosebery to Ford, 13 Oct. 1893; Ibid, No.266 very Secr.

(2) Currie to Kimberley, 11 Aug. 1894; Ibid, No.129 Secr.

(3) Currie to Rosebery, 9 Aug. 1894; Ibid. No.128 Secr.
 (Paraphrase).

principal gain would be the better disposition of the Sultan
 towards Britain. ⁽¹⁾ On 14 August he was able to inform
 Currie that the Cabinet was "inclined to accept in principle". ⁽²⁾
 Currie, who was personally keen to see the Convention conclu-
 ded, immediately communicated privately and unofficially to
 Shakir Pasha an amended draft with the date of ratification
 left blank, so that, if the Convention should go through, it
 would be in a form for final submission to the British
 Government. ⁽³⁾

The news that Currie had gone so far caused some alarm
 in British Government circles. Rosebery wrote in a minute
 of 17 August: "Currie had no business to commit us so
 much ..." ⁽⁴⁾ The Queen wrote to Kimberley expressing the

- (1) Kimberley to Currie, 28 Aug. 1894; Kimberley Papers, C/3b.
- (2) Kimberley to Currie, 14 Aug. 1894; F.C.97/601. Tel. No. 67. The words "inclined to" were inserted in the draft telegram as an afterthought. Before the insertion, the sentence read: "Cabinet accept in principle".
- (3) Currie to Kimberley, 17 Aug. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/3a.
- (4) Rosebery's Minute 17 Aug. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/3a.

opinion that Britain should not bind herself to evacuate Egypt within any definite time.⁽¹⁾ Kimberley consulted Lord Cromer as to the probable effects in Egypt of the Convention and Cromer replied in such a way as to make it quite clear that he did not wish for the Convention.⁽²⁾ Consequently, the early enthusiasm of the Cabinet cooled. Britain was engaged in critical negotiations with the French about African questions and the Cabinet was afraid of offending France at that time. Currie was told that, as the Cabinet was on the point of dispersal for the Summer, no further progress could be made with the negotiations.⁽³⁾

Thus was lost one more opportunity for the settlement of the Egyptian question. Currie was discouraged and he wrote to his old chief, Salisbury, that he could have brought the negotiations to a successful conclusion if there had been "more fixity of purpose in Downing Street".⁽⁴⁾ The action of the British Cabinet caused Currie to reflect and to ask what

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- (1) The Queen to Kimberley, 11 Aug. 1894; Ibid C/19.
 (2) Kimberley to Currie, 16 Aug and 22 Aug. 1894; Ibid C/3b.
 (3) Kimberley to Currie, 22 Aug and 28 Aug. 1894; Ibid C/3b.
 (4) Currie to Salisbury, 21 Oct. 1894; Salisbury Papers, Currie file.

was the real policy of the British Government towards Turkey. He hoped that Turkey was not looked upon entirely as a "quantité négligeable" or as "a mere appendage to the Eastern question". Sooner or later the Eastern problem would come up for treatment and Britain's position in regard to it would greatly depend upon the state of her relations with the Sultan. (1) Kimberley volunteered only a brief and non-committal answer:

"The master of such an army as the Turkish army can never be a 'quantité négligeable'". (2)

When, in the middle of August, the Armenians at Sassoun, in the Bitlis vilayet, rose in an open revolt which was put down with great ferocity by the Turks, (3) it seemed that the Eastern question would very soon demand treatment. Britain had obligations, under the Cyprus Convention and under the 61st Article of the Treaty of Berlin, to watch over the welfare of the Christian inhabitants of Asiatic Turkey and it was certain that she would have to take some action. (4) The

(1) Currie to Kimberley, 22 Aug. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/3a.

(2) Kimberley to Currie, 28 Aug. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/3b.

(3) D.C. Weeks, The Armenian Question and British Policy in Turkey, 1894-96. An unpublished M.A. thesis for the University of London, 1950, p.87. Mr. Weeks deals fully with the Armenian question and so, in the following pages, the question is dealt with only in so far as it is necessary to treat it in relation to the general theme of this thesis.

(4) For Cyprus Convention and 61st Article 7 of Treaty of Berlin cf. E. Hertslet, Map of Europe by Treaty, Vol.IV, pp.2717-20 and p.2796.

need to act became pressing when the Porte presented to Currie a note which charged the British vice consul at Bitlis, Mr. Hallwood, with urging the Armenians to rise against the Government. (1) Currie proposed sending the military attaché of the British Embassy at Constantinople to hold an inquiry into Hallwood's conduct and into the disturbances in the Bitlis vilayet. (2) This proposal, as Currie had anticipated, caused the Porte to suggest a counter-measure: the Sultan promised "a just and impartial inquiry into the events which had taken place at Sassoun" and, in accordance with this measure, the Porte was prepared to cancel their note. (3)

Currie, who maintained that the best attitude for Britain to adopt was one of friendly advice to the Sultan, persuaded his Government to accept the proposed Commission of the Sultan as a means of inquiry into the disturbances. (4) But the aspect of the problem changed when the Sultan decorated two Turkish officials who were implicated in the incidents at Sassoun and when it was officially announced in the Turkish

(1) Currie to Kimberley, 9 Nov. 1894; F.O.78/4546, Tel.No.189.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Currie to Kimberley, 16 Nov.1894; F.O.78/4546, Tel.No.194.

(4) Ibid.

press that the object of the Sultan's Commission was "to
 inquire into the criminal conduct of the Armenian brigands"⁽¹⁾.
 Britain needed some guarantee that a really impartial inquiry
 would be made and these two events made it unlikely that it
 would be obtained unless Britain took further action. Currie
 was still reluctant to appeal to the other signatories of
 the 61st Article of the Treaty of Berlin for help in inter-
 vening between the Turk and his Christian subjects. He thought
 that Germany would refuse to participate and that Austria-
 Hungary and Italy would give only half-hearted support to
 Britain.⁽²⁾ As a milder form of intervention, Currie sugges-
 ted that Britain might propose to the Powers who had consuls
 at Erzeroum jointly to call upon the Porte to give facilities
 to their consuls to communicate with the Turkish commission
 and to report the progress of the inquiry to their respective
 Governments.⁽³⁾ France and Russia were the only two Powers
 (apart from Britain) who had consuls at Erzeroum. Russia,
 who was compelled by her own geographical position to prevent
 the spread of Armenian disaffection from arousing her own

(1) Currie to Kimberley, 24 Nov. 1894; F.O.78/4544, No.533;
 D.C. Weeks, op.cit., p.100.

(2) Currie to Kimberley, 26 Nov. 1894; Kimberley papers, C/3a.
 Currie to Kimberley, 26 Nov. 1894; F.O.78/4544, No.541.

(3) Currie to Kimberley, 27 Nov. 1894; F.O.78/4546, Tel.No.
 205.

Armenian population, would probably respond favourably to such a proposal and France would be likely to follow suit.

Although Currie, in proposing to seek the aid of France and Russia, was influenced purely by the practical consideration that it was from those Powers that Britain could expect most help in solving the Armenian problem, some members of the British Government (which eventually adopted the proposal) were influenced by views which took into consideration wider aspects of policy. Harcourt wrote to Kimberley:

"The key to the enigma is a good understanding with Russia, a thing we have never yet tried, but which is now happily within our reach ... If we stick firmly to it, the Eastern question will be a much less dangerous one than it has been heretofore". (1)

When Harcourt wrote to the Prince of Wales in order to congratulate him on his contribution to the "establishment of the most friendly and intimate relations with Russia" (following the Prince's visit to St. Petersburg to attend the funeral of the Tsar), Harcourt added:

"This is an experiment which has never yet been fairly tried in foreign affairs and it is my humble opinion that there is none which is more likely to minister to the cause of peace and good-will". (2)

(1) Harcourt to Kimberley; quoted in A.G. Gardiner, The Life of Sir William Harcourt (London, 1923), Vol. II, p.325.

(2) Harcourt to the Prince of Wales, 6 Dec. 1894; Ibid, p.326.

In November Britain finally met all the Russian demands concerning the Pamirs and a definite agreement regarding the Pamirs was concluded. (1)

Rosebery, in his speech at the Guildhall, emphasized that in the Far East Britain and Russia had proceeded hand in hand and that the relations between the two Governments had never been "more hearty". (2)

The evidence available indicates that these gestures of friendship towards Russia were meant not as preliminary moves towards a reorientation of policy but as means to put pressure upon Germany in order to persuade her to readopt a more friendly attitude towards Britain. Hatzfeldt, however, was seriously concerned and he told Kimberley that:

"Closer relations between [Britain] and Russia appeared to him to imply a considerable and important change in [British] policy and one that might have far-reaching consequences. It was not to be supposed that Russia would ask for nothing in return ... it would not be long before she demanded free passage through the Bosphorus and Dardanelles for her ships of war". (3)

In November both the British and the Germans thought it likely that, in the near future, Russia would raise the question of the free passage of her war ships through the Straits. (4)

(1) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit. Vol.I, p.145.

(2) Annual Register, 1894.

(3) Memorandum of Kimberley's conversation with Hatzfeldt, 19 Nov. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/23.

(4) On 27 Nov. Harcourt wrote to Kimberley: "indications come from all quarters that the question of the Dardanelles (cont. next page)

In a conversation with Colonel Swaine the Kaiser made it clear that he would not raise objections, but would demand a quid pro quo in the shape of a reduction of the Russian forces on the German frontier; although he would make it clear that, if Russian men of war were allowed to pass freely in and out of the Black Sea, German ships must have a similar privilege⁽¹⁾. Early in December, the German ambassador at Constantinople had a conversation with Jadowski (the Russian charge d'affaires) in which the latter expressed an opinion that an agreement between Russia and Britain regarding the Straits was unlikely because, although it would be in Russia's interest to secure Britain's assent to the free passage of her war ships through the Straits, it was unlikely that Britain would give her consent without demanding compensations which it would not be in Russia's interest to grant.⁽²⁾

Jadowski's view of the situation was to prove correct. The Near Eastern question was still a formidable obstacle to

- (4) from previous page:
is about to be raised ... As the Cabinet may not meet again for some time, I think it essential that we should discuss the whole matter (the Eastern question) on Wednesday and especially the question of the Dardanelles. I have written to Rosebery to ask that we may have a full statement on the subject". Harcourt to Kimberley, 27 Nov. 1894; Kimberley Papers, C/15a. There is no available account of the Cabinet meeting.
- (1) Gosselin to Kimberley, 16 Nov. 1894; F.O.78/4592, No.229 Secr. enclosing a Memorandum by Colonel Swaine.
- (2) Radolin to Hohenlohe, 7 Dec. 1894; Austrian Foreign Office Archives; quoted by von Ludwig Israel op.cit. p.66.

closer Anglo-Russian relations. Although the Russian and French Governments did accept Britain's proposal to call upon the Porte to give their consuls facilities to communicate with the Turkish commission of inquiry into the disturbances at Sassoun, the subsequent history of the Armenian question demonstrated that this was done more with the object of restraining Britain than with the object of helping her to find a satisfactory solution to the Armenian problem. Kimberley gave a true answer to Hatzfeldt when he said:

"So far as regarded the Triple Alliance, [he] was not aware that there was anything new in the situation". (1)

Although Germany declared that her official attitude towards the Near Eastern question was one of désintéressement, the need to maintain the status quo at Constantinople was still a pressing one to Austria-Hungary and Italy. Throughout the subsequent negotiations for the settlement of the Armenian question, Currie kept Calice informed of all that passed and he found the knowledge and experience of the Austro-Hungarian ambassador very useful. Although Calice took no part himself in Armenian affairs, he was "friendly and

(1) Memorandum of Kimberley's conversation with Hatzfeldt, 19 Nov. 1894, Kimberley Papers C/23.

helpful" and had no sympathy with the German attitude. (1)

The Italian ambassador at Constantinople at first requested that the Italian consul at Trebizond, who also had jurisdiction at Erzeroum, should be allowed to join with the British, French and Russian consuls. (2)

Kimberley instructed Currie to give the Italian ambassador his "best support":

"The active co-operation of some member of the Triple Alliance is for many reasons desirable and of Italy especially on account of her cordial relations with us". (3)

Although for practical reasons, Kimberley was forced to seek the support of France and Russia, he was under no delusion as to the real attitude of Russia and he still believed that a close relationship between Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance formed the best guarantee for peace.

Currie considered that it was almost certain that the inquiry would show that an impossible state of things existed in the Bitlis vilayet and, soon after the commission began its labours, he began to consult with the French and Russian ambassadors at Constantinople with a view to drawing up a scheme of reform for the Armenian provinces of Asiatic

(1) Currie to Kimberley, 29 Nov. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/3a.

(2) Currie to Kimberley, 8 Dec. 1894; F.O.78/4546, Tel.No.230

(3) Kimberley to Currie, 14 Dec. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/3b.

(1)
 Turkey. The object of the three ambassadors was to draw up provisions which would ensure security for the life and property of the Armenians. Currie did his utmost to introduce into the scheme of reforms provisions which would enable the Powers to exercise an efficient control, but his colleagues were afraid that, if these were of too stringent a nature, "it would be impossible to induce the Turkish Government to agree to them without having to resort to measures which they were unwilling to employ".

(2)
 This early difference of opinion as to the stringency of the provisions for ensuring an effective European control foreshadowed the differences of opinion which followed after the scheme of reforms was presented to the Porte early in May 1895.

(3)
 When a fortnight had elapsed without the

(1) Currie to Kimberley, 31 Dec. 1894; Kimberley Papers C/3a.

(2) Currie to Kimberley, 18 April 1894; F.C.78/4609, No.245.

(3) On 6 May 1895 Kimberley authorised Currie to concert with the French and Russian ambassadors for the presentation of the scheme of reforms to the Sultan and the Porte. Kimberley to Currie, 6 May 1895; F.C.78/4626, Tel No.40. For text of reform scheme cf. Memorandum enclosed in Currie to Kimberley, 19 Jan. 1895, A & P/CV (1896), Turkey No.1. pp 1-2.

ambassadors receiving a satisfactory reply, Kimberley instructed Currie to propose to his two colleagues that, if an answer was not received by 30 May, they should make a joint communication to the Porte, insisting upon a categorical answer by 1 June and stating that an unfavourable reply would be the occasion for the exertion of pressure. ⁽¹⁾ A despatch of Nelidov to the Russian Government, reporting Currie as saying that, if the Porte's answer was delayed, Britain would have recourse to measures of constraint, resulted in Lobanov telegraphing to his ambassador that "in no case would the Russian Government associate itself with such measures". ⁽²⁾ The relations between Britain and Russia were, therefore, unsatisfactory when, on 3 June, the Sultan presented his answer, in which he rejected most of the ⁽³⁾ demands of the ambassadors.

Britain was forced to act alone in order to press the Sultan to reconsider his reply. Kimberley used strong language to the Turkish ambassador in London and the British fleet was ordered to cruise along the coast of Syria and ⁽⁴⁾ Asia Minor. These measures resulted in the Sultan declaring

(1) Kimberley to Currie, 27 May 1895; F.C.78/4626, Tel.No.52.

(2) Kimberley to Currie, 31 May 1895; Ibid. Tel.No.58.

(3) Currie to Kimberley, 4 June 1895; F.C.78/4613, No.356.

(4) Kimberley to Currie, 11 June 1895; F.C.78/4626, Tel.No.71.

on 14 June, that the British, French and Russian Governments were mistaken in considering his reply of 3 June as a rejection of their advice and that a further reply would soon be communicated. (1) No satisfactory answer had been received when the Liberal Government resigned on 24 June. One can detect in the telegram which Kimberley sent to Currie on that day something of the relief which the Minister felt on being relieved of further responsibility:

"The Ministry having tendered their resignation, which has been accepted by the Queen, I must leave the decision of the course to be followed to my successor". (2)

The negotiations regarding the Armenian question had been conducted on a day-to-day basis without any specific programme and without any specific idea as to the course to be followed if the Sultan refused to accept the reform proposals. This manner of conducting affairs had the advantage of localising the conflict and preventing the raising of general issues in Britain's relations with other Powers. But there were great disadvantages in such a mode of procedure. Britain could not really depend upon Russia

(1) Currie to Kimberley, 19 June 1895; F.O.78/4613 No.392, enclosing a copy of a note verbale received from the Porte.

(2) Kimberley to Currie, 24 June 1895, F.O.78/4626, Tel. No. 91.

for support in order to force her demands upon the Sultan. Abdul Hamid saw that the Powers were not really united and quickly took advantage of this circumstance. The fact that Britain was associating herself with the Powers of the Dual Alliance in the negotiations regarding the Armenians aroused the suspicions of the Powers of the Triple Alliance. The close relationship between Britain and the latter Powers, which had been based upon "reciprocal confidence" was damaged without Britain gaining any real advantage from her new relationship with France and Russia. It was an unenviable heritage which Kimberley bequeathed to his successor, Salisbury.

CHAPTER IVRussia and the Straits: 1890-1894

There was no major spectacular crisis during these years, yet they were years in which Turkey and the Powers had to meet as great a challenge as they had ever met regarding Russia's pretensions to the passage of her ships through the Straits. At this time Russia pursued her old object - the opening of the Straits for Russia and for Russia alone - not by an open challenge but by an underhand, systematic bypassing of the stipulations laid down in the treaties respecting the Straits. Just because her methods were underhand, the problem presented to the Powers was more complex than it had ever been before. Britain, supported with varying degrees of enthusiasm by the Powers of the Triple Alliance, grappled manfully with the problem; but, in spite of the efforts of Salisbury and Rosebery and the British ambassadors at Constantinople, the Powers were placed in what was essentially a false position.

The situation will be seen more clearly if a detailed examination is made of Russia's actions and the counter-moves of the Powers; but, first, it must be pointed out that there was some justification for Russia's action. The opening of the Suez Canal and the movement of Russia's interests to the

Far East had for Russia completely altered the aspect of the Straits question. The quickest and safest route to the Far East was not from the Baltic but from the Black Sea via Suez. In these circumstances, Russia considered that it was absolutely necessary for her to insist upon immediate transit to her Pacific possessions and back again. This demand was recognized by the other Powers to have a certain amount of justification: it was the means employed by Russia to which the Powers - if they had regard for the treaties and their own interests - were forced to object.

The first issue over which Britain and Russia came to grips concerned the passage through the Straits of actual Russian war ships. The treaties clearly stated that, as long as the Porte was at peace, no foreign war ship should pass the Straits; the only exceptions being two gun boats for the Danube for each Power, light despatch boats for the service of the foreign embassies at Constantinople and ships which carried on board a sovereign or the chief of an independent state. (1) Russia circumvented these stipulations when she sent through the Straits, into the Black Sea, ships which, at the time of passing the Straits, were unarmed but

(1) Foundations, p.466; Memorandum of Bertie, 4 July 1890; F.C.78/4473.

which could easily be turned into war-ships proper, as facilities for arming ships existed at Russian ports in the Black Sea. Since the Porte made little difficulty in regard to the passage through the Straits of merchant ships carrying arms and munitions, it would be competent to a man of war to pass the Dardanelles with a vessel unarmed and, when in the Sea of Marmora, to receive his armaments from a merchant ship.

Britain recognized the significance of this practice⁽¹⁾ and watched closely Russian activities. In June 1890 three unarmed torpedo vessels passed through the Straits into the Black Sea.⁽²⁾ Since it was not the first occasion for such a practice, Britain attempted to make an issue out of the occurrence. On 16th White was instructed to warn the Porte of the danger of allowing these vessels to pass and so strengthen the Russian fleet in the Black Sea.⁽³⁾ On 11 July Fane was told to point out that the passage of such ships was

- (1) In Dec. 1890 the British Vice Consul at the Dardanelles wrote that he trusted to make arrangements so that no Russian vessel should pass down the Straits without his knowledge. White to Salisbury, 8 Dec. 1890; F.O.78/4473, No.530.
- (2) White to Salisbury, 13 June 1890; F.O.78/4280, Tel.No.34.
- (3) Salisbury to White, 16 June 1890; No.179. This despatch is not in the case volume on the Straits nor in the volume of despatches to Constantinople; the reference is taken from R.W. Brant's memorandum: The Passage of Ships of War and of Vessels of the Russian Volunteer Fleet through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, 6 Oct. 1902; F.O.78/5248.

a breach of Treaty stipulations and to intimate that H.M.'s Government "would expect to be treated with similar favour, should they have occasion to require it".⁽¹⁾ White carried out these instructions in a Note to the Porte of 13 August.⁽²⁾

Salisbury hoped that he would receive the support of Germany, Austro-Hungary and Italy for a common representation in which stress would be laid on the fact that, if Russia continued her practices, the other Powers would do the same.⁽³⁾ But enquiries at their respective capitals revealed that the Continental Powers still showed considerable circumspection about putting themselves forward in a matter which they considered to be primarily the concern of Britain. Caprivi thought it was "out of the question" for Germany to join in a protest at Constantinople to be directed at Russia, when Germany's own interests were not vitally affected. During the approaching Imperial visit to St. Petersburg declarations regarding the Straits, but in the opposite sense, were expected from Germany. If she previously

- (1) Salisbury to Fane, 28 June 1890; No.286; R.W. Brant, op.cit.
- (2) White to Salisbury, 13 Aug. 1890; No.369; ibid.
- (3) A draft to this effect was drawn up in Aug. 1890, but was subsequently cancelled on Lord Salisbury's directions. Minute by a Permanent official of the Foreign Office, 9 Sept. 1890; F.O.78/4473.

took up a positive position on that question, a friendly arrangement at St. Petersburg would be rendered difficult. If, on the other hand, Germany remained free she could stop all discussion at St. Petersburg with the intimation that she stood absolutely on the basis of the treaties, the interpretation of which was not her affair, but that of all the signatory powers in common. (1) Holstein, who thought it important to reassure Britain, came forward with a proposal of his own. He suggested that it would be a very serious matter, even for Austria, to join the protest, especially if Germany held aloof; she might refuse and, in that case the community of views which had recently been made apparent by the four Powers at Constantinople would vanish and the recent confidence of the Sultan would diminish. But, if Britain reversed her method of procedure and first asked the Porte for permission for a British ship of war to pass the Straits, explaining to the Sultan that this was done for his own safety and upon the advice of Austria-Hungary, Italy and Germany, these Powers would be obliged to say that, as the Porte had allowed Russian ships, which were virtually men of war, to pass, she could hardly refuse a similar permission to

(1) Caprivi to Hatzfeldt, 8 Aug. 1890; G.P.IX, No.2100.

England. The effect would be that the Sultan would have to grant the permission; or would have to refuse it in future to Russian ships; or, if he refused permission to Britain alone, sufficient ground would then exist for a protest in which Austria and Italy could more easily join. (1)

Salisbury was not greatly impressed by the circumlocutions of Holstein. He was influenced more by the opinions of Currie and Kalnoky. Currie thought it prejudicial to British interests to demand a free passage for British ships, because, in order to make that permission effective, the British Government would be forced to keep a number of ships permanently in the Sea of Marmora. If, in the course of time, the Sultan was obliged to yield to Russian pressure and the Dardanelles were occupied by Russia, if those British ships were not fully equal in strength to the combined Russian and Turkish forces, they would run a serious risk of being cut off and overwhelmed. Britain could not run such a risk and, if she chose this course, she must keep a fairly strong fleet stationed on the other side of the Dardanelles, which would cause the British tax payer an immense and very unwelcome increase of expense. It would be taken in Russia

(1) Holstein to Hatzfeldt, 8 Aug. 1890; G.P.IX, No.2099 Priv.

Malet to Salisbury, 8 Aug. 1890; Salisbury Papers, Vo.63, No.48 Priv. and Secr.

as a provocation and might lead to complications. (1) Kalnoky thought that if Britain demanded passage for her ships, France would make a similar demand for her own ships and the result would be the union of a considerable Franco-Russian naval force in the Black Sea. (2) Salisbury bowed before these opinions and gave up the idea of a common representation to the Porte. (3) He fell back on the old habit of simply placing (4) on record each Russian infraction of the rule of the Straits.

In September, Kalnoky made up for his lack of support on this specific question, when he was present at the meeting of the Emperors of Austria-Hungary and Germany at Rohstock, by obtaining for Britain and Austria considerable success on the more general question. He gained German assent to a verbal understanding to the effect that a solution of the Straits question according to Russian desires would be impossible and that any change in the existing treaties or any concessions to Russia in the Near East would be made by

(1) Hatzfeldt to Caprivi, 19 Aug. 1890; G.P.IX, No.2102.

(2) Paget to Salisbury, 9 Oct. 1890; No.439; R.W. Brant, op.cit.

(3) Salisbury to Barrington, 8 Aug. 1890; F.O.78/4473.

(4) Ford to Salisbury, 22 April 1892; Ibid, No.133; Minute by J.H. Sanderson.

Germany only with the consent of Austria.⁽¹⁾ The achievement was remarkable in that Germany was led so far away from the Bismarckian policy.

In 1891 Kalnoky gave his full support to Britain when she again joined issue with Russia in the matter of her bypassing the stipulations of the Straits' Treaties. On this occasion the offending vessels were ships of the Russian Volunteer Fleet and Russian transports. The Volunteer Fleet was founded in 1877.⁽²⁾ Its ships carried the merchant flag, with the Imperial Eagle on the white field, but they were so constructed as to make it possible for them to be used as men of war at any moment. Their crews were subject to naval discipline and training and the principal officers of each vessel were commissioned by the Government. A transport was for all practical purposes a vessel employed for carrying soldiers, war-like stores or provisions from one place to another and for conveying to their destination convicts, who required a large military guard; it was clearly not a merchant vessel in the ordinary sense of the term, though transports also usually carried the merchant flag.⁽³⁾ An

(1) G.P.XXX, Nos. 10987, 10989, 10998.

(2) On the status of the Russian Volunteer Fleet, cf. J.B. Espéret, La Condition Internationale des Détroits du Bosphore et des Dardanelles, (Toulouse, 1907), chap.VII.

(3) Memorandum by E. Hertslet to The Right of Russia to send Troops and Unarmed Recruits in Russian or Other Hired
(cont. next page)

effort was made by Russia to regularise matters by styling her troops "military immigrants" and by entering them at the Port office at Port Said as "passengers". But the Porte insisted that the essential character of the ships was war-like and required for their passage through the Straits permission in the form of an Iradé or personal expression of the Sultan's will, instead of a firman, which was issued as a matter of course for merchant ships proper by subordinate officials at the Porte.

The importance for the Powers and the Porte of keeping a check on ships, which, although sailing under the guise of merchant vessels, could become effective war ships was obvious. If Russia alone were allowed continually to send such ships through the Straits, without the observation of the formalities necessary for warships, privileges would be given to that Power greater than those possessed by other Powers under the international treaties. By devious means Russia would be achieving what the Powers had joined together to prevent her achieving in 1833 by the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi: the sole and exclusive right of sending her war ships through

(3) cont. from previous page:
Transports through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, 9 Oct. 1886; F.O.78/5248, Conf. 5420.

the Straits. The danger to the Porte of such a practice was equally obvious: Russia could turn the usage against Turkey; and ships, ostensibly designed for the Pacific possessions of the Russian Empire, might under certain eventualities be suddenly landed on the shores of the Bosphorus.

The difficulties involved in the treatment of such ships became clear when an open controversy broke out in 1891 between Russia and the Porte. Early in April the Porte detained in the Bosphorus the Volunteer Vessel "Nijni Novgorod" on the ground that it had a railway battalion on board and special permission for the passage of the ship had not been requested by the Russian Government. (1) On 9th Nelidov sent to the Turkish Foreign Minister a note in which he claimed that the alleged soldiers were simply workmen and pointed out that the ships also carried a number of first class passengers, among whom was a courier of the Imperial Cabinet, proceeding to the Far East. Such treatment of a ship flying the commercial flag constituted a flagrant violation of the liberty of navigation assured to Russia by the treaties in force. The note concluded with the threat:

(1) White to Salisbury, 18 April 1891; F.O.78/4473, No.156.

"L'ambassadeur Imperial se croit obligé d'aviser désormais lui-même aux mesures nécessaires pour assurer à ses bateaux la liberté de passage qui leur est acquise par les traités".

The tone of Said Pasha's reply of 20 April was almost apologetic. He wished to assure the Ambassador that the measures prescribed by Turkey were little more than a simple surveillance of police. He concluded with the significant statement:

"Le Ministre Imperiale regrette d'autant plus que l'Ambassadeur de Sa Majesté l'Empereur en ait fait l'object d'une plainte qu'elle arrivée à une conclusion à attirer l'attention des autres Puissances". (1)

Turkey was aiming at keeping the dispute quiet between herself and Russia. Therein lay the difficulty for Britain. Currie remarked that it would be difficult for the Powers to take the matter up, unless the Porte appealed to them. (2) But before any steps would be taken, a further crisis was precipitated by the stoppage of a second Russian Volunteer Vessel, the "Kostroma". On this occasion, since the Sultan was involved in religious duties, a delay of twenty-four hours elapsed before an Irade was issued. On 24 April Nelidov sent a second heated Note to the Palace. He pointed out that only fifteen days had elapsed since he had been obliged to make the

(1) A copy of the Russian note and of the Porte's reply is enclosed in White to Salisbury, 20 May 1891; Ibid No.199 Secr.

(2) Memorandum by P. Currie, 2 May 1891; Ibid (no number).

last protest and demanded that the Porte should:

"infliger une punition exemplaire aux coupables" et
 "indemniser ceux qui ont eu à subir des dommages à la
 suite de cet incident et en prévenir dorénavant le
 retour".

The demands were great: the dismissal of the Commander of the forts at Kavanak or his chief, who had been responsible for the stoppage of the ships, an indemnity of 1,000 Turkish livres and the issue of precise orders to the commanders of the forts forbidding them absolutely to stop under any pretext whatsoever, a ship under the Russian commercial flag. ⁽¹⁾

The agreement which was eventually reached between the Powers was a complicated transaction. The official reply of the Porte, on 5 May, was not so apologetic as previously. It stated that, since the Russian ambassador had recognized that the Commandant of the forts of Kavanak was not at fault, but that the stoppage of the boat was the result of a misunderstanding, the Commandant would retain his position, but that an order would be given to the authorities at the Straits not to stop "aucun paquebot portant pavillon de commerce Russe". ⁽²⁾ Nelidov, in a private letter to the Porte, made

(1) A copy of the Russian note is enclosed in White to Salisbury, 20 May 1891; F.O.78/4473, No.199 Secr.

(2) A copy of Said Pasha's note is enclosed in White to Salisbury, 11 May 1891; Ibid, No.194 Confid.

known that, conforming to the desire expressed by the Sultan, the necessary measures had been taken for the Porte to be informed beforehand:

"lorsque des detachements de soldats en activité de service et armés quelqu'en soit le nombre ou bien de transports de forcats seront embarquer à bord de bateaux de commerce Russes, qui auraient a traverser les détroits". (1)

This concession, significantly made in a private letter and not a public note, was in striking contrast to the ground first taken up by Nelidov. Even so, Russia had achieved considerable success. As matters stood, the Porte was to allow the passage of all steamers provided they hoisted the commercial flag and to limit that permission to Russian steamers. (2) The other Powers were not happy about the arrangement, but they found no opportunity to take action until a further controversy occurred in August.

On 4th the Porte detained the "Moskva" on the ground that it had on board soldiers on active service and that no notice had been given. (3) Nelidov maintained that the soldiers were discharged men and no longer en activité. In the

(1) A copy of Nelidov's private letter is enclosed in White to Salisbury, 24 May 1891; Ibid, No.217 Secr. These copies of notes were obtained by White from the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs under promise of strict secrecy.

(2) White to Salisbury, 11 May 1891; Ibid, No.194, Confid. Minute by Cadogan.

(3) White to Salisbury, 8 Aug. 1891; Ibid. No.330 Confid. enclosing a Memorandum by Sandison on the stoppage of the "Moskva".

discussions which followed Russia demanded the dismissal of the Commandant of the Dardanelles and an indemnity of £2,000. The Porte was completely excluded from participation in the negotiations, which were carried on by the Palace through Munir Bey, with the result that an abject apology was conveyed to Russia, the Commandant dismissed and the indemnity promptly paid. Although this dispute had much in common with the earlier ones, the whole issue was magnified out of all proportion by the fact that the agreement reached was kept secret at a time when Europe was still uneasy about the rapprochement of France and Russia, demonstrated by the Cronstadt visit and the dismissal of Kiamil Pasha, which followed closely on that event.

The English newspaper the Standard caught the tone of the prevailing atmosphere when it published an alarmist article:

"Turkey has yielded to Russia on the Straits question, thus completing the partial surrender of Treaty rights which was made some short time ago ... Russian diplomacy has achieved a complete victory on this question and henceforth the Straits will be open to her vessels, whilst closed to those of other nations". (1)

(1) The Standard, 31 Aug. 1891.

The Standard had, of course, confused the special question under discussion as regards the passage of particular vessels flying the merchant flag and belonging to the Volunteer Fleet with discharged soldiers on board, with the general question of the rights of ships under the Straits Treaties. But confusion on this point was general at the time in all but the best informed circles. It was remembered that in July there had appeared a significant article in the Nord stating that Russia did not aspire to possess Constantinople: it was sufficient for her to make effective the closure of the Straits. (1) From Sinai, General Lowther sent a despatch in which he wrote that Bulow, during an audience with the king, had been told that the king was in possession of confidential information which convinced him that some arrangement had been arrived at between the Russian and French Governments with regard to the passage of the Russian fleet through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles and that H.M. thought that this arrangement had taken the form of a written engagement. (2)

Further fuel to the flames of European speculation was

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- (1) The Nord, No.30 of 25 July 1891; quoted in White to Salisbury, 28 Aug. 1891; F.O.78/4473, No.365 Secr.
- (2) General Lowther to Salisbury, Sept. 1891; Ibid No.112.

supplied, on 13 September, by the news that a British force had landed on the island of Sigri, a deserted rock to the west of Mytilene. Although it transpired that the landing had been made solely on the initiative of the British Rear Admiral, who had thought the island suitable for carrying out mining exercises, combined with a sham night attack by torpedo boats and, on account of the isolated position of the island, he had thought it unnecessary to ask the permission of the local authorities before carrying out the operations, foreign consular agents and press correspondents interpreted the action as a naval demonstration staged by the command of the British Government. (1) The official denials issued by the Government were nowhere taken seriously. It seemed strange that, just at the moment when the Dardanelles question was in the forefront, British ships should have found it necessary to carry out so spectacular an action at the most strategic point near the entrance to the Dardanelles. (2) Two days after the landing there appeared in the Standard the significant statement:

"If Russia were to seize Constantinople, England and the Triple Alliance would drive her out again". (3)

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- (1) Copy of the Report of Rear Admiral Walter Kerr to the Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office, 5 Oct. 1891 M.2573; F.O.78/4372, Minute by Sanderson.
- (2) W.L. Langer, The Franco-Russian Alliance, p.205.
- (3) The Standard, 15 Sept. 1890; Ibid, p.205.

The Porte was so alarmed by what had taken place that, on 24 September, it issued a circular with the object of dispelling the mystery surrounding the recent Russo-Turkish agreement regarding the passage of ships of the Volunteer Fleet. It stated explicitly the instructions given to the Turkish officers:

"Lorsqu'ils (les bateaux de la Flotte Volontaire) auront à bord des déportés ou des soldats, leur passage, sur l'avis donné par l'ambassadeur de Russie, sera permis par Iradé imperiale".

In conclusion, it stated:

"Vous voyez qu'il n'y a là rien de nouveau et que (1) c'est l'ancien régime qui continuera à être appliqué".

Unfortunately, this was not strictly true. The Porte had always required that permission should be asked for the passage of ships, having soldiers on board. In the Circular there was an implicit assumption that Russia would not ask for such permission - she would merely give notice of the intended passage of such vessels.

Britain and Austria quickly went into action. First, they exchanged views on the manner in which it would be best to (2) reply to the Porte's circular. Then, on 2 October, Salisbury

(1) The Circular was dated 19 Sept. 1891; communicated 24 Sept. 1891 and it was enclosed in Salisbury to White, 2 Oct. 1891, F.O.78/4473, No.214.

(2) Paget to Kalnoky, 1 Oct. 1891; W.S.A.VIII/III Varia d' Angleterre, 1891. Foundations, p.467.

sent to White a despatch which was to be read to the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs:

"In the opinion of H.M.'s Government, it is the essence of the rule sanctioned by the European powers that it is applicable to all countries alike and that any right in respect to the passage of the Straits, which is a departure from the provisions of the existing treaties, will, if granted to one Power, be as a matter of course and ipso facto granted to all". (1)

This declaration has been considered important by historians, as being the foundation of a new doctrine regarding the Straits. But the utility of the doctrine, when put to a practical test, was doubtful. Russia, because of her geographical position and the possession of ports in the Black Sea, could make use of her rights in a more practical way than the other powers, whose ports were much further away from that vital area. In September 1891 Kalnoky approved of Salisbury's doctrine. He was so enthusiastic that, although he had presented to the Porte his own reply to their Circular, he sent a further communication in which he stated "la manière de voir anglaise [est] entièrement partagée par le Gouvernement Imperial". (2)

It was important that the friendly Powers should appear

(1) Salisbury to White, 2 Oct. 1891; F.O.78/4473, No.214.

(2) A copy of Kalnoky's communication is enclosed in White to Salisbury, 7 Nov. 1891; Ibid, No.465.

publicly in complete agreement with Salisbury. For this reason some disappointment was felt when Germany gave only a verbal reply, as opposed to the written replies of the other Powers. Kalnoky told Salisbury that he regarded "the fact merely as an instance of the traditional policy of German non-intervention in Eastern affairs and not as a reversion to what might be called the Bismarckian era at Constantinople".⁽¹⁾

But, in December, when Hatzfeldt went to Berlin, the Austrian ambassador there pointed out to him that it should not be forgotten that such a divergence of action, even if it existed only in form, might be taken in Constantinople as a substantial difference and give the enemies of the Triple Alliance an opportunity to attach an unfavourable interpretation to it. Hatzfeldt assured Schiessl that Salisbury had not taken the Straits incident tragically, but had only wished to make certain that Britain could obtain the same privileges which the Porte was allowing to another state.⁽²⁾ Hatzfeldt's view was borne out by the opinion expressed by Salisbury in a private letter to White:

"I should be disposed to guess that Nelidow is in great spirits over his supposed victory in the matter of the

(1) L. Phipps to Salisbury, 21 Oct. 1891; Ibid No.214 Confid.

(2) Schiessl to Kalnoky, 8 Dec. 1891; H.H. v. St.A. Wien, Pol. A. Rot., 465, Geheim XXV/A.

Straits, but that his exultation is unfounded. The Sultan has conceded nothing essential and is only playing with him". (1)

The use to which Russia could put her "supposed victory" was, however, demonstrated by the events of 1897, when there were disturbances in the island of Crete. Russia asked the Porte to allow the passage through the Straits of ships carrying 600 soldiers. (2) The Porte consulted the Powers. Russia took exception to this move of the Porte and maintained that, in reality, she had not asked the consent of the Porte, but had merely given notice of the passage of the ships. She founded her right to do this on the stipulations laid down in the Turkish Circular of 24 September 1891, maintaining that the agreement was not limited to the passage of troops intended for the Far East. Sir Philip Currie, then British Ambassador at Constantinople, concluded his despatch on the subject with the words:

"I am informed that the Russian embassy habitually notifies the passage of soldiers too late for the Sultan's Irade to issue before vessels conveying them arrive at the Bosphorus and that they pass the forts without any other formality than that observed by ordinary merchant vessels". (3)

Russia had completely achieved her aim.

The Salisbury stipulation, which Kalnoky had received with

(1) Salisbury to White, 14 Sept. 1891; Salisbury Papers Vol. 76, No.122.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 15 March 1897; R.O.78/4884, Tel.No.122.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 22 March 1897; Ibid, No.190.

such pleasure in October 1891 was, within a year, discarded by him because it did not meet a similar case: the case presented to the Powers by Russia's attempt to secure the insertion in the new Commercial Treaty, which she negotiated with Turkey between 1890-93, of a clause which could be interpreted to mean that Russian ships, flying the merchant flag and passing in transit through the Straits, should be allowed to pass freely, whatever the nature of their cargo.

The true nature of the innovation which Russia was hoping to achieve can be clearly seen if the new draft article 17 is compared with the corresponding article 14 of the old treaty of 1862. ⁽¹⁾ The third paragraph of article 17 contained entirely new words: "les bâtiments de commerce russes se rendant d'un port russe à une autre port russe", which would imply that vessels were to be affected which not only came into the Straits, but also went out of them; the old article 14 referred only to incoming vessels. Another addition was to be found in the phrase: "pouvant traverser en transit, sans arrêt, les dits détroits quelle que soit la cargaison ou les passagers à bord sans aucune formalité douanière".

In order to understand the implications of this phrase

(1) Ford to Rosebery, 21 Oct. 1892; F.O.78/4473, No.324
Confid.

it is necessary to refer to the Porte's Circular of 1888, which required that notice should be given of the passage of ships with war material on board, so that the Sultan's permission for the passage of such ships could be given. The British and other foreign embassies did give such notice, failing which their ships were stopped. Russia, however, never accepted the terms of the Circular and never admitted in a formal note the right of the Porte to exercise supervision over ships having ammunition on board. She hoped that she would be able to utilise the words "sans arrê^t" - placed in article 17 - so that, if a Russian ship, carrying arms, were to be stopped, she could say that they entitled her to demand that her ship should circulate freely, with or without permission.

The words "sans aucune formalité douanière" had a double meaning. Russia probably meant by this that her ships need not have a "guardier de surveillance" on board, as was required in the case of other foreign Powers having cargoes of ammunition on board, since "formalité douanière" there could not be. Turkey hoped to claim that she had reserved for herself the right to put a guardier on board and that Russia could not escape this by putting forward the word "douanière", since the "guardier de surveillance" was not charged with carrying out custom formalities. But, in any case, the phrase was too ambiguous to be safe.

Attached to Article 17, was a declaration which at first seemed to contain a concession by Russia. She deferred to the wishes of the Porte in consenting to give, before arrival in Ottoman waters, the names, ports of departure and destination of ships, flying the merchant flag and having on board munitions of war and also information concerning the nature and quantity of the munitions. But, here again, no mention was made of the word "permission". The second paragraph contained the words:

"les bâtiments de commerce ... transitant librement et sans arrêt quelque soit le cargaison à bord".

Any remaining doubt as to Russia's intentions was entirely cleared up by the concluding paragraph:

ml "les déclarations qui seront faites dans le but surmentionné ... ne pourront jamais et sans aucun prétexte être interprétées comme une demande d'une autorisation".

Sir Clare Ford, British ambassador at Constantinople in 1892, drew the conclusion that the British Government might consider whether, if Russia was to enjoy more favourable treatment than that accorded to Britain under the Turkish Circular of 1888, H.M.'s Government would consent to be further bound by the stipulations of that Circular.

(1)

(1) Ibid.

In Vienna, Kalnoky was also aware of the privileges which Russia was hoping to gain. In an interview with the British ambassador on 31 October 1892 he suggested that, if the Porte showed signs of yielding to Russian pressure, it would be advisable to remind them of the stipulation made by Salisbury in his reply to the Turkish Circular of 19 September and afterwards adopted by himself - that "any privilege in respect of the Straits granted to any one Power is ipso facto granted to all".⁽¹⁾ When Mr. Paget sent home a report of this conversation, Rosebery (now Foreign Secretary) minuted "The Russian proposal is so framed that the article quoted would not serve the Powers".⁽²⁾ Kalnoky himself was not slow to realise this and, in a further conversation with Paget of 3 January, he said that, since his last conversation, it had occurred to him that Salisbury's stipulation:

"Would hardly meet the present case, because there was no other Power having, like Russia, ports in the Black Sea and it, therefore, appeared better to intimate to the Porte that, in the event of its being contemplated to grant to Russia any privileges or concessions going beyond those already accorded, they should be made known to the other Powers who should be consulted thereupon".⁽³⁾

(1) A. Paget to Rosebery, 31 Oct. 1892; Ibid., No.200 Confid.

(2) Ibid. Minute by Rosebery, undated.

(3) Paget to Rosebery, 3 Jan. 1893; F.O.78/4592, No.2 Confid.

Rosebery approved of Kalnoky's suggestion and the ambassadors of Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy acted at the Porte on these lines. Nelidov, however, continued to press the Porte and the Palace. At the end of August, the Austro-Hungarian ambassador, in an interview with Said Pasha, warned him of the far-reaching scope of the Russian demands, advanced "under the innocent garb of a simple commercial article" and said that the concessions demanded by Russia had a practical meaning for that Power alone and would have a very serious meaning if a Russian fleet were ever permanently established in the Mediterranean. (1)

Some indication of the development of British policy is given by an examination of the minutes on a despatch which was received from the British ambassador at Constantinople on 29 August. Sir Philip Currie, at this time Permanent Under-Secretary, asked whether Britain should repeat to the Porte that she demanded similar privileges - which, it had been pointed out, was an empty phrase - or whether Britain should simply point out to the Porte the danger of such concessions which was aggravated by the intention of Russia to maintain a fleet in the Mediterranean. Rosebery replied:

(1) Nicolson to Rosebery, 29 Aug. 1893; Ibid No.414 Confid.

"I think we had better say that any such concession will reopen the Eastern Question and compel us to review our position. But, whatever may be the result of that review, we shall, of course, insist upon similar privileges for ourselves". (1)

Instructions were accordingly sent to the ambassador, instructions which were the most forceful yet sent. (2) Any mention of a reopening of the Eastern Question could always be calculated to send shivers down the spines of all Foreign Ministers.

It appears that the great perseverance, which was extended over a period of three years, of Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance finally resulted in the prevalence of their view. The last available reference to the subject is the record of a conversation of Sir Clare Ford with Said Pasha, the Turkish Foreign Minister, who said on 25 October 1893:

"The concessions which were desired by the Russian Government would, owing to their political bearing, never be allowed to pass or be sanctioned by the Sublime Porte. His desire was to deal in the matter of Commercial Treaties with Italy, Austria-Hungary, France and England first, and to leave the negotiations with Russia to the last, so that in the event of

(1) Minutes on Nicolson to Rosebery, 29 Aug. 1893.

Ibid.

(2) Rosebery's Minute became: Rosebery to Nicolson, 30 Aug. 1893, Ibid., No.258 Confid.

serious difficulties arising with that Power in the negotiations, the Turkish Government might dispense with concluding any treaty at all with that country". (1)

Britain and her continental friends might think that they had won a great victory in this matter, but, in fact, it was only a Pyrrhic victory because, as has been shown, Russia had already achieved the object she sought to gain by Article 17 of the Commercial Treaty.

In reality, Russia had, in the 1890s, pursued her object of the opening of the Straits in peace time for her war ships and for hers alone by three different methods: by sending war ships through, which, at the time of passing, were unarmed but which could be armed immediately after they had passed; by coming to an agreement with the Porte according to which she merely notified the Porte of the passage of ships which were virtually war ships; by the new stipulations, inserted in article 17 of the proposed Commercial Treaty. She failed only in the latter attempt: as a whole, she was so successful that the other Powers came to consider whether they had any longer anything to

(1) Ford to Rosebery, 25 Oct. 1893; Ibid, No.487
Confid.

gain by maintaining the old treaty stipulations and whether it would not be better to come to an entirely new international agreement regarding the Straits.

The Commission has considered the various proposals for the revision of the Straits Convention and has concluded that it is not possible to reach a new agreement which would be more satisfactory than the existing one. The Commission has also considered the possibility of a general agreement regarding the Straits, but has concluded that this is not desirable at present. The Commission has therefore recommended that the existing Convention should be maintained.

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CHAPTER V

Salisbury Returns

It has been said of Salisbury that he never became keen about anything which "he did not think and work out for himself".⁽¹⁾ But Foreign Secretaries do not begin their work in a vacuum. When Salisbury took office in June 1895 for the third time as Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs he had to face the philanthropic tempest which had been raised in England by the Armenian question. The Liberal Foreign Secretary had attempted to ameliorate the conditions of the Armenians by drawing up a scheme of reform for the Asiatic provinces of Turkey which had been presented to the Sultan on 11 May 1895. The greatest task - that of persuading the Sultan to accept the reforms and securing their execution - was still unaccomplished when Kimberley left office.

The reform policy was Kimberley's not Salisbury's. Salisbury was not keen about the project of reforms; but he was practically forced, for the sake of continuity, to execute the policy begun by his predecessor. Currie accurately

(1) G. Cecil to Earl St. Aldwyn, 23 Jan. 1914; Hicks Beach Papers, PCC/69.

summed up the position in a letter to his chief:

"France and Russia are pledged to the plan. The other powers of Europe have expressed their approval, and any change of front now, besides laying the Government open to the charge of having deserted the Armenians, would give us all our work to do over again on some other lines". (1)

Salisbury accepted the reform plan, but he could not resist expressing to Currie his distaste for it. He referred to it as a very "unsavoury omelette", left to him to cook. (2) Throughout 1895 he continually reminded Currie that Kimberley was the man really responsible for the enterprise. Salisbury wondered what issue Kimberley had expected from the reform policy when he had initiated it. Why had not Kimberley bound France and Russia more definitely? Why had Kimberley not ascertained how far Austria was prepared to go?

Salisbury posed these questions without much hope of finding the answers. In the summer of 1895 he resigned himself to his enforced task of pushing through, in some form or other, the proposed reforms. Once he had convinced himself that this was the only course he could take, he was determined

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 1 July 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol.135, No.10.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 12 Aug. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No.7.

to make no new departure from it: any new departure would place the responsibility for what might happen wholly on himself. ⁽¹⁾ Although the immediate issue was the Armenian question, any such upheaval as that caused by the Armenian troubles was bound to raise the more serious questions: what would be the future of the Ottoman Empire and who would control the Straits? Such questions were pondered by the Foreign Secretaries of all the major countries of Europe in the summer of 1895. Salisbury was convinced that, unless the administration of the Ottoman Empire was improved, Europe would take decisive action concerning the future of the empire. He had a number of conversations with Hatzfeldt during which reference was made to possible future eventualities in Turkey. In the circumstances, it was quite natural that the future of Turkey should be discussed. But Hatzfeldt's reports of his conversations with Salisbury caused great concern in Berlin, and, when they were communicated to the Austrian Foreign Minister, also in Vienna. They conveyed the impression that Salisbury was contemplating the formulation and execution, in the near future, of a plan for partitioning the Ottoman

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 24 Aug. 1895; F.O.195/1862
Priv.tel.

(1) Empire.

In 1895, Hatzfeldt's despatches were accepted by the German Foreign Office as accurate accounts of Salisbury's views. Since that time historians, hampered by the deficiency of the English source material, have been forced to base their reasoning on Hatzfeldt's despatches and so they also believed that Salisbury contemplated a partition of the Ottoman Empire in 1895. Only recently has more evidence become available in Salisbury's private papers and the official Austrian archives which enables the student seriously to question the accuracy of Hatzfeldt's reports.

An examination of the reports themselves, even without any comparison with other source material should be sufficient to advise caution against accepting them as reliable evidence of Salisbury's ideas. Hatzfeldt reported Salisbury's words only rarely; for the most part he expressed his own opinion of what he thought Salisbury had in mind. The most startling of the ideas Hatzfeldt attributed to Salisbury - that the Foreign Secretary contemplated giving to Russia "Constantinople

(1) Hatzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 10 July 1895; G.P.X, No.2396.
 Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 31 July 1895; Ibid, No. 2372.
 Hatzfeldt to the German Foreign Office, 3 Aug. 1895; Ibid, No.2375.

avec tout qui s'ensuit" was not reported by Hatzfeldt at the time when he first sent home his description of Salisbury's "plan".⁽¹⁾ Hatzfeldt related Salisbury's views on the compensation to be given to Russia only after he had heard that Holstein suspected Salisbury of deliberately attempting to stir up trouble in the East and bring about dissension between the powers of the Triple Alliance and Russia.⁽²⁾

When Currie heard from the Austrian Ambassador at Constantinople that it was believed that Salisbury had hinted to Hatzfeldt that Britain might agree to hand over the city to Russia, the ambassador informed Salisbury. The latter immediately disclaimed with indignation:

"I never said anything of the kind".⁽³⁾

According to Salisbury, Hatzfeldt had begun the conversations by urging that Britain should join the Triple Alliance. In order to support his arguments, the German ambassador asked how otherwise could Britain defend Constantinople against Russia. Salisbury replied that, in case of war with France, Germany would be the first to give Russia Constantinople

(1) Hatzfeldt to Holstein, 5 Aug. 1895; Ibid, No.2381.

(2) Holstein to Kiderlen, 3 Aug. 1895; Ibid, No.2377.

(3) Minute on Currie to Salisbury, 2 Sept. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol.135, No.42.

and everything connected with it. (1)

When the two versions of the Salisbury-Hatzfeldt conversations are related to what is known of the general outlook and policy of Salisbury and the leaders of Germany, it must be recognized that Salisbury's version is far more likely to be true than Hatzfeldt's. One might go further and suggest that the "partition plan", attributed by Hatzfeldt to Salisbury, had its origin in the mind of Hatzfeldt rather than in any words of Salisbury's to Hatzfeldt.

Throughout the summer and autumn of 1895 the leaders of German policy were much occupied with the possibility of the collapse of Turkey and the necessity of making arrangements for the redistribution of her territory. In August, the Kaiser wrote a long marginal note on a despatch of the German ambassador at Vienna, in which he argued that the collapse of Turkey was inevitable and that the Triple Alliance must look out for its share of the spoils. (2) He even spoke on the subject to the Austrian ambassador, sketching out the compensations the Powers might receive and stating his belief that

(1) Calice to Goluchowski, 12 Sept. 1895; Priv. letter; Austrian Archives, Geheimakten XXV, 462.

(2) William II's note on despatch of Eulenburg to Hohenlohe, 18 Aug. 1895; G.P.X, No.2391.

Russia could not be prevented from occupying Constantinople. (1)

Little more than a week after this conversation, the Kaiser spoke in a similar way to Colonel Swaine:

"Give Asia Minor and Constantinople to Russia indemnify Austria by leaving her the Balkan States down to Salonika".

Britain could take an island and satisfy Italy in the Mediterranean. (2)

Hatzfeldt also chose Colonel Swaine as a confidant and remarked to him that the departure of the Sultan out of Europe would have to be faced sooner or later:

"It would be well if Germany and England, by confidential conversations, came to some agreement on the subject to prevent either being taken by surprise at the moment of its occurrence". (3)

The true nature of the conversation between the Kaiser and Salisbury at Cowes, on 5 August, is still unknown.

Holstein later maintained that Salisbury then proposed to the German Emperor a partition of the Ottoman Empire. (4) When, in 1896, Sir Valentine Chirol - after a conversation with

- (1) Szógyény to Goluchowski, Private, 19 Aug. 1895, A.A. Preussen, Varia.
- (2) Lascelles to Salisbury, 30 Aug. 1895; F.O. 64/1351, No. 194 Secr., enclosing a secret and confidential Memorandum by Colonel Swaine of 30 Aug.
- (3) Swaine to Barrington, 27 Sept. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 122, No. 92.
- (4) Memorandum of Holstein, 31 Oct. 1901, G.P. XVII, No. 5026.

Marschall - brought to the attention of Salisbury this version of the conversation, Salisbury remarked:

"It showed the expediency of having a third party present when talking to the Emperor, if he made it his practice to put into his interlocutor's mouth proposals which emanated from himself". (1)

In 1902 Lord Lansdowne was told by the German ambassador of Salisbury's alleged proposal to the German Emperor at Cowes.

Lansdowne replied in no uncertain terms:

"I was convinced that no such proposal had been made by my predecessor, who must have been entirely misunderstood by the German Emperor". (2)

Both the German and English sources show that, in 1898, when the subject of the partition of the Ottoman Empire was again raised in conversation between Salisbury and Hatzfeldt, it was the German ambassador who initiated the discussion. (3)

He wished to obtain from Salisbury "an undertaking" that, when the Empire disintegrated, its fragments should not be allowed to fall into Russian hands. Salisbury did not contest the soundness of such a policy. But he was not enthusiastic about going forward on the lines Hatzfeldt indicated and nothing

(1) Account of Chirol in the Times, 11 Sept. 1920.

(2) Lansdowne-Buchanan, 3 Nov. 1902; F.O.78/5248, No.284.

(3) Salisbury to Lascelles, 11 May 1898; F.O.64/1436, No.109a, Secr. G.P.XIV (1) 230-31.

was done.

The whole tenour of the evidence points to the conclusion that, even at the time of the famous Salisbury-Hatzfeldt conversations of July and August, 1895, the German ambassador rather than Salisbury led the way in the discussion. Perhaps Hatzfeldt came to realise that he had gone too far. When, after the Cowes episode, he was instructed to reopen the discussion, he wrote that it would be well to let the matter rest for a little while. (1)

When Salisbury took up office in 1895, the one aspect of policy upon which he was adamant was the necessity for Britain of retaining the friendship of Austria-Hungary. Again and again he stressed this conviction. In a letter to the Queen he described how, at a Cabinet meeting, he had "expressed himself strongly against any policy that would cut Austria adrift". It would reconstitute the Dreikaiserbund - a state of things which must be injurious to Britain. (2) The friendship of Austria had a certain positive value to Britain. She had influence with Germany and she was a clog to Russia, so long as the two countries were opposed. But, if Austria and Russia

(1) Hatzfeldt to Foreign Office, 7 Aug. 1895; G.P.X., No.2385.

(2) Salisbury to the Queen, 19 Feb. 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol.84, No.10.

were to unite, they could carry everything in the S.E. of Europe before them.

"Therefore", wrote Salisbury, "I shrink from any action which would weaken the tie that binds England and Austria together". (1)

Coupled with his conviction of the practical value to Britain of Austrian friendship was Salisbury's feeling that Britain had an obligation to Austria. Having pursued her policy side by side with Austria for so many years, there would be something of "bassesse" in Britain's conduct, if she were to leave Austria in the lurch.

Now, it was well known that the policy of the Austrian Foreign Minister was dominated by two considerations: the desire to maintain the status quo in the Near East and to keep Russia out of Constantinople. Even if there were to be a general redistribution of Turkish territory and Austria were given her fair share, the arrangement would be unsatisfactory to Austria, because it would expose her to the danger of upsetting the balance between the Slavonic and non-Slavonic elements of her Empire. If Russia occupied Constantinople the Balkan states would crystallise themselves about that centre and Austrian influence there and in the Adriatic would be

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 15 Dec. 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol.138, No.35.

(1)
lost.

There is every indication that Salisbury understood and appreciated the Austrian point of view. At the same time as he had with Hatzfeldt the conversations, discussed above, Salisbury also had conversations with the Austrian ambassador. The subject matter of the conversations with Deym is illuminating. Salisbury began by assuring Deym that he would do all in his power to maintain the complete entente between the two countries: Austria could rely on Britain's support in all questions of common interest. (2) Britain's policy was still directed towards the maintenance of the status quo in the Ottomon Empire, though Britain would have to insist on the introduction of some measure of reform. (3) It was in Britain's interest to see that Russia was kept out of Constantinople. (4)

All this is in contradiction to Salisbury's alleged statements to Hatzfeldt. Should one believe that Salisbury

(1) Eulenburg to Hohenlohe, 8 Nov. 1895; G.P.X, No.2497.

(2) DEym to Goluchowski, 3 July 1895; A.A. England, Geheimakten XXV, 462.

(3) Deym to Goluchowski; 11 July 1895; A.A. England, No.18B.

(4) Deym to Goluchowski; 25 July 1895; A.A. Geheimakten, 462, No.20 A-D.

was so double-faced a diplomat that he could proclaim one policy to Hatzfeldt and another policy to Deym? Was Salisbury trying to keep Austria's friendship by making reassuring statements, while he secretly harboured sinister designs? Surely not. Such tortuous conduct was wholly foreign to Salisbury's nature. If, then, one accepts as a premise Salisbury's fair dealing, one must conclude that one set of his remarks was incorrectly reported. The probability of Hatzfeldt having misreported Salisbury has already been demonstrated. It remains to show how, in the light of other evidence, it is certain that his statements to Deym represented his real views on policy.

Among Salisbury's private papers, which have only recently become available, is a very valuable account by the Foreign Minister of the opinions he held in 1895 on the place which Constantinople should occupy in British policy. He set forth this very full exposition of his views in a private letter of 3 December 1895 to Lord Goschen, the First Lord of the Admiralty. The document is of extreme value for two reasons. It is the only known document in which Salisbury related, in 1895, the motives behind the actions he took in that year regarding Constantinople. There is no reason to question the reliability of Salisbury's exposition: it is a first-hand account to a member of the Cabinet. There could

be no reasons for not telling the truth. Salisbury wrote:

"I am not at all a bigot to the policy of keeping Russia out of Constantinople. On the contrary, I think the English statesmen who brought about the Crimean war made a mistake. But the keeping of Constantinople out of Russian hands has now for near half a century been made a vital article of our political creed: it has been proclaimed such by statesmen of all parties, at home and in the East; our fame and prestige are so tied up with it, that, when it falls, the blow will be tremendous. Meanwhile, the world at large, including everybody except the circle round the Admiralty, believes that the Straits can, under the Turk, be easily forced and that, if we are distanced in the race for Constantinople, it will be only due to our own neglect. I do not envy the Foreign Secretary who is in office when the surprise of Constantinople happens. I hope it may not be me". (1)

Here is valuable evidence that, in December 1895, Salisbury still thought it imperative that Constantinople should be kept out of Russian hands. His conviction was founded on the belief that, since British statesmen had proclaimed the policy for so long, its maintenance had become a matter of prestige. In fact, Salisbury still held to the views he had expressed in 1886:

"The possession by Russia of Constantinople will be an awkward piece of news for the Minister who receives it. The prestige effect on the Asiatic populations will be enormous and I pity the English party which has this item on their record". (2)

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- (1) Salisbury to Goschen, 3 Dec. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Goschen box.
- (2) W.S. Churchill, Lord Randolph Churchill (London, 1951), p.515-6. cf. p.32.

Salisbury, then, was quite sincere when, on 24 July 1895, he told Deym that he believed that Russia must be prevented from taking possession of Constantinople; Deym enquired whether Salisbury was sure that British public opinion would not suffer such action by Russia. The Foreign Secretary answered that he was completely convinced that the great majority of people in England shared his opinion. He knew that Sir William Harcourt believed that Constantinople should be surrendered to Russia, but, even in the Liberal camp, there were few politicians who shared Harcourt's opinions. (1)

When Salisbury decided that, for the sake of continuity, he must carry out the Liberal reform policy for the Asiatic provinces of Turkey, he had in fact decided to maintain as far as possible the status quo in the Ottoman Empire. The main idea behind the reform policy was to so improve conditions in Asiatic Turkey that Russia would have no excuse to advance into the territory on the pretext of restoring order. There should be no excuse for any alteration in the status quo.

In the execution of the reform policy Salisbury made two mistakes. The first arose from his method of trying to

(1) Deym to Goluchowski; 25 July 1895; A.A. Geheimakten, 462, No.20A - D.

obtain the Sultan's acceptance of the reforms. He began by continuing Kimberley's policy of "terrifying through Rustem". Although Salisbury's warnings to the Turkish ambassador were usually prefaced with the statement that his own object was to maintain the Ottoman Empire, Salisbury used very strong language. He told him that, on coming back to office, he had been much struck by the ground which the Empire had lost in English opinion. A settled conviction was growing that "nothing could be done but to finish with it".⁽¹⁾

Language of this kind appeared to have little effect. By 5 August, Salisbury was regretting that he could not swear in French, because he knew of no other method of convincing Rustem Pasha that he was in earnest.⁽²⁾ Driven to extremities, Salisbury decided on the method of public warning. In his speech in the House of Lords, on the occasion of the opening of Parliament, he said:

"If generation after generation, cries of misery come up from the various parts of the Turkish Empire, I am sure that the Sultan cannot blind himself to the possibility that Europe will at some time or other become weary of the appeals that are made to it and the fictitious strength that is given to the Empire will fail it".⁽³⁾

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 10 July 1895; F.O.78/4626 Tel.No.109.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 5 Aug. 1895; F.O.195/1862, Priv.tel.

(3) Hansard, Vol.XXXVI, p.50.

Such language was not very different from that which Salisbury had already used in private conversation. Its purpose was to intimidate the Sultan. Abdul Hamid was no more afraid of the public warning than the private warning, but the Foreign Ministers of Germany and Austria were afraid. When they heard of the speech, they questioned whether Salisbury was really sincere in his protestations of his desire to maintain the status quo. At a time when the atmosphere in Europe was charged with suspicion, Salisbury's speech added fuel to the flames of speculation.

Hatzfeldt was already suspicious. Salisbury's second mistake lay in the conduct of his relationship with the German ambassador. Throughout his previous ministry Salisbury had often had very confidential discussions with Hatzfeldt. The two men had pondered over all kinds of possible future eventualities. Such discussions had been made possible by the relationship of mutual trust which existed between them. In 1895, Hatzfeldt no longer had the same confidence in English policy; yet, Salisbury did not perceive this and attempted to carry on as before. Although, in the light of the new evidence, it is certain that Salisbury did not entertain the ideas which Hatzfeldt attributed to him, the Foreign Secretary must have made some remarks which gave Hatzfeldt

some grounds for the fears he expressed in his despatches that Salisbury contemplated a partition of the Ottoman Empire.

The content of Hatzfeldt's despatches was made known by Hohenlohe to Goluchowski when the two statesmen met at Alt Aussee on 4 August. Goluchowski was appalled. (1) Until then he had fully accepted Salisbury's assurances regarding Britain's desire to maintain the status quo. Goluchowski now questioned whether Salisbury really regarded himself bound by the accords of 1887. The Austrian Foreign Minister's misgivings were increased when he heard of Salisbury's speech in the House of Lords. He instructed Deym to sound Salisbury on the subject of Britain's Eastern policy.

On 16 October, Salisbury found that Deym "appeared to be affected by some speculations published in England regarding the retirement of England altogether from the Mediterranean as a field of political action". (2) It is noteworthy that the ambassador did not mention that the Austrian fears were based

(1) Notes of Goluchowski on discussion with Hohenlohe, 9 Aug. 1895; A.A. Geheimakten, XXV, 462.

(2) Salisbury to Monson, 16 Oct. 1895; F.O.7/1224, Tel.No.98. Deym to Goluchowski, Secr. 17 Oct. 1895; A.A. Geheimakten XXV, 461, No.30B.

primarily on the information given by Hohenlohe. ⁽¹⁾ If the whole matter had been openly discussed, Salisbury could have dealt with it decisively. As it was, he could meet the general fears, expressed by Deym, only with general assurances:

"There was no fear of any movement of public opinion in this country which would result in the withdrawal from the Mediterranean as a field of political action".

Deym then urged the importance of maintaining the Turkish Empire for the longest possible period, because Austria could not tolerate the presence of Russia on the Bosphorus. Salisbury concurred with this statement of policy, as being the policy for a long time professed and supported by England and to which England still adhered.

Deym was quite satisfied. He told Hatzfeldt that, personally, he had never believed that Salisbury had ever seriously intended to partition the Ottoman Empire. This confidence drew from Hatzfeldt a grudging acquiescence: perhaps Deym was right. But Hatzfeldt added that Salisbury had harmed himself by his speech in the House of Lords and people were justified in mistrusting him. The ambassador ⁽²⁾ thought that mistrust had not entirely disappeared. It still

(1) Equally significant is the fact that Hohenlohe, in his report of his conversation with Goluchowski at Ault Aussee made no mention of his communication of the contents of Hatzfeldt's despatches. G.P.X, No.2405.

(2) Deym to Goluchowski; Secr. 31 Oct. 1895, A.A.Geheimakten, XXV, 461.

lingered in Austria and Germany.

Salisbury never understood the reason for the suspicion with which his policy was regarded. In March 1896, he wrote to his ambassador in Berlin that he had heard that the Kaiser was dissatisfied with the conduct of Britain in the Armenian matter of 1895 - that the Kaiser thought it inconsistent with an unreserved resolve to uphold the Turkish Empire. Salisbury denied that there had been any inconsistency. He explained:

"I followed to its end, the policy to which my predecessor had pledged England, but I did nothing more". (1)

He was speaking the truth. Far from contemplating, in 1895, a heroic solution of the Eastern question, Salisbury showed a strange reluctance to depart in any way from the lines of policy which Kimberley had laid down. Salisbury disliked having to execute another's policy. He was determined to devote all his efforts to carrying that policy, as quickly as possible, to its logical conclusion, so that, having fulfilled his obligations, he would be quite free to make his own decisions.

Although Salisbury perceived the basic weaknesses of the

(1) Salisbury to Lascelles, 10 March 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol.122, No.6.

Liberal policy, he found it almost impossible to overcome them. As early as 11 July he observed that there was little likelihood of gaining much help from Russia in carrying through the reforms. But Kimberley had associated British action with Russian action in the compilation of the scheme and Salisbury could do little else but appeal to Russia for help in carrying out what had been a joint undertaking. He asked whether, if the Sultan remained obdurate, Russia was prepared for any form of coercion? If not, would she object to the exercise of it by Britain? (1)

The Russian reply was as unsatisfactory as Salisbury had anticipated it would be:

"The idea of the employment of force was personally repugnant to the Emperor". Lobanow "completely shared the views of H.M. in this respect". (2)

Lobanow maintained that he had never concealed from Lascelles his opinion that the reform scheme, drawn up by the ambassadors at Constantinople, was unworkable. But, he graciously recognized that, after all that had taken place, the Sultan should be induced to grant some reform. He professed himself willing to accept a compromise suggestion, which Currie had put forward. (3)

(1) Salisbury to Lascelles, 27 July 1895; F.O.65/1494, Tel. No.146.

(2) Lascelles to Salisbury, 9 Aug. 1895; F.O.65/1491 No.196 Confid.

(3) Ibid.

Currie urged that, since the Powers had had little success in their efforts to impose on the Sultan a mixed local government, they should try to gain their object - the introduction of a non-Turkish element in a position of authority - by pressing upon the Sultan a mixed Commission to superintend the application of such reforms as were demanded by local requirements. (1) This demand could be made on the basis of the 61st article of the Treaty of Berlin. The suggestion had been adopted and developed by Salisbury. He thought the Commission should be composed of three Europeans (one each from Britain, France and Russia) and four Turks, with the power to act separately for the purpose of collecting information, but with instructions to report collectively as far as they could agree. (2)

It soon became clear that Lobanow was willing to press the mixed Commission only so long as he thought the Sultan would accept it. When Abdul Hamid, frightened by the temper of the population at Constantinople, returned the latest summary of the reforms, which had been presented to him by the ambassadors, with the information that, instead of granting

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 4 Aug. 1895; F.O.195/1867, Priv.tel.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 27 Aug. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No.10.

new reforms, he had withdrawn some of those he had previously granted,⁽¹⁾ Lobanow reacted to the new mood of the Sultan. The Russian ambassador at Constantinople was instructed to demand that the Powers of the Triple Alliance, who were also signatories of the Treaty of Berlin, should be invited to participate in the proposed Commission.⁽²⁾ The prime motive was to restrain Britain.

It might have been expected that Salisbury would seize this opportunity to broaden the basis of the "Near Eastern entente" by inviting the co-operation of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy, who had formerly been of assistance to Britain at Constantinople. But Salisbury recognized that the German Powers disliked Britain's Armenian policy: they thought it "quixotic and dangerous".⁽³⁾ They would be far more likely to hinder than help:

"If we desire to take active measures, it will be more difficult to do so with five Powers hanging on our coat tails than two".⁽⁴⁾

Salisbury refused to do more than inform the Powers of the Triple Alliance of the proposed appointment of the Commission

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 21 Aug. 1895; F.O.78/4616, No.540.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 20 Aug. 1895; F.O.195/1867, Priv.tel.

(3) Salisbury to Currie, 27 Aug. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol.138, No.10.

(4) Salisbury to Currie, 24 Aug. 1895; F.O.195/1862, Priv.tel.

and to request their approval. The Austrians returned the friendly answer that, while reserving the rights of all the signatory Powers, they would do nothing to endanger the success of the Commission. (1) Lobanow had to accept the situation. (2)

But Russia did not mean business. She was only playing for time. Could Britain, in the absence of the co-operation of the other European Powers, apply force to coerce the Sultan? The Liberal Government had made tentative efforts, ordering fleet movements in Turkish waters. But there had not been a decisive show of force. Salisbury recognized this fundamental weakness. On taking office, he wrote to Currie:

"It is indelicate to say anything disparaging of one's predecessors: but my impression is that they have forced you into a very awkward corner. Without using force to deprive the Sultan of his independent sovereignty, you are imposing on him terms which no independent sovereign would accept". (3)

Force was an excuse to men who had to yield - especially in the East, where the Moslem submitted religiously to a decree of fate. The Sultan's subjects would accept a position into which the Sultan had been forced: they would be discontented only if the Sultan had yielded without force having been applied. The problem was to find some part of the Sultan's

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 30 Aug.1895; F.O.78/4628 No.391.

(2) Lascelles to Salisbury, 28 Aug.1895; F.O.65/1491, No.209
Confid.

(3) Salisbury to Currie, 1 July 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No.2.

dominions where Britain alone could apply force without arousing the susceptibilities of the other European Powers. Throughout 1895, Salisbury tried hard to find a solution. But, he was little more successful than Kimberley.

Salisbury considered most carefully the possibility of Britain's acting at Jeddah, on the Red Sea littoral. There was much to recommend such a course. Britain could act alone without causing the alarm which she would undoubtedly cause if she attempted action nearer the Straits. Just as the Straits, because of their strategic position, were sensitive spots in the Sultan's political body, so Jeddah, because of its position as capital of the Hadj, was also a sensitive spot.

Salisbury contemplated occupying Jeddah.⁽¹⁾ But the British Military attaché at Constantinople had warned the Foreign Office that, unless the operation were supported by a considerable contingent of Indian troops, it would prove a very difficult business. Even a naval demonstration in the Red Sea was not a measure to be recommended owing to climatic conditions.⁽²⁾

There were undoubtedly great difficulties in the way of

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 12 Aug. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol.138, No.7.

(2) Memorandum by Col. Chermiside, enclosed in Currie to Kimberley, 6 June 1895, F.O.78/4613, No.368.

action in this area. They were responsible for keeping the idea of action in the realms of discussion. But Salisbury never openly referred to the difficulties. As late as December he was still writing about the possibility of sending iron clads down to Jeddah. ⁽¹⁾ For him, it had become a form of reassurance.

He turned to the Admiralty for immediate assistance. Here again he was confronted by difficulties. There was a difference of opinion between him and Goschen as to the purpose to which the fleet should be put. Salisbury thought a major duty of the fleet should be to reinforce diplomatic operations: he wanted ships to "over-awe" the Sultan. Goschen thought the prime purpose of the fleet was to ensure the safety of Britain and to be prepared to fight, if necessary. ⁽²⁾ Consequently, he was very cautious in giving his permission for any fleet movements. Nevertheless, he did his best to provide Salisbury with the necessary naval support. In October he responded immediately to Salisbury's request that the fleet should not sail from Lemnos to Zante, but should remain in Turkish waters. ⁽³⁾

(1) Salisbury to Goschen, 3 Dec. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Goschen box.

(2) Goschen to Salisbury, 23 Dec. 1896; ibid.

(3) Salisbury to Goschen, 1 Oct. 1895; ibid.
Goschen to Salisbury, 4 Oct. 1895; ibid.

The Sultan was alarmed by the proximity of the fleet. On 7 and 8 October he sent messages to Currie, asking that it should be removed to a more distant point. ⁽¹⁾ He believed that the action of the Armenian Revolutionary Committee (at that time provoking disturbances) was based on the proximity of the British fleet. Currie replied that, only after the reforms demanded by the ambassadors had been promulgated, could a change be made in the position of the fleet.

The diplomatic pressure which Britain exerted over the Jeddah affair ⁽²⁾ and over the mixed Commission, as well as the naval pressure, ⁽³⁾ all combined to break the Sultan's resistance. On 17 October he issued an iradé, accepting the reforms of the ambassadors. But such is the irony of fate that, almost immediately afterwards, the very situation which the reforms were meant to obviate, developed. A state of anarchy, arising from massacres at Constantinople, spread throughout the Empire.

How were the Powers to deal with the crisis? Goluchowski took the lead. He urged that the Powers should come to agreement

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 7 & 8 Oct. 1895; F.O.78/1868, No.461, F.O.78/4629, No.468.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 21 Sept. 1895; F.O.195/1867, Priv.tel.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 18 Oct. 1895; F.O.78/4619, No.687.

on three points: the protection of the embassies at Constantinople, the manner in which European unison could be openly displayed, a decision as to the concerted employment of force in the event of a serious revolutionary outbreak in the Turkish capital. For the first, he thought that the suggestion, already made by Nelidow - that the Powers should call up a second stationnaire - was adequate. For the second, he suggested the despatch of a squadron to the Levant by France, Italy Germany and Austria. If events should render necessary such a step as the concentration of a combined naval force in the Bosphorus, the diplomatic representatives at Constantinople should decide on "the opportuness of such action and there should be no question of referring home for instructions". (1)

The last two suggestions caused great consternation in St. Petersburg. The Russians had, throughout, devoted all their energies to preventing the very action Goluchowski now recommended. They decided to mobilise their Black Sea Fleet. If British ships entered the Dardanelles, Russian ships would enter the Bosphorus and arrive at Constantinople at the same time as the British ships. Nelidow and others urged that,

(1) Monson to Salisbury, 14 Nov. 1895; F.O.7/1229, No.333.

whatever happened, Russia should take advantage of the crisis to seize control of the forts of the Bosphorus. (1)

British agents at the Black Sea ports sent home accounts of the Russian preparations. A common factor was a note of urgency. The British consul general at Odeassa wrote that the Black Sea fleet, although officially reported to be out of Commission, was in a state of readiness for sea at a few hours' notice. (2) Lloyds reported from Sevastopol that 4 iron clads, 2 gunboats and 3 of the best torpedoes were "waiting with steam, ready for further orders". Two of the biggest transports of the Volunteer Fleet were ready to start with them. The greatest precautions had been, and were still being taken, to prevent all news of the preparations from leaking abroad. (3)

The sudden putting into commission of the Black Sea fleet aroused the suspicions of Salisbury. He asked himself: did Russia wish to seize Constantinople? Had she the audacity to do it? They were difficult questions to answer.

(1) V. Khvostov: "Blizhne-Vostochnyi Krizis, 1895-97 gg". (Istorik Marksist, XIII, 1929, pp.19-54. cf. W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, pp.25-8, p.207.

(2) A.J. Marder, op.cit. p.246.

(3) Salisbury to Currie, 30 Nov. 1895; F.O.195/1863, No.386 enclosing copy of letter from Admiralty.

Salisbury thought the only prudent course was to assume an unfavourable answer.⁽¹⁾ Thus he was face to face with the situation he had discussed hypothetically with Deym. Here was the test case. Now was the time for Salisbury to prove, by his actions, the sincerity of his words to Deym.

Salisbury considered that the seizure of Constantinople was really a question of surprise: Russian ships could be there in four days and troops to cover them in ten. If they once manned the Dardanelles their position would be impregnable. But if the British ambassador could act immediately and summon the British fleet through the Dardanelles, Salisbury thought he would have a fair chance of seeing the British ships arrive at Constantinople first.⁽²⁾ As early as the beginning of October Salisbury had asked Goschen to give the Commander of the British squadron in the Levant instructions to conform to the orders of Currie.⁽³⁾ He had justified his request by observing that, before the days of the telegraph, the ambassador had the disposal of the fleet. In time of great emergency, that power should still be in the

(1) Salisbury to Goschen, 3 Dec. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Goschen box.

(2) Ibid.

(3) A.J. Marder, op.cit. p.243.
Salisbury to Goschen, 9 Oct. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Goschen box.

ambassador's hands. Goschen had thought Salisbury's request "a very large order".⁽¹⁾ He consistently refused to give Currie carte blanche:

"Without knowing (and I do not know) what Currie would do with the fleet, what end the policy he might pursue might have in view, I cannot reconcile myself to the expediency of that one step as at present advised ... It is a different thing to support your policy and to support Currie's".⁽²⁾

The day for ambassadors like Stratford Canning was well and truly over.

But in November the situation was so grave that Salisbury thought the time had come to appeal to the Cabinet. He called a special meeting and proposed that, in case Russia menaced a descent on the Bosphorus, Currie should be allowed to summon the British fleet through the Dardanelles. Objections were raised by Goschen and Richards, the First Sea Lord; also, by Balfour and Chamberlain. Richards flatly declined to have anything to do with the idea and left the room.⁽³⁾ The objections prevailed in the Cabinet and Salisbury accepted its decision. He was "much put out".⁽⁴⁾ He wrote to Goschen:

(1) Goschen to Salisbury, 4 Oct. 1895; Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Private letter of Admiral Custance; A.J. Marder, op.cit. p. 244

(4) Memorandum by Earl St. Aldwyn, d. between 16 Dec. 1913 and 23 Jan. 1914; Hicks Beach Papers, P.C.C/69.

"My position is becoming one of exceeding difficulty - for, in deference to the apprehensions of the Admiralty, and I am bound to add - of Balfour and Chamberlain - I am administering a policy in which I entirely disbelieve and which may lead to much disgrace". (1)

Salisbury believed that the keeping of Constantinople out of Russian hands had been proclaimed as a policy by British statesmen for so long that, if the city were surrendered to Russia, the blow to British prestige would be tremendous. He had asked that precautions against the latter contingency should be taken by giving to Currie permission to summon the British fleet. That permission had been refused and Salisbury thought the refusal meant, or might mean, the surrender of Constantinople to Russia. From that time he felt constantly that he was administering a policy in which he disbelieved.

(2)
He was "cut to the heart". He had not expected the members of the Cabinet to be so greatly influenced by the opinions of the Admiralty. As for the Admiralty, Salisbury thought there was something "theological" in the absolute confidence they had in the opinions of their experts. (3) The latter continually stressed the danger the British fleet would

(1) Salisbury to Goschen, 22 Nov. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Goschen box.

(2) Goschen to Salisbury, 23 Dec. 1896; ibid.

(3) Salisbury to Goschen, 12 Dec. 1895; ibid.

incur at the far end of the Mediterranean, if the French fleet should emerge from Toulon: it would be trapped between the French and Russian fleets. Salisbury himself did not believe that the junction of Russia and France in a maritime war was "at all a probable contingency"; and, if it were, he did not believe that the Admiralty figures properly represented the force of their combined fleets, which it was supposed to be necessary for the British to over-top. (1) In January 1896, he stated his belief that war with America was "more of a reality than the future Russo-French coalition". (2)

Since Salisbury held these convictions so strongly, it is surprising that he did not make more effort, in November 1895, to overrule the opinions of the members of his Cabinet. Lord St. Aldwyn, in the memorandum which he sent Lady Gwendoline in 1914, remarked that Lord Salisbury never exercised the same control over his colleagues in or out of the Cabinet, that Lord Beaconsfield had done. Lord St. Aldwyn had known Lord Beaconsfield over-rule the opinions of every member of his Cabinet but one. Lord Salisbury

(1) Salisbury to Hicks Beach, 2 Jan. 1896; Hicks Beach Papers, PCC/69.

(2) Ibid.

frequently allowed important matters to be decided by majority vote, even against his own opinion. Lord St. Aldwyn thought that Salisbury's record as Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary would have gained if his nature had been harder (1) and more self-assertive.

It is impossible not to concur with this opinion. One cannot but regret that Salisbury did not, in November, make more effort to over-rule the opinions of his colleagues. It is now known that, in many of his ideas, Salisbury was more near the truth than the Admiralty. Investigation showed the Russians that their Black Sea Fleet was not in such good order as had been imagined. Requests for armed assistance to their French ally brought the discouraging reply that:

"Only a great national interest, like the regulation anew" of the Alsace-Lorraine question, "would be sufficient to justify ... engagements implying military action in which the Great Powers might find themselves successively involved". (2)

There was to be no French support for a Russian offensive in the Near East.

It is probable that the British fleet could have passed the Dardanelles and arrived safely at Constantinople in

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- (1) Memorandum by Earl St. Aldwyn, d. between 16 Dec. 1913, and 23 Jan. 1914; Hicks Beach Papers, PCC/69.
- (2) D.D.F., 1871-1914, Series III, Vol.II, No.202, quoted by W.L. Langer, op.cit., p.208.

November 1895. But this chance was missed because Salisbury did not assert his authority in the Cabinet. He failed not only to over-rule the opinions of his colleagues, he failed also to make completely clear the prime reason for his request to send the fleet through the Dardanelles.

Hicks Beach understood that Salisbury wanted the fleet sent to "coerce Turkey into proper treatment of the Armenians".⁽¹⁾

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, like many other Ministers, believed that few people in Britain would run the risk of a European war on the chance that further intervention by Britain would help the Armenians.⁽²⁾ Goschen noted that

discussion in the Cabinet was confused and he doubted whether they ever came to any definite decision at all.⁽³⁾

Goschen himself did not believe that Russia really meant to descend on Constantinople.⁽⁴⁾ As the outcome showed, he was right: when the Russians discovered that their fleet was inadequately prepared for action, they devoted their efforts to preventing action by the other Powers. Although Goschen objected, on this particular occasion, to sending the British

(1) cf. Memorandum of 16 Dec. 1913, *op. cit.*

(2) Hicks Beach to Salisbury, 20 Dec. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Hicks Beach Box 111.

(3) Goschen to Salisbury, 22 Dec. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Goschen box.

(4) Ibid.

fleet through the Dardanelles, he did not maintain that that decision should be final and operative from that time onwards. He always thought that the Dardanelles could be passed, though he did not believe it would be an easy operation.⁽¹⁾ On 7 December he was still writing to Salisbury about the necessity of examining the question as to a seizure of the outer forts of the Dardanelles in certain contingencies. He asked whether the War Office had lately had before them the possibility of co-operation at the mouth of the Dardanelles:

"Whether or not to go through the Straits, every step which might be taken at this neck of the bottle should be considered".⁽²⁾

But Salisbury took very much to heart the Cabinet's refusal. For him it marked a turning point. Although, at the time, his prime motive for the request to send up the fleet was to safeguard Constantinople from possible Russian aggression; afterwards, he realised that the same Cabinet decision would hold good, should he wish to send the fleet through the Dardanelles to coerce the Sultan: the Cabinet and the Admiralty thought the undertaking too dangerous.

(1) Goschen to Salisbury, 7 Dec. 1895; Salisbury Papers, Goschen box.

(2) Ibid.

In the past Britain had always relied on naval measures in this vital strategic area to coerce the Sultan. Since such action was no longer considered practicable, unless Britain could find other means of coercing the Sultan, or unless she could institute a new governing power in Turkey, she would have no hold on any of the Turkish territories - except, possibly, Egypt. The realisation that such a state of affairs would necessitate the formulation of a new policy came slowly in the following years.

CHAPTER VISalisbury Remains Loyal to Austria.

It was evident by the turn of the year 1895 that the major part of Britain's Armenian policy had failed. The Sultan had given in words nearly all that had been asked, but Britain was, as Salisbury bitterly lamented, "no forrarder".⁽¹⁾ The execution of the reforms, accepted by the Sultan in October, had "gone no further than the filling up of a large register, beautifully bound".⁽²⁾ In Turkey, it was expected that words should be accepted as deeds.

The Sultan considered that he had triumphed and that he owed much of his success to Russia, who had refused to consider Britain's proposal to apply coercive measures. He showed his gratitude by sending to St. Petersburg a special embassy, led by Arif Pasha, with magnificent gifts for the Tsarina. A more than usually earnest appeal was made to the Tsar for protection. Russian engineer officers were given permission to inspect the fortifications of the

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 17 Dec., 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 135, No. 19.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 5 March, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 18.

Dardanelles, with a view to strengthening them.⁽¹⁾ These significant actions were observed by Currie, who quickly reported that "something was going on between Russia and Turkey".⁽²⁾ Currie believed that it was impossible that Russia would completely abandon her role as protector of Christians and he, therefore, thought it likely that she contemplated some scheme of occupation of the Asiatic provinces. His view seemed confirmed when he learnt that the Tsar had intimated that he would guarantee the Sultan's safety on condition that Russia should occupy the six Anatolian provinces as far as Diabekir and Trebizond for at least ten years, paying the surplus revenues to Turkey.⁽³⁾

The negotiations were kept secret and, although the general opinion was that an entente existed between the two countries, no one knew to what lengths it went. On 23 January the Pall Mall Gazette published an alarmist telegram from Constantinople positively affirming that an offensive and defensive alliance had been concluded between Russia and Turkey on the basis of the Treaty of

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 7 Jan., 1896; F.O.195/1914, Tel. No. 18. Secr.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 13 Jan., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 2.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 10 Jan., 1896; F.O.78/4723, Tel. No. 25 Secr.

Unkiar Skelessi and ratifications exchanged by Arif Pasha at St. Petersburg. (1)

The news greatly troubled Salisbury, who, as in former years, turned for support to the Powers of the Triple Alliance. The reception given to his overtures showed how greatly the confidence of the Continental Powers had been undermined by Britain's Armenian policy. Salisbury himself had observed how curious it was that two "psychological climates" could exist so utterly different as those of Britain and Continental Europe. He did not believe that, from Archangel to Cadiz, there was a soul who cared whether the Armenians were exterminated or not. But in Britain the sympathy for them, though the area over which it extended was not very large, approached to frenzy in its intensity. (2) Salisbury had been forced by the pressure of public opinion to do what he could for the Armenians. He denied that his action had been "inconsistent with an unreserved resolve to uphold the Ottoman Empire". But people on the Continent found it difficult to believe that Britain had acted purely from humanitarian motives. Salisbury was surprised to learn that Goluchowski was not absolutely convinced that

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 23 Jan., 1896; F.O.78/4722, Tel. No. 15.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 27 Aug., 1895; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 10.

Britain herself would not give some encouragement to Russia to occupy the disturbed provinces of Asia Minor for the purposes of pacification. (1)

The immediate cause of Goluchowski's suspicions was eventually found to be the result of a misunderstanding of the purport of a communication which Salisbury had made to Russia in January. When Salisbury heard from Currie that the only obstacle which prevented the ambassadors from concerting measures for remedying the state of things in Turkey lay in the fact that the concert, as far as the Russian ambassador was concerned, was limited to the protection of foreigners, (2) Salisbury sent a despatch to St. Petersburg, asking that Nelidov should be given instructions to discuss the general situation. Lobanow immediately proclaimed that Salisbury had proposed to Russia to put the Sultan under "a sort of tutelle of the Powers". (3) Goluchowski thought it highly suspicious that Britain should have made the communication to Russia alone. Was Britain contemplating some scheme which went far beyond her avowed

(1) Monson to Salisbury, 1 Jan., 1896; F.O.7/1241, No. 2 Secr.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 19 Dec., 1895; F.O.78/4625, No. 967 Confid.

(3) Goschen to Salisbury, 30 Jan., 1896; F.O.65/1514, No. 18 Confid.
Gosselin to Salisbury, 25 Jan., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 121, No. 26.

policy? He was not completely reassured by Salisbury's explanations. He believed that Nelidov must be able to discuss the general situation without special instructions from his Government. (1)

There was a fundamental difference of opinion between the British and Austrian Ministers as to the mode of procedure most likely to delay the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire. Goluchowski thought the Powers ought to sit still and give time to the Sultan, who alone had the necessary authority to re-establish order and carry out the necessary reforms. (2) Salisbury believed that this negative policy would not arrest the evils by which the Ottoman Empire was afflicted. While he did not propose any definite course of action, he thought it wise to seek the advice of the ambassadors on the spot, with a view to finding a remedy for the existing state of things. (3)

Goluchowski explained frankly to Monson that he was assailed by doubts as to British policy on two matters. First, the maintenance of the status quo in the Near East.

- (1) Monson to Salisbury, 23 Jan., 1896; F.O.7/1241, No. 28 Secr.
- (2) Monson to Salisbury, 16 Dec., 1895; F.O.7/1229, No. 370.
- (3) Salisbury to Currie, 28 Jan., 1896; F.O.195/1910, No. 11.

Britain had always professed herself anxious to maintain it, but her recent actions aroused the suspicion that British policy "did not mean this at all". Then, there was the principle of opposing Russian aggression in the East. He had always regarded that principle as the basis of the identical policy which Britain and Austria pursued there. But he was now forced to ask whether Britain considered her interests in the Mediterranean to be still the same or whether they had changed?⁽¹⁾ Goluchowski felt the need for a definite assurance as to the objectives of British policy. But his craving for reassurance was such that he was no longer content with the vague statements of principle, exchanged between the two Governments in 1887. He now asked for an agreement in which Britain would definitely pledge herself to oppose with force any attempt by any Power to force the Straits or attack Constantinople. In fact he instructed his ambassador, Deym, to attempt to negotiate a very far-reaching new treaty with Britain.⁽²⁾

The importunities of the Austrians forced Salisbury to define very clearly the aims of his policy and to explain

(1) Monson to Salisbury, 18 Feb., 1896; F.O.7/1241, No. 60 secr.

(2) This fact is elaborated in the article by J.A.S. Grenville "Goluchowski, Salisbury and the Mediterranean Agreements, 1895-97"; Slavonic and East European Review, Vol. XXXVI, No. 87, June, 1958, pp. 355-361.

the difficulties in the way of the execution of that policy. Salisbury declared that he himself would always do his utmost to keep Constantinople and the Straits out of Russian hands. He was quite willing to renew the accords of 1887. But he could not commit his country to any written engagement involving an obligation to go to war. That attitude was prescribed to him by Britain's "popular constitution": the power of the Government to act depended upon the practical sentiment prevailing at the moment when the necessity arose and it was impossible to foresee that sentiment.⁽¹⁾ The constitutional objection was to Salisbury a very real one. He did not put it forward simply to avoid the necessity of admitting other objections. In 1887, after the Mediterranean Agreements had been concluded, Salisbury expressed to the Queen his opinion that they constituted "as close an alliance as the Parliamentary character of British institutions would permit".⁽²⁾

In 1896, Salisbury was quite prepared to admit that other difficulties had presented themselves in the

- (1) Salisbury to Monson, 4 Feb., 1896; F.O.7/1240, No. 17 secr. printed in BO VIII, pp. 4-5.
 Deym to Goluchowski, 23 Jan., 1896; printed in the Slavonic Review, Vol. XXIX, 1950-51: unpublished documents from the Austrian archives selected by Eurof Walters.
 Deym to Goluchowski, 29 Jan., 1896; Ibid, p. 278.
 Deym to Goluchowski, 6 Feb., 1896; Ibid, pp. 279-83.
- (2) Salisbury to the Queen, 2 Feb., 1887; Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd. Series (1930) Vol. I, pp. 268-70.

intervening years. A major consideration was the change in the attitude of the British public towards the Sultan. The cruelties which had recently been exercised upon the Christian subjects of the Sultan, without any apparent discouragement on the part of the Turkish Government, had "excited feelings of deep horror and indignation in Britain". Salisbury thought that "for some time to come the recollection of what had taken place would prevent the growth of any sympathy for the Sultan's Government or any desire to shield him from any danger by which he might be threatened." He very much doubted whether "public opinion would sanction a war to defend the Ottoman Empire". He could not consent to enter into an engagement, on behalf of the Government, which he had no certainty of being able to fulfil. On the other hand, Salisbury emphasized that this statement should not be taken as a declaration that Britain would not, under any circumstances, act in defence of the Ottoman Empire against Russian aggression. He thought:

"It was probable that a sight of any attempt, if ever it were made, to make Russia master of the Straits, would create a violent revulsion of feeling in England and as strong a desire for resistance as was aroused by the approach of the Russian armies to Constantinople in 1878." (1)

(1) Salisbury to Monson, 26 Feb., 1896; F.O.7/1240, No. 24 Secr.

This expression of opinion was of extreme importance, because it was the opinion, not of Salisbury alone, but of the majority of the British Cabinet.⁽¹⁾ The demands of Goluchowski and the Emperor of Austria that Britain should explain her Mediterranean policy more clearly had been so imperative that Salisbury had called a special Cabinet to discuss the Eastern question. The fact that Salisbury had gone so far as to lay the matter before the Cabinet was in itself significant: he had undertaken more than Rosebery had been prepared to undertake. The manner in which Salisbury presented the problem to the Cabinet was also significant: it was a question of deciding whether Britain should be the friend of the Triple Alliance or the friend of Russia. Salisbury:

"expressed himself strongly against any policy that would cut Austria adrift. It would reconstitute the Dreikaiserbund - a state of things which must be injurious to Great Britain."

Chamberlain declared that the world situation was such that antagonism to Russia was a mistake: Britain would occupy a stronger position in Europe if she were the friend of Russia. Opinions in the Cabinet were "much divided", but it was generally agreed that, although the feeling in Britain (even on the Tory side) was much more favourable to

(1) Salisbury to the Queen, 19 Feb., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 84, No. 10. (Copy)

Russia and much more adverse to the Turks than it used to be, the Government might be allowed by the people of Britain to go to war in defence of the Straits to prevent them being appropriated by Russia.

Salisbury had won over the majority of the Cabinet Ministers to his view, but there remained the practical problem of whether Britain would, in fact, be able to defend the Straits. Salisbury told Deym quite frankly that the Admiralty were very apprehensive of the dangers involved in such an undertaking - the fortifications of the Dardanelles were much stronger than they had been in 1887. But Salisbury gave it as his personal opinion that Britain would certainly be able to defend the Straits if she were sufficiently supported from the land by Austria. (1)

The strategic problem was not fully discussed by Salisbury and Deym. Salisbury did not stress the matter unduly because he had recently received encouragement from a memorandum by Colonel Chernside, who argued that, in case of hostile action by Russia against the Straits, it would be possible for Britain to seize the S.W. extremity of the Gallipoli peninsula and hold that position until reinforcements arrived. The locality was an important strategic

(1) Deym to Goluchowski, 29 Jan., 1896; printed in Slavonic Review, op.cit., vol. XXIX, p. 278.

position and, if taken in conjunction with the occupation of the island of Lemnos, it would enable Britain to control the Dardanelles.⁽¹⁾ The scheme was accepted as feasible until the D.M.I. and D.N.I. raised the insuperable objections that Britain would be unable to muster and dispatch in time the requisite number of soldiers.⁽²⁾ Even then, however, Salisbury did not despair. Throughout 1896, the Defence Department was urged to study all the possible measures which Britain could take to counter a Russian attack on the Straits.

At this time, Salisbury was more concerned with "the result upon the safety of Constantinople of the recent conversion of Prince Boris" and the subsequent reconciliation of Bulgaria and Russia.⁽³⁾ As long as Bulgaria was hostile to Russia, any Russian expedition against Constantinople would have to depend upon communications with the sea and it would be liable to interruption by any power stronger than Russia upon the sea. But, if Russia

(1) Copy of a Secret Memorandum by Colonel Chermiside, enclosed in Currie to Salisbury, 29 Jan., 1896; F.O.78/4884, No. 78 Secr. A. J. Marder, op.cit., p. 248.

(2) D.M.I., E. F. Chapman, to Permanent Under-secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 26 Feb., 1896; A.J. Marder, op.cit., pp. 249-50.

(3) Salisbury to Monson, 26 Feb., 1896; F.O.7/1240, No. 24 Secr.

could command an uninterrupted road from the Pruth to the Bosphorus, she would be comparatively indifferent to any dangers which might menace her communications with Sebastopol. It was still too early to forecast with certainty the course of events in Bulgaria. There were indications that the new relations which Bulgaria had established with Russia would lead to considerable difficulties and inconveniences for Bulgaria.⁽¹⁾ Currie believed that, if Britain were "to hold out the hand of friendship to Bulgaria" the principality would be encouraged to take an independent attitude.⁽²⁾

The conversations of Salisbury and Deym, in January and February 1896, were inconclusive. Goluchowski was disappointed that he had failed to bind Britain more closely, but he still believed that, if an emergency arose, Britain would co-operate loyally with Austria and Italy and so he did not see any need for changing Austria's foreign policy. Salisbury repeatedly stated that Britain's policy had not changed: Britain wished to be as good friends with the Powers of the Triple Alliance as she had been in 1892:

"We wish to lean on the Triple Alliance, without belonging to it. But, in 1892, as now, we kept free from any engagement to go to war in any contingency whatever. That is the attitude

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 30 March, 1896; F.O.78/4705, No. 247.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 16 April, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 23.

prescribed to us by our Parliamentary constitution ... Whether the attitude is reasonable or not, it is the attitude we maintained from 1886 to 1892." (1)

Although the Armenian troubles, Britain's refusal to allow the Italians to occupy Zeyla⁽²⁾ and the Kruger telegram⁽³⁾ had introduced elements of estrangement into Britain's relations with the Powers of the Triple Alliance, in March it seemed that friendly relations were once again restored. The Kaiser had found it more difficult than he had expected to form a coalition of the Continental Powers against Britain.⁽⁴⁾ The support of Britain had become essential to the Italians, if they were to retrieve their position in Abyssinia. William II executed a complete volte face and stated his wish to maintain friendly relations with Britain:

"She and Germany were the two great Protestant Powers, standing in the forefront of civilization and united by ties of blood, religion and mutual interests." (5)

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- (1) Salisbury to Lascelles, 10 March, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 122, No. 6.
- (2) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 276.
- (3) Ibid, pp. 234-238.
- (4) Ibid, pp. 228-233, p. 248.
- (5) Lascelles to Salisbury, 6 March, 1896; F.O.64/1376, No. 61 Secr, enclosing Gen. M. Grierson's secret despatch to Lascelles, 3 March 1896.
Gosselin to Salisbury, 7 March, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 121, No. 30.

The Kaiser promised German aid for the proposed British expedition against the Dervishes in the Sudan, provided Dongola was made its first objective: an advance against that city would compel the Dervishes to abandon their campaign against the Italian colonies.⁽¹⁾ Britain could extricate her old Mediterranean ally from a dangerous position at the same time as she extended her own power in Egypt.

The situation which developed as a result of the Dongola advance served to define very clearly the grouping of the European Powers: the parties of the Triple Alliance confronted France and Russia, with Britain on the side of the former. On 17 April, Monson found Goluchowski anxious to emphasize:

"The belief entertained at Rome, Berlin and Vienna that England now occupies towards the Triple Alliance the same position as that which subsisted until the discussion of the Armenian reforms brought into strong relief her apparent isolation."⁽²⁾

Goluchowski's one complaint was that British influence at Constantinople had greatly diminished. He deplored "the material brutal fact" that the dominating influence, once

(1) Memorandum by Marschall, 4 March, 1896, GP XL, No. 2771.

(2) Monson to Salisbury, 17 April, 1896; F.O.7/1242, No. 121 Conf.
Monson to Salisbury, 17 April, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 91, No. 34.

exercised by Britain, was now wielded by Russia.⁽¹⁾ His observations moved Currie to write a long despatch, describing the situation at Constantinople.⁽²⁾ The despatch was regarded as being sufficiently important to warrant printing for the use of the Cabinet. Currie refused to admit the correctness of Goluchowski's estimation of the state of British influence at Constantinople. Britain's task, for the last eighteen months, had been to obtain reforms for the Christians and security for their lives and property. Although she had not been able to force the Sultan to execute the main body of reforms, Britain had achieved a number of her aims:

"Many excesses have been prevented, many lives have been saved, some objectionable officials have been removed, mediation has been successfully employed, many prisoners have been released."

No doubt the Sultan bitterly resented Britain's action, but his hatred of Britain, which dated from the time of Sir Henry Layard's departure, could hardly be stronger than it was before the Armenian question occurred:

"It is now, at any rate, tempered by fear."
 "He fears us more from having felt how intensely disagreeable we can make ourselves. Therefore, our influence, after the present

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- (1) Lascelles to Salisbury, 11 March, 1896, F.O.64/1376, No. 71 Very Confid: reporting a conversation with Goluchowski who was on a visit to Berlin.
- (2) Currie to Salisbury, 12 April, 1896; F.O.78/4705, No. 273.

crisis has subsided, will remain much what it was."⁽¹⁾
The exceptional position of Nelidov did not really betoken any important change in the situation. The power of Russia over Turkey was due to her geographical position and the material force at her command: recent events had only increased it in so far as they had diminished the probability of Britain's interference on behalf of the Ottoman Empire. As long as Russia gave the Sultan the support which enabled him to neglect his treaty engagements, her ambassador would always be received with favour.

Currie's despatch, besides constituting a defence of his own work as ambassador, presented a fairly accurate description of the state of affairs at Constantinople. The only criticism which could be levelled against the despatch was that it did not sufficiently emphasize one important change which had occurred: the ambassadors of the Powers of the Triple Alliance no longer wholeheartedly supported Currie in any action he might take against the activities of the Russian and French ambassadors. The united front of former times had been broken and Russia was reaping the benefit. Once the Armenian troubles had demonstrated just how easily the status quo in Turkey might be upset, the

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 20 Feb., 1896, Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 12.

Austrians became extremely cautious: often their views were more in harmony with the Russians than the British - everything possible should be done to maintain the status quo, even at expense to other aspects of policy. For some time the Germans had pursued an independent line at the Turkish capital, which consisted in doing nothing which would be distasteful to the Sultan. Political considerations were sacrificed to economic considerations: nothing should be done which might result in loss of orders for German food stuffs and other commodities.⁽¹⁾ The new Italian ambassador was "not nearly so pertinacious" as Catalani and little reliance could be placed upon him.⁽²⁾

The fluid state of the grouping of Powers at Constantinople was demonstrated when troubles in Crete made some action on their part imperative. Some of the Cretans, who were anxious for the union of Crete with Greece, having formed an influential committee in Greece, organised a large-scale agitation in the island.⁽³⁾ In May, a violent outbreak at Canea, in which many Christians were killed,

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 23 April, 1896, Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 25.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 10 Feb., 1896, Ibid, No. 9.

(3) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 317.
Herbert to Salisbury, 10 June, 1896; F.O.78/4701, No. 458 Secr.

caused Britain, France, Russia and Italy to send war ships. Unless the Great Powers could quickly enforce a settlement, it seemed likely that outbreaks would also occur in Macedonia and a general conflagration would ensue, which would bring down the Turkish Empire.

At Constantinople, the British and French ambassadors at first took the lead in pressing the Sultan to grant reforms to the Cretans. But the Turkish Government seemed determined to suppress the insurrection by force. At a meeting of the ambassadors on the 10 June, Cambon insisted that the Turks should be given a lesson and that Turkey should be compelled by the common action of the six Powers, to hold her hand in Crete.⁽¹⁾ It was noteworthy that Cambon was able to take so strong a line only because the Russian ambassador was absent: once Nelidov returned, Cambon had to moderate his language. When the Porte finally accepted the measures advocated by the six ambassadors for restoring tranquillity in Crete, it was influenced primarily by the action of Calice. The Austrian ambassador, being afraid that prolonged agitation in Crete would encourage insurrection in Macedonia, addressed to Izzet Bey (the Sultan's chief adviser) a private letter which contained a very

(1) Herbert to Salisbury, 11 June, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 31.

strong warning as to the risks Turkey was running.⁽¹⁾

Throughout the negotiations, the Russian chargé d'affaires had shown himself extremely hostile to Britain. He suspected that Britain was working for a protectorate over Crete and devoted himself to seeing that Britain should be given no opportunity to act alone there. He protested against a journey which Mr. Biliotti (the British Consul in Crete) proposed to make to distribute money which had been collected in Britain for the relief of the Cretans.⁽²⁾ He proposed that the ambassadors at Constantinople should write to their consuls in Crete, requesting them to instruct the commanders of their ships of war in Cretan waters "to act together as much as possible."⁽³⁾ Mr. Herbert, the British chargé d'affaires at Constantinople, described, in a private letter to Salisbury, the position taken by the ambassadors when these two matters were discussed:

"Cambon supports him (the Russian chargé d'affaires) because he is obliged to and the German agrees, because, for some reason or other, he is also inclined to be suspicious as to our action in Crete. The Austrian does not believe the Russian stories, but he humours

(1) Herbert to Salisbury, 4 July, 1896; F.O.78/4709, No. 518 B. Secr.

(2) Herbert to Salisbury, 8 July, 1896; F.O.78/4709, No. 542 Confid.

(3) Herbert to Salisbury, 23 July, 1896; F.O.78/4724, No. 294 Secr.

the French and Russian representatives in order to keep them in line. The Italian frankly supports me, but we are only two against four and we have to give way if we want to keep up the accord." (1)

The concert of the ambassadors had succeeded in persuading the Sultan to offer reasonable terms to the Cretan insurgents, but it still had to persuade the insurgents to accept the terms. As long as they received aid from Greece, it was unlikely that they would be satisfied with anything less than annexation to Greece, which the Powers could never permit. In July, Goluchowski took the matter temporarily out of the hands of the ambassadors at Constantinople, when he proposed that the Powers should address a collective note to the Greek government, calling on them to take effective measures for the prevention of the importation into Crete of arms and ammunition and the dispatch of volunteer reinforcements to the island. If this step were not sufficient to stay hostilities, the Powers should agree to a pacific blockade of the island by their combined fleets. (2)

The ambassadors at Constantinople considered the latter

(1) Herbert to Salisbury, 23 July, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 42.

(2) Memorandum by Sanderson, 25 July 1896; F.O.7/1240.
Gosselin to Salisbury, 28 July, 1896; F.O.64/1378,
No. 245.

proposal to be premature. Goluchowski had omitted to consult Calice before making it. The Austrian ambassador was hurt at the slight and said openly that, if he had been consulted he would have spoken strongly against such a measure being taken at that time.⁽¹⁾ But the British Government effectively quashed the proposal by its refusal to take part in the blockade: it was against the traditional policy of Britain to intervene by force between a Sovereign and his subjects and, in any case, British public opinion would never allow the Government to ally themselves with the Sultan against his Christian subjects.⁽²⁾ The action of the British Government produced a very painful impression upon Goluchowski. He considered the treatment awarded to his suggestion as "somewhat contemptuous and scornful" - he felt the manner of its rejection more than the rejection itself.⁽³⁾ The Austrian Foreign Minister was notoriously vain and a blow had been struck to his vanity. The soreness he felt influenced his attitude to Britain for some time to come.

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 6 Aug. 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 43.

(2) Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 Aug., 1896; F.O.64/1378, No. 259 Confid.

(3) Rumbold to Salisbury, 27 Sept., 1897; F.O.7/1259, No. 326, Very confid.

In Germany, the reaction to Britain's refusal to join with the Powers in a blockade of Crete was even more pronounced. The views prevailing there were reflected in two articles in the Cologne Gazette:

"It used to be the boast of England that she maintained the integrity of Turkey. The Armenian question was the first occasion for the change and certainly England's action might well have resulted in a general conflagration. In this last matter (the Cretan question) we hoped that England would be found on the side of the Powers who, without selfish end, aimed only at the maintenance of peace ... we find we are mistaken." (1)

The second article continued in a similar vein:

England "always begins with the most beautiful speeches about liberty and humanity and, behind them, pursues, in decent obscurity, her own shop-keeping business. England will go to war to propagate the blessings of opium or sacrifice in the cause of humanity as many leading articles as you wish, but you will never get the world to believe that England will stir a hand in the cause of humanity for sentimental reasons."

England remained the defender of the integrity of Turkey only until, as a reward for her exertions, she gained possession of as much Turkish territory as suited her private ends.

The writer of the Cologne Gazette was convinced that England's present object was to secure the independence of Crete under a chieftain who would be dependent upon England. (2)

(1) Cologne Gazette, 1 Aug. 1896, Precis enclosed in Lascelles to Salisbury, 3 Aug, 1896; F.O.64/1378, No.257.

(2) Cologne Gazette, 2 Aug., 1896, Ibid.

As it happened, the Cretan question was settled, early in September, in a manner satisfactory to all the Powers when the insurgents finally accepted further concessions, made by the Sultan on the advice of the ambassadors at Constantinople.⁽¹⁾ The suspicions of the Continental Powers that Britain had abandoned her traditional policy of maintaining the status quo in Turkey were temporarily allayed. Complete unanimity was restored to the ambassadors at Constantinople when a fresh outbreak of violence in the city compelled them to act together.

On 26 August, an attack by Armenian revolutionaries on the Ottoman bank at Galata was the signal for a general uprising, which was put down with great ferocity by the Turks. Five to six thousand Armenians were killed.⁽²⁾ Currie wrote on 3 September that the last few days had enabled him to realize what St. Bartholomew's Day was like.⁽³⁾ The Russian and Austrian ambassadors were jolted out of the cautious attitudes which they had adopted in their dealings with the Sultan. On 28 August the ambassadors addressed a telegram direct to the Sultan, calling his attention to the

(1) W.K. Langer, op.cit., vol. I, p. 320.

(2) Ibid, pp. 323-4.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 3 Sept., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 47.

horrors which were being committed and urging him to "put an end to a state of things, likely to have the most disastrous consequences for his Empire".⁽¹⁾ At mid-night, the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs visited Calice and asked him, in the Sultan's name, what the telegram meant. Calice let Tewfik Pasha clearly understand that:

"If such excesses continued to be committed under the eyes of Europe, public opinion would become convinced that the Turkish Government was incapable of maintaining order, and would seek some more satisfactory substitute." ⁽²⁾

The Russian ambassador was even more violent in his language. He said that, if order were not restored at once, he would send his gun boat to bombard and raze to the ground a Turkish quarter.⁽³⁾ Most of the ambassadors were so moved by the recent events that they looked forward to "action on the part of the Powers as inevitable and desirable".⁽⁴⁾ Even Nelidov was convinced that the state of affairs could not be allowed to last much longer, without outside interference. Currie thought that Nelidov personally would not be adverse to common action on the part of the Powers, if

(1) Herbert to Salisbury, 31 Aug., 1896; F.O.78/4713, No. 688.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Ibid.

(4) Currie to Salisbury, 16 Sept., 1896; F.O.78/4714, No. 734.

the objections of his Government could be overcome.

It was natural that the ambassadors at Constantinople, who had all witnessed scenes of horror should be united in their desire to see some common action taken. It was just as natural that the rulers of the countries which they represented should be more concerned with the international complications which would ensue, if the status quo in Turkey were in any way altered.

Towards the end of August, the Emperor of Russia, accompanied by Lobanow, visited Vienna. There, the Austrian and Russian Emperors and their Foreign Ministers agreed that Turkey, if left alone from outside interference, was likely to maintain itself for a considerable time; everything possible should be done to maintain the status quo.⁽¹⁾

The Tsar proceeded to Breslau, where he met the Kaiser, who in turn, expressed his desire to maintain the territorial status quo in Turkey.⁽²⁾

Salisbury did not share the views of the Emperors that Turkey, if left alone, could survive. He was convinced that the Sultan's misgovernment was reducing his Empire to fragments and that it was bound to perish if Europe remained

(1) Monson to Salisbury, 29 Aug., 1896; F.O.7/1243, No.271.

(2) William II to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, 9 Sept., 1896; GP XI, No. 2861.

inactive. If it perished in a storm of military mutiny it was more likely to create bitter hostility among the Powers than if some action were taken to arrest the process of disintegration. He felt so strongly on this matter that he went so far as to consider the possibility of Britain occupying some part of Turkish territory. He discussed the subject with Rosebery. But the two men, once they learnt of the unanimous decision of the Emperors to maintain the territorial status quo, decided that any occupation of the territory by Britain would mean war with some of them and so that course would have to be put aside.⁽¹⁾ The only other mode of acting directly against the Sultan was to go "in personam" and not "in territorium". Salisbury turned with enthusiasm to the idea of deposing the Sultan.⁽²⁾ He thought that, if the present Sultan could be deprived of his position by the Powers and, if a new Sultan could be selected according to the rule prevalent in the House of Ottoman, the Powers would obtain a sure guarantee of good government: the new Sultan, influenced by the knowledge of his predecessor's fate,

(1) Salisbury to Hicks Beach, 5 Oct., 1896; Hicks Beach Papers, P.C.C./69.

(2) The immediate reaction of the Emperor William to the news of the massacres at Constantinople was: "The Sultan must be deposed." GP XII, Nos. 2898 & 2901 footnote. But Marschall was strongly against it. Lascelles to Salisbury, 4 Sept., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 121, No. 45.

would pay due regard to the advice of the Powers.⁽¹⁾ The prime aim of Salisbury was, therefore, to bring about a change of Sultan. But he had another policy in reserve: the instruction of the ambassadors at Constantinople to consult together as to the changes which would have to be made in the Turkish administration, in order to secure better government; after a preliminary condition had been agreed upon that the reforms, once unanimously agreed upon by the six Powers, should be enforced by the six, and, if any did not like to take an active part in enforcing the reforms, he should not hinder the other six from doing so.⁽²⁾

Salisbury, having formulated his policy, set to work to execute it. By a fortunate coincidence the Tsar was at that time at Balmoral on a private visit to Queen Victoria. Aware that his programme would have more chance of success if the Russian Government's suspicions of British policy could be removed, Salisbury went to Balmoral to discuss the Eastern question with the Tsar. In the course of two long conversations, the Russian Emperor and the British Foreign Minister entered into explanations of the points

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- (1) Cabinet Memorandum by Salisbury, 29 Sept., 1896 (printed) Very Secr.; Salisbury Papers, F.O. (Priv. Corr.) Vol. 89.
cf. Appendix III
- (2) Salisbury to Monson, 23 Sept., 1896; F.O.7/1240, No. 112 Very Conf.

about which they entertained mutual suspicions.⁽¹⁾ Then Salisbury tried, by means of careful arguments, to persuade the Tsar to join in deposing the Sultan. At the first interview Nicholas II seemed inclined to agree, but, on reflection, he thought that it was "too big a job". He thought that the Turks were very likely to refuse to obey the successor whom the Powers would put in place of Abdul Hamid and then the burden of pacifying and governing the Turkish Empire would fall upon the six Powers.

The Tsar had listened attentively to what Salisbury had to say. Later, Nicholas II advanced his own view, "on which he dwelt at considerable length and was thoroughly in earnest."

"It was that the Straits should be under Russian control ... The Straits were the door to the room in which he lived and he insisted he must have the key of that door."

Salisbury pointed out mildly that the Tsar's view implied that the Sultan had disappeared, for, "while he was there, it was only he that could have control of the Straits". The Tsar replied that, to some extent, that was true; he was forecasting the future. But he could conceive the Sultan remaining, even though Russia had command of the Straits:

(1) Cabinet Memorandum by Salisbury, 29 Sept., 1896, No. 20; Salisbury Papers, F.O. (Private Correspondence) vol. 89, Cabinet Memoranda; cf. Appendix III, pp. 332-344.

"Russia did not want Constantinople or any of the territory on either side. She only wanted the door and the power of fortifying it."

Salisbury quietly interposed by asking how the Tsar thought Rumania would like such an arrangement or how he thought Italy and France would like the introduction of a new naval power into the Mediterranean? Italy had a deep interest in the question whether she had to defend the long line of her maritime coast against one Power or two. Salisbury had been assured by Waddington that France's Mediterranean policy "was unchanged from what it was at the time of the Crimean War". Britain herself had a maritime objection to the establishment of Russian naval power in the Mediterranean, though Salisbury did not pretend that Britain's maritime interest in the matter was of so urgent a character as that of Italy or France. But Salisbury had to consider a more serious objection and that was the one which came from Austria. She believed that the master of the Straits would have full control over the present Turkish dominions, lying between Bulgaria and the Aegean Sea. Austria could not allow herself to be surrounded by Russia. Salisbury expressed "in strong language" his feeling that, after Britain had pursued the policy of maintaining the status quo in the Straits question by the side of Austria for so many years, there would be something of "bassesse" in Britain's conduct, if she left Austria in the lurch:

"I did not see how we could abandon the allies by whom we had stood for so long. The task of Russian and Austrian statesmen should be to see whether there was no contrivance by which, not only compensation, but also security could be given to Austria, in the case of any such change taking place on the disappearance of the Turkish Empire. I thought that if Austria, France and Italy were (in that event) in favour of Russia having control of the Straits, England would not maintain her objection alone, but would seek for some arrangement by which it could be met."

The words of Salisbury and the Tsar have been quoted at length because the exact nature of the conversations at Balmoral was, until recently, only a matter of conjecture. The discovery of a memorandum of the conversations by Salisbury has made possible a more accurate understanding of them. The other English source material, which is meagre,⁽¹⁾ taken in conjunction with some German documents, which are misleading⁽²⁾ has led even so careful a historian as W. L. Langer to the erroneous conclusion that Salisbury, in September 1896, was so anxious to bring about an entente with Russia that he dangled before the Tsar the prospect of concessions in the Straits question.⁽³⁾ It is now known

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- (1) The Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd. Series (1930) vol. III, pp. 82-6.
Salisbury to Iwan-Muller, 31 Aug, 1896; B.D. VI, p. 780.
Hansard, 4th. Series, XLV, pp. 28-29.
- (2) William II to Marschall, 27 Aug., 1896; GP XII, No.2918.
Chargé d'affaires at London to Hohenlohe, 15 Oct., 1896; GP. XII, No. 3064.
William II to Hohenlohe, 15 Jan, 1897; GP. XII, No.2932.
- (3) W. L. Langer, op.cit; Vol. I, p. 330.
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that Salisbury quite firmly stated not only Austria's, but also Britain's objections to any control of the Straits by Russia as long as there was a Sultan at Constantinople. As to the situation which would be created on the disappearance of the Turkish Empire, Salisbury made it quite clear that Britain would withdraw her objection to Russian control of the Straits only after she had learnt that Austria, France and Italy had withdrawn their objections. Salisbury qualified even this statement:

"I had colleagues and H.M.'s Government had allies and past traditions and therefore he must not take any expression of opinion as a pledge."

The most Salisbury was prepared to offer was that the Straits should be open to all nations. This concession, he could offer without any disloyalty to Austria, because he had learnt from Goluchowski that "if ever, owing to events which might occur, such a proposal were made, it would not be one to which Austria would raise any great objection."⁽¹⁾ Nicholas II, however, stated emphatically that Russian opinion would never accept such an arrangement. The Tsar and Salisbury concurred in the view that there seemed no cause of opposition between Russia and Britain except the question of the Straits. But, as yet, nothing could be done

(1) Milbanke to Salisbury, 15 Sept., 1896; F.O.78/4884, No. 289, Very Confid.

to remove this obstacle to complete Anglo-Russian friendship.

It is unlikely that Salisbury ever expected that, at this time, he would be able to bring about a complete Anglo-Russian entente. His aim was rather to bring about a general understanding respecting questions in which Russia and England were interested so that it would be easier to devise common action at Constantinople.⁽¹⁾ Although Salisbury would have preferred to deal with the situation there by deposing the Sultan, as soon as he discovered that the Tsar would not assist him, he realised that this programme could not be carried out and he reverted to his reserve plan, devoting his efforts to securing the assent of the Tsar to the "mild dose of coercion" which he thought would be essential in order to compel the Sultan to accept any changes in the Turkish administration which the ambassadors at Constantinople might, in concert, decide to be necessary. At Balmoral, Salisbury succeeded in gaining the Tsar's assent to his proposal for coercion "in its most homeopathic form".

Austria had already returned a half-favourable answer to the same proposal.⁽²⁾ Fortified by the measure of

(1) Salisbury was following the advice of Nelidov.
Currie to Salisbury, 22 Sept., 1896; F.O.78/4724,
Tel. No. 405 Secr.

(2) Monson to Salisbury, 24 Sept., 1896; F.O.7/1243,
No. 302 Confid.

success he had thus far achieved, Salisbury launched, on 20 October, in a circular to the six Powers, his programme for maintaining the Ottoman Empire through reform.⁽¹⁾ The circular is an extremely impressive document. In its authoritative tone and masterly survey of the existing situation and suggestion of the practical remedy to be applied it was reminiscent of the famous Salisbury circular of 1 April, 1878. There were, however, fundamental differences between the situations of 1878 and 1896. In 1878, Salisbury's aim was to unite the European Powers in opposition to Russian encroachments upon the territory of the Turkish Empire. In 1896, his aim was to persuade all the six Powers, who were already united in their desire to maintain the territorial status quo, to work together to impose upon the Sultan such reforms as were essential if the Ottoman Empire were to be saved from internal decay. Salisbury's reform proposal of October 1896 differed from previous reform proposals in two respects. It envisaged reforms not only for the Christian inhabitants of the Empire, but for all the subjects of the Sultan - to whatever race or religion they might belong. It was distinguished by the proviso that the reforms, once unanimously agreed to

(1) Text of Circular in AsP. (1897), ci, 279-283. Extracts in W.L. Langer, op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 333-334.

by the six Powers, should be enforced by the six.

The business-like tone assumed by Salisbury in the circular has led historians to the conclusion that Salisbury was hopeful of achieving his object. But the private papers now available reveal the numerous doubts with which Salisbury was troubled. He was uncertain as to whether the Porte retained vital force enough to improve its system of government. He knew that, in reality, the Powers had "little stomach" for the duty of coercing it and he thought that the slaughter of Christians would be likely to go on for some time longer, until the growing penury of the Empire induced "some ruined Turk to cut the Sultan's throat".⁽¹⁾ Above all, he very much doubted whether, when it came to the point, either Austria-Hungary or Russia would join in coercing the Sultan. Salisbury regarded the only certain merit of his circular to be that it served to make the situation more defined and that it marked time.⁽²⁾ He was quite prepared to find that it would have no other effect.

Salisbury's doubts as to the reliance to be placed upon Russia were very soon justified. M. Chichkine, who was temporarily in charge of the Russian Foreign Office,

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 22 Sept., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 31.

(2) Salisbury to Lascelles, 21 Oct., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 122, No. 9.
Salisbury to Hicks Beach, 5 Oct., 1896; Hicks Beach Papers, P.C.C./69.

told Goschen that the idea of coercion was "extremely distasteful to the Imperial Government" and that, before coming to a decision, they must learn what the other Governments thought on the subject.⁽¹⁾ Nelidov, on the other hand, told Currie that he was convinced that Turkey was in a state of decomposition and that some definite steps should be taken by the Powers. He had asked permission to go home to explain his views to his Government. Nelidov also stated to Currie his belief that it would be easier to carry out common action at Constantinople if the Powers first came to a decision as to the steps to be taken if the Ottoman Empire should collapse. He envisaged "something in the nature of an understanding as to the spheres of influence within which the Powers would respectively be at liberty to interfere in such an eventuality".⁽²⁾ Currie reported this statement to Salisbury, who asked Hatzfeldt if he had heard of the rumour that Nelidov had gone to St. Petersburg with a ready-made map, indicating the spheres of influence to be allotted to the Powers on the occasion of the fall of the Turkish Empire. Hatzfeldt replied in the negative, but added that Salisbury, no doubt, would like to think that

(1) Goschen to Salisbury, 6 Nov., 1896; F.O.65/1517,
Tel. No. 60.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 3 Nov., 1896; F.O.78/4724,
Priv. tel.

his (Salisbury's) desires concerning the Euphrates valley would be taken into consideration at St. Petersburg.

Hatzfeldt reported home that Salisbury acquiesced with a nod of the head, while throwing Hatzfeldt a knowing look.⁽¹⁾

Hatzfeldt was once again very suspicious of Salisbury's intentions in the Near East. He had ceased to believe that consideration of the interests of Austria-Hungary and Italy would prevent the British Government from concluding an agreement with Russia. He thought it could scarcely be doubted that Salisbury would be disposed to come to a peaceful agreement with Russia for the partition of the Turkish heritage, if Russia would offer suitable compensation.⁽²⁾ On 15 October, in the course of a discussion with Lascelles on the unsatisfactory relations existing between England and Germany, Hatzfeldt gave it as his opinion that this state of affairs was due to:

"The change which took place some years ago in England with regard to Turkey. Before then, it was a recognized axiom that England would do all in her power to maintain the Turkish Empire. There was now, however, considerable doubt as to the line which England would take if the Eastern question were reopened." ⁽³⁾

(1) Hatzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 22 Dec., 1896; G.P. XII, No. 3086.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Lascelles to Salisbury, 15 Oct., 1896; F.O.64/1379, No. 310 Confid.

Hatzfeldt personally did not attribute much importance to the colonial questions which had arisen between England and Germany. "They were not of sufficient importance to bring about a permanent estrangement between the two countries." But it could not be denied that considerable irritation existed on both sides and Hatzfeldt repeated his conviction that the irritation in Germany arose from the doubts which existed there as to the line which England would take if the Eastern question were reopened.

Hatzfeldt did not fail to reveal to Deym his suspicions of British policy. The German ambassador said that previously Salisbury had always consoled him with the assurance that, if he (Salisbury) had a larger majority, he would be prepared for anything. But now Salisbury had come to power with a colossal majority and had not approached Hatzfeldt.⁽¹⁾ Deym thought that the distrustful mood recently shown by Hatzfeldt might have been brought about by Hatzfeldt's failure to influence Salisbury. Formerly, persons in the confidence of Salisbury had frequently expressed astonishment at the way in which the Foreign Secretary allowed himself to be influenced by the German ambassador. But, lately, Hatzfeldt had had little success in his efforts in

(1) Deym to Goluchowski, 7 Jan., 1897; A.A. VIII, England, Karton 120, Private letter. Very confid.

this direction.⁽¹⁾

On 10 December, Hatzfeldt, in a conversation with Salisbury, introduced the subject of the Straits, emphasising the intention which people attributed to Russia of assuring for herself free passage through the Dardanelles, while forbidding to other Powers access to the Black Sea.⁽²⁾ Hatzfeldt reported Salisbury as saying that Britain could not do anything important in such an eventuality, but that, probably, in no case would Austria accept such action by Russia. Hatzfeldt regarded the Minister in astonishment, while replying:

"Do you really believe that Austria would be able to oppose Russia alone and risk the dangers which such an attitude would bring?"

Salisbury replied that Germany would stand behind Austria and Austria would not be alone. Hatzfeldt, not possessing instructions for discussing the question, was forced to close the conversation with the remark that the content of Germany's engagements with Austria was well known and Salisbury could judge for himself in what measure those engagements were applicable to the Eastern question.

Goluchowski soon learnt that, on several occasions,

(1) Deym to Goluchowski, 12 Jan., 1897; Ibid, Private letter, confid.

(2) Hatzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 10 Dec., 1896; G.P. XII, No. 2929, Strictly Confid.

Salisbury had observed that Austria would act "in the first line" if Russia attempted to alter the status quo in the Straits question. When he learnt also that Salisbury was apprehensive that, if a great divergence of opinion appeared among the ambassadors at Constantinople, when the question of compulsory measures against the Sultan came to be discussed, Russia would proceed alone with compulsory measures against Turkey, Goluchowski thought that the time had come for an open discussion between the Vienna and London Cabinets as to the policy which they would pursue in that event.⁽¹⁾ On 13 January 1897, Goluchowski told Rumbold (the new British ambassador at Vienna) that Salisbury was "completely wrong" in his assumption that Austria "would step into the first line". Goluchowski held to the opinion, which he had always expressed, that it was primarily Britain's task to oppose any Russian aggression against Constantinople or the Straits. If Austria could obtain an assurance that Britain still held to her traditional policy and would fight for the defence of Constantinople and the Straits, then Austria would be prepared to come to an understanding with the London Cabinet as to the way in which she could best support Britain. But it was out of the question

(1) Goluchowski to Deym, 13 Jan., 1897; A.A. VIII, England, No. 601.

that Austria would fight for the maintenance of the status quo in the Bosphorus, without first receiving an assurance that Britain would fight. Austria could not count upon the support of Germany and the risk would be too great for any Austrian Government to undertake.⁽¹⁾ Goluchowski instructed Deym to make this quite clear to Salisbury and, at the same time, to ascertain the real attitude of the British Government.

For some time, Salisbury had given his serious attention to the Straits question. In September, he had learnt that General Chickhachev, the Russian chief of staff of the Odessa military district, had made a detailed inspection of the forts of the Dardanelles, which resulted in the Sultan taking additional measures for their defence.⁽²⁾

The British Defence Department expressed the opinion that, if the forts were under the direction of Russian officers, it would not be possible for Britain to force the Dardanelles without undergoing considerable losses.⁽³⁾ Salisbury was at last obliged to recognize that, as time went on, the prospects that Britain would ultimately keep the Straits out

(1) Ibid.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 17 Sept., 1896; F.O.78/4715, No.744, transmitting a letter from the Commander of H.M.'s ship "Imogene".

Currie to Salisbury, 1 Dec., 1896; F.O.78/4719, No. 993 Confid.

(3) Deym to Goluchowski, 21 Jan., 1897; A.A., VIII, England, No. 4A-C.

of Russian hands became fainter and fainter.⁽¹⁾ But the chief importance of the attitude which Britain took in the Straits' question lay in the fact that it was a "question between the alliance of Austria and Russia". Salisbury did not believe that Austria would acquiesce in any portion of the Straits being surrendered to Russia. Austria was still Britain's "only real friend in Europe". Her friendship had a certain positive value, because she had influence with Germany and because she was a clog to Russia, as long as they were opposed. Salisbury shrunk from any action that would weaken the tie which bound England and Austria together.⁽²⁾ Therefore, although his hopes that Britain could defend the Dardanelles were fainter, he felt he must continue "to hold the old language", because, although his hopes were fainter, his views of policy were unaltered.⁽³⁾ But his loyalty to Austria forced him to explain to Deym some of the difficulties of the situation.

On 20 January 1897, Salisbury admitted to Deym the interest of England in the Straits question, while maintaining that England did not have a more vital interest than Austria

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 23 Nov., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 34.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 15 Dec., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 35.

(3) Salisbury to Currie, 23 Nov., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 34.

or France. (1) There were, however, three considerations which altered the condition of the problem from what it had been in the 1880s: the increased hostility of the British public towards the Sultan's Government, the fact that the Sultan had strongly fortified the Dardanelles and neglected to fortify the Bosphorus and the fact that the balance of opinion among British nautical experts was strongly unfavourable to any attempt to force the Dardanelles by action of the fleet alone, without accompanying it by military measures against the forts by land. Salisbury was careful to point out that he had made this statement to Deym before and that it did not mean that Britain renounced the right to act if, when the contingency arose, it was thought desirable. Salisbury made no kind of pledge one way or another: he merely reserved full liberty of action.

Salisbury afterwards maintained that his statements to Deym on 20 January 1897 were precisely the same as those he had made in February 1896:

"There has been no change of tone or policy on our part." (2)

(1) Salisbury to Rumbold, 20 Jan., 1897; F.O.78/4884, No. 6, Very Confid; printed in B.D.IX, part I, p. 775.
Deym to Goluchowski, 21 Jan., 1897; A.A., VIII, England, 4A-C.

(2) Salisbury to Rumbold, 28 Jan., 1897; F.O.7/1261, Tel. No. 8, Secr.

But Deym had perceived a change. He pointed out that, in Spring 1896, Salisbury had refused to give binding assurances, pledging Britain to go to the defence of the Straits, because, he said, the ability of the Government to act would depend upon the opinion of the British public when the time to act came. In 1897, Salisbury had admitted that the position was threatening, but that the events of the past year had made the British public so hostile to the Turkish Government that no British Government would dare to consider undertaking to involve Britain in a war with Russia solely for the purpose of maintaining the status quo in Turkey. In Spring 1896, Deym had believed that, under certain conditions, should Russia carry out a coup on Constantinople, Salisbury would not accept the situation and that he would have the majority of the British people behind him in carrying out his policy for the defence of Britain's interests in the Mediterranean. But in 1897, Deym had received the impression that, although Salisbury himself would be prepared to defend Constantinople and the Straits, he would be powerless "in the face of English public opinion" to take up the fight.⁽¹⁾ Deym reported his opinion to Goluchowski, who announced that:

(1) Deym to Goluchowski, 9 Feb., 1897; A.A. VIII, England, 7A-E.

"He could not but feel that there was no counting any longer on (Britain's) support in an emergency." (1)

Goluchowski requested that Britain's change of attitude should be kept entirely secret, because, if it became known, Russia might be encouraged to attempt a coup de main on Constantinople. (2)

Goluchowski regretted that he would now be "forced to forget" the "earlier understanding with Britain". Under the circumstances, Austria too must retain a completely free hand. But Goluchowski still thought it desirable to remain in the most intimate contact with the British Cabinet respecting the treatment of all questions arising in the East. (3) He instructed the Austrian ambassador at Berlin to inform the German Government of the interchange of views between Vienna and London, but to stress that Goluchowski had been mainly concerned to disabuse Salisbury of the idea that Austria would, "in the first line", take up the fight to defend Constantinople and the Straits. Goluchowski was satisfied that the necessary clarity as to the respective

(1) Rumbold to Salisbury, 27 Jan., 1897; F.O.7/1255, No. 30 Secr.

(2) Rumbold to Salisbury, 27 Jan., 1897; F.O.7/1254, Paraphrase of tel. No. 30 Secr.

(3) Goluchowski to Deym, 10 Feb., 1897; A.A. VIII, England, No. 649 Secret.

positions of the British and Austrian Governments had been achieved and he hoped that the Berlin Cabinet would cultivate in the future the most intimate relations with Britain.⁽¹⁾

In actual fact, the "intimate contact" of Britain and Austria respecting the treatment of questions arising in the East had, throughout the discussions as to the line which the Governments would take on the higher planes of policy, remained uninterrupted on the lower level of every-day diplomatic activity. When the consent of the Russian Government to the programme outlined in Salisbury's Circular had finally been won,⁽²⁾ the ambassadors at Constantinople had begun their deliberations and had once again arranged themselves into groups: Cambon put himself entirely under the Russian wing and the Austrian, Italian and British ambassadors supported one another. On 22 December, Nelidov introduced a diversionary proposal respecting the execution of the law of 1880 for the European provinces, suggesting that the step should at once be recommended to the Governments, leaving other measures to be taken up or not, later.⁽³⁾

(1) Goluchowski to Szögyény, 3 Feb., 1897; A.A., Berlin Embassy Archives, No. 641.

(2) Salisbury to O'Connor, 25 Nov., 1896; F.O.195/1913, No. 302.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 24 Dec., 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 136, No. 62.

Currie met the attack by insisting that the ambassadors' recommendations must cover the whole ground of the evils to be remedied and that each point should be discussed before any conclusions were reached. The strong support of Calice and the Italian ambassador enabled Currie to gain his end. Calice did not like the idea of the execution of the law for the provinces. He thought it would increase the danger of serious disturbances.⁽¹⁾ Currie decided to follow Calice's lead on the question, as it so closely concerned Austria's interests. Although Currie had gone so far as to draw up a formula respecting the execution of the law, which he thought would be acceptable to the Governments, he withdrew his formula at the request of Calice.⁽²⁾

The Austrian ambassador, as doyen of the diplomatic corps at Constantinople, insisted that everything should be done with due deliberation. Each of the ambassadors drew up a list of the most crying evils to be remedied and the Austrian and Italian ambassadors prepared a memorandum, embodying the points mentioned in the list, which served as a basis for discussion. All the ambassadors were agreed in attributing the worst features of the situation to the

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 25 Dec., 1896; F.O.78/4724,
Tel. No. 497 Secr.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 3 Jan., 1897; Salisbury Papers,
Vol. 137, Tel. No. 2.

interference of the Palace.⁽¹⁾ By 21 January, a general body of opinion was established regarding the questions in the memorandum. The chief remaining difficulty was the financial arrangement. Calice suggested a scheme whereby a loan to Turkey should be raised under the guarantee of the Powers, with the stipulation that their delegates should supervise the expenditure of it. He thought that practical European control of the entire Turkish finances would, in a short time, grow out of the arrangement.⁽²⁾

Goluchowski and Salisbury were agreed that the scheme had little chance of success, because in Britain and Austria the consent of Parliament would be necessary before any financial assistance could be given to Turkey. Goluchowski thought "it was very doubtful whether such consent could be obtained";⁽³⁾ Salisbury was certain that it could not be obtained. The British Foreign Secretary pointed out privately to Currie the difficulty of adjusting the motions of two machines so different as that of the ambassadors' conference at Constantinople and Parliament in Britain:

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 27 Dec., 1896; F.O.78/4724, No. 501 Secr.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 16 Jan., 1897; F.O.78/4813, Tel. No. 15 Secr.

(3) Lascelles to Salisbury, 20 Jan., 1897; F.O.64/1409, No. 20 Confid.

"Parliament in its heart of hearts would like to see the Turkish Empire disappear, both for the sake of the pickings and to get rid of these intolerable philanthropic agitators. Therefore, it is not alarmed by the threat that, if a certain course is not pursued, the Turkish Empire will fall to pieces and it will require some very evident advantage, sentimental or material, before it will run any kind of risks for the Turks." (1)

Currie had anticipated the difficulties, which Salisbury described and, on 14 January 1897, had initiated a further discussion of the financial situation. It was then suggested (and the suggestion was subsequently adopted) that the situation could be met by the appointment of a permanent mixed commission - to be composed of Ottoman and European members in equal numbers (the latter to be named or accepted by the Powers) - which would study the financial situation of Turkey, prepare a genuine Budget and supervise its execution.⁽²⁾ Such a commission would certainly not be accepted by the Sultan without pressure, but the same could be said of all the reforms which the Powers were about to propose.

Throughout January and February 1897, Goluchowski had not ceased to concern himself with the problem of the coercive measures to be applied to the Sultan, if he proved

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 26 Jan., 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 36.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 15 Jan., 1897; F.O.78/4813, Tel. No. 12, Secr.

intransigent. The Austrian Foreign Minister thought that it was not sufficient for the Powers to have reached an agreement on the principle of coercion - they must also reach an agreement on the exact nature of the coercive measures contemplated, before the reforms were presented to the Sultan for acceptance.⁽¹⁾ Deym communicated Goluchowski's opinion to Salisbury, who called it a "very happy idea". At first Salisbury suggested that the discussions as to the most suitable coercive measures to be applied should be left to the ambassadors at Constantinople. He assured Deym that he would instruct Currie to support Calice warmly, if the latter suggested that the ambassadors should discuss the subject.⁽²⁾ But Goluchowski thought that Currie should introduce the subject. Goluchowski considered that it fell naturally to the British ambassador to take the initiative in the discussion of coercive measures, because they had been suggested by Salisbury in his Circular of October 1896. The most pressing reason for Goluchowski's desire that Currie should take the initiative was that such action would bind the British Cabinet more tightly and would compel them morally to act in the case of a Russian advance

(1) Goluchowski to Deym, 13 Jan., 1897, A.A. VIII, England, No. 601.

(2) Deym to Goluchowski, 28 Jan., 1897; Ibid, Tel. No. 13 Very Confid.

against the Straits.⁽¹⁾ On 5 February, however, Deym found that Salisbury advocated that the Powers themselves should discuss the nature of the coercive measures, which they might employ; although Salisbury told Deym that he would not mind leaving the discussion to the ambassadors, if Goluchowski thought that that would be more appropriate.⁽²⁾

The communications between London and Vienna indicate how close the contact between the two Cabinets remained throughout the period when Goluchowski was suffering disappointment as a result of his failure to gain explicit assurances that England would defend Constantinople and the Straits. The confidential nature of the communications shows that Goluchowski was still determined to work closely with England in the management of the affairs of the East. He still hoped that, although Salisbury would not formally commit England to fight to defend Constantinople and the Straits, if a dangerous situation were to develop at Constantinople in a certain way, a change would occur in English public opinion and "the English guns would go off themselves".⁽³⁾

(1) Goluchowski to Calice, 5 Feb., 1897; A.A.I, karton 462, No. 642.

(2) Deym to Goluchowski, 5 Feb., 1897; A.A.,VIII, England, Tel. No. 21 Very confid.

(3) Goluchowski to Calice, 5 Feb., 1897; A.A.I, karton 462, No. 642.

The discussions as to coercive measures to be used to press the Sultan to execute the reforms, drawn up by the ambassadors, were brought to an abrupt conclusion when it was learnt that the real object of Nelidov, in visiting St. Petersburg, had been to persuade the Russian Government to take advantage of the situation, as it might develop at Constantinople, to occupy the northern shores of the Bosphorus.⁽¹⁾ The situation was so delicate that the Powers thought it better to let matters rest. The British Channel squadron was sent on a "visit" to Gibraltar, so that the ships of that squadron could be available for use in the Mediterranean.⁽²⁾ Once the leakage of "the Nelidov plan" had occurred, the Russian Government decided that it was too dangerous to execute it and no action was taken. But the fears which the knowledge of the plan had aroused in the minds of the Foreign Ministers of other countries and the outbreak of serious trouble in Crete resulted in the dropping of the reform scheme, which had been completed by the ambassadors in February.⁽³⁾ In October Salisbury wrote to

(1) The subject is fully discussed in W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit, Vol. I, pp. 336-349.

(2) Ibid, p. 349.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 10 Feb., 1897; F.O.78/4797, No. 88, Secr., transmits copy of the proposals, signed by the six ambassadors at Constantinople on 8 Feb., respecting the introduction of reforms into Turkey.

Currie that he supposed that the reforms might "be considered as relegated to the Greek Kalends".⁽¹⁾ The Powers could only hope that, by judicious management, an acute crisis in the internal affairs of Turkey might be averted.

Salisbury Papers
(1) Salisbury to Currie, 19 Oct., 1897, Vol. 138, No. 43.

CHAPTER VII

The Shadow of the Dreikaiserbund.

If the Powers had really believed that the settlement which they negotiated between the Sultan and the Cretans in September 1896 would be lasting, they were very soon disappointed. In February 1897 serious disturbances again broke out in Crete and on this occasion the situation was rendered more critical by the active intervention of Greece. On 6 February, the insurgent leaders in Crete declared union with Greece and appealed to the King of the Hellenes to assume possession of the island. Four days later, Prince George, the second son of the King, left Greece for Crete with four torpedo boats. The Prince did not land on the island; but Colonel Vassos, who left Greece on 13 February, with 1500 men, landed at Canea and joined the insurrectionary forces.⁽¹⁾ There was considerable unrest in Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia and it seemed likely that the flame, lit in Crete, would set ablaze the whole of the Balkan peninsula. The only hope for the localization of

(1) Colonel Vassos had orders to occupy Crete in the name of King George of Greece.
cf. G.S. Papadopoulos, England and the Near East, 1896-98, an unpublished Ph.D. thesis of the University of London, 1950, pp. 210-211.

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the conflict lay in the action the Great Powers might take.

All the Great Powers condemned the Greek expedition to Crete, and none so violently as Germany. On 12 February Marschall reminded Lascelles that it was in consequence of the representations of the Powers that the Sultan had withdrawn most of his troops from Crete. While Marschall was strongly of the opinion that the Sultan should not be allowed to send more troops to Crete, as that would probably be the occasion for fresh massacres, Marschall believed that, if the Powers prevented the Sultan from sending troops:

"They were equally bound, by every consideration of honour and fair dealing, to prevent a Power or rather an impotence, like Greece, from taking advantage of the military weakness of the Sultan, which was due to their action, to annex Turkish territory." (2)

If the annexation of Crete by Greece were permitted by the Powers, it would be the beginning of the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire, as Bulgaria and Serbia would certainly demand compensation for the aggrandisement of Greece and would be encouraged to seize portions of Macedonia. It was evident that diplomatic representations and remonstrances at Athens would have no practical result: active measures were necessary. On 14 February, William II, who was very

(1) W.L. Langer, op.cit, vol. I, pp. 355-360.

(2) Lascelles to Salisbury, 12 Feb., 1897; F.O.64/1409, No. 42 Confid.

hostile to King George of Greece, took the matter out of the hands of his Ministers and began his personal conduct of the affair by suggesting that the Powers should blockade the coast of Greece.⁽¹⁾ The Continental Governments immediately reacted favourably to the Kaiser's suggestion, but Salisbury was more cautious in his comment. He said that he saw "little objection", thus implying that he saw some objection. William II took Salisbury's reply as a personal insult and became violently excited against England, whom he accused of following a selfish policy and wishing to fish in troubled waters.⁽²⁾ The Kaiser complained to Prince Christian that he could never obtain a definite answer from Salisbury. Lascelles reported privately that the Kaiser's suspicions of England appeared "to verge on insanity".⁽³⁾ The ambassador urgently requested Salisbury to send him instructions which would enable him to allay William II's apprehensions.

The situation presented considerable difficulties for Salisbury. In England, there was much sympathy for Greece: it was part of the classical tradition and part of the political credo of those who prided themselves on their

(1) A & P (1898), cvi, 390-391.

(2) Lascelles to Salisbury, 16 Feb., 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 121, No. 52.

(3) Ibid.

championship of enlightened ideas.⁽¹⁾ One of the sisters of the King of Greece was married to the Prince of Wales and the eldest son of the King was married to the daughter of the Empress Frederick, eldest daughter of Queen Victoria. The English Queen received many letters from her Greek relatives, which she constantly pressed upon Salisbury. In the Cabinet, the Liberal Unionist element, Balfour, Goschen and Hicks Beach expressed themselves strongly against a blockade of Greece. The prevalent opinion was that no blockade of Greece should be considered until the future of Crete had been resolved. Although Crete should remain a portion of the Ottoman Empire, it should not remain under the Turkish Government, but it should become a privileged province.⁽²⁾ The British Cabinet's decision was communicated in a Circular to the ambassadors abroad.⁽³⁾

When Rumbold informed Goluchowski of Britain's views and told him that he was instructed by Salisbury to request his opinion upon them, Rumbold stressed that Salisbury, in desiring Goluchowski's opinion, "was marking the value" he attached "to the agreement of views which generally existed

(1) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., vol. I, p. 360.

(2) The Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd. Series, vol. III, p. 133.

(3) Circular tel., A. & P. (1898), cvi, 411.

between the two Governments in the affairs of the East."⁽¹⁾ Although Salisbury had, in January, refused to give definite pledges that Britain would defend Constantinople and the Straits, and although Britain and Austria had *later* reserved for themselves complete liberty of action,⁽²⁾ Salisbury and Rumbold were clearly hoping that Britain and Austria would associate closely in the negotiations for the settlement of the Cretan question. Goluchowski, however, was very definitely of the opinion that the most important consideration was that Greece should not be permitted to derive any immediate advantage from her ill-considered action and that the principle of the status quo should be carefully guarded.⁽³⁾ He agreed with the Germans that if Greece were allowed to gain her end in the face of the opposition of the Powers, the moral bankruptcy of the Powers would be proved. While Goluchowski was ready to mediate between Germany and Britain in order to find some compromise measure upon which the Powers could base their action, the Austrian Minister was more in sympathy with the German than with the British

(1) Rumbold to Salisbury, 18 Feb., 1897; F.O.7/1255, No. 52, Confid.

(2) cf. pp. 194-200, 230-32.

(3) Rumbold to Salisbury, 18 Feb., 1897, F.O.7/1255, No. 52 Confid.

attitude.(1)

The Russians finally took the initiative in proposing that there should be no annexation of Crete, but the island should be given autonomy and that an ultimatum should be sent to Greece, requiring the Government to withdraw its troops, failing which "suitable rigorous measures" would be used in the form of a blockade of the Piraeus or direct action against the Greek forces in Crete.(2) The Russian suggestion was accepted by all the Powers and it was embodied in two identic notes presented to the Greek and Turkish Governments on 2 March.(3) The Turks accepted, but the Greeks refused and continued to demand the annexation of Crete on the basis of a plebiscite, with Greek troops remaining on the island until it was pacified.

There followed long discussions among the Powers as to the measures to be taken to compel Greece to submit to their demands. In the course of the discussions the isolation of Britain was many times demonstrated. It was true that Salisbury was in complete agreement with the Continental

(1) Rumbold to Salisbury, 12 Feb., 1897; F.O.7/1255, No. 45 Confid.

(2) Muraviev to De Staal, 23 Feb., 1897; F.O.65/1543, tel.

(3) Text of notes in A.&P. (1897), cii (C-8333), 3-5.

Powers that the integrity of the Turkish Empire should be preserved. When Kimberley, at the annual gathering of the National Liberal Federation, repudiated any policy that had as its basis the integrity of the Ottoman Empire,⁽¹⁾

Salisbury was seriously disturbed. On 19 March, in the House of Lords, the Foreign Secretary commented caustically on Kimberley's announcement:

"If the policy adopted for so many years by his party is to be given up because of two or three condemnatory events in the Turkish Empire, then I think the policy was either very lightly adopted or very lightly abandoned."

Salisbury considered that Kimberley's declaration was a "heavy blow" to British policy and he stressed that he separated himself "as strongly as possible" from it.⁽²⁾ But at the same time as he upheld the integrity of the Turkish Empire, Salisbury considered it essential that "a bridge of gold" should be made for Greece in order to enable her to retire from the position into which her rash action had precipitated her. Salisbury advocated that the Greek suggestion that their troops should be employed to preserve order in Crete should be considered by the Powers. He believed that, if the Greek forces were divided among the

(1) The Times, 18 March 1897.

(2) Hansard, 4th Series XLVIII, 1009-1014.

As G.S. Papadopoulos has pointed out in his thesis, England and the Near East, 1896-98, p. 234, this speech should be read in conjunction with Salisbury's "wrong horse" speech of 19 Jan., 1897.

Great Powers and placed under European officers, the gendarmerie force so constituted would be the most effective body of police that could be organized and in this way the subsequent restoration of Crete to the Sultan's authority would not be endangered.⁽¹⁾ The Continental Powers objected to the idea of using the Greek troops as a gendarmerie force and their objections prevailed.⁽²⁾ As Salisbury remarked to the Russian ambassador, he could not expect his suggestion to be adopted "if, as it appeared, it was resisted by Russia, Germany and Austria."⁽³⁾

The three Powers were determined that Greece should be coerced and they wished for an immediate blockade of the Piraeus. Salisbury felt unable to promise that Britain would participate in the blockade unless he was first assured that Crete would be occupied by the European Powers. He adopted a proposal - already made by Russia⁽⁴⁾ - for the military occupation of Crete by a corps of 10,000 or 12,000 men, the force being furnished by France and Italy conjointly:

- (1) Salisbury to O'Connor, 9 March, 1897; F.O.65/1535, Tel. No. 104 (Paraphrase).
- (2) Memorandum by Baron von Marschall, 11 March, 1897; G.P. XII, vol. II, No. 3184.
- (3) Salisbury to O'Connor, 11 March, 1897; F.O.65/1535, Tel. No. 110.
- (4) O'Connor to Salisbury, 10 March, 1897; F.O.65/1536, Tel. No. 19.

Austria and Germany had already declared themselves unwilling to send troops. Britain was willing to agree that Crete should be occupied by 5,000 Frenchmen and 5,000 Italians or by 10,000 of either Power alone; or by 5,000 Russians and 5,000 Englishmen or by 10,000 of either Power alone. Unless such an occupation was agreed upon, Britain would be compelled to confine herself to the blockade of Crete alone.⁽¹⁾

The announcement was very unfavourably received by the Continental Powers. Russia pretended that she had never made such a proposal.⁽²⁾ Even Goluchowski, who had up till this time tried to keep Germany and Britain from moving too far apart, condemned the British reply. He accused Salisbury of receding from his recently avowed intention of blockading the Greek coast. He complained that the British decision would increase the suspicions, already prevalent on the Continent, that Britain

"had some deep design in allowing the existing complications to increase, that in short Britain was playing for her own hand instead of working disinterestedly with the other Powers for pacification and for the general peace." (3)

(1) Salisbury to O'Connor, 16 March, 1897; F.O.65/1535,
Tel. No. 121.

(2) O'Connor to Salisbury, 17 March, 1897; F.O.65/1531,
No. 70 Confid.

(3) Rumbold to Salisbury, 17 March, 1897; F.O.7/1256,
No. 100 Very Confid.

As a result of Britain's policy, the Powers were forced to limit themselves to a minimum programme of announcing the granting of autonomy to Crete, of proclaiming the blockade of the island and of despatching 600 troops each - except for Germany and Austria. (1)

On 25 March Salisbury left England for Beaulieu. He interrupted his journey to have an interview with the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hanotaux, during which the Cretan question was fully discussed. (2) Salisbury's aim was to gain the co-operation of France and Russia for the settlement of the question. But France would not act without Russia and Russia was most reluctant to part company with Austria and Germany. (3) Under the circumstances, Britain was forced to keep within the Concert in order to avoid public isolation. When, on 30 March, Russia again came forward with the proposal that the Piraeus should be blockaded, Salisbury signified his readiness to agree. (4)

Britain was now placing her hopes for the solution of

(1) G.S. Papadopoulos, op.cit., p. 233.

(2) Hanotaux to Montebello, 26 March 1897, Conflit Gréco-Turc pp. 230-31.
Ibid, p. 237.

(3) The Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd. Series, Vol. III, p. 149.

(4) O'Connor to Salisbury, 30 March, 1897; F.O.65/1536, Tel. No. 30.

the difficulty on negotiations at Constantinople. If the Sultan could be persuaded to accept a programme which would ensure a satisfactory régime in Crete and if he would withdraw all Turkish troops, Greece might find the "golden bridge" which would enable her to retire.⁽¹⁾ Currie, aided by his French and Italian colleagues, worked towards this end. They succeeded in persuading the other ambassadors to join them in drawing up recommendations for Cretan autonomy which they submitted to their Governments.⁽²⁾ The crucial point was the selection of a governor. The only person who might reconcile Crete to the Sultan's suzerainty was Prince George; but, in view of the difficulty of persuading the Sultan to accept a Greek nominee, it was thought better that his election should be ensured without mentioning his name. The fourth article of the ambassadors' recommendations, therefore, provided for the election of a ruler "on principles analogous to those adopted for Bulgaria". The Austrian Government accepted this recommendation in principle, but nullified it in practice by declaring itself opposed to the

(1) Sanderson to Salisbury, 30 March, 1897; F.O.78/4891, Tel. No. 14.

Salisbury to Sanderson, 31 March 1897; Ibid.

(2) Conflit Gréco-Turc, p. 274.

election of any member of the Greek royal family.⁽¹⁾ None of the European Governments was enthusiastic about the ambassadors' recommendations: even Salisbury did not regard the fourth article as practicable.⁽²⁾ There was a general feeling that the only way out of the impasse lay in a resort to arms. On 12 April Salisbury wrote to Sanderson that he thought that Germany and Austria meant that there should be a fight upon the Macedonian frontier and that the "Greeks should get thrashed: they will make no effort to escape from that result."⁽³⁾ No one was surprised when, on 17 April, the Ottoman Government declared war on Greece.

During the preceding years the Turkish army had been thoroughly re-organised by General von der Goltz Pasha who, immediately before the outbreak of hostilities, accepted the local command-in-chief of Turkish troops. They were issued with Mauser rifles and they went to war so well-equipped and so well-disciplined that their superiority over the Greek forces was very quickly demonstrated during the campaigns in Thessaly and Epirus.⁽⁴⁾ Within a few days

(1) Rumbold to Salisbury, 12 April, 1897, F.O.7/1261, Tel. No. 45 Secr.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 13 April, 1897; F.O.78/4811, Tel. No. 13.

(3) Salisbury to Sanderson, 12 April, 1897, Sanderson Papers.

(4) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., Vol. I, pp. 369-72.

it was obvious that the Greeks would be hopelessly defeated. The Germans looked upon such an event with equanimity, but Britain could not allow the complete defeat of Greece. On 19 April, Queen Victoria told Salisbury that she thought it would be necessary for Britain to take action "regardless of Germany (who has been behaving so ill), in order to stop further bloodshed." Salisbury replied that the time was coming when Britain would "have to break away from Germany and Austria, but not quite yet."⁽¹⁾ Four days later, however, Salisbury telegraphed hastily to Russia proposing that a conference of ambassadors should be held at Paris to discuss terms of peace, without waiting for the conclusion of an armistice.⁽²⁾ When Salisbury made the same suggestion to Hanotaux, the latter expressed his belief that an armistice should be sought first.⁽³⁾ Salisbury then suggested that if Britain, France and Russia, "as the Powers by whom Greece was created at and after Navarino, should propose an armistice at Constantinople" that would enable them "to turn the German difficulty".⁽⁴⁾ But Hanotaux

(1) The Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd. Series, Vol. III p. 151.

(2) Salisbury to O'Connor, 23 April, 1897; Tel. A & P. (1898) cvi, 556. Ibid, pp. 152-153.

(3) Monson to Salisbury, 24 April, 1897; F.O.27/3316, No. 293, Secr. and Confid.

(4) Salisbury to Monson, 25 April, 1897; F.O.27/3321, Tel. (no number).

doubted whether Russia would venture upon any action independently of Germany, for the latter carried Austria with her and Russia would fear the antagonism of the two.⁽¹⁾

At first it seemed as though Hanotaux's doubts were unfounded, for, on 26 April, Muraviev and the Tsar accepted Salisbury's suggestion "in principle",⁽²⁾ but three days later Russia "backed out".⁽³⁾ The Russian Government announced that it considered that it would be best:

"that the Cabinets of all the powers who are willing to participate should continue to treat directly between them respecting the steps to be taken for the re-establishment of peace." (4)

In the interval between Russia accepting and then rejecting Salisbury's proposal an important event took place in the form of the state visit to St. Petersburg of the Austrian Emperor, accompanied by Goluchowski, Baron Zwiedenek (head of the Oriental Department at the Ballplatz) and Baron de Beck (the Austrian Chief of Staff).⁽⁵⁾

- (1) Monson to Salisbury, 25 April, 1897; F.O.27/3322,
Tel. No. 104 Most Conf.
- (2) O'Connor to Salisbury, 26 April, 1897; F.O.65/1536,
Tel. No. 46.
- (3) Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd. Series, Vol. III, p.156.
- (4) O'Connor to Salisbury, 29 April; 1897, F.O.65/1536, No. 50.
- (5) Rumbold to Salisbury, 30 April, 1897; F.O.7/1256,
No. 150 Very Confid.

Austrian advice may have been responsible for the backing down of Russia: on 28 April, O'Connor had an audience with Francis Joseph during which the Emperor laid such stress upon "the importance of maintaining the concert of the Powers" that O'Connor presumed that he was aware of Salisbury's proposal and disapproved of it.⁽¹⁾ An official of the German embassy at St. Petersburg wrote home that Salisbury's proposal had caused "a great sensation in well-informed circles":

"The British attempt to settle with Russia and France, over the head of Austria-Hungary, questions which especially affect the Empire on the Danube - this deceitful blow ... calculated simply to push the Triple Alliance states out of the Areopagus of Europe, will ... have strangled in the Austro-Hungarian statesman the last of the Anglophil feelings which might still survive from the beginning of his official activities and have made him all the more ready for an unreserved understanding with Russia." (2)

Of all the political combinations open to Austria-Hungary, Goluchowski would undoubtedly have preferred, even at this time, a close association of Austria-Hungary and her two partners in the Triple Alliance with Britain. But Germany was now openly hostile to Britain and ostentatiously friendly with Russia. Once Goluchowski had tried and failed

(1) O'Connor to Salisbury, 28 April, 1897, F.O.65/1536, Tel. No. 48.

(2) Tschirschky to von Hohenlohe, 1 May 1897; G.P. XII (11), pp. 412-415, and the Emperor's marginal notes.

to gain explicit assurances from Britain respecting the line which she would take with relation to Constantinople and the Straits, Goluchowski felt compelled to follow the advice of Berlin and to turn to Russia in the hope of arriving at some general understanding on Eastern affairs. The reception which Goluchowski met with at St. Petersburg surpassed all his expectations in its cordiality. Goluchowski and Muraviev found little difficulty in arriving at a "gentleman's understanding".⁽¹⁾ It was expressed in two despatches: one from the Austro-Hungarian Government to St. Petersburg and the other - sent in reply by the Russian Government.⁽²⁾ The basis of the agreement was the idea of maintaining the status quo in the Balkans as long as circumstances would permit. An important feature of it was the mutual recognition by the two Powers that the question of Constantinople and the Straits, having an eminently European character, was "not of a nature to be made the object of a separate understanding between Austria-Hungary and Russia". But Maraviev did declare that Russia held to the complete maintenance of the treaties relating to the Straits as they "gave full ... satisfaction to Russia

(1) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., vol. I, pp. 374-375.

(2) A.F. Pribram, The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary, op.cit., vol. I, pp. 185-95.

in prohibiting, by the closure of the Straits, access to the Black Sea to foreign war vessels." Bases of understanding were also established regarding the Balkan territories. The two Ministers immediately acted upon the understanding by sending to their representatives in the Balkan capitals telegrams, stating that they would not allow "even the least movement in the Balkans".⁽¹⁾ It was largely due to their persistent warnings that the Graeco-Turkish conflict remained localised and that Bulgaria and Servia were forced to be satisfied with concessions in the way of bishoprics.⁽²⁾

At the time of the Imperial visit to Russia, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Vienna Foreign Office had an important conversation with Rumbold in which he stressed that the fact of Austria's drawing nearer to Russia should not be interpreted as a "cooling down" towards Britain. Although there was considerable disappointment in Vienna that Britain had not seen fit to enter into an engagement with Austria, Count Welserheimb thought that, in spite of this, the time-honoured tradition of friendship between the two Governments was sufficiently strong to continue.⁽³⁾

(1) W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., vol. I, p. 374.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 27 April, 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 137, No. 13.

(3) Rumbold to Salisbury, 30 April, 1897; F.O.7/1256, No. 150 Very Confid.

Salisbury could not but welcome the Austro-Russian agreement, in so far as it was a contribution to the maintenance of peace;⁽¹⁾ but the drawing together of Austria-Hungary, Russia and Germany made any solution of the Cretan question on the lines which Britain desired much more difficult. A forecast of what was to come was provided by an article in the Neue Frei Presse of 27 April:

"Indeed both in Paris and in London the question of intervention (between the Turks and Greeks) is on all sides discussed, but it remains to be seen whether these utterances will find an echo at the three Imperial Courts. In the form in which these opinions are expressed the reply must be certainly not. They demand that the uplifted arm of recklessly provoked Turkey should be stayed by means of an intervention which conquered Greece has not yet solicited. Until it has become plain at Athens that Greece ... deserves the chastisement which has befallen her ... the three Imperial Governments will scarcely care to take any steps to liberate her from the Turkish scourge. To this point of view the remaining Powers must consent, unless they wish to learn by experience that the three Imperial Governments are resolved to carry out without them that Eastern policy upon which they have agreed in the interests of European peace." (2)

The Austro-Hungarian and German Governments lost no time in making it known that the proposal for an armistice would have to be begged for by Greece with the promise that she would unconditionally submit to the verdict of the Powers,

(1) Deym to Goluchowski, 13 May, 1897; A.A. VIII, England, karton 120, No. 19B, Confid.

(2) Extract enclosed in Rumbold to Salisbury, 28 April, 1897; F.O.7/1256, No. 155 Confid.

before they intervened.⁽¹⁾ Salisbury was helpless in the face of the united front presented by the Continental Governments. In a despatch to Egerton he acknowledged that Austria-Hungary and Germany were masters of the situation:

"Without their concurrence Russia and France will not act; and the Sultan would pay no regard to any mediation which was not supported by all the Powers." (2)

All that Salisbury could do was to strongly advise Greece to yield.

The Sultan was not slow to realise that the international situation was favourable to himself and when the ambassadors at Constantinople were finally instructed to arrange an armistice and terms of peace, they found that the Sultan's demands were high: he asked for the retrocession of Thessaly and the payment of a considerable indemnity.⁽³⁾ All the Great Powers were agreed that the Sultan should not receive the whole of Thessaly; but, with the exception of Britain, they showed a strange reluctance to contemplate measures to force Turkey to moderate her demands. Indeed, the role of Britain and the other Powers within the European concert

(1) The Letters of Queen Victoria, 3rd. Series, Vol. III, pp. 159-160.

(2) Salisbury to Egerton, 9 May, 1897; F.O.32/699, Tel. No. 135: quoted by G.S. Papadopoulos, op.cit., p. 269.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 15 May, 1897; Tel. A & P. (1898) cvi, p. 608.

was now completely reversed: when it was a question of coercing Greece, Britain was hesitant and the other Powers were urgent; but now that it was a question of putting pressure on Turkey, the Continental Powers found excuses to procrastinate while Britain urged the expediency of rapid action. (1)

The great difficulty lay in finding an area within the Ottoman Empire where force could be used without arousing the fears of the European Powers. Salisbury discussed the problem in a telegram to O'Connor of 15 May. He realised that no means of coercing the Sultan by land existed, except at the cost of a difficult and expensive campaign. But very easy means existed of coercing the Sultan by sea: viz naval action in the Bosphorus. This action could not at once be applied because the Powers, and principally England and Russia, were afraid of suffering some damage from the presence of others in the Bosphorus. Salisbury thought that it was time

"for England and Russia to consider whether it is not possible to devise some form of agreement which would enable them, in company with any

(1) Salisbury to the Prince of Wales, 15 July, 1897; Salisbury Papers, Cabinet Memoranda:
 "With regard to Turkey, there was a strong disposition evident (in the Cabinet) to take drastic measures if the Sultan refuses to accede to the present proposals."

other Powers who may wish to co-operate, to send a limited number of ships to anchor before Yildiz." (1)

He instructed O'Connor to speak in the above sense to Muraviev. As the British ambassador was ill and unable to leave his room, he sent Goschen to talk to Muraviev in the sense of Salisbury's telegram, but with the recommendation that Goschen should be cautious and be guided as to the language he used by the tone which Muraviev adopted in preliminary conversation. It was as well that O'Connor had advised caution, for Muraviev, although sharing Salisbury's opinion that Turkey should not have Thessaly, was convinced that the Sultan would not persist in his demand "in the face of the well-known opposition of all the Powers". If, contrary to his belief, the Sultan remained obstinate, Muraviev thought that coercive measures should be resorted to only after every means of persuasion had failed and "after the most careful consideration by all the Great Powers together." In view of the pointed manner in which Muraviev made the last statement, Goschen realised that Salisbury's proposal had little chance of being favourably received and he closed the conversation by reiterating that the British Government would not consent to any condition of peace

(1) Salisbury to O'Connor, 15 May, 1897; F.O.65/1535,
Tel. No. 244 Confid.

involving the retrocession of Thessaly.⁽¹⁾

Although the ambassadors at Constantinople succeeded in arranging an armistice between Turkey and Greece on 19 May,⁽²⁾ the negotiations as to the Thessalian frontier continued all through the summer. The military attachés of the Powers prepared a map showing a strategical frontier line which they regarded as just, but the Sultan held out for a frontier which would give to Turkey a number of Greek towns and villages.⁽³⁾ Mediation at Constantinople was a slow process due to the difficulties raised by the Germans. Currie was disgusted with their conduct. He wrote privately to Salisbury condemning the way in which they frequently tried to "curry favour" with the Sultan by taking the lead in holding out hopes of concessions which they had neither the intention nor the power of granting:

"The Germans are playing a shabby game here."⁽⁴⁾
The German ambassador was absolutely forbidden to agree, without referring for instructions, to any written

(1) O'Connor to Salisbury, 17 May, 1897; F.O.65/1536,
Tel. No. 59 Confid.

O'Connor to Salisbury, 17 May, 1897; F.O.65/1532,
No. 112 Confid.

(2) G.S. Papadopoulos, op.cit., p. 272.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 21 June, 1897; F.O.78/4814,
Tel. No. 417.

(4) Currie to Salisbury, 4 June, 1897; Salisbury Papers,
Vol. 137, No. 16.

communication to the Porte. When the other ambassadors pressed Baron Saurma to let them send in what was little more than an acknowledgement of receipt. Saurma replied mournfully:

"Ah I daresay it is nothing to you if I am dismissed from my post, but it is a great deal to me!" (1)

The other ambassadors, being gentlemen of the old school, "could say no more".

By the second week in July, it seemed that the spirit of resistance to the demands of the Powers was growing in Turkey and that it was being stimulated by the Sultan himself. Under these circumstances, the ambassadors became convinced that the negotiations would never be brought to a satisfactory conclusion until the Powers came to an agreement to apply coercion, if necessary.⁽²⁾ On 19 July they sent identic telegrams to their Governments in this sense.⁽³⁾ Muraviev was very unfavourably impressed by the telegrams. He thought that the ambassadors ought to have proceeded more calmly. He was still convinced that the Sultan would give way

(1) Ibid. For Currie's complaints of the attitude of the Germans, see also Currie to Salisbury, 2 July, 9 July and 19 Aug., 1897. Ibid., Nos. 21, 22 and 32.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 13 July, 1897; F.O.78/4814, Tel. No. 454.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 19 July, 1897, F.O.78/4814, No.471.

without the Powers having to resort to actual menaces. The opinion of Salisbury that a naval demonstration inside the Straits would be the most effective means of breaking the Sultan's resistance⁽¹⁾ must have become known in St. Petersburg; for, Muraviev told O'Connor that

"Russia would not consent to coercion entailing hostile naval action against Constantinople and the passage of the Dardanelles by foreign ships of war, being contrary to the conditions of the Treaty of Paris, would compel her to take measures on her own account." (2)

Muraviev made doubly certain that this view would be known in London, by sending a telegram to M. de Staal in the same sense.⁽³⁾ He also instructed his ambassador in Berlin to inform the German Government that the Russian Government would consider the passage of foreign ships of war through the Dardanelles to be a violation of the Treaties and that, in that case, Russia would take "ses propres mesures". O'Connor thought that Muraviev's object was to show the European Powers that "Constantinople was in a special and particular manner under the aegis of Russia."⁽⁴⁾

(1) Memorandum by Sanderson, 9 July, 1897; F.O.78/4846.

(2) O'Connor to Salisbury, 20 July, 1897; F.O.65/1536,
Tel. No. 70.

(3) Secr. tel. of Count Muraviev to de Staal, 21 July 1897;
F.O.65/1543 (duplicate).

(4) O'Connor to Salisbury, 22 July, 1897; F.O.65/1533,
No. 166 Confid.

Currie believed that the German Embassy at Constantinople informed the Porte that the Powers were discussing the possibility of the use of coercion, for, by 23 July, Turkish public opinion was being prepared for peace.⁽¹⁾ In view of the extremely uncertain attitude taken by the European Powers to the ambassadors' hint of the possible necessity of coercion, this was fortunate. Currie hoped that it might never "be revealed to mankind that the Concert of Europe was so little behind it."⁽²⁾

The position of the British Embassy at Constantinople, in view of the new state of affairs arising out of the success of Turkey in the war against Greece, was a matter of concern to Currie in the summer of 1897. During the last years of White's embassy and the first months of Currie's embassy, Britain had relied on the support of the Powers of the Triple Alliance for carrying out her policy at Constantinople. But in the current negotiations for peace the attitude of the German ambassador was rather that of a "Representative of the Sultan" than one of the Great Powers.⁽³⁾ The Austrian ambassador showed a great deference

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 23 July, 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 137, No. 28.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 2 June, 1897; F.O.78/4802, No. 372 Confid.

to the views of his German colleague⁽¹⁾ and, for the first time in Currie's experience, Calice ceased to show suspicion of his Russian colleague, but, on the contrary, followed his lead with a docility which rivalled that of his French colleague. On 2 June Currie wrote:

"The condition of affairs seems to be tending towards a revival of the Dreikaiserbund so far as the Eastern Question is concerned, with the objects of maintaining the status quo, supporting the Sultan against any attack from without or from his own subjects, repressing movements on the part of the Balkan states or of the Christian populations of the Turkish Empire, patching up temporarily the Turkish finances and limiting the reforms to such merely formal measures as the Sultan can be prevailed upon to accept without serious pressure." (2)

The British view had always been that the maintenance of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire could be secured only by raising the condition of the Christian subjects of the Sultan and by reforming the general administration of the Empire. Britain had energetically pursued that policy for the last two and a half years and her views had so far prevailed that a scheme of reforms had been prepared by the ambassadors, which the six Powers had been more or less

(1) On 15 Sept. 1897 Currie wrote that Calice "for the last few weeks has been more German than the Germans." Currie to Salisbury, 15 Sept., 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 137, No. 34.

On 11 Nov., 1897 Currie wrote that Calice showed "all the zeal of a convert in pursuing the pro-Turkish policy initiated by Germany." Ibid, No. 40.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 2 June, 1897; F.O.78/4802, No.372, Confid.

agreed to force upon the Sultan. The ambassadors had also, in consequence of Salisbury's suggestions, drawn up a plan of reorganization for Crete. The adoption of these measures by the Powers had been mainly due to the feeling aroused on the Continent by the Armenian massacres and the general feeling of revulsion aroused by the misgovernment of the Sultan, whose prestige had fallen very low. But this state of things had been entirely changed by the good organization which Turkey had shown in the conduct of the war with Greece. The victories in Thessaly had restored the Sultan's prestige, not only among his Mussulman subjects, but also in the eyes of the Powers of the Triple Alliance. They were now content to support the Sultan in order to maintain the status quo. Currie believed that the prestige of England would suffer and her interests would not gain if she abandoned her reforming policy. She must, therefore, look for support to other Powers: France and Italy. Currie thought that there was much dissatisfaction among Frenchmen at the subordinate part which France had played in the current negotiations⁽¹⁾ and that, if England could offer France the prospect of a working alliance between England, Italy and herself, with the object of exercising a counter-balancing influence in

(1) Currie referred to an article by Ernest Lavisse in the Revue de Paris of 15 May 1897 which expressed this feeling.

the East, France might be tempted to take advantage of it. Practically, so far as the opinions of the three countries were reflected in the minds of their representatives at Constantinople, it had for some time been apparent that England, France and Italy were on the same side of all questions affecting the Christian subjects of the Sultan, either in Crete, Macedonia or the Asiatic provinces. The geographical position of the Western Powers must lead them to consider the maintenance of their maritime power in the East of the Mediterranean as the only possible counterpoise to the preponderance of Russia in that quarter, which, in the event of a close understanding with Austria, would become even greater. Currie believed that on such an understanding appeared to rest the only hope for the British Embassy of avoiding isolation in the future.

Currie's despatch of 2 June was submitted to the Cabinet and circulated to the British ambassadors at the capitals of the Great Powers. It must have been the subject of much anxious discussion. There is no evidence of any decision reached in the Cabinet, but, on 19 October, Salisbury sent Currie a very long private letter which in effect gave Salisbury's answer to the questions which Currie had indirectly posed.⁽¹⁾

(1) Salisbury to Currie, 19 Oct., 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 43.

The events of the last two years had had a profound effect on Salisbury's attitude towards the Eastern question. The most important of these was the Cabinet decision of November 1895, when Salisbury was refused leave to send the fleet up the Dardanelles because it was impracticable.⁽¹⁾ Then, in October 1896, the Defence Department presented memoranda which reiterated their view that any attempt to force the passage of the Straits would be a "hazardous proceeding", on account of the British fleet having to meet afterwards the combined forces of France and Russia.⁽²⁾

The Director of Naval Intelligence stated bluntly:

"Conditions are so altered that there is no practical way, as long as France supports Russia by force of arms, of preventing the latter from using the Straits, unless opposed by the Turks. There is no material advantage to England in the Straits being opened to all alike unless the fortifications are entirely removed." (3)

The D.N.I. foretold that, in time, Asia Minor would become Russian or at least entirely subject to Russian influence: Europe could not prevent it. When that was done, Marmorice would be the naval base of Russia in the Mediterranean.

(1) Cf. pp. 182-188.

(2) Director of Military Intelligence's Memorandum on Naval Policy, 13 Oct., 1896, printed in A.J. Marder, op.cit., Appendix III.

(3) Director of Naval Intelligence's Memorandum on Naval Policy, 28 Oct., 1896. Ibid, Appendix IV.

There was no avoiding the conclusion that the time for jealously guarding the inviolability of the Dardanelles was passing away and that it was no longer worth any important sacrifice. The D.N.I. emphatically denounced the idea that any important effect could be produced to check Russia's advance by holding Lemnos or any point so advanced in closed waters and so far from Britain's base: it was illusionary. Britain must provide permanently for meeting the power of Russia in the Eastern Mediterranean. The only way in which this could be done was to adopt a new naval and military policy in the Mediterranean. To make a successful stand against the France of the Atlantic, the France of the Western Mediterranean and the Russia of the Eastern Mediterranean, England would require three fleets and three bases - Gibraltar, Malta and Alexandria:

"There would be only one way in which England could not only maintain herself in the Mediterranean at all, but continue to hold India and that is by holding Egypt against all comers and making Alexandria a naval base." (1)

England must, in the words of Eothen, "plant a firm foot on the banks of the Nile and sit in the seats of the faithful".

Such was the recommendation of the Defence Department. Salisbury had never been inclined to take much notice of their advice. But it happened now that the experiences

(1) Ibid.

which he had met with in the conduct of diplomacy in the last two years tended to lead him to conclusions similar to those of the Defence Department. In the course of the negotiations with Turkey respecting the Armenians and the Cretans, Salisbury had found over and over again that he had no means of enforcing his serious demands upon the Sultan. In 1895 he had been forbidden by the Cabinet to send the fleet through the Straits to coerce the Sultan. In 1897 he had tried to reach an understanding with Russia so that the two Powers alone, or together with other Powers, could send their fleets to anchor before Yildiz. Russia had shown herself strongly averse to any such proceeding and without the concurrence of Russia, Britain could not act.⁽¹⁾ Salisbury had thought of using "blockades" to coerce Turkey, but it had been ascertained that (without a declaration of war) neutral nations need not accept them.⁽²⁾ In 1897 America had shown herself very much disinclined to do so. At one time Salisbury had believed that the occupation of Jeddah might be a possible means of bringing pressure to bear upon the Sultan, but he had discovered that "the costliness of Indian troops and the extreme unhealthiness of

(1) Cf. pp 260-62.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 19 Oct. 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 43.

the climate made that idea impracticable."⁽¹⁾ In October 1897 a message from the Sultan with regard to articles in the Standard newspaper about his position as Caliph offered a gleam of hope that, in respect to his position as Caliph, a rod might be found to fit his shoulders. The Sultan was very sensitive on the question of the Caliphate. Salisbury thought that Britain should study the idea and see if it could be developed:

"But, unless something can be made of that, we have really no hold on - and therefore no interest in - any of the Sultan's territories except Egypt." ⁽²⁾

In November 1896 Salisbury had considered that as time went by the prospects that Britain should ultimately keep the Straits out of the hands of Russia became fainter and fainter.⁽³⁾ The best that Britain could hope for was to put off that result until after the catastrophe of the Turkish Empire. Salisbury had then believed that the Sultan was going downhill so fast that it was probable that this could be done. If once the question of cutting up the Sultan became practicable, the sovereignty of the Straits might become, for Britain and for Austria-Hungary, a

(1) Ibid.

(2) Ibid.

(3) Salisbury to Currie, 23 Nov. 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 34.

question of compensation. Nothing should be said of such views at that time, as Austria would imagine that Britain was going to desert her, which was "certainly very far from being the case". Nevertheless, these were the views of Salisbury in 1896. But, by October 1897, the idea that the Turkish Empire was on the verge of dissolution had been dissipated. Salisbury was now certain that Britain was incapable of keeping the Straits out of Russian hands until the time when the collapse of the Ottoman Empire might allow them to be treated as questions of compensation in a general rearrangement of the Ottoman territories. Britain was now under no direct obligation to Austria-Hungary with respect to affairs in the Near East; in January 1897 Britain and Austria had reserved for themselves complete liberty of action.⁽¹⁾ Salisbury, therefore, concluded in October 1897 that Britain's best policy was "to withdraw as much as possible from all responsibilities at Constantinople".⁽²⁾ It could only be done gradually, by reason of Britain's past engagements, but it should be done. At the same time as it was being done, Britain should continue to strengthen her position on the Nile, to its source.

For some time Britain's interest in Egypt had been

(1) Cf. pp. 230-32.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 19 Oct. 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 43.

growing stronger.⁽¹⁾ After the Sultan's victories in the Sudan, it was clear that, if Egypt were given back at all, it must be given back to the Sultan, as Khedive: no one else had any legal right.⁽²⁾ The events of 1897 had conclusively proved that the Concert of Europe could never be trusted with even the slenderest portion of executive authority. It followed that

"either Egypt must be given back to the Moslems, which no one except the Moslems would approve; or Britain must use for the purpose of maintaining peace and order there, the authority with which she had been invested by the victory of Tel-el-Kebir." (3)

Salisbury thought that this was the only policy left to Britain.

As far as British influence at Constantinople was concerned, Salisbury now despaired. It seemed unlikely that Currie's idea of forming a combination of the Western Powers could ever be realised: Hanotaux seemed determined to sacrifice the time-honoured policy of France in the East to the Russian alliance.⁽⁴⁾ Salisbury believed that it

(1) Ibid. W.L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, op.cit., Vol. I, p. 284; Vol. II, pp. 537-38.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 19 Oct. 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 138, No. 43.

(3) Ibid.

(4) This was also the opinion of Count Nigra, the Italian ambassador at Vienna.

Rumbold to Salisbury, 23 June, 1897; F.O.7/1256, No. 218 Confid.

would be difficult, if not impossible, to break the solid front presented at Constantinople by the ambassadors of Germany, Austria and Russia. From this time onwards Salisbury's interest in the questions of the Near East declined. There are no more private letters to the British ambassador at Constantinople preserved among Salisbury's papers.

But it is not the end of the story; for, even before the ambassadors had finished their labours in concluding terms of peace between Turkey and Greece, it was becoming apparent that the ever-increasing influence which Germany was acquiring in Turkey was arousing the jealousy of Russia. The latter Power would not relinquish her political influence in Turkey without a struggle. If two rival camps were to be established at Constantinople, Britain, standing between the two, would be in a powerful position. The British ambassador did not despair.

CHAPTER VIII

Echoes of the Past.

The Turks were aware that they owed their military successes in the war against Greece to Germany. They knew that the fine discipline and good equipment of their soldiers were achieved as a result of the work of the German Military Mission and, above all, of General von der Goltz Pasha.⁽¹⁾ In the campaigns of Thessaly, a prominent part was taken by German officers and, after the war, two of the senior members of the Military Mission - General von Kamphoevner Pasha and General von Grumbchow Pasha continued to serve as instructors in infantry and artillery.⁽²⁾ In 1901, three additional German officers arrived in Turkey to serve as instructors.⁽³⁾ The German ambassador at Constantinople considered that a great part of the prestige which Germany enjoyed in Turkey was due "to the German officer and his work".⁽⁴⁾ It had now become a settled policy of the

- (1) In 1881 a group of German army officers first took up service in the Turkish army. In 1883 von der Goltz became the leader of the German Military Mission.
- (2) Currie to Salisbury, 27 April, 1897; F.O.78/4801, No. 291.
- (3) O'Connor to Lansdowne, 22 April, 1901; F.O.78/5121, No. 149, transmitting a despatch from Ponsonby.
- (4) Marschall to Hohenlohe, 5 March, 1898; G.P. XII(11) No. 3339. Confid.

German Government to encourage the Turkish army to engage German officers.

The Turks also recognized that Germany gave them considerable diplomatic support at the time of the negotiations respecting the Cretan question. But the German ambassador at Constantinople, Baron Saurma, was a "guileless being" and carried out the policy of his Government (which was to support the Sultan secretly, while outwardly conforming to the wishes of the other ambassadors in the Concert) in a blundering fashion.⁽¹⁾ Clearly, Germany needed a better representative if she were to embark on a forward policy in Turkey. The appointment of Baron Marschall von Bieberstein as German ambassador to Constantinople,⁽²⁾ in October 1897, marked a significant step in the forward movement - the beginning of the Drangnachosten.

The activities of the Germans were closely watched from St. Petersburg. The Russians were not inclined to brook a rival to their political influence in Turkey, which had been increased at the time of the Armenian troubles, without putting up a fight. They chose as a battle ground the subject of the new governor for Crete. In December

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 19 Aug., 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 137, No. 32.

(2) Lascelles to Salisbury, 21 Oct., 1897; F.O.64/1411, No. 278.

1897 the Russians informed the German Government that their representative at Constantinople had been instructed to propose Prince George of Greece as a candidate for the provisional Governorship of Crete.⁽¹⁾ Russia, in fact, proposed a solution to the Cretan question which Germany and Austria-Hungary had made it their aim to prevent ever since the outbreak of the Cretan troubles: it was sure to be strenuously opposed. Currie believed that:

"the most plausible explanation of the Russian action was that she intended once for all to deal a blow at the growing German influence at Constantinople."⁽²⁾

Certainly, a vigorous diplomatic battle quickly began at the Turkish capital. Currie learnt that M. Zinoviev (the new Russian ambassador to Constantinople) had been instructed to inform the Sultan that, if he did not accept the candidature of Prince George as Governor of Crete, Russia would be compelled to support the annexation of Crete to Greece.⁽³⁾ The wider implications of the Russian move did not escape the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, who perceived that it was a question of a struggle between Russia and Germany

(1) Bulow to Radolin, 25 Dec., 1897; G.P.XII (11) No.3255.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 20 Jan., 1898; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 137, No. 48.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 19 Jan., 1898; F.O.78/4922, Tel. No. 11, Confid.

for influence in Turkey. In December 1897 the Russian Dragoman had warned him:

"You must choose between us and the Germans. German support cannot help you. If you rely on us, you need not care for the other Powers. We will protect you." (1)

The new German ambassador, Marschall, was not slow to enter the lists. He informed the Sultan that he looked upon the nomination of Prince George as a virtual annexation of Crete to Greece and that he opposed it "in the most formal manner." (2)

The Russian move created a great sensation at the foreign capitals, especially at Vienna. Goluchowski was very unfavourably impressed by the Russian proposal which bore with it the possibility of reopening questions which he had thought closed. The ambassadors at Vienna were generally agreed that Goluchowski considered that Russia had infringed the spirit, if not the letter, of the recent Austro-Russian agreement on affairs in the Near East. (3) The Russian move coming, as it did, so soon after the success Goluchowski had achieved in the Delegations, when he had given information

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 15 Jan., 1898; F.O.78/4922, Tel. No. 13.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 18 Jan., 1898; Ibid, Tel. No. 19.

(3) Rumbold to Salisbury, 2 and 5 Jan. 1898; F.O.7/1272, Nos. 2 Confid and 7 Confid.

concerning the Austro-Russian Agreement,⁽¹⁾ was a serious embarrassment to the Minister, who showed considerable hesitation when asked to comment upon it. There were other signs that elements of discord were beginning to appear in the relations of Austria-Hungary and Russia. There was a great deal of latent agitation in the Balkan states and, although the official Russian attitude was in harmony with the agreement to maintain the status quo in the Balkans, the character of certain Russian agents - such as M. Jadowski and Baron Zaube, recently installed at Belgrade and M. Bakhmetiev, recently sent to Sofia - was not reassuring as to Russian designs.⁽²⁾ Moreover, Russia had brought about the repatriation of Bulgarian officers who had been exiled during Stambulov's administration and it was obvious that Russia was strengthening her hold on Bulgaria.

Under such circumstances, the attitude which Britain would take towards the proposed candidature of Prince George would have an important effect upon the minds of those who directed the foreign policy of the Great Powers. If Britain were to oppose the Prince's candidature, a way might be opened for dispelling the coolness which had arisen

(1) Rumbold to Salisbury, 22 Nov., 1897; F.O.7/1260, No. 394.

(2) Rumbold to Salisbury, 27 Jan., 1898; F.O.7/1272, No. 21 Confid.

between London and Vienna as a result of Britain's refusal to give binding assurances with respect to Constantinople and the Straits and as a result of the differences of opinion which arose in the course of the earlier negotiations for the settlement of the Cretan question.⁽¹⁾ But, quite apart from the local Cretan question, Salisbury was at this time occupied with considerations of a diplomacy which had to take into account world policy. The Far East occupied the centre of the stage. After the German occupation of Kiao-chow in November 1897 and the sending of Russian ships to Port Arthur in December, it seemed that a scramble for Chinese territory had begun.⁽²⁾ If Britain were not to be completely out-manoeuvered, she must reach an agreement either with Germany and Japan or with Russia. Whatever Salisbury's personal preference may have been, he was forced by the majority in his Cabinet to attempt first to reach an understanding with Russia.⁽³⁾ On 17 January he sent O'Connor instructions to ask M. Witte whether it would be possible for Britain and Russia to work together in China.⁽⁴⁾ Eight days later, Salisbury wrote again to

(1) cf. p 230 and pp. 245-246.

(2) W.L. Langer, op.cit., vol. II, pp. 453-458.

(3) Ibid, p. 465.

(4) Salisbury to O'Connor, 17 Jan., 1898; B.D. I, No. 5.

O'Connor and on this occasion he linked Turkey with China - these being two countries which contained large territories, some of which interested Britain more than Russia and vice versa. Salisbury enquired whether it would not be possible to arrange that where, in regard to these territories, British and Russian counsels differed the Power least interested should give way to and assist the other.⁽¹⁾ In order to demonstrate to Russia the value of British assistance, Salisbury utilised the current issue of the candidature of Prince George as Governor of Crete: on 17 January he instructed Currie to support the candidature, if it was again brought before the Sultan.⁽²⁾ But, although Muraviev expressed satisfaction at the harmony of views, existing between Britain and Russia with regard to the Governorship of Crete, the Russian Minister was averse to a discussion of Turkey at that time and his object in China was to define spheres of influence so that Russia would have an absolutely free hand in the sphere which she would claim for herself. Britain's efforts, on the other hand, were directed towards securing the open door in the territories which would be lost to her in China.

(1) Salisbury to O'Connor, 25 Jan., 1898; B.D. I, No. 6.

(2) Salisbury to Currie, 17 Jan., 1898; A. & P. (1899) cx, 509.

The aims of the two Governments were opposed and it soon became clear that no agreement could be reached.⁽¹⁾

From the first there had not been great enthusiasm on the British side. Britain had not given Russia much encouragement: Russia was not in any great need of diplomatic assistance at Constantinople in her attempt to secure the appointment of Prince George as Governor of Crete. She very soon relaxed her pressure upon the Sultan, as she realised that, in time, it would become apparent that Prince George's appointment would be the only possible solution to the Cretan question and would be carried through⁽²⁾ - as indeed it was in November 1898.

There were, however, important members of the British Cabinet who still believed that Britain should reach an agreement with some country in order to secure support for her policy in China. Throughout the early months of 1898, Chamberlain and Balfour carried on, unofficially, negotiations with Hatzfeldt and Eckardstein with the object of bringing about an Anglo-German agreement.⁽³⁾ From the

(1) W. L. Langer, *op.cit.*, Vol. II, pp. 469-70.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 16 Feb., 1898; F.O.78/4922, Tel. No. 53.

(3) Salisbury was at this time convalescing on the Continent, but he was informed of all that took place.

memoranda which Chamberlain made, recounting his conversations with the Germans, it is clear that his chief aim was to secure German aid in order to check any Russian advance beyond Manchuria; in order to induce the Germans to accept the proposed agreement, Chamberlain personally was ready to offer a defensive alliance against Russia.⁽¹⁾ But the Germans intimated that they would be willing to enter into an alliance with Britain only if the alliance were accepted by Parliament. It was doubtful whether Parliament would accept an Anglo-German alliance at that time - the Kruger telegram was still not forgotten. Hatzfeldt, therefore, suggested on 25 April that the difficulty might be overcome if the Mediterranean Agreements of 1887 were renewed, as a closer connexion between England on the one hand and Austria-Hungary and Italy on the other would of necessity lead to closer Anglo-German relations. Chamberlain showed little interest in the idea and reiterated that his wish was for an alliance with Germany.⁽²⁾

When Salisbury returned he told Hatzfeldt that he thought there "might be much to be said" for a general

(1) Garvin, Life of Chamberlain, III, pp. 259 ff.

(2) Hatzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 26 April, 1898; G.P. XIV No. 3793.

alliance with Germany, but that he was bound to remind him that:

"With respect to one subject, the maintenance of the Ottoman Empire, this country was not in a condition to enter upon any further engagements. He (Hatzfeldt) had himself seen sufficient to convince him that, in respect to that question, the public opinion of this country was very deeply divided." (1)

Hatzfeldt replied that he did not think that either Italy or Austria-Hungary (with whose interests Germany in this matter was principally concerned) desired any further engagements from Britain with respect to the Ottoman Empire than "an undertaking to prevent its fragments, when it fell to pieces, falling into Russian hands". Salisbury did not contest the soundness of such a policy, but he observed that:

"a negative condition, so vague, could hardly be the foundation of an agreement." (2)

The Ottoman Empire had ceased to be a burning issue. Whereas in 1887 Britain, Austria-Hungary and Italy had had vital common interests in the Ottoman Empire to defend against Russian encroachment, in 1898 this was no longer the case. In 1898 Britain was much more concerned with opposing Russian aggression in China. Of the Powers of

(1) Salisbury to Lascelles, 11 May, 1898; F.O.64/1436, No. 109a, Secr.

(2) Ibid, and G.P. XIV (1) pp. 230-31: footnote.

the Triple Alliance, Germany was the only country with interests in China and, although it was in Germany's interest to see that Russia did not obtain too much territory in China, it was even more in her interest to see Russia occupied in the Far East, as then Russian pressure on Germany's frontier was greatly reduced.

In 1898 there was no longer the same relationship between the British and German ambassadors at Constantinople as there had been in the early years of the 1890s. When White and Radowitz represented their Governments at Constantinople, the German Government had little interest in Turkey beyond a desire to see that Russian influence did not completely dominate the scene; therefore, it was in the interest of Germany to make common cause with Britain, Austria-Hungary and Italy on all questions in which these Powers were opposed to Russia and France.⁽¹⁾ But in 1898 Germany herself was seeking to increase her economic and political influence in Turkey. In the course of working towards this end she inevitably found herself in collision with Britain, who still had some important interests left in Turkey.

In November 1897 considerable agitation was caused among British representatives at Constantinople when it

(1) Cf. pp. 52-57.

appeared that the Germans were unofficially urging that the Presidency of the Council of Ottoman Public Debt should no longer be confined to the British and French representatives, but that a German representative should be given the opportunity to become President.⁽¹⁾ When the Council was first instituted it was arranged that the Presidency should be held alternately by Britain and France, because these countries held the preponderating amount of the debt - (about 30% in Britain and about 40% in France, while Germany only held about 3%). It was, however, provided that if any material alteration should take place at any time in the relative amounts of the holdings the arrangement should be reconsidered. The German representative, Dr. Lindau now stated that the German holding was as large as the British and a report drawn up by the French delegate, with some other object in view, confirmed his statement. Dr. Lindau was instructed by his Government "to insist" on a reconsideration of the arrangement, although he himself professed to depreciate any change. The Italian representative was friendly to Britain but, in view of the fact that the Italian Government might be pressed by the Germans to instruct him to support their proposal, Mr. Caillard, the British delegate, urged that the British

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 12 Nov., 1897; F.O.78/4809, Priv.

Government should ask the Italian Government not to give the German proposal any encouragement.⁽¹⁾ Caillard maintained that there was no proof that the relative proportions of the holdings of the debt had changed to the extent which the Germans declared they had changed. He wrote to Salisbury a long letter and memorandum on the German proposal and described it as:

"one more attempt of the Germans to push out English influence and substitute their own." (2)

The question as to who would be President of the Council had a political significance as the President had political influence at Constantinople. The new attitude of Salisbury to the diplomatic struggle at Constantinople was to a certain extent shown by his comment on Caillard's memorandum: "What a bore the man is!"

As it happened, the German delegate agreed to take no action as long as Caillard was President and, since it would be unwise to initiate a discussion when the Frenchman was President (in view of the preponderance of French interests) the issue was shelved.⁽³⁾ But another

(1) Ibid.

(2) Caillard to Salisbury, 10 Nov. 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 98, Nos. 83 and 84.

(3) It was reopened again in 1901, when it was decided to wait three years until the Bonds were again deposited for a new sheet of coupons.
O'Connor to Lansdowne, 29 Jan., 1901; F.O.78/5120, No. 39.

struggle between the British and the Germans quickly followed on the subject of railway concessions. The Smyrna-Aidin Railway Company, the only British railway company still operating in Asiatic Turkey, was trying to obtain permission to extend their line to Tchai, where they would join the German railway line to Konia. They had succeeded in getting a contract drawn up which had received the assent of the Grand Vizier and other important Turkish Ministers, when it became apparent that the German Anatolian Railway Company would vigorously oppose the granting of the concession.⁽¹⁾ In order to prevent the extension of the British line, the German Company sought permission to extend their line to Diner. At the same time the Deutsche Bank and the Anatolian Railway Company made a loan of £1200,000 to the Sultan, one of the conditions of the loan being that the Company should be given the required concession.⁽²⁾ The Sultan was greatly in need of a loan and so he sent instructions to his Council of Ministers, which was prepared to report favourably to the Aidin Company, "to drop the matter".⁽³⁾ Currie had

(1) Currie to Sanderson, 6 Jan., 1898; F.O.78/4911, Priv; including a report (surreptitiously obtained) of a meeting of the directors of the German Anatolian Railway Company.

(2) Currie to Sanderson, 10 Jan., 1898; F.O.78/4922, Tel. (no number).

(3) Ibid.

already envisaged the possibility of the Germans putting "the screw on the Sultan" and had asked Salisbury to speak to the Turkish ambassador in London in favour of the Aidin Company.⁽¹⁾ Salisbury promised to try to do his best with the ambassador, although he revealed his pessimistic attitude by adding "but I expect very little result".⁽²⁾ Currie, however, sent a very strong message of protest to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs and to the Palace.⁽³⁾ After a long discussion, the Turkish Council of Ministers decided to refuse to grant the extension to Diner to the Germans.⁽⁴⁾ Currie did not cease to press the claims of the Aidin Company;⁽⁵⁾ but, on 31 March, the Sultan issued an iradé proclaiming that extension should be granted neither to the German nor the British railway companies.⁽⁶⁾ Currie had been only partially successful in his efforts to press the claims of the Aidin Company, but the fact that he had succeeded in stopping the German attempt to

(1) Currie to Sanderson, 6 Jan., 1898; F.O.78/4911, Priv.

(2) Currie to Sanderson, 10 Jan., 1898; F.O.78/4922 (no number). Minute by Salisbury.

(3) Currie to Salisbury, 12 Jan., 1898; F.O.78/4922, Tel. No. 9.

(4) Currie to Salisbury, 13 Jan., 1898; Ibid, Tel.No. 10.

(5) Currie to Salisbury, 3 March 1898; F.O.78/4913, No.123.

(6) Currie to Salisbury, 31 March 1898; F.O.78/4914, No. 201.

crush the company altogether showed that British influence was still not negligible at Constantinople.

The Germans, however, had still to play their trump card, in the struggle for influence at Constantinople. They played it on 17 October when the German Emperor arrived in person to pay his respects to the Sultan as head of the Ottoman Empire. In the course of a visit which lasted six days William II was feted at the Turkish capital. No trouble or expense was spared by the Sultan in his effort to entertain his Imperial guest. The visit was taken as a compliment by the Mussulman population who felt that honour was being done to their Caliph, to their religion and to their country by the visit of so great a potentate.⁽¹⁾ The full significance of William II's visit was well evaluated by Sir N. O'Connor (the new British ambassador to Constantinople) in his annual report for Turkey of 1907:

"The Sultan was under the odium and cloud of the Armenian massacres. The European Powers showed their displeasure. They barely tolerated the Greek war and interfered to prevent Turkey reaping the benefit of her military successes and Greece from suffering the punishment of her aggressive policy. They shortly afterwards approved of the autonomy of Crete. The German Emperor did not see his way to gainsaying the decisions of Europe. But he came to Constantinople with the Empress, spent a week at Yildiz,

(1) O'Connor to Salisbury, 22 Oct., 1898; F.O.78/4919, No. 550A.

showed himself as the personal friend of the Sultan and, as far as lay in his power, whitewashed the Sultan before Europe." (1)

The effusive attitude which William II adopted towards the Sultan and the Turks was typified by a speech which he made at Damascus in November:

"Let H.I.M. the Sultan Abdul Hamid Khan II rest assured, as well as the 300 millions of Moslems who, scattered as they are all over the world, are united by the closest bonds with the Turkish Sovereign in his character as Caliph, that the German Emperor will be their friend forever." (2)

The Germans naturally expected some reward for this excessive display of friendship and the ambassadors of the other Powers at Constantinople were at pains to decide whether the Germans sought it in the political or commercial sphere. No political understanding of any kind was arrived at, but the Emperor dwelt upon the importance of improving the Turkish army and probably assured the Sultan of Germany's support in this direction. The commercial results of the Emperor's visit were bound to be numerous. Many concessions were put forward as being the object of German ambition. There was the concession for the construction of quays and depots at Haidar Pasha, the terminus of the Ismid railway;

(1) Annual Report for Turkey, 1907, B.D. V, No. 43.

(2) O'Connor to Salisbury, 24 Nov., 1898; F.O.78/4920, No. 622, transmitting a report from the British Consul at Damascus.

there was the concession for the prolongation of the German railway from Angora to Bagdad and the concession for a port on the coast of Syria.⁽¹⁾ O'Connor believed that nothing more had been done in the matter of the concession to the Anatolian railway which would run counter to the interests of the Smyrna-Aidin railway.

The Sultan had to be extremely careful at this time not to offend unduly any of the Great Powers; for, although his prestige had been raised both in the eyes of Europe and of his own subjects by the successful conduct of the war against Greece, much of that prestige had been lost throughout the time of the long negotiations which resulted in the peace of September 1897. Then, in November 1898, Prince George of Greece was finally appointed commissioner of Crete with a mandate from Britain, France, Russia and Italy to organize a proper administration in the island.⁽²⁾ Everyone knew that Prince George's appointment was only the first step to the union of Crete with Greece. The Sultan, through bad administration, had lost another province and the effect of this was not lost either on his subjects or on his ministers. The last effort of the Sultan to put a bold front forward was made in November

(1) O'Connor to Salisbury, 26 Oct., 1898; F.O.78/4919, No. 556.

(2) W.L. Langer, op.cit., vol. I, p. 378.

1898 when he suddenly interfered with the Porte's decision to withdraw the Turkish troops from Crete and instructed his Ministers to draw up a new "mazbatta" in the opposite sense.⁽¹⁾ On this occasion two Turkish Ministers refused to sign the "mazbatta" - the Sheikh-ul-Islam and the Minister of Justice, H.H. Abdurrahman Pasha. The Sheikh-ul-Islam explained to the Council his reasons for not signing the "mazbatta" and added that:

"if the Sultan persisted in his system of Government, there was a great danger to the Empire ... The present system of Government was not in accordance with the Koran. The holy law enjoined upon them to live in concord with their Christian fellow subjects: for some time the opposite had been the case." (2)

The Sheikh-ul-Islam was the leader of the religious party in Turkey: in any struggle against the Sultan he would have that party with him. His remonstrance against abuses in every part of the Turkish administration was, therefore, of great significance. Even more significant was the fact that the Sheikh and the Minister of Justice continued in office after their open criticisms of the Sultan's rule. In former years any minister who had dared to use such language would have been instantly dismissed. The fact

(1) O'Connor to Salisbury, 23 Nov., 1898; F.O.78/4920, No. 614 Secr.

(2) Ibid.

that the Sultan did not dismiss the Sheikh and Abdurrahman Pasha indicates that he felt a weakening in his position.

The reform policy which Britain had advocated in Turkey for so many years was now openly proclaimed by two of the most powerful Ministers of the Sultan. Abdul Hamid, realising that his surrender to Russian influences had discredited him in the minds of an increasing number of his subjects who were adherents of a more liberal policy and that even the German "alliance" was no longer as popular as it had once been, felt compelled to show a more favourable disposition towards Britain. The attempt of the Sultan to bring about more friendly relations between Turkey and Britain was greatly facilitated by the appointment of Sir N. O'Connor as British ambassador to Constantinople in October 1898. Sir Philip Currie had, from 1895 onwards, been obliged to maintain towards the Sultan an "attitude of coldness and reserve", for no other attitude was compatible with the feeling of repugnance at the Sultan's conduct towards the Armenians which was widespread in Britain.⁽¹⁾ Currie's conduct of diplomacy at Constantinople had also been characterised by a certain want of

(1) Currie to Barrington, 20 July, 1897; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 137, No. 24.
Barrington to Currie, 27 July, 1897; Ibid, Vol. 138, No. 42.

"suaviter in modo" which arose from the fact that his earlier experience had been that of an official at the British Foreign Office and not that of a diplomatist.⁽¹⁾ But O'Connor came to Constantinople after having served as ambassador at St. Petersburg and he came with the intention of using all his charm and "savoir faire" in order to restore something of the cordiality which had once existed between the Sultan and the British embassy. O'Connor was aided in his task by the growing conviction among the Turks that the power of Britain was on the increase. Events in Egypt had greatly impressed them and the Sultan felt that it was no longer safe to outrage British public opinion.⁽²⁾

The first sign of the change of front in Turkey appeared when a series of articles in the local newspapers was published advocating a return to better relations with Britain. For many years previously the Turkish press had either studiously avoided all reference to British affairs or had treated them in a spirit of marked hostility. But now such papers as the Tarik commented with satisfaction on the tone of the British press.

(1) Barrington's Memorandum of a conversation with Mr. S. Whitman, London Correspondent to the New York Herald, who had just returned after spending three months in Constantinople, 24 November, 1896; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 96, No. 21.

(2) O'Connor to Salisbury, 29 March, 1899, F.O.78/4992, No. 151.

"Papers (formerly influenced by Gladstone and men with views like his) now publish matter showing that they fully appreciate the importance and value of Turkish friendship. These contain frequent mention of the name of the new British ambassador at Constantinople, Sir N. O'Connor. This diplomatist is a statesman of correct views, who has of old appreciated the moral and material power of Turkey." (1)

The acting British consul at Erzeroum reported that a general feeling of friendship towards Britain was returning together with the conviction that the disturbances and massacres of 1895-6 had been a mistake which had done much to injure the prosperity of the country. He thought that orders had been sent by the Sultan to the provinces for a more just treatment of the Christian population and that this was a consequence of the desire to please Britain. (2) It now suited the Sultan to forget the events of 1895-6 and their effect upon British public opinion. He began his bid for British friendship by asking O'Connor for a list of the pending cases in which the British Embassy was interested and which were awaiting solution at the Porte. (3) O'Connor tactfully presented the Sultan with a list which

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- (1) Ibid, inclosing a translation of the Tarik, 17 March 1899.
- (2) O'Connor to Salisbury, 17 April, 1899; F.O.78/4993, No. 185, inclosing a despatch from the British consul at Erzeroum.
- (3) O'Connor to Salisbury, 13 April, 1899; F.O.78/4992, No. 179.

"he could clear off without loss of dignity in his own eyes."

About this time O'Connor thought it likely that the Sultan might make direct overtures to Britain and the ambassador requested Mr. de Bunsen, who was on leave in Britain, to sound Salisbury as to the line to be taken if this should happen. O'Connor himself thought that British public opinion would "have nothing to say to Abdul Hamid", but, on account of her Mussulman subjects, Britain could not afford "entirely to pooh pooh offers of this kind".⁽¹⁾ Salisbury's advice to O'Connor was given in a brief and curt minute: "Distrust them" - that is, the Sultan's overtures.

At the same time as the Sultan was trying to place his relations with Britain on a more friendly basis, the Russians were attempting to come to some kind of arrangement with Germany on affairs in the Near East. The increased influence which Germany enjoyed in Turkey after the Graeco-Turkish war had from the beginning aroused Russian opposition.⁽²⁾ The financial credit which the Sultan gained as a result of the indemnity to be paid by Greece enabled him

(1) O'Connor to de Bunsen, 2 Feb. 1899; Salisbury Papers, Vol. 137, No. 58.

(2) Cf. pp. 277-279.

to spend money in Germany on munitions of war. As early as November 1897 this provoked a warning from Russia to the Porte regarding Turkey's continued indebtedness to Russia in respect to the indemnity of the Russo-Turkish war of the '70s. Russia claimed that an outstanding charge of £1,000,000 for the maintenance of prisoners of war remained to be settled.⁽¹⁾ Currie heard that the Sultan had directed his ambassador at St. Petersburg to explain to the Tsar that:

"There was a strong anti-Russian feeling among his Ministers and that he might find it impossible to persist in his present attitude of political friendship with Russia if the latter continued to press for the indemnity at this inconvenient moment ..."⁽²⁾

When the Germans succeeded, in Spring 1899, in gaining the concession for the construction of a port at Haidar Pasha and began also to press for a concession for the construction of a railway from the Sea of Marmora to the Persian Gulf, the Russian Minister, Muraviev, openly expressed to the German ambassador at St. Petersburg his fears that Germany's economic interests in Turkey might one day lead her to defend them and turn against Russia.⁽³⁾

(1) Currie to Salisbury, 18 Nov., 1897; F.O.78/4809, No.757.

(2) Currie to Salisbury, 25 Nov., 1897; Ibid, No. 777.

(3) Radolin to Hohenlohe, 5 Ap., 1899; G.P. XIV (11) No. 3982.

Count Osten-Sacken, the clever Russian ambassador at Berlin went even further and attempted to bring about an agreement between his country and Germany regarding their respective interests in Turkey. He told Bülow that:

"The time of alliances was passing; existing alliances were either in the process of destroying themselves or of being transformed into acts of pure formality, or indeed they had had from the beginning a more platonic than practical character. We live," he declared, "in times of arrangements. Germany and Russia ought to conclude an arrangement relating to Asia Minor." (1)

After allowing a suitable interval to elapse, Osten-Sacken returned to the subject and stated specifically that the point of vital interest to Russia was the Straits. If Germany would set at rest Russian fears regarding the Straits (i.e. guarantee them to Russia on the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire), Russia would leave Germany a free hand in Asia Minor.⁽²⁾ The Germans did not receive Osten-Sacken's proposal with enthusiasm. They thought that what Russia offered bore no relation to what she asked from Germany in return.⁽³⁾ It was quite clear that Germany could press ahead with her economic enterprises in Asia

(1) Memorandum by Bulow, 18 Ap., 1899; Ibid, No. 4017.

(2) Memorandum by Bulow, 26 Ap., 1899; Ibid, No. 4018.

(3) Memorandum by Bulow, 4 July, 1899; Ibid, No. 4025.

Minor with or without Russian approval: all Germany really needed was the Sultan's approval and William II had taken care to ensure that this would be given. A German commitment to Russia respecting the Straits would be in contradiction to Germany's commitments under the terms of the Triple Alliance. Russia would have to offer a more tangible inducement to Germany in order to persuade her to run the risk of losing the friendship of the Austrians and Italians.⁽¹⁾ If, however, Russia and France would declare themselves ready to enter with Germany into a reciprocal guarantee of the maintenance of the territorial status quo of the three Powers, Germany would be ready to conclude an agreement.⁽²⁾ Osten-Sacken had to admit that this would not yet be possible for France: although the rational element in the French character had renounced Alsace-Lorraine, the sentimental element in their character would not permit the formulation of this rationalism.⁽³⁾ The Russians had for the time being to be content with the assurance that Germany had only economic interests in Turkey and would not seek to secure a predominant political influence. In April 1900, however, the Russians concluded

(1) Hatzfeldt to Minister of Foreign Affairs, 1 May, 1899; Ibid, No. 4019.

(2) Memorandum by Bulow, 5 May, 1899; Ibid, No. 4020.

(3) Ibid.

an agreement with Turkey which prevented the building of railways in the Black Sea districts of Asia Minor without their consent.⁽¹⁾

The interests of Russia and Germany in Turkey were in fact opposed. Although Russia might wish, for the present, to maintain the status quo, she did not wish to see Turkey strengthened; on the contrary, she worked for the slow decomposition of the Ottoman Empire. Germany, on the other hand, was investing large sums of money in the Ottoman Empire and industrial capital demanded the stability of the political situation in the country in which it was placed. Germany worked with the object of preserving the Ottoman Empire for as long a time as it would be possible to preserve it.⁽²⁾ In August 1898 the Berlin Foreign Office went so far as to consider the possibility of assisting Turkey to fortify Constantinople on the side menaced by Russia.⁽³⁾ Marschall gave a true forecast of the future when he observed that, if Germany continued to expand economically in the Near East, he foresaw the moment:

(1) G.P.XVII, Nos. 5211, footnote, 5217, 5218, 5221.

(2) Marschall to Hohenlohe, 6 June, 1899; G.P. XIV (11), No. 3988.

(3) Richthofen to Bulow, 9 Aug., 1898; G.P. XII (11), No. 3343. The idea was given up because it was thought too dangerous.

"When the famous remark that the whole Near East is not worth the bones of a Pomeranian grenadier will be an interesting historical reminiscence, but will no longer correspond to reality." (1)

By the turn of the century it was becoming increasingly apparent to the Turks and even to the Sultan that Russia would like to see the process of disintegration continue in Turkey. But the Sultan had at heart only one interest - self-interest - not the interest of his country. It is probable that there was some truth in the rumour which circulated at this time that Abdul Hamid had concluded a secret agreement with Russia which guaranteed his personal safety, whatever might happen.⁽²⁾ But, although the Sultan was reassured on this point, he still felt the need to make some attempt to halt the process of disintegration of his Empire and to subscribe to the wishes of a great number of his subjects by enlisting the aid of Britain. Throughout the last years of the old century and the early years of the new, the Sultan continued to make tentative approaches to Britain.

On the occasion of the Queen's birthday, in May 1900, the reception at the British Embassy at Constantinople was attended by "a quite unusual number of Ottoman Ministers

(1) Helfferich, Georg von Siemens, III, 90; quoted by A.J.P. Taylor in The Struggle for Mastery in Europe, 1848-1914, (Oxford, 1954) p. 383.

(2) O'Connor to Lansdowne, 6 Oct., 1902; F.O.78/5193, No. 432 Confid.

and officials". In view of the fact that special Imperial permission was necessary in the case of every prominent Turk who desired to visit an Embassy, the prevalence of the Turkish element at the British Embassy "excited general comment and was observed to be in contrast with the usual practice on such occasions." (1)

On 3 August the Sultan spoke to O'Connor in a very friendly manner of the identity of interests which existed between Turkey and Britain.

"Common interests were the foundation of policy and he would always endeavour, as he had done in the past, to maintain the friendly relations between the two countries." (2)

The Sultan remarked that, however great one country was, it was always possible that, at some time or another, it might be in need of assistance. He had a numerous and fine army and could put in the field a million men and, had need been, he could have sent one or even two army corps to S. Africa or elsewhere:

"There were certain points which it would be necessary for England to guarantee and that he would, if I liked, put them down on paper and send them to me." (3)

(1) O'Connor to Lansdowne, 25 May, 1900; F.O.78/5059, No.186.

(2) O'Connor to Lansdowne, 3 Aug., 1900; F.O.78/5060, No. 271 Conf.

(3) Ibid.

O'Connor answered in a general polite way, but did not encourage the Sultan because he was certain that, if any agreement were concluded, all the burden would be on the side of Britain.

In spite of the Sultan's fine words, certain pending questions between Britain and Turkey were still unsettled by 1901. These included the payment of indemnities of losses suffered by Britain at the time of the Armenian troubles, the payment by the Sultan for the purchase of a cruiser from Armstrongs, a concession for the Haifa-Damascus railway and a settlement regarding the Salonica post office.⁽¹⁾ It was to O'Connor's credit that he took a firm stand in demanding the settlement of these questions. Eventually resort had to be made to a movement of the British fleet to put pressure upon the Sultan.⁽²⁾ The movement of the fleet, the stern language held in London to the Turkish ambassador⁽³⁾ and the diplomatic pressure exerted by O'Connor at Constantinople all combined to make the Sultan give way and order a settlement of the questions

(1) O'Connor to Lansdowne, 3 May 1901; F.O.78/5126,
Tel. No. 34.

(2) Lansdowne to O'Connor, 23 May, 1901; F.O.78/5125,
Tel. No. 56.

(3) Sanderson to O'Connor, 25 May and 26 May, 1901;
F.O.78/5125, Priv.
Sanderson to Lansdowne, 27 May, 1901; F.O.277/31.

which was satisfactory to Britain.⁽¹⁾ The prestige of the British embassy at Constantinople was increased by this success, which represented a triumph for O'Conor who prevailed upon the Sultan without losing his friendship.

In December 1902 the Sultan asked O'Conor's advice "as a friend rather than as an Ambassador" regarding the steps which Turkey should take to deal with unrest in Macedonia. Abdul Hamid waxed sentimental and recounted how his father had been fortunate enough to have Ambassadors accredited to him who were sincere friends. The Sultan mentioned Lord Stratford and said that he remembered, as a child, his coming frequently to the Palace, laughing and joking with his father:

"and many a time had he lifted him, a mere boy, in his arms and carressed him."

Abdul Hamid lamented that he had not had the luck of his father: there had been no other ambassador whom he could regard in the light of an intimate friend;⁽²⁾ although, it must be admitted that the Sultan was doing his best with O'Conor!

In 1901 certain influential persons in Britain and Germany were once more doing their best to bring their two

(1) O'Conor to Lansdowne, 5 June, 1901; F.O.78/5126, No. 64.

(2) O'Conor to Lansdowne, 19 Dec., 1902; F.O.78/5194, No. 533 Confid.

countries together - even to the extent of an alignment. The conduct of the unofficial negotiations was facilitated by the fact that Lansdowne had succeeded Salisbury as Foreign Secretary, although Salisbury remained Prime Minister. Lansdowne was not nearly so convinced as Salisbury of the safety of Britain standing, as she did, unattached to either of the two great Continental groups of Powers.⁽¹⁾ He was ready to receive with sympathetic attention any overtures from Germany. In spring 1901 the leading figure on the German side was Eckardstein, the first Secretary of the German Embassy in London. His great ambition was to conclude an Anglo-German alliance and, at this time, he was given scope for his activities, as the German Ambassador, Hatzfeldt, was ill. Acting on the principle that the end would justify the means, Eckardstein distorted the facts of the situation both in Germany and in Britain, so that the negotiations were confused.⁽²⁾ But when Hatzfeldt was well enough to resume his duties as ambassador and, on 23 May, had an important conversation with Lansdowne, the issue was clarified. Hatzfeldt suggested that an alliance should be concluded between the British Empire on the one

(1) Memorandum by Salisbury, 29 May, 1901; B.D. II, No. 86.
Memorandum by Lansdowne, 11 Nov., 1901; Ibid., No. 92,
Very secr.

(2) W.L. Langer, op.cit., vol. II, pp. 728-732.

hand and the Triple Alliance on the other.⁽¹⁾ While Hatzfeldt thought that agreement should be reached on this general principle before concrete terms were discussed, Lansdowne was anxious to discuss details. He had been promised a memorandum by Eckardstein.⁽²⁾ The memorandum never materialised. This fact, together with the extreme reluctance of Salisbury to contemplate Britain's adherence to the Triple Alliance and the general confusion caused in Berlin and in London by Eckardstein's misreporting of the views of the Ministers concerned resulted in the dropping of the negotiations until November.

In the period a crisis developed between Britain and Germany over Kuwait on the Persian Gulf. Britain had important interests in the Persian Gulf which she had tried to safeguard in 1899 by concluding a secret agreement with the Sheikh of Kuwait who undertook not to grant concessions to third parties or to cede any part of his territory without the consent of the British Government.⁽³⁾ The Sheikh of Kuwait was in fact an independent ruler,

(1) Memorandum by Lansdowne, 24 May, 1901, B.D. II. No. 82 Enclosure.

Hatzfeldt to the German Foreign Office, 23 May, 1901; G.P. XVII No. 5010. Tel.

(2) Lansdowne to Eckardstein, 24 May, 1901; B.D. II, No. 84.

(3) Secret Agreement of 23 Jan., 1899; B.D. X (11), pp. 194-5.

although, in theory, his territories were on the outer fringe of the Ottoman Empire. In August 1901 Turkish troops were sent to Kuwait and the Sultan tried to strengthen his hold on those territories. Britain at once protested and prevented the disembarkation of the Turkish troops.⁽¹⁾

The action of Britain aroused great alarm at Berlin, for the Germans felt the need to secure the terminus of the Bagdad railway at Kuwait and they greatly feared a protectorate over Kuwait by Britain.⁽²⁾ The Germans accordingly used strong language to Britain. Metternich (the new German ambassador in London) declared that a British protectorate would be regarded as "an unfriendly act to Germany in consequence of her interest in Kuwait as the terminus of the Bagdad railway."⁽³⁾ Britain had in fact no intention of declaring a protectorate for she realised that it would raise "international questions which had better remain quiescent".⁽⁴⁾ All that Britain required was that Turkey should understand that Britain would not allow her to

(1) H.S.W. Corrigan, British, French and German Interests in Asiatic Turkey, 1881-1914. Unpublished thesis of university of London, Ph.D., 1954, pp. 232-234.

(2) Richthofen to Marschall, 6 March, 1901; G.P. XVII, No. 5289.

(3) Memorandum by Sanderson, 29 Aug., 1901; F.O. 78/5173. Bulow to Bekardstein, 29 Aug., 1901; G.P. XVII, No. 5292.

(4) Minute of Lansdowne, undated on India Office to Foreign Office; F.O. 78/5173.

strengthen her hold over Kuwait to the detriment of Britain's position in the Persian Gulf.⁽¹⁾ When this fact was accepted at Berlin, Germany's fears died away and the crisis passed.⁽²⁾ But Holstein drew the important moral that if questions such as Kuwait could come to a head between Britain and Germany, there could be no more talk of an alliance, but, at best, of two antagonists.⁽³⁾

In the meantime, however, Lansdowne had given his serious attention to the German proposal of the Spring regarding an Anglo-German alliance. The Foreign Secretary thought that it was "out of the question" that Britain should entertain the German overture in the form in which it was presented by Hatzfeldt; but he would not refuse all further discussion of the question, for the objections to Britain joining the Triple Alliance did not seem to him to apply to a much more limited understanding with Germany as to Britain's policy in regard to certain matters of interest to both Powers. Lansdowne thought that it would be valuable to conclude an understanding on the lines of the Anglo-

(1) Lansdowne to O'Connor, 3 Sept., 1901; F.O.277/31.

(2) Bulow to Marschall, 4 Oct., 1901; G.P. XVII, No. 5311. Tel.

(3) Holstein to Metternich, 4 Sept., 1901; Ibid, No. 5296, Priv. Tel.

Italian Agreement of 1887.⁽¹⁾ Britain and Germany might agree that they had a common interest in the maintenance of the status quo on the shores of the Mediterranean, the Adriatic, the Aegean and the Black Seas and in the maintenance of the freedom for the commerce and navigation of all nations in the Persian Gulf and the prevention of any territorial acquisitions by other Powers which might interfere with that object. The two Powers might agree to cooperate in the furtherance of this policy, the nature of the co-operation to be determined whenever the occasion for it might arise.⁽²⁾

It would obviously be to the advantage of Britain that the status quo should not be disturbed at Constantinople, in Albania, Macedonia and Bulgaria, in Tripoli and Morocco and in Egypt and that Russia and Germany should be excluded from establishing themselves strategically on the shores of the Persian Gulf. In a sense, Lansdowne was attempting to revert to the relations which prevailed between Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance in 1887. But there was one important difference: in 1887 Britain had been connected with the Triple Alliance through her close relationship with Austria-Hungary and Italy and her connection with

(1) Memorandum by Lansdowne, 11 Nov., 1901; B.D. II, No. 92, very secr.

(2) Memorandum by Lansdowne, 12 Dec., 1901; B.D. II, No. 93.

Germany was only indirect. In 1901 Lansdowne wanted the relationship with Germany to be direct. He was disappointed in his hopes, for Metternich very quickly made it plain that Germany wanted a full-blown alliance or nothing. He said quite bluntly:

"It was a case of the whole or none."⁽¹⁾

In 1902, however, it seemed that there might be a prospect of Britain once more approaching the Triple Alliance through Austria-Hungary and Italy. The attempt made by Russia, in September, to send through the Straits into the Black Sea, four torpedo boats, which had been constructed at Cronstadt,⁽²⁾ resulted in a re-opening of discussions on the Straits question between the Cabinets of London, Vienna, Rome and Berlin. It was then revealed that there had been a genuine misunderstanding at the Continental capitals regarding the importance which Britain attached to the Straits. The Austro-Hungarian ambassador in London, Deym, revealed that Goluchowski had inferred from the statements which Salisbury had made in Spring 1896 that it was unlikely that Britain would take an active

(1) Lansdowne to Lascelles, 19 Dec., 1901; Ibid, No. 94.

(2) O'Connor to Lansdowne, 2 Sept., 1902; F.O.78/5248, No. 389 Conf.

interest in the Straits question.⁽¹⁾ Lansdowne pointed out to the Austro-Hungarian chargé d'affaires that Salisbury:

"Had never said anything which could properly be interpreted as an announcement that Britain had ceased to take an interest in the question of the Straits. On the contrary ... he had guarded himself against such an admission, and that on every occasion when vessels of war had been allowed to pass the Straits had placed on record a protest on behalf of the British Government and reserved the right to resort to such consequent measures as might seem to them appropriate." (2)

Lansdowne wished Austro-Hungary and Italy to act simultaneously with Britain in representing to the Porte that the admission of the four Russian torpedo vessels through the Straits would be contrary to the Treaty obligations of Turkey and that, if they were allowed to pass, those countries would reserve the right to claim corresponding privileges.⁽³⁾ The Foreign Secretary hoped that this common action would be the precursor to a discussion à trois of the Straits question.

On 20 November Plunkett (the British ambassador in

(1) Lansdowne to Plunkett, 17 Nov., 1902; Ibid, No. 137, Conf.

(2) Lansdowne to Plunkett, 9 Nov., 1902; Ibid, No. 133.

(3) Lansdowne to Rodd, 18 Nov., 1902; Ibid, Tel. No. 49.

Vienna) reported Goluchowski as saying that he hoped that he might before long hear from Lansdowne in regard to the renewal of the "accord à trois". Goluchowski believed that a fresh arrangement on the lines of the former would be most desirable. (1)

But as the days went by it was gradually revealed that Austria-Hungary was not prepared to play the role which Lansdowne expected of her even in the specific matter of the four Russian torpedo boats. By the third week in December Goluchowski had still not sent instructions to his ambassador in Constantinople to make representations to the Porte. When Milbanke discussed the subject unofficially with Count Lützow of the Vienna Foreign Office the latter expressed the opinion that Calice would not be instructed to make any but the vaguest and most general representations at Constantinople. Lützow explained that, in view of the approaching visit to Vienna of Count Lamsdorff (the Russian Foreign Secretary) and the excellent relations which existed between Austria and Russia, which were of so great importance in regard to the Macedonian question, the Austrians were loth to do anything which might be taken badly at St. Petersburg and the question of the Straits was

(1) Plunkett to Lansdowne, 20 Nov., 1902; Ibid, No. 279 Conf.

naturally one on which the Russians were particularly sensitive.⁽¹⁾

Lansdowne commented on Milbanke's report: "this is very unsatisfactory." The Foreign Secretary's hopes of reviving the "accord à trois" were to be disappointed. Goluchowski was to steadfastly maintain the view that Britain should be in the first line and Austria-Hungary only in the second line with regard to any action to be taken respecting the Straits. In fact both Lansdowne and Goluchowski had to a certain extent bluffed in their pronouncements of November 1902. Although it was true that Britain was still interested in the Straits, it had by this time become accepted that Britain could not do anything materially to prevent Russia occupying Constantinople and obtaining free access from the Black Sea through the Dardanelles. Indeed, after Fashoda and after the strengthening of Britain's positions in Egypt, it was decided that the circumstance of Russia obtaining free access through the Straits "would not fundamentally alter the present strategic position in the Mediterranean."⁽²⁾

(1) Milbanke to Lansdowne, 18 Dec., 1902; F.O.277/1. Private.

(2) Memorandum by Hardinge respecting the Passage of Russian War Vessels through the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, 16 Nov., 1906. Includes Extract from Defence Committee Paper IB, 13 Feb., 1903; B.D. IV, p. 58.

As far as Austria-Hungary was concerned, the real parting of the ways took place in 1897 when the Austro-Russian Agreement was concluded. Although after this time certain Russian actions aroused irritation at Vienna and on occasion Austro-Russian relations were strained, Goluchowski philosophically decided that neither party to an understanding, however intimate, could be expected entirely to surrender his independence of views on certain points and continued to believe that the best hope for Austria-Hungary's future security lay in the Agreement with Russia. (1) Certainly, in 1902, the area from which most danger to peace was to be feared was Macedonia where considerable unrest was manifested. In the concerted effort of Austria-Hungary and Russia to press the Sultan to undertake remedial measures for the situation in Macedonia lay the best hope for peace.

The improved relations between Britain and Turkey at the beginning of the twentieth century came too late to make any material difference in the situation. The Sultan was still afraid of Russia who, after all, was his nearest neighbour, and he was still much influenced by Germany who was the greatest military Power. The future of Turkey was

(1) Rumbold to Salisbury, 13 May, 1898; F.O.7/1273, No.157.

uncertain. In January 1902 O'Connor wrote privately to Lansdowne expressing the opinion that anarchy might supervene in the near future; but he concluded with the remark that, in spite of the partial military outbreaks then taking place, he was inclined to take an optimistic view of the situation: there could hardly have been an ambassador at Constantinople for the last fifty years who had not, at some time, thought a disruption inevitable, yet it had not come. (1)

In 1902 it seemed rash to attempt to forecast the future. The only certainty was that the old grouping of Powers at Constantinople was no more. The tentative movement of Britain and France towards a better relationship between their two countries had become more definite. Cambon was now the French ambassador in London. Only two more years were to pass before the Anglo-French Agreements regarding Egypt and Morocco were concluded. (2) Already, in 1902, the way was open for a reorientation of British policy.

(1) O'Connor to Lansdowne, 14 Jan., 1902; F.O.277/27.

(2) Texts in B.D. II, pp. 374-398.

CONCLUSION

In 1890 Salisbury regarded Constantinople and the Straits as the "keys to the Eastern question", which still occupied a vitally important position in Britain's foreign policy. The diplomatic moves of the other European Powers at Constantinople were closely watched and any movement of Russian ships through the Straits was noted. The events which took place in Asiatic Turkey, the Balkan countries and the Turkish territories of Africa were a matter of concern to Britain who often took decisive action in order to safeguard her own interests. It is not true to say that, in the early years of the 1890s, the Near East was superseded in importance by the Far East and the colonial territories.

Salisbury considered the problem of Constantinople and the Straits from two different but inter-related points of view. He recognized that the keeping of Constantinople out of Russian hands had been made a vital article of the British political creed for many generations and British prestige had become tied up with it. If Constantinople were to fall under Russian influence, the blow would be tremendous: the party which had that item on their record would share the fate of Lord North's party. Until 1897 Salisbury consistently

worked with the object of delaying Russia's advance towards Constantinople and of checking Russia's attempts to achieve a diplomatic supremacy in the capital of the Ottoman Empire.

His most important action was to enlist the aid of Germany, Italy and Austria-Hungary. The latter Power was even more vitally interested than Britain in maintaining the status quo at Constantinople and in the Straits. Salisbury recognized that not only did Austria-Hungary and Britain share this common interest, but their interests clashed nowhere: Austria-Hungary was Britain's only real friend in Europe. When, during and after 1896, Salisbury's doubts about Britain's ability to defend the Straits and to maintain a strong diplomatic position at Constantinople increased, he continued publicly to adhere to his former policy, because, although it was no longer so important in itself to Britain, it was important as a means towards another end - the retention of the friendship of Austria-Hungary and the prevention of the formation of the Dreikaiserbund.

The doubts of the Directors of Naval and Military Intelligence concerning Britain's ability to defend the Straits were of a much earlier origin than Salisbury's. In 1891 they warned Salisbury that it would be too dangerous to employ any portion of the British Mediterranean fleet at

the extreme eastern end of the Mediterranean, because the ships would not only be at the end of somewhat precarious communications but, ^{to} detaching them, ^{would be to} would hand over for a time the maritime preponderance in the western Mediterranean to the French. The immediate reaction of Salisbury to this statement was the caustic comment that, since "the main object" of British policy in the Mediterranean was declared to be entirely out of reach, it was questionable whether Britain should keep a fleet in the Mediterranean at all: if the fleet were retained in Portsmouth Harbour, it would at least be safe from any possible attack and a very considerable relief would be given to the Budget of the Chancellor of the Exchequer! Salisbury never properly understood naval matters. His daughter records that he once bitterly enquired:

"What is the use of a fleet if it is never to be taken out of silver paper for fear of the paint getting scratched?" (1)

He quickly allowed the information of the Directors of Naval and Military Intelligence to recede into the background of his mind, for there were diplomatic considerations also to be taken into account: Salisbury was certain that any hostile

(1) G. Cecil, Biographical Studies of Lord Salisbury
(printed for private circulation, London, 1948), p.35.

move made by Russia against Constantinople and the Straits would at once arouse the opposition of the other European Powers and as long as Britain maintained her close relationship with Austria-Hungary and the other Powers of the Triple Alliance, their assistance could be utilised to hold the French in check.

The Cabinet's refusal to allow the fleet to go through the Straits in November 1895 came as a shock to Salisbury and constituted a psychological turning point. Although he strove throughout 1896 and the early months of 1897 to carry on his policy as before, the diplomatic setbacks which he met with in those years served to increase his despondency. Britain could not maintain an active interest in Constantinople, the Straits, and the surrounding territories if she had no means of enforcing her demands on the Sultan.

Even at the beginning of the period, British diplomacy was not in itself sufficient to carry great weight at Constantinople. The measure of success attained bore a direct relationship to the measure of support accorded by Germany and her friends of the Triple Alliance. But, as Germany's economic interests in Turkey increased, so she

became correspondingly less willing to endanger them by giving political support to Britain. She was reluctant to forfeit the Sultan's good-will by associating herself with Britain in pressing demands for reform upon the Sultan. Indeed, she was suspicious of Britain's repeated attempts to coerce the Sultan into accepting reforms: she asked herself whether Britain really wished to maintain the status quo or whether Britain was not secretly working for the downfall of the Ottoman Empire. These suspicions came to a head in 1895 when the Germans became convinced that Salisbury wished to partition Turkey.

In fact, Salisbury, believing that the only hope for the Ottoman Empire lay in reform, was, by the energetic execution of the reform policy, doing his utmost to ensure the Empire's continued existence. Salisbury never wavered in his loyalty to Austria-Hungary. Even when, after the worst excesses of violence against the Armenians, Salisbury asked for the co-operation of the Tsar to depose the Sultan, he made it clear that there could be no concessions to Russia in the Straits: Britain could not abandon Austria-Hungary after she had stood by her for so long.

The Germans had, however, already sowed the seeds of their own suspicions in the minds of the Austro-Hungarian

Foreign Secretary, Goluchowski. He craved for reassurance as to Britain's intentions in the Near East and sought to substitute for the vague agreements of 1887 a more definite agreement by which Britain would be committed to fight for the defence of Constantinople and the Straits. Unlike his predecessor, Kalnoky, he did not understand that Britain, governed by Parliamentary institutions, could not pledge herself in advance to go to war and Salisbury's refusal to enter into new engagements confirmed his suspicions that Britain was no longer to be trusted. In spring 1897 Goluchowski sought security in an agreement with Russia to maintain the status quo in the Near East.

Although the Cretan troubles brought about a temporary resurrection of the Dreikaiserbund, the tradition of co-operation between Britain and the Powers of the Triple Alliance in the Near East was sufficiently strong to survive and, in 1901, Lansdowne came near to re-creating the old grouping of Powers in order to counter Russian activities in the Straits. He failed ultimately because the confidence of the three Continental Powers in British Policy was no longer strong enough to form a basis for collaboration: they insisted on a definite commitment by Britain to support the Triple Alliance. Lansdowne felt no more able than

Salisbury had done to enter into written engagements involving an obligation to go to war. Britain turned away from the Triple Alliance and the movement was accelerated as Egypt came more and more to displace Constantinople as the focus of Britain's interest in the Near East.

After Fashoda and the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, Britain's position in Egypt was assured. She had Alexandria as a naval base and could strengthen her naval power in the Mediterranean so that she could say in 1903 that the opening of the Straits would not fundamentally alter the strategic position. Moreover, the diplomatic support of the Powers of the Triple Alliance was no longer necessary to Britain in the Egyptian question. There were no further obligations to Austria-Hungary in the Near East to be considered: the Dual Monarchy had chosen to look to its agreement with Russia as a source of security. The way was open for a reorientation of British policy.

APPENDIX IBritish Diplomatic Representation at Constantinople,1890 - 1902

Sir William White, Ambassador, 1 January 1887-27 December 1891.

Sir Edmund Fane, Chargé d'Affaires, 25 June 1891-20 January,
1892.

Sir Clare Ford, Ambassador, 12 January 1892-25 December 1893.

Sir Edmund V. d. Fane, Minister, 21 January 1892-26 February
1893.

Sir Arthur Nicolson, Chargé d'Affaires, 6 June 1893-10 February
1894.

Sir Philip Wodehouse, Ambassador, 1 January 1894-30 June 1898.

Sir Michael Herbert, Chargé d'Affaires, 29 October 1896-8
September 1896.

Mr. M.W.E. de Bunsen, Chargé d'Affaires, 27 May 1896-21 September
1898.

Sir Nicholas Rodrick O'Connor, Ambassador, 1 July 1898-1 September
1900.

Mr. de Bunsen, Chargé d'Affaires, 13 September 1900-29 August
1902.

APPENDIX IILord Salisbury's Memorandum of 4 June 1892

Most Confid.

Printed for Cabinet, 8 June 1892.

Salisbury Papers, confidential

prints.

A joint report of the Director of Military Intelligence and the Director of Naval Intelligence has just been placed in my hands by the direction of the Lords of the Admiralty, who concur in it. It has reference to the possibility of a descent of Russia upon Constantinople and upon the attitude which should be observed by this country in case of such an event.

I do not think it to be urgent, because, as far as it is possible to judge, a Russian descent is not imminent at present. They are not prepared for a general war, their fleet is not complete, their military armament is imperfect and their finance is in disorder.

I do not therefore advert to it as a matter requiring the immediate attention of H.M.'s Government. But it is of the gravest possible moment and the early attention of whoever is responsible for the conduct of public affairs cannot be withheld from it without public danger for very long.

For the upshot of this Report is that the Foreign Office on the one side and the Defence Department on the other have been proceeding on lines as far divergent as it is possible for lines of policy to diverge and it is evident that, if this difference is maintained until the moment for action arrives, nothing but the most serious disaster can be the result.

The protection of Constantinople from Russian Conquest has been the turning point of the policy of this country for at least forty years and to a certain extent for forty years before that. It has been constantly assumed, both in England and abroad, that this protection of Constantinople was the special interest of Great Britain. It is our principle, if not our only, interest in the Mediterranean Sea; for, if Russia were mistress of Constantinople and of the influence which Constantinople possesses in the Levant, the route to India through the Suez Canal would be so much exposed as not to be available except in times of the profoundest peace.

I need not dwell upon the effect which the Russian possession of Constantinople would have upon the Oriental mind and upon our position in India, which is so largely dependent upon prestige. But the matter of present importance is its effect upon the Mediterranean and I cannot see, if

Constantinople were no longer defensible, that any other interest in the Mediterranean is left to defend. The value of Malta, our only possession inside that sea, would at all events be diminished to an infinite degree.

It now appears from this Report that, in the opinion of General Chapman and Captain Bridge, it is not only not possible for us to protect Constantinople, but that any effort to do so is not permissible. Even supposing the fortifications in the Dardanelles could be silenced, even supposing the Sultan asked for our presence in the Bosphorus to defend him against Russian attack, it would yet be, in the judgement of these two officers, a step of the gravest peril to employ any portion of the British Mediterranean fleet in protecting him. The peril would arise, not from any danger we might incur in meeting the Russian forces, not from the strength of any fortifications the fleet would have to pass, but from the fact that this is the extreme end of the Mediterranean and that, so long as the French fleet exists at Toulon, the function of the English fleet must be to remain in such a position as to prevent the French fleet at Toulon from escaping into the Atlantic and the English Channel, where it would be a grave peril to this country. They conclude, therefore, that unless we had the concurrence of the French,

which is of course an absurd hypothesis or, unless we had at first destroyed the French fleet at Toulon, which at all events must be a very distant contingency, it is not legitimate for us to employ our fleet at the Eastern end of the Mediterranean. The presence of the French fleet in the harbour of Toulon, without any declaration of hostile intention or any hostile act, has the power of entirely immobilizing and therefore neutralizing any force that we possess or could bring under existing circumstances into the Mediterranean.

Two very grave questions arise from this tragic declaration which it must be the task of H.M.'s Government, before any long period has elapsed, definitely to answer.

In the first place, it is a question whether any advantage arises from keeping a fleet in the Mediterranean at all. The main object of our policy is declared to be entirely out of reach and it is laid down that even a movement to attain it would be full of danger. There is nothing else in the Mediterranean which is worth the maintenance of so large and costly a force. If its main duty is to protect the Atlantic and the Channel, it had better go there. If it is retained in Portsmouth Harbour, it will, at least, be safe from any possible attack on the part of the fleet at Toulon and a very considerable relief will be given to the Budget of

the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Secondly, the other consideration is that our foreign policy requires to be speedily and avowedly revised. At present it is supposed that the fall of Constantinople would be a great defeat for England. That defeat appears to be not a matter of speculation, but of absolute certainty, according to the opinion of these two distinguished officers, because we may not stir a finger to prevent it. It would surely be more in the interests of our own reputation to let it be known as quickly as possible that we do not pretend to defend Constantinople and that the protection of it from Russian attack is not, in our eyes worthy of the sacrifices of the risks which such an effort would involve. At present, if the two officers in question are correct in their views, our policy is a policy of false pretences. If persisted in, it will involve discomfiture to all who trust in us and infinite discredit to ourselves.

I would merely say, in conclusion, that this momentous question is not one which either the Admiralty or the War Office can decide on their own responsibility. The Cabinet which undertakes to decide it (and the decision cannot be long delayed) must have at its command the opinion of all that England or India can furnish of naval or military strategic

knowledge. We have been going on for long, evidently enormously overrating the utility of our fleet for any purpose except that of bare coast defence at home. It is very important that the real facts, however disagreeable they may be, should be ascertained and presented in the clearest light to those who are responsible for the policy of the Empire.

APPENDIX IIILord Salisbury's Conversations with the Tsar at
Balmoral, 27 and 29 September, 1896

Cabinet Memorandum by Lord Salisbury 27 and 29 September 1896. Salisbury Private Papers, F.O. (Private Correspondence) Vol.89, Cabinet Memoranda, No.20. Very Secret.

"I saw the Emperor of Russia tonight between 7 and 8.30. He was, of course, purely Russian in his views, but, subject to that qualification, his language was conciliatory, straightforward, and honest. He made me begin the conversation; and throughout he initiated little.

There was one central point on which he felt very strongly: there were a number of subsidiary points on which he spoke quite clearly, but without any strong feeling. I will take the latter first.

He was distinctly in favour of maintaining at present the territorial status quo in Turkey. On this point he received my views approvingly, but did not pledge himself as to the immediate steps to be taken. He agreed that it was dangerous for any Power to attempt to coerce Turkey by occupying any portion of her territory, because to do so would awaken a jealousy among the Powers so keen that it might lead to war; but, on the other hand, he agreed that it

was dangerous to leave matters as they are, for many causes, and chiefly financial pressure, might speedily bring the Ottoman Empire to anarchy, and then the isolated action of some Power or other - especially Austria - became probable and would in all likelihood lead to European war. Therefore, something must be done. Our procedure could not, for the reasons stated, be levelled against the territory of the Empire, therefore, it must be directed against the Sultan himself. He recognized that the deposition of the Sultan might be a necessary step, and that it was only through the agency of a Sultan that better government for the Turkish Empire could be gained. He doubted who the next heir would be. I replied that he must be selected according to the rule prevalent in the House of Ottoman, but that whoever he might be, when he took the Sultanate he would know that his predecessor had been deprived of it by the voice of the Powers and he would know that if he shocked the feeling of Europe, or disregarded the voice of the Powers, a similar fate might await himself. Premising, therefore, my distrust of paper reforms and Constitutions created for the purpose, I expressed the belief that the best guarantee of good government we could obtain would not be in formal Constitutions and Organic Laws which might be instituted by the presence of the

Ambassadors, but without a guarantee for their observance would have no practical effect whatever. Such a guarantee could only be sought in the Sultan's fears, I thought the mere knowledge of his predecessor's fate would make the successor pay due regard to the advice of the Powers, and that no other security was needed or would be of much use. He listened to these observations - demurred to none of them, and assented to most of them from time to time with varying emphasis. I ended by saying that, as he agreed in the main to these views, I should make a formal proposal to his Foreign Minister, as soon as he had one, to the effect of my proposal last week to Austria, of which I informed him, viz, that the ambassadors should be directed to consult as to the changes that were necessary in order to prevent a recurrence of the recent cruelties, that whatever the Six Powers were all agreed upon the Sultan should be compelled to accept. I further suggested that our Ambassadors should be instructed that a change of Sultan was probably a desirable expedient. His attitude and language throughout this part of the conversation were assenting, but without warmth As to Egypt, he told me that was the matter about which the French were most keen."

[Salisbury did not see his way to a very early evacuation.]

"Later on I referred to Nicholas' proposal in 1851 to Sir G.H. Seymour, when he wished to consider the heritage of the Sick Man, and proposed we should have Egypt in the distribution. He said he had no objection to our having Egypt. I added that the Emperor Nicholas had proposed that France should have Syria; he seemed to think that too little ..." [India and Persia].

In regard to Armenia, he ridiculed the proposals of some philanthropists in England who wished that Russia should occupy Armenia. It would be a very costly undertaking, bringing no return to Russia, and it would not benefit the Armenians as a whole; for, although those who were in the occupied territory might benefit, those outside, who were scattered throughout the Turkish Empire would not benefit, but would be exposed to the vengeance of the Moslems.

I introduced the subject of the extreme East and assured him that England had no desire to hinder the commercial and industrial development of Russia in that quarter, because all that favoured industry created trade, and it was on trade we lived. He accepted these assurances with great apparent satisfaction. He said he should try to carry his railway through Manchuria, but they had yet no definite project as to its outlet. He was confident that there would be no cause

of friction between Russia and England in that quarter.

Then he advanced his own view, on which he dwelt at considerable length, and was thoroughly in earnest. It was that the Straits should be under Russian control. I suggested that he might without difficulty procure that they should be opened to all nations; but that arrangement he emphatically said that Russian opinion would reject. The Straits were the door to the room in which he lived, and he insisted he must have the key of that door. I said that this view implied that the Sultan had disappeared, for while he was there, it was only he that could have the control of the Straits. To some extent, he replied that was true; he was forecasting the future. In dealing with the immediate present, he said he was in favour of the status quo. But, he added, he could conceive the Sultan remaining, even though Russia had command of the Straits. Russia did not want Constantinople or any of the Turkish territory on either side. She only wanted the door, and the power of fortifying it.

I asked how he thought Roumania would like that arrangement. He said that difficulty had never occurred to him, but it was not a matter of great importance. I asked how he thought Italy and France would like the introduction of a new Naval Power into the Mediterranean. He seemed surprised

at the idea that either should object. I pointed out that Italy, with her long line of maritime coast, had a deep interest in the question whether she would have to defend it against one Power or against two. France was mistress of the Mediterranean so far as the States bordering on any one of the three Continents was concerned and the introduction of Russia to the Mediterranean would be challenge to that supremacy. But France, he said, will not think we mean to go to war with her. I replied, not now; but men and circumstances change and they have to guard against an unknown future. I told him that Waddington had been very earnest in assuring me on that point; the policy of France was unchanged from what it was at the time of the Crimean War. He expressed great surprise at this statement, but told me he had taken no steps to ascertain the feelings of France. I hoped that he would ascertain from Hanotaux (whom I praised highly) how France would take this change. He promised to ask Hanotaux and to let Dufferin know the result.

He insisted much on his own objection to war, and that in asking for the key of the door, he had no desire to establish a Maritime Power in the Mediterranean. He had a fleet in the Black Sea. It consisted of his best and most modern vessels. Directly the Straits were open he should send

those vessels to the Pacific and leave them there.

These were the maritime objections. England's objection, I said, was of the same order, so far as her interests were concerned. But I did not pretend that our interest in the matter was of so urgent a character as that of either of these Powers. Our direct interest in the Mediterranean was at present confined to Malta and Egypt. But there was a more serious objection which was not mainly maritime and that was the one that came from Austria. I expressed in strong language my sense of the importance to Europe of the existence of Austria, and my feeling that after having pursued this policy by her side for so many years, there would be something of "bassesse" in our conduct if we left her in the lurch. As I understood, Austria's impression was that the master of the Straits would have full control over the present Turkish dominions lying between Bulgaria and the Aegean Sea, and Austria could not allow herself to be surrounded by Russia. To protect herself by taking Salonica and the territory which lay behind it, would expose her to another and an internal danger - the upsetting of the balance between the Slavonic and the non-Slavonic elements of her Empire.

The mention of Austria produced a series of remarks on her condition from the Emperor which showed considerable

antipathy - though he expressed the deepest respect for the actual Emperor. He was sore that Austria should have obtained Bosnia and Herzegovina in the last war without losing a man or spending a shilling, making Russia take the chestnuts out of the fire. He expressed a strong view as to her future. He thought that she was only held together by respect for the present Emperor ... But he repudiated with some emphasis the idea that he should attempt to hasten or assist the process of her [Austria's] disintegration by force of arms

I expressed the opinion, which he shared, that there seemed no cause of opposition between Russia and England except this question of the Straits. I thought that the interest of England in the matter was not so large as that of the others, and was purely maritime. I admitted that the theory that Turkish rule at Constantinople was a bulwark to our Indian Empire could not be maintained. But I did not see how we could abandon the allies by whom we had stood so long. The task of Russian and Austrian statesmen should be to see whether there was no contrivance by which, not only compensation, but security, could be given to Austria in the case of any such change taking place on the disappearance of the Turkish Empire. I thought that if Austria, France and Italy were (in that event) in favour of Russia having control

of the Straits, England would not maintain her objection alone, but would seek for some arrangement by which it could be met.

Incidentally, he expressed himself in terms by no means friendly to the Emperor of Germany. He said that the Emperor was a very nervous man; he (the Emperor of Russia) was a quiet man, and he could not stand nervous men. He could not endure a long conversation with the Emperor William, as he never knew what he would do or say. I understood him to say that the Emperor William's manners were bad; that he would poke him in the ribs, and slap him on the back like a schoolboy

I mentioned incidently, while praising the talents of Prince Lobanow, that I thought he had a "guignon" against England. The Emperor denied this energetically and said that he had talked a great deal to Lobanow on the subject and was convinced that it was not true.

He told me the Emperor of Germany was willing to fall in to his views about the Straits, but he had not ventured to speak about them to the Emperor of Austria.

The upshot of the conversation I take to be that if we give him the Straits he will help us, and will consider favourably proposals for compensation to us. If we do not

give him the Straits, he will only help us formally in regard to present difficulties.

29 September

I saw the Emperor again this evening. The Emperor sent for me to tell me that he had thought for two days over our conversation and that while recognizing the enormous difficulty of doing any good while Abdul Hamid was on the Throne, he thought that the deposition of the Sultan was at this stage too great a risk to run. It was impossible to say how the Moslems would take the proceeding. They had often had artificial successions to the Throne created by the murder of the Sultan and they had submitted peaceably to his successor; but they have never had a vacancy created by the action of the Christian Powers. He thought it was quite possible that they would look on the new Sultan as a creature of the Christians and would refuse to obey him - perhaps murder him. In that case the intolerable burden of pacifying and governing the Turkish Empire would be thrown upon the Powers. I recognized that nothing could be done in that direction unless the Six Powers were agreed; and I recognized that his apprehensions were not without foundation; but I feared that if we let the matter slide a graver crisis, the utter

disintegration of the Ottoman Empire, would be upon us before long. I understood him, however, to renew his assent to the proposal I had made to Austria, which I have mentioned above. But I should not be surprised if his advisers and the French Government were to succeed in talking him into inaction. He promised to let me know through Lord Dufferin what Hanotaux thought of the steps to be taken to meet the present difficulties.

Referring to what he said about Russian control of the Straits, I gave my opinion that it was not impossible that the claim should be admitted if made after the Turkish Empire had disappeared; because the other Powers would all have demands to satisfy, and it might be made part of a general arrangement. But I said that the idea, at which he had hinted, that this control of the Straits should be given to Russia while the Sultan was still at Constantinople, would be exceedingly unacceptable to the other Powers and would be strongly resisted. It would not be a situation nette. The Sultan with his Treaty rights and his religious influence would still be there; but he would really only be a mask for Russia. He assented, and said he quite understood my objection, and would prefer the other arrangement himself. He

had only proposed the course to which I objected because he wanted to emphasize what he had said before, that Russia wanted no addition to her territory, not the smallest; she had enough to occupy her whole energies for a century; but he wanted access to his dominions.

In discussing these future matters, I said that I was giving him my candid opinion on the questions he raised; but that I had colleagues, and Her Majesty's Government had allies, and past traditions, and therefore he must not take any expression of opinion as a pledge. To that he quite assented.

I mentioned to him at the end of our conversation that I apprehended one possible danger, against which we ought to be prepared. It is said that the next commotion in Constantinople is like to be directed, among others, against the subjects of the Six Powers and, still more, against the personnel of the Embassies. I said it would be quite possible that, if such a thing took place, we could sit still and tolerate it. In this view he emphatically agreed. It would be necessary that we should agree upon some mode of defending ourselves. I suggested that each Power should, in that case, have the liberty of sending up not more than three ships of war. He did not contest this view; I

think he partially approved it. But he did not at all fancy the prospect and soon afterwards closed the interview.

Sent to:

Prince of Wales,

Lord Lansdowne,

Duke of Devonshire,

Mr. Chamberlain,

Mr. Goschen,

Lord G. Hamilton,

Mr. Balfour saw it at Hatfield.

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