THE BOSPHORUS AND THE DARDANELLES: 1902-1923

(A STUDY OF FRENCH AND BRITISH POLICIES)

"Les règles du droit pourront varier, la fortune pourra déplacer le siège de la puissance; les fatalités géographiques demeureront."
- René Pinon

A THESIS

PRESENTED TO

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

McGILL UNIVERSITY

BY

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FOR THE

MASTER OF ARTS DEGREE

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

MONTREAL - CANADA

- 1958 -

PREFACE

From the viewpoint of international law, much has been written about the problem of the Straits, whereas from the viewpoint of diplomatic history, only the briefest sketches exist, most of which are now out-dated. What general accounts of the history of the Straits do exist, all tend to consider the problem throughout the centuries and are reluctant to dip deeply into the history of any one phase.

In this paper, we shall consider the Straits question, in its final phases, as a dispute of international proportions. Between 1902 and 1923, hardly a year passed without there occurring, on the horizon of European controversy, a quarrel involving the Straits. Yet after 1923, many of the elements of this quarrel have vanished; the problem is no longer one of primary importance in European diplomacy. Truly the Straits question has passed into history.

Prior to 1902, though French and British policies in the matter of the Straits were fixed along traditional lines, elements of change are detectable. It is these changes that constitute our chief interest in the introductory chapter. By 1903, both, in varying degrees and from different motives, felt the need to modify their Straits policies. This attitude culminated in the 1908 declaration. The third chapter records the French and British reaction to the repeated attempts by Russia to secure further modifications in their policy. As we shall see, in chapter four, only the contingencies of war would induce the two to acquiesce in the Russian scheme for the Straits. However, when the Tsarist régime capitulated, and when Russia had repudiated the wartime agreement, France and Great Britain sought a new and final solution to the question. The problems that they faced and the solutions that they proposed are outlined in the last chapter.

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This thesis has been made possible through the helpful direction of my tutor - Professor H.N.Fieldhouse, Chairman of the History Department of McGill University; through the invaluable criticism of my father - Mr. Q.J.Gwyn; through the assistance of Mr. Robert Vogel, who so readily put at my proposal his excellent catalogue of Blue Books on British foreign policy, which is the work for his Doctoral thesis;

and finally through the prompt and courteous assistance of Miss Norma Johnston and her staff of the Inter-Library Loan Department of the Redpath Library, who acquired on my behalf a vast number of volumes from many parts of North America.

J.R.J.G.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BD	-- British Documents on the Origins of the World War: 1898-1914.
DBFF	-- Documents on British Foreign Policy: 1919-1939.
DDF	-- Documents Diplomatiques Français: 1871-1914.
GP (ET)	-- Die Grosse Politik der Europaischen Kabinette; 1871-1914 (English Translation of selected documents by E.T.S.Dugdale).
GP (FT)	-- Die Grosse Politik der Europaischen Kabinette: 1871-1914 (French Translation up to 1908 by various French scholars).
KA	-- A Digest of 'Krasnii Arkhiv'.
LN	-- Un Livre Noir - Diplomatie d'avant-guerre et de guerre d'après les documents de archives russes: 1910-1917.
MD	-- The Miller Diary - D.H.Miller's Diary at the Peace Conference.
PD	-- Parliamentary Debates of the British House of Commons and of the House of Lords: 1902-1923.
S & S	-- B de Siebert & G.A.Schreiner's Entente Diplomacy and the World: 1909-1914.

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CHAPTER - I

INTRODUCTION: 1888-1903

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Despite the fact that essentially the problem of the Straits was one of Russo-Turkish conflict, it remains meaningless, for the most part, unless the policies of the two European powers, whose interests in that sphere were so deep-seated, are carefully analyzed. In this study of the Straits policies of France and Great Britain, between 1902 and 1923, we shall quickly realize that their interests are deeply concerned both with Russian ambitions in that area, and with the Turkish attempts to curb those ambitions. On the one hand, once the Franco-Russian 'rapprochement' had matured into an alliance, France becomes intimately involved with those Russian intentions; no longer can she solely be concerned with the protection and the development of her own vested interests at the Straits. On the other hand, Great Britain, who, well before the middle of the nineteenth century, had 'espoused the Sultan's cause,' at all times insisted that she was also deeply concerned with both the Russian and the Ottoman attitudes toward the 'rule' of the Straits.

From the alignment of interests, a great number of questions readily emerge, the answers to which will form the body

of this paper. How greatly was France's policy in the Straits question determined by her alliance with Russia? Did France attempt to curb Russian ambitions at the Straits? As a result of the Alliance, did Russia attempt to enlist France's support to counteract British opposition or to soften the path for her in London, in the matter of the Straits? Despite the Alliance, was France as determined as Great Britain to prevent Russian domination of the Straits? How real was the British opposition to Russia at the Straits? Would France fight for her interests at the Straits? Would France fight for Russian interests at the Straits? Once the 'entente' with Great Britain had evolved, did France find herself in an untenable position between the Russian and the British policies? If since 1903 the Admiralty had realized that a Russian-controlled Straits could not seriously menace British interests, why was the Foreign Office so reluctant to submit to such a scheme? Why was France so reluctant to initiate negotiations over the Straits problem? How far was France prepared to follow the British policy in the matter of the Straits, once the entente was established? What made France and Great Britain acquiesce in the Russian plan for the Straits in 1915, and not in 1908 or 1912? Were the Anglo-French conditions to this 1915 Accord so vague and of such wide scope that their agreement in fact meant little? Did the British, in the immediate post-War era, attempt to set up their own

hegemony over the Straits? How great an effect did the Anglo-French rivalry in the post-War Middle East have on their respective Straits policies? With their vast interests in the Levant, why were the French so willing to follow the British lead, during the post-War period, in the matter of the Straits?

To answer these many questions, and others that will undoubtedly develop, is to portray the French and British policies over the Straits question between 1902 and 1923.

A - The Development of French Policy over the Straits Question: 1891-1902

The policy of France in the matter of the Straits question, prior to 1902, was not one of overt hostility to Great Britain. Here, at least, the two powers had no quarrel. There might be bickering in other theaters, almost to the point of war, but at Constantinople, the traditional approach to the question of the Straits had been one of cooperation rather than of rivalry.

It is with the development of the Franco-Russian rapprochement - a recognized fact by 1891 - that French policy in the Straits question assumes importance for us. Through it, and later because of the Alliance, hopes arose in Russia that an agreement over the Straits, satisfactory to Russia, might be

achieved. Paris quickly made it clear that a rapprochement with the Russians was not intended to strengthen the Russian position for a possible 'coup' at the Straits. In December 1891, Ribot wrote to his ambassador in Constantinople and told him that, lest the Sultan grow anxious and feel that France was combining with Russia, he should be told openly that there was no intention of putting pressure on the Porte in this regard. [1] Four years later, when the Russians intentionally raised the question of French support for their ambitions at the Straits, this attitude was given full expression. The Russian Minister of Foreign Affairs - Lobanoff - owing to his deep-seated distrust of British policy in the Straits question, proposed to Montebello, the French Ambassador, in December 1895, that if the British attempted to force the Straits and provoke the partition of the Ottoman Empire, a Russian force would be sent to secure the Bosphorus. He wanted concerted action from France in this scheme, and asked what the French desired by way of compensation. [2] After much hesitation, the French presented their reply. If all efforts to preserve the 'status quo' failed and the partition of the Ottoman Empire came before an international congress, then France would offer diplomatic support - but not military or naval action, unless these pourparlers might include a revision of the Frankfurt Treaty, by which Russia would commit herself to the recovery of Alsace-Lorraine. In return for this aid,

France asked for support in securing the evacuation of the British from Egypt and towards the neutralization of Suez, together with certain concessions in Syria. [3]

When Hanotaux came to the Quai d'Orsay, he did not veer from this attitude. In a despatch to Montebello, in January 1897, he showed that he had no desire to become involved in the Russian Straits policy. He repeated what he had already said to Mohrenheim, the Russian Ambassador, that France would not assume an active military role, as the risks were so great and the rewards so improbable. [4] Later when Mouravieff visited Paris, Hanotaux again declined to support his ally in an adventure which could have involved France in war. The most that France would offer was to exert her influence to prepare the powers to accept the 'fait accompli.' [5] This policy, begun by Ribot and continued by Hanotaux, became axiomatic once the Franco-Russian accord of August 1899 was signed:

> Cet accord établissait en somme pour la politique française et pour la politique russe une espèce de parallelisme entre la question balkanique et la question d'Alsace-Lorraine. [6]

It will become apparent that even after France had agreed to the Straits Settlement of 1915, she regarded her support of Russian ambitions in that sphere as being similar to her own desire for the recovery of the 'lost provinces.' Not until 1917 would this be precisely recorded in an agreement; but

from the time the Alliance was made, it remained one of the prime motives underlying French policy at the Straits.

Though it was manifestly clear that she was not prepared to support her ally's ambitions at the Straits by military action, France could not, nor did she wish to, close the door on Russia in this quarter. Despite her vast vested interests in the Ottoman Empire, Paris, with her eyes forever cast across the Rhine, at all times considered the problem of the Straits to be a secondary point of concern. For this reason, though she would not substantially assist her ally there, she certainly would not oppose her. Thus while she was a party to the Franco-Russian Naval Accord in December 1901, by which the Black Sea Fleet was to force the Straits should a Russo-French war with Great Britain ensue, [7] at the same time, for Paris, this was a concession of little importance as, by 1902, Delcassé was working towards a rapprochement with Great Britain. If he could achieve that, the Russians would have gained nothing.

B - The Development of British Policy over the Straits Question: 1888-1902

By 1902 the policy of opposition to Russian designs on the Straits, which had become an axiom of British foreign policy, was showing distinct signs of decay. Salisbury was

the chief exponent of this new approach. It was not until August 1888 that he privately committed to paper ideas which indicated that he was modifying his opinion with regard to the control of the Straits. He wrote vaguely of a scheme by which the Russians might find themselves on the Bosphorous. [8] At the Congress of Berlin, he had agreed to the closure of that passage to all warships in peace and war. [9] Even then it appeared that he had preferred another solution. He had written, in March 1878, to Beaconsfield of his preference for an arrangement which would guarantee the free passage of the Straits at all times 'as if they were an open sea.' [10]

Still he was not prepared to make public this inclination. For in 1886, when Lord Randolph Churchill insisted that the protection of Egypt and India was more vital than the 'sealed' Straits, Salisbury reminded him - more from an interest in party unity than from strategic considerations - that there could be no question of allowing Constantinople to fall into Russian hands. He refrained from mentioning the other possibility - the open Straits. [11]

By 1891 Salisbury had openly espoused the policy he had hinted at in 1878 and again in 1888. When asked by Joseph Chamberlain in July if he considered that a Russian occupation of Constantinople would be injurious to British interests, as had been assumed at the time of the Crimean War, Salisbury

replied that Palmerston should have accepted the Tsar's proposals, as Russia would be far more vulnerable at Constantinople than in the Black Sea. [12] In October he took one step further. Acutely aware of the possibility of a Franco-Russian naval combination forming in the Mediterranean as a result of their recent Alliance, Salisbury took an opportunity to make a clear exposition of British policy at the Straits. To Sir William White, his ambassador in Constantinople, he despatched a detailed note, a part of which concerned the Straits:

> ... any right in respect to the passage which is a departure from the provisions of the existing treaties, if granted by the Sultan to one power, should be, as a matter of course and ipso facto, granted to all. [13]

In November 1893, Gladstone expressed his full agreement with the new policy. [14] The twofold policy, firstly to contain the Russian threat to the Mediterranean, and secondly to question the sanctity and timelessness of the Straits Conventions, without fully accepting the policy of the 'open' Straits, had been born. Only the Straits Settlement of 1915 would mark the complete reversal of this policy, though, as it will be apparent, by 1903 the effect of a Russian-controlled Straits would be thought in London to be of small consequence.

Despite reports, during the succeeding years, that Great Britain seriously contemplated the international partition

of the Ottoman Empire, [15] Salisbury's interest lay mainly with the Straits question. As in 1891, so too in 1898, the same feeling of weakness in the Mediterranean, faced with a possible Franco-Russian naval combination, prompted Salisbury to initiate pourparlers with Russia. He desired an Anglo-Russian understanding over the Ottoman Empire. To O'Conor in Constantinople he sent the following despatch:

> ... Merely as an illustration, and binding myself to nothing, I would say that the portion of Turkey which drains into the Black Sea ... interests Russia much more than England.
>
> Would it be possible to arrange that where, in regard to these territories our counsels differ, the power least interested give way to and assist the other ... [16]

The question of China had formed the other half of the bargain. It was in China that Salisbury felt British interests were preponderant, not at the Straits. The integrity of China was a cardinal point of Salisbury's policy; as long as it was preserved, he would concede a great deal. Though this offer, based on the principle of 'no partition of territory, only partition of preponderance,' came to naught, it indicates clearly the changed position of British Straits policy from what it had been in the time of Palmerston.

During the 'nineties, the Admiralty had been converted to the new approach. To the naval experts, British policy

in the Straits question emerged from a dual consideration. From the economic viewpoint, the vested interests of Great Britain in the Levant were large and were growing, while her carrying trade from Russia in cereals and later in oil was the largest of all the powers. From the strategic standpoint, it was doubtful if the Fleet could prevent the Russians from capturing the Straits, if a determined effort was made. If Russia controlled the passage, Great Britain's position in the entire Mediterranean would be seriously undermined.

To Admiral Sir Anthony Hoskins, Commander-in-Chief in the Mediterranean, this meant that, with the concentration of her greatest battleships at Toulon since 1888, France could challenge the British in the Mediterranean - if the Black Sea Fleet forced a passage through the narrows. [17] As the Sultan had deigned to fortify only the Dardanelles and not the Bosphorus, such an occurrence was thought by London to be very possible:

> Unless we are acting in concert with France, the road to Constantinople, for a British force bent on a belligerent action, lies across the ruins of a French Fleet. [18]

So poignantly was this brought home to the experts that during the Armenian troubles of 1895, though Salisbury was prepared to send the Fleet through the Dardanelles, the First Sea Lord, Sir Frederick Richards, refused to associate himself

with the plan - so great was his fear of being trapped in the Marmara by a French Fleet anchored outside. [19] This same pessimism pervaded the Naval Intelligence reports of 1895 and 1896:

> ... Whether the status quo at Constantinople is maintained or the Straits are opened to all nations, or to Russia alone, our naval and military position in the Mediterranean is too weak to meet the calls which may be made upon it. [20]

Only too well was Salisbury aware of his Admirals' hesitations. It was partly his realization of the comparative weakness of his Mediterranean Fleet that had allowed him to contemplate a possible partition of the Ottoman Empire. Certainly this same thought had partially prompted him to seek an agreement with Russia over their mutual interests in Turkey and China. Again in 1897, it was directly because of his inability to prevent a Russian 'coup' at Constantinople, that he was forced to refuse an offer from Austria by which the Sultan's position would be guaranteed, on the one hand, by the Austrian Army, and on the other, by the British Fleet. [21]

We have observed the process of realignment of both the French and British policies in the Straits question. The French, unwilling to permit their ally to use the Alliance as a stepping-stone to Constantinople, unless she was prepared to commit herself to the recovery of the 'lost provinces,' felt that the maintenance of the <u>status quo</u> would serve their

greatest interest. The British, chiefly through Salisbury's determination but also because they were aware of their embarrassing naval position, had begun to reconcile themselves to the possibility of a Russia-controlled Straits, which however would not exclude the idea of an 'open' Strait.

Shortly, two new factors will be introduced which, more than anything else, helped to determine the future of French and British relations in the matter of the Straits. For both, it would mean a slight modification of their Straits policies. The first was the British declaration in 1903 that a Russian occupation of the Straits, by force or by international arrangement, would not essentially harm British interests there or in the Mediterranean. The second was the emergence of a rapprochement between France and Great Britain which culminated in the Accord of April 1904.

But first, by way of immediate introduction, one incident must be considered, which demonstrates clearly the respective positions of French and British Straits policies prior to their modification. It is the Straits Incident of January 1903.

C - The Straits Incident of January 1903

On January 14, 1903, the first of four Russian Destroyers, flying the commercial flag and bearing no armament, passed

off the Golden Horn on its way to the Black Sea. The only protest against this action - a direct violation of the Straits Conventions - had come from London, and that had gone unheeded. French support for the Russian move, or rather French failure to protest, had permitted the Russian success.

As early as August of the previous year, the rumour had spread that Zinovieff, the Russian ambassador in Constantinople, was negotiating with the Porte for the passage of certain war vessels. They were wanted for an inspection the Tsar would make of Black Sea naval units and installations. At first the British felt sure that the Sultan would never permit such a violation of the Treaties. [22] But when rumours thickened and it appeared that some arrangement might have been made, Lansdowne carefully defined his policy:

> ... It would be contrary to their Treaty obligations if the Turkish Government permitted these vessels to pass through the Straits, and in case this permission is granted them, we shall reserve the right of demanding the privileges of a like nature. [23]

O'Conor was instructed to approach the Porte in this manner, while Lansdowne set out to enlist the support of Rome, Berlin, Vienna and Paris. All these attempts ultimately failed.

The rumours had subsided, when suddenly, in late December, word was received that the passage of the war vessels was imminent. O'Conor, aware of Lansdowne's policy, on January 6

presented the Porte with a protest dated January 1, wherein he complained of the forthcoming breach of Treaty obligations. He also pointed out that Great Britain would expect the same privileges if a similar situation arose for her. [24] This was the practical expression of Salisbury's policy, first uttered in 1891. The Porte became very disturbed over the note, and implored the Russians not to carry the plan through, lest the British should send their fleet to Constantinople. The Russians were adamant and the Porte regained its nerve and did not even bother to reply to the British protest. [25]

Originally, when the facts became known in Paris, Delcassé determined not to oppose his ally. In early October he had received word that, after some difficulty, Zinovieff had received authorization for the passage. [26] This permission, although its terms were not precisely known, had been granted conditionally on September 19. Four conditions were imposed: the ships were to bear no armaments or war stores; they were to fly a flag of commerce; they were to pass at intervals of at least twenty-four hours; they were to conform to all the formalities observed by ordinary merchantmen. [27] Two weeks later, when presented with an aide-memoire by Monson, the British Ambassador, in which British policy concerning the proposed passage was stated, Delcassé, when asked the French opinion, having received only Con-

stans' warning, was forced to reply that he knew nothing about it. Immediately he sent to St. Petersburg for information.[28] By the 21st he had his reply. The four Destroyers had been built by the Russian Navy in the Baltic for service in the Black Sea; when the Turk was first advised of this he had expressed strong opposition; when Zinovieff returned to his post to take over the negotiations from his Chargé, he had instructions to close the affair, but he was able to overcome the Porte's opposition and received approval.[29] From that moment, Delcassé resolved not to object to the victory the Russians had achieved. When O'Conor made his official protest in January, Paris saw no reason to support it and consequently completely ignored it.

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1. - To Paul Cambon, December 6; DDF I-9, pp. 139f; see also pp. 253-57.

2. - Montebello to Berthelot, December 6; DDF I-12, pp. 330-31.

3. - Berthelot to Montebello, December 20; ibid pp. 356-58; see also J.D.Hargreaves -- Entente Manquée - Anglo-French Relations: 1895-1896; pp. 79-80, Cambridge Hist. Jour. Vol. XI - 1953; and A.J.P.Taylor -- The Struggle for the Mastery in Europe: 1848-1918, pp. 336-7; P.Renouvin -- La politique extérieure de la IIIe République de 1871 à 1904, p. 286.

4. - 12 January 1897, DDF I-13, p. 109; see also R.Pinon -- L'Evolution de la Question des Détroits, (L'Esprit International - Vol. II - April 1928), p. 191; Renouvin -- IIIe Rép.: 1871-1904, p. 287; W.L.Langer -- The Franco-Russian Alliance: 1890-1894, p. 396.

5. - A.N.Mandelstam -- La politique russe d'accès a la Méditerranée au XXe siècle, pp. 627-28.

6. - Renouvin -- IIIe Rép., p. 298.

7. - The likelihood that such a war would ensue soon disappeared for on 6 February 1903 Pelletan, Minister of Marine, told the Chambre des Députés that France must abandon the idea of the 'Grande Guerre.' She could no longer afford to rival Great Britain in Battleship building. For appropriate data see A.J.Marder -- The Anatomy of British Sea Power - A History of British Naval Policy in the Pre-Dreadnough Era: 1880-1905, p. 471.

8. - G.Cecil -- Life of Robert Marquis of Salisbury, Vol. III, p. 84, August 12.

9. - Ali Fuad -- La Question des Détroits: ses origines, son évolution, sa solution à la Conférence de Lausanne, p. 112. M.Lozé -- La Question des Détroits: étude juridique sur la situation internationale du Bosphore et des Dardanelles, pp. 63f; S.Goriainoff -- Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles: étude historique sur la question des Détroits, p. 383; Article 63 of the Treaty of Berlin see G.E.Noradounghian (Ed.) -- Recueil d'actes internationaux de l'Empire Ottoman, Vol. IV - p. 163; G.W.Prothero (Ed.) -- History of the Eastern Question, p. 59; J.L.Shotwell & F.Deak -- Turkey at the Straits, p.63.

10. - Cecil -- Salisbury II, p. 214.

11. - C.L.Smith -- The Embassy of Sir William White at Constantinople: 1886-1891, pp. 51-55, 135.

12. - ibid., p. 136; see also J.Chamberlain -- A Political Memoir: 1880-1892, p. 297, July 7.

13. - BD IX i, pp. 774-75, 2 October 1891; Smith -- William White, p. 136. Smith calls this Salisbury's "new doctrine to his Straits policy ..."

14. - PD IV-18, p. 1915.

15. - R.Lacoste -- La Russie Soviétique et la Question d'Orient: La Poussée Soviétique ver les mers chaudes, p. 51; Hadzfeldt to Holstein, 5 August 1895 in GP (ET) Vol. II, pp. 337-38, 341; there find also Hadzfeldt to Holstein, February 1896, pp. 413-14; and again Hadzfeldt to Hohenlohe, 8 June 1896, p. 431.

16. - To O'Conor, 25 January 1898, BD I, p. 8.

17. - In May 1890, as a precautionary measure, the Mediterranean Fleet split into two divisions - one stationed at Malta, the other at Gibraltar. See Smith -- Wm. White, pp. 135-36, and Marder -- Anatomy, Chap. IX passim.

18. - A joint DMI-DNI report dated 18 March 1892, see Marder -- Anatomy, pp. 159-160.

19. - ibid., pp. 244-45.

20. - DNI memo dated 12 November 1895, ibid., pp. 246-48; DMI memo dated 13 October 1896, ibid., pp. 569-71; DNI memo dated 28 October 1896, ibid., pp. 580-81.

21. - For his despatch to Rumbold in Vienna on 20 January 1897, see BD IX i, pp. 775-76.

22. - See Wangenheim's report of de Bunsen's attitude, 1 September 1902, GP(FT) Vol. 22, p. 34.

23. - To Lascelles on October 17, GP(FT) Vol. 22 No. 5654 annex 1, pp. 83-4.

24. - BD IV, p. 41; C.Phillipson & N.Buxton -- The Question of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, p. 168; R.Pinon -- L'Europe et l'Empire Ottoman, p. 90; Mandelstam -- Politique russe, p. 636; Taylor -- Struggle, p. 409.

25. - PD IV - Vol. 118, pp. 495-96.

26. - Constans to Delcassé, October 6 1902, DDF II-2, pp. 518-20.

27. - I.H.Smith -- Anglo-Russian Relations and the Dogger Bank Incident: 1902-1905, p. 49; Lozé -- Quest. des Dét., pp. 82-3; N.Dascovici -- La Question du Bosphore et des Dardanelles, p. 260.

28. - Delcassé to Boutiron, 18 October 1902, DDF II-2, p. 547.

29. - ibid., pp. 552,556.

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CHAPTER - II

REALIGNMENT OF FRENCH AND BRITISH POLICY: 1903-1908

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REALIGNMENT OF FRENCH AND BRITISH POLICY: 1903-1908

Between 1903 and 1908 a great number of factors were introduced which required both France and Great Britain gradually to modify their policies in the Straits question. It is chiefly the realignment of forces in Europe which caused this: the Anglo-French Accord of 1904, the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. Although the Straits are mentioned in neither agreement, both had significant influence toward the modified policy expressed in the 1908 formula. The destruction of the Russian Fleet, and the ever-increasing supremacy of the British Mediterranean Fleet must also be considered. All these items contributed to the evolution of the Anglo-French 'formula.' Though it was but a partial answer to Russia's heartfelt demands, it did establish a 'modus vivendi' at the Straits.

A - The Rearrangement: 1903-1904

The Straits Incident had hardly passed into history, when both the Quai d'Orsay and the Foreign Office formally began to reappraise their Straits policies. By 1903, Delcassé

and many of his colleagues were actively working toward an 'entente' with Great Britain. As a direct result of the April 1904 Accord, despite the fact that the Straits were neither mentioned in the preliminary discussions nor in the Agreement itself, France found herself in a position very changed from that which she had held during the Incident of 1903.

She faced something of a dilemma. She still had her ally who now, more than ever before, appeared ready to pursue an active policy in the Straits question. France still had her enormous interests in the Levant, interests which she continued to feel were best protected by the maintenance of the 'status quo' throughout the Sultan's realms. But now she had a new friend - a friend who was deeply committed to an active interest in the disposition of the Straits, and who seemed to be diametrically opposed to the Russian ambitions there. While preserving her own interests at the Straits, France would be forced to play the difficult and unrewarding role of intermediary between the two. This, however, would be subordinated to a greater end desired by French policy - her vital, more immediate concern in Europe. For Paris, in the final analysis, whatever happened at the Straits was a problem of secondary importance. The real problems lay in Europe; the Straits became vital for her only when they threatened to destroy the balance Paris was attempting to maintain across the Rhine.

Reappraisal of Straits policy came earlier for London. But here policy was not directed along radically new lines. The reappraisal partly confirmed the Salisbury principle of 1891, and partly simplified the British position at the Straits. By mid-February 1903, Lansdowne had in his possession a paper from the newly-formed Committee of Imperial Defence, which brought home to the Foreign Office the accuracy of Salisbury's arguments. This paper bluntly stated that if, by controlling the Straits, Russia was able at will to move into the Mediterranean, though she might obtain certain tactical advantages, it would not fundamentally alter the existing strategic position that the British held in the Mediterranean. The exclusion of Russia from the Straits was no longer a primary naval pre-occupation:

> It may be stated generally that a Russian occupation of the Dardanelles, or an arrangement enabling Russia to freely use the water way ... would not make any marked difference in our strategic dispositions ... [1]

This was an important turning point in British opinion. It completely reversed the conclusions made during the 'nineties in the annual Naval Intelligence reports. Once public opinion in Great Britain was conditioned, the Straits could be used as bait for the Russians. It was now a question of time before London was prepared to make her new opinion known in Paris or in St. Petersburg.

B - Towards the October Formula of 1908

1. Problems arising from the Russo-Japanese War: With the outbreak of hostilities between France's ally - Russia, and Great Britain's ally - Japan, though all the fighting took place in the Far East, the Straits problem once again appeared on the horizon of European controversy. This time, unlike in 1903, discussion was centered on the possibility of a violation occurring, rather than on an actual violation of the Straits Treaties. Two distinct problems arose for London. Firstly, would the Black Sea Fleet force the Straits and turn the naval balance against Japan? Secondly, what status had the vessels of Russia's Volunteer Fleet, which passed through the Straits flying the commercial flag, but which once through the Suez canal, took on the appearance of war vessels? For France, the role of intermediary demanded that she minimize the chances of a war developing between Russia and Great Britain.

Under no conditions would the British allow the Russians to cast aside the Straits Conventions. In January 1904, before the War broke out, Balfour warned Lansdowne to make preparations in Constantinople and in St. Petersburg to ensure that British action would be immediate, if the Russian Fleet tried to break out. [2] By the end of the month, Lansdowne had sent a warning to Scott in St. Petersburg.[3] Shortly thereafter both

Constantinople and Tokyo were similarily warned. [4] In mid-February, the Government was able to reply to a question asked in the House that, though no evidence existed that Russia contemplated such a move, it would be considered a grave violation of the Straits Treaties. [5] Lansdowne went further. In view of the newly-signed agreement with France, he warned Cambon that the situation in Europe would become very strained if the Russians made such an attempt, and as a result of the immediate action the Navy would take if Russia attempted such a passage. He hoped that Cambon would speak to Benckendorff, the Russian Ambassador, and warn him of this. [6] Throughout the crisis, British policy remained firmly fixed along this line. At the end of April, Lansdowne still maintained:

> The passage of the Straits by a Russian Squadron for the purposes of attacking our ally in the Far East could not therefore be tolerated by this country. [7]

To ensure the success of this policy, Lansdowne ordered O'Conor to tell the Porte that London was closely watching her and was expecting her to act with as much regard for the Straits Treaties as Great Britain had herself. [8] However, the one important factor, which denied Russia any possible success in such an adventure, was that her Black Sea Fleet, at that time, was totally unfit for sea. [9]

France, especially in the persons of Cambon in London and Bompard in St. Petersburg, was prepared throughout the

difficult period to dispel suspicion and smooth over the misunderstandings. Bompard felt that because of the recent 'entente' between France and Great Britain, Paris could not now oppose London at the Straits in any serious dispute, even if she so desired. [10] Indeed Cambon had, during recent years in Constantinople, come to the realization that a tripartite agreement to solve the difficulties of the Straits question was a wise and sorely needed move. Since this could not immediately be secured, he felt that the obvious role for France to play was that of intermediary to calm both camps and to foster understanding between the two. [11] When later, with the heat of the Dogger Bank Incident hardly passed, the Russian press renewed its polemics in favour of an 'open' Strait, so that Admiral Rodjestvensky's Fleet could be re-inforced, Benckendorff came hurriedly to Cambon and asked him to impress strongly upon Lansdowne that these sentiments were certainly not those of the Imperial Government. This Cambon readily agreed to do. No doubt, then, that:

> Le rôle de la politique française a toujours été de circonscrire l'incendie chaque fois qu'on a tenté de l'allumer. [12]

In the contemporary difficulties which developed when vessels of the Volunteer Fleet, having passed through the Straits, changed from a commercial flag, to a war footing once in the Red Sea, France, under Delcassé's direction, once

more played her role of pacifier throughout. That the incidents, which do not directly concern us here, were amicably solved was due in no small measure to his friendly intervention in London and in St. Petersburg. As in the troubles that evolved over the Straits, he had found himself involved in the controversy of the two powers which he had most reason to hope would become friends. [13]

The unfortunate position in which Russia found herself during the war with Japan added weight to the growing opinion that a new international arrangement or formula was needed for the Straits. Though the Foreign Office had not deemed it opportune to tell the world that the Straits were no longer a vital interest for her, Edward VII, during the threatening days of April, had spoken to Cambon of his desire to see Anglo-Russian relations improve, through the possible relaxation of the existing British policy towards the Straits. [14] We shall now attempt to determine what effect this opinion had in the cultivation of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement.

2. The Straits and the Anglo-Russian Rapprochement: Almost immediately after the tension of the Dogger Bank incident had eased, rumours began to circulate in the capitals of Europe which suggested that Russia and Great Britain could come to an agreement over their mutual difficulties, and which

agreement undoubtedly must include the thorny problem of the Straits. Sparse evidence exists, however, that such a suggestion was authoritatively voiced before September 1905. A report was made to Berlin that, with the first hints of a 'rapprochement,' there was simultaneous talk of a new plan for the disposition of the Straits. [15] Another German report, which originated in London, re-emphasized the same suspicions, and referred to a possible accord to include both Persia and the Straits. [16] The French too saw the signs which seemed to indicate at least a 'detente' between the two. Bompard reported, on September 23, that there was even possibility of a 'rapprochement' developing, but he warned that the position of France would be exceedingly difficult for she could not be too careful lest she ruin the tender plant by too hastily initiating pourparlers - though she must be prepared to assist whenever asked. [17]

The British were very much aware of these possibilities. With the Straits clearly implied, Grey declared on October 20:

> ... there was, indeed, no British Government that would not gladly let Russia have a free hand in the Near East, if it should come to a general Anglo-Russian agreement. [18]

At the same time, Hardinge, his Ambassador in St. Petersburg, prepared a memorandum in which he suggested that a modification in the 'status quo' at the Straits would undoubtedly receive a very eager audience in many parts of Russia. [19]

When pourparlers with Russia began, they proved to be a tortuous undertaking; time and again they threatened to collapse leaving the two more embittered than when they had started out. From the beginning, London determined to let St. Petersburg take the initiative to introduce the Straits question. In January, Spring-Rice, Chargé d'Affaires to the Tsar, reported that Benckendorff had spoken to him about the difficulties involved in initiating such negotiations so soon after the Russian defeat and while internal dissensions still divided her. The Russian had suggested that, in order to gain widespread popularity for the Anglo-Russian talks, Great Britain should first of all enter into a dual agreement with Russia to solve mutual problems at the Straits. London found this quite unpalatable, as it was felt that by such a concession Great Britain would undermine her bargaining position. Besides this, French interests would have to be considered and closely consulted in any arrangement over the Straits, lest her apprehension be aroused. It was certain that the French felt that any negotiations over the Straits were as much their business as it was the Russians'. [20]

When the Straits problem reappeared in the discussions in November, London was still inclined to leave the initiative, in this sphere, to St. Petersburg. This time the Russian Chargé spoke to Hardinge, now Permanent Under-secretary for

Foreign Affairs, about the Straits and the progress that was being made in the Anglo-Russian discussions. [21] Since the Foreign Secretary was away, Hardinge had to refer to a letter of Grey's, which had been sent to Nicolson in St. Petersburg at the beginning of the month. In part it stated:

> So far as the Russian Government are aware officially our attitude in the Near East has not been changed. But it is not for us to propose changes with regard to the Treaty conditions of the Dardanelles ... we should be prepared to discuss the question if Russia introduces it. [22]

Following closely his chief's advise, Hardinge pointed out that since the Straits question was of interest to many powers besides Russia and Great Britain as opposed to Persia, Afghanistan, or Thibet, in which only the two had direct interest, the problem properly should be discussed at an international conference. However, he expressed his enthusiasm for a solution to the Straits question, proposals for which he felt should be originally formulated by the Imperial Government. [23]

The British had now purposely laid the opportunity to formally initiate conversations concerning the Straits in the hands of the Russians. To the Foreign Office, whose policy had altered in February 1903, this had become the logical course. Yet the British had been careful to promise nothing.

Very hesitantly the Russians took what must have appeared as very tempting bait. In mid-March, though as yet without

specific instructions, Benckendorff re-introduced the Straits problem into the Anglo-Russian discussions. He felt that if the question was to be incorporated into the general agreement, it would favourably dispose Russia to put full confidence in the entire scope of these discussions. Since Russia had lost her Fleet, the Bosphorus must remain closed, though he saw no reason why the Dardanelles should not be opened - unless Russia could have the right of unhindered exit from the Bosphorus, without it being open for entrance to others, she would rather the question was not raised at all. [24]

Grey disliked this sort of arrangement. He asked for further time to consider the proposals, for, as he explained, he feared the storm of public opinion at such an announcement. Undeniably, public opinion was then extremely hostile towards Russia: the Tsar was the arch-enemy of 'progress' and of 'liberal' institutions; Russia, at the Straits, threatened the life-lines of the Empire; party tradition played a deep and vital role. But by April 1, Grey gave his reply. He pointed out, in a letter to Nicolson, that, owing to the storm of public opinion that was expected, he felt it better to omit the Straits question from the proposed Convention altogether. [25] The moment was inopportune; the Russians were forced to yield. [26]

London had taken a large step; a change in policy since the Incident of 1903 was now apparent. Russia now realized that a rearrangement of the régime for the Straits could not be effected merely through an Anglo-Russian understanding. France would certainly have to be consulted; and under normal circumstances so too would Germany and Austria. Above all it would require a definite improvement in Russo-Turkish relations, if the proposed agreement was to be made without undue coercion.

The Russian Foreign Minister thought the moment opportune to summon an international conference in October 1908. Immediately he encountered Anglo-French opposition. A study of this instantaneous opposition, will once again present an opportunity to analyse French and British policies in the matter of the Straits.

C - A 'Modus Vivendi' at the Straits is discovered: October 1908

In his Buchlau interview with Aehrenthal, Isvolsky badly compromised himself. Against the wishes of the Tsar, against Russian popular sentiment, and unknown to his superiors, he had agreed to the Austrian annexation of the predominantly Slav districts of Bosnia and Herzegovina. In return he had received only the promise of Austria's good-will should a

new régime for the Straits be proposed before an international conference. Early in October, when Isvolsky was on his way to Paris to enlist further support for this project, Aehrenthal made his move and presented the Russian with the 'fait accompli' of the Bosnian annexation. Now Isvolsky wanted a conference that would deal chiefly with the crisis caused by the annexation, but which would also attempt to reestablish the Straits régime along lines radically different from that which existed in the Straits Convention confirmed by the Congress of Berlin in 1878.

Neither Paris nor London felt that they were bound to support Isvolsky's plan. Both considered the idea to have been ill-advised and inopportune. Though neither Paris nor London hesitated to point this out to the Russian, still neither wanted to see Isvolsky return home empty-handed. The October formula was the outcome. It was this open manifestation of the intimate sympathy and concern one power felt towards the other's interests - a unique period in Anglo-French history - which ultimately defeated the Russian scheme, but which at the same time held out hope for a future settlement of the Straits question.

Once it was clear that Isvolsky meant to include the Straits question in the programme for the proposed conference, British policy was far from being adverse. Grey immediately

insisted that before a conference could be summoned, some preliminary understanding over the questions to be considered was vital. If the Straits problem was to be discussed, London would require time to study the issue, while public opinion was given an opportunity to develop favourably. Grey also insisted that the objections which the Porte was expected to make would also have to be carefully considered. [27]

The immediate reaction from France was very similar. Clemenceau admitted that if the Question of the Straits arose, British public opinion would require preparation, while time for consultation with the Porte was considered imperative. So convinced were the French of this, so great was their regard for British opinion over the question, that Pichon was able to convince Isvolsky that he should postpone his proposal for a conference until he had spoken to Grey in London. [28] Paris allowed London to take the lead, while she would give only "des assurances de bon vouloir et d'appui diplomatique." [29] France would show as much interest in this Russian plan, as the Russians had shown towards France during the Moroccan crises.

The new formula for the Straits was resolved in London during Isvolsky's visit. Responsibility for it rests initially with the British Cabinet, but in this they were unhesitantly seconded by Paris. On October 10, Grey saw Isvolsky. Within

two hours he had convinced him that the Straits question should be omitted when the agenda of the proposed conference was submitted, but that it should be made the subject of a separate Russo-Turkish agreement at a more opportune time. Grey, who had already made inquiries with the Porte, had determined not to embarrass the 'Young Turks' at that time by such a request, lest the new-found British prestige in Constantinople be compromised. [30] He wrote:

> The conference should not deal with the Dardanelles question, which Russia and Turkey should discuss privately, Turkey's consent being necessary before any change could be made ...
>
> It is not ... the moment to discuss the Dardanelles question, which might make it appear as if Russia were pursuing selfish motives in profiting by the recent events and concluding a bargain with Austria ... [31]

Once this was decided, Grey set out to discover some sort of 'modus vivendi' for the Straits, without having to replace the existing Straits Convention. To do this he employed the only argument which would convince the Russians, despite the fact that to do so he completely disregarded the advise the experts had given his predecessor in 1903. He pointed out to Isvolsky that if Russia sought a solution which would enable Russian warships to enter the Mediterranean from the Black Sea and, in time of war, raid foreign shipping and then slip back into the security of the narrows, Great Britain

would stand opposed. In fact Grey's constant worry, as was evident in 1906 and again in 1907, was the adverse public opinion which he felt would be aroused if he was forced to announce that he had supported Russia at the Straits. The British public felt that Russia had shown bad faith in her dealings in Persia, ever since the Anglo-Russian Convention had been signed. Some tangible indication that the Russians were prepared to cooperate with Great Britain was demanded from many quarters.

But Grey sought Cabinet approval for his policy. Though Isvolsky was able to see many of the leading Ministers, the Cabinet fully agreed with Grey, and concluded that the moment was exceedingly inopportune and that British public opinion would be unwilling to support a one-sided arrangement in the Straits question. [32] The popularity of the Young Turk party in Great Britain, even among many of the Members of Parliament, and the reluctance of the Cabinet to offend the Porte confirmed this decision.

But Grey was quick to make it clear to Isvolsky that he had no intention of refusing absolutely the Russian's suggestion. He told him that some sort of agreement must one day be decided upon - at a more opportune moment. [33] At the same time, he sent a warning to his ambassadors:

> M. Isvolsky urged very strongly that if Russia could satisfy Turkey that an arrangement about the Straits was safe for Turkish interests, England should not oppose it ... It would be fatal to a good understanding with Russia if, when the question of the Straits was raised, it was found that England blocked the way. [34]

Thus, Grey desired a solution whereby the Straits would be opened on terms which, while being acceptable to Russia, would not place the Porte or any other interested government at an unfair disadvantage. [35] He was even prepared to support such a scheme in Constantinople at a more favourable time, since the Porte had specifically requested that no pressure be applied to Turkey to do then reluctantly what she might later do willingly. [36]

French policy solidly supported Grey's formula. When Isvolsky had left for London, Pichon had told Bertie that he considered the Russian plan to be unacceptable to both Great Britain and to the Porte. He added that it was not for the French Government to indicate to St. Petersburg the objections to it. However, he strongly desired that some sort of agreement be reached, as he believed that a failure would have serious repercussions in Russia. Any weakening of the Ally's position in Europe must be prevented. [37] Throughout the period of tension, Cambon played the role of the helpful intermediary. He had advised Grey of the necessity for the Cabinet to show its good-will by being prepared to accept the possibility

of a re-examination of the Straits Convention, in order to discover a form more agreeable to Russia. But he was not enthusiastic over Isvolsky's proposals. He advised Pichon, on the one hand, to prepare Berlin to receive favourably this idea of a modified Straits Convention, and on the other hand, he advised Isvolsky to pursue:

> ... les négociations directes entre la Russie et la Porte, communication ultérieure au Foreign Office des résultats de ces pourparlers, et accueil favorable du Cabinet de Londres. [38]

On his return to Paris, Isvolsky realized that the French had fully subscribed to London's views. French interests were mainly financial and would be satisfied with any improvement in the security for, the returns from, and the redemption of its vast investments in the Levant. [39] The scheme proposed by Isvolsky was, above all, a risky business proposition, a bad investment; while, if they adhered to Grey's compromise, they had committed themselves to nothing. She was prepared only to play the role of pacifier: "Dans la crise ... la France intervint pour calmer et pour pacifier ..." [40]

London and Paris had once more soothed St. Petersburg with a promise. The Russians were far from being disappointed. The absence of a solution had merely whetted their appetite.

London's answer to Isvolsky's suggestions, and Paris' acquiescence in that reply, was bound only to be a temporary

measure. His Majesty's Government was aware that Russia must once again later seek an opportunity to modify the restrictions she experienced at the Straits, which recent events had shown were extremely inconvenient for her. Grey had long foreseen that if the Anglo-Russian 'entente' was to flourish, some definite agreement over the Straits, mutually arrived at and sanctioned by an international accord, would eventually have to result. This the October 'formula' failed to supply.

The French too had long since realized that if forced to an extreme by dire circumstances in Europe, they could not unconditionally oppose their ally in the matter of the Straits. The 'opportune moment' became the vital factor. Paris as ever convinced that her interests were best served if the 'status quo' at the Straits remained unaltered, would not gladly submit to her ally's ambitions; and if she did yield, she would insist that her interests must be guaranteed to her.

We shall now consider the various attempts made by Russia in the years prior to the Great War to induce Paris and London to modify further their Straits policies. But each time Paris, after determining what London proposes to reply, will give a similar response: the moment is inopportune; the October formula must suffice for the present.

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1. - BD - IV, p. 60.

2. - 19 Jan. 1904, B.E.C.Dugdale -- Arthur James Balfour, Vol. I, pp. 383-84.

3. - BD - II, p. 242; Scott replied that there was no indication whatever that Russia contemplated such a project.

4. - BD - IV, p. 48.

5. - The question was asked by the well-informed critic of the Government - Gibson-Bowles on 15 Feb. 1904, PD - IV Vol. 129, p. 1336.

6. - G.P.Gooch -- Before the War: Studies in Diplomacy, Vol. I, p. 76.

7. - 29 April, to Monson in Paris, BD - II, p. 401.

8. - 7 June, BD - IV, p. 51.

9. - Cambon to Delcassé, DDF - II - 5, pp. 569-71; Bodman (Chargé in Constantinople) to Bülow, 3 July 1904, GP(FT) Vol. 24, p. 199.

10. - M.Bompard -- Mon Ambassade en Russie: 1903-1908, pp. 59f.

11. - Reported by Metternick (German Ambassador in London), GP(FT) Vol. 24, pp. 234-35.

12. - J.B.Espéret -- La condition internationale des Détroits du Bosphore et des Dardanelles, p. 143.

13. - He was given appropriate recognition for his amicable attitude by the British Press, see Cambon to Delcassé, DDF - II - 5, pp. 329-30.

14. - S.Lee -- King Edward VII - A Biography, Vol. II, p. 238.

15. - Miquel, Chargé in St. Petersburg, to Bülow, 22 September 1905, GP(FT) Vol. 27, p. 191.

16. - Bernstorff, Chargé in London, to Bülow, 25 September 1905, ibid., p. 203.

17. - To Rouvier, DDF - II - 7, pp. 564-66.

18. - R.P.Churchill -- The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, pp. 107-08; in a letter to Spring-Rice in December 1905, Grey stated that there was no longer any need for Great Britain to pursue an anti-Russian policy in Turkey, see S.Gwynn (ED) -- The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, Vol. II, p. 53.

19. - BD - IV, pp. 50f, 16 November 1905.

20. - Spring-Rice to Grey, March 1 1906, BD - IV, p. 226.

21. - Gooch -- Before the War, Vol. I, p. 307.

22. - 6 November 1906, E.Grey -- Twenty-Five Years: 1892-1916, Vol. I, p. 157.

23. - BD - IV, p. 255; H.Isvolsky -- Les Papiers d'Alexandre Isvolsky - Correspondance inédite: 1906 (La Revue de France; Vol. XIV i - 1934) pp. 428-430.

24. - Taylor speaks of the "Theoretical permission for theoretical Russian ships to pass the Straits," -- Struggle ..., p. 443; see also Grey's memo to Nicolson on March 20, BD - IV, p. 279; Gooch -- Before the War ..., Vol. I, p. 301.

25. - A.W.Palmer -- The Anglo-Russian Entente (History Today; Vol. VII, Nov. 1957) p. 748; N.Buxton -- Europe and the Turks, p. 58; Grey -- Twenty-Five ..., Vol. I, p. 158.

26. - W.D.David -- European Diplomacy in the Near Eastern Question: 1906-1909, p. 116; V.Potiemkine (Ed) -- Histoire de la Diplomatie, Vol. II: 1872-1919, p. 202; P.Renouvin -- Histoire des Relations Internationales, Vol. VI: 1871-1914, p. 223; BD - IV, p. 289, Nicolson to Grey, 14 April 1907.

27. - To Bertie, BD - V, p. 396; Hardinge feared the effect of public opinion, ibid., pp. 409-10.

28. - S.B.Fay, Vol. I, p. 380, -- The Origins of the World War.

29. - Pinon -- L'évolution ..., p. 192.

30. - J.Headlam-Morley -- Studies in Diplomatic History, pp. 245-47; BD - V, pp. 441ff; Phillipson & Buxton -- The Question ..., p. 190; W.L.Langer -- Russia, The Straits Question, and the European Powers: 1904-1908, p. 78.

31. - Grey -- Twenty-five ..., Vol. I, pp. 172-73.

32. - Lee -- Edward VII, Vol. II, pp. 639-40; P.P.Graves -- Briton and Turk, p. 118; Fay -- Origins ..., Vol. I, p. 380; J.A.Spender -- Fifty Years of Europe, p. 304; Grey to Nicolson, 12 October 1908, BD - V, p. 429.

33. - Grey to Nicolson, 13 October, BD - V, p. 434.

34. - ibid., pp. 442-43.

35. - ibid., pp. 452; Taylor -- Struggle ..., p. 452; Gooch -- Before the War, Vol. II, p. 149.

36. - Grey to Nicolson, 19 October, BD - V, p. 456.

37. - Bertie to Grey, ibid., p. 432.

38. - Cambon to Pichon, 14 October, DDF - II - II, p. 831.

39. - H.E.Breitenbucher -- Anti-Entente Tendencies in French Opinion: 1904-1912, p. 103; G.Young -- Nationalism and War in the Near East, p. 364.

40. - J.Caillaux -- Mes Mémoires, Vol. III, p. 336; see also P.Cambon -- Correspondance, Vol. II: 1898-1911, to Barrère, Ambassador in Rome, 17 October, p. 247.

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CHAPTER - III

TESTING THE OCTOBER FORMULA: 1908-1914

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Once the Russians had been pacified by the rather doubtful concession granted them in 1908, both France and Great Britain seemed content to preserve the 'status quo' at the Straits. Yet in the last few years before the War, Russia again grew anxious and attempted to induce the two to accept a new régime for the Straits favourable to her. As long as trade through the passage was not obstructed by war both France and Great Britain remained rather unconcerned. Not even when it became obvious that the real threat to the security of the Straits came not from St. Petersburg but from Berlin did they begin to worry. With the threat of war hanging over her head, Russia grew reluctant to make further demands upon her friends, and was prepared to postpone to a more favourable moment the summoning of an international conference to initiate discussions to revamp the outmoded Straits Convention of 1871.

A - French and British policies: The Tcharykoff Affair

Despite occasional rumours and alarms after 1908, for three years the Straits problem lay dormant. The quiet was shattered, shortly after the outbreak of war between Italy and the Ottoman Empire, when the Russian Ambassador in Constantinople - Tcharykoff - proposed to the Porte a Russo-Turkish Convention. Russia was prepared to guarantee to the Sultan his realms in Europe and in Asia in return for certain wide privileges to be exclusively exercised by Russia, which would ultimately mean Russian domination at the Straits. [1] The Russians felt that their prospects of success were bright. The Porte was distracted by the war. France, whom Russia had supported at Agadir, would feel bound to repay her in the same coin. [2] Great Britain's promises of 1908 could now be carried through. The greatest pressure would be put on the French. Neratoff would speak to the French Chargé - Panafieu, Tcharykoff would speak to Bompard, and Isvolsky - now Ambassador in Paris - would see de Selves. [3]

France was embarrassed by the Russian proposal, [4] once it came to be known precisely, as she still needed Russian support in her negotiations with Germany in Morocco. [5] The plan was not thought to be sound. It was, above all, ill-timed. When it appeared that Great Britain was not prepared

to advance beyond her 1908 position, France quickly agreed. But, at first, Paris was not prepared to refuse outright the Russian scheme. De Selves instructed Bompard in Constantinople to act sympathetically towards the draft convention. He even offered to make the Russian path easier in London; but this was refused. [6]

However, Isvolsky introduced a further and much wider plan by which France was to allow Russia a free hand in the economic development of North China. It was his intention that France's support for the proposed Straits agreement, along with this concession in China, was to balance the support Russia had offered at Agadir. De Selves became wary. He immediately sent to St. Petersburg to verify the fact that this was the official Russian policy. When it became clear that the Russian Ambassador had overstepped his authority, not even a highly enthusiastic letter from Bompard - wherein he argued that France must assist her ally to regain her lost prestige in Constantinople, a step which would in turn display to Europe the solidarity of the 'entente' - could lessen the Foreign Minister's suspicions. [7] He now looked to London. For the moment he was not prepared to proceed beyond the 1908 promise.

News of Tcharykoff's proposals had come more slowly to London. Once the facts had been verified, the Foreign Office determined to stand by its 1908 policy. Grey wrote:

> I would support what I had promised M. Isvolsky about the Straits three years ago with the consent of the Cabinet. More than this I would not say without consulting my colleagues. [8]

Nicolson, in St. Petersburg, felt that the moment was inopportune in view of the Porte's embarrassment in her war with Italy. Grey fully agreed as he felt that a lasting rapprochement between Russia and Turkey could be achieved only when the Porte was at peace. However, he did suggest that the solution to the Straits question, desired by Russia, might in part be realized. In time of peace Russia could have unhindered access to the Mediterranean; in time of war such an arrangement would be unfair to the powers interested in the trade passing through the Straits, and to the powers at war with Russia. [9] But Grey was unwilling to sanction the proposed Russian territorial guarantee, which Benckendorff had at first failed to mention. [10] He felt this to be an innovation, a new element, beyond the scope of the 1908 arrangement. De Selves had also hesitated over this item. Thus, London and Paris substantially agreed with each other. [11]

The Porte had been sufficiently wise to consider the Russian offer only after the most careful appreciation of the attitudes manifested by Paris and London. [12] It was Anglo-French determination not to promote the Russian proposal which convinced the Turk that the Russian plan should be ignored. From the very outset, London indicated that her policy would largely depend

on the Turkish reaction to Tcharykoff's offer. Paris was of the same opinion. The Turk knew that pressure to accept the draft proposal came only from Russia. He suspected also that neither France nor Great Britain were willing to give Russia a 'carte blanche' in the matter of the Straits. The Porte quickly deduced that the French, from whom the Russians would expect the strongest support, identified their policy with that of the British. As Panafieu had said:

> Nos intérêts généraux dans cette question sont sensiblement identiques à ceux de l'Angleterre. [13]

It had been the failure of France to support the Russian motion that had been the chief cause of the Russian failure. Yet by the time France had transmitted an official notice of her policy to St. Petersburg in January 1912, [14] it was obvious that the Quai d'Orsay could not have supported the Russian interests at the Straits without having seriously jeopardized her own more tangible interests in the Levant. Bompard, who had at first been so concerned to ensure that the Russian achieved a diplomatic success, gives us the best insight into the attitude which made Paris so reluctant to support her ally in this project:

> Les intérêts si complexes de la France dans le Levant, intérêts politiques, intérêts intellectuels, intérêts religieux, intérêts industriels, intérêts financiers, tous nos intérêts en un mot, matériels et moraux, nous commandent de vivre en bons termes avec la

> Turquie, comme de favoriser son développement, sa prospérité, et sa puissance, car l'hostilité du Gouvernement ottoman et la ruin ou simplement l'appauvrissement du pays les atteindraient aux-mêmes profondément ... [15]

B - The Straits during the Balkan Conflicts

1 - Bulgarian threats on Constantinople precipitate a crisis: With the astounding early successes of the Balkan allies, which had so nearly brought with them the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, the Straits question once again threatened to upset the precarious balance in the Near East. It had appeared that nothing could prevent the Bulgarians from marching on Constantinople.

The alarm had sounded in St. Petersburg, despite the repeated assurances received from Sofia, Athens and Belgrade that they would leave the political aspects of the Straits question to the decision of the interested powers, as long as they were guaranteed that the Porte would not, in future, be allowed to use the Straits from which to launch an offensive. [16] Here too, as in 1911 and in 1908, the panic in Russia was greatest. The threat that another power should, by an act of war, settle the Straits problem, was galling to her. While the possibility that trade through the passage might again be disrupted - as in the Italo-Turkish War -

should the Porte, as a defensive measure, close the Straits with mines, was intolerable. [17] Quickly a communiqué was sent which warned the Bulgarians that a Russian fleet had been made ready to sail for the Bosphorus, in conjunction with the French and the British, 'to protect Russian interests', if they were felt to be threatened. [18]

Paris continued the policy she had pursued during the Italo-Turkish War. Along with Great Britain and Russia she supported all attempts to keep the Straits open for navigation. But when a proposal to determine a new Convention for the Straits was made, she expressed her disapproval, and would commit herself no further than she had in 1908. Poincaré was disposed to lend support to the original Russian warnings to Sofia, and he instructed Bompard to support the Russian communications to the Porte, which had warned the Turk against closing the Straits with mines. He was even prepared to offer a guarantee of the territorial 'status quo' for Constantinople and the Straits. [19]

This sound policy had not committed France to any new scheme. Yet Paris, ever watchful over her interests in the Levant, ever fearful lest a Balkan or non-European crisis should precipitate war, was careful not to foster Russian ambitions in the matter of the Straits. France drew back when Louis, the Ambassador to the Tsar, reported that Russia

hoped to use the existing crisis to resolve many pressing complications in the Near East, once a peace conference had been summoned. The Straits question was to be thoroughly examined. [20] On hearing this report, Poincaré immediately insisted that Isvolsky submit a thorough memorandum, which was to explain precisely Russia's ultimate intentions and future policy in the matter of the Straits. He felt that, as the position of France in the Mediterranean had greatly altered since the Tcharykoff crisis of 1911, he must have exact information. [21] For by the Naval Agreement signed in St. Petersburg in August 1912, it had been decided that, in the event of war with the Central Powers, the French Mediterranean Fleet was to ensure that the Austrian Fleet was prevented from attacking Russia through the Straits. [22] At the same time, with the decision of the British Admiralty to decrease sharply its naval power in the Mediterranean in order to redistribute its fleets to meet the steadily-growing threat from Germany in the North Sea, and with the Anglo-French Naval Convention of November 1912, which formally handed over the command of the Mediterranean Area to the French, France became the real protector of Russian interests at the Straits. [23] In reply to Poincaré's request for precise information, Sazonoff made it clear that, despite the existing crisis, it would not be necessary to raise the Straits question in its entirety, but that certain unspecified modifications to the 1908 formula would have to be intro-

duced. Though she would not initiate such a proposal, Russia would expect sympathy and support from France, if it arose. [24]

Paris promptly decided that it would be best if the question was left untouched. At the Conference of Ambassadors in London, summoned to discuss a peace settlement, Cambon took the lead in the Straits question. On 15 December 1912, he had received a full letter of instructions: Constantinople was to remain in Turkish hands; so too were her European possessions in Thrace; with regard to the Straits, despite Russia's policy, lest any Balkan power should assume great ambitions in that area, it would be best - while bearing in mind the British attitude - not to raise the question at all. [25] As a result, on December 18, Cambon moved that:

> Le gouvernement français est fermement attaché en ce qui concerne Constantinople au maintien du statu quo. Cette ville devra donc rester dans la possession de l'Empire Ottoman. La Turquie devra en outre conserver en Europe un territoire longeant la Mer de Marmara et les Dardanelles ... [26]

This received immediate and unanimous support.

British policy in this affair was on many points similar to the French. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities, Great Britain, like France, was prepared to support Russian measures lest the Straits once more be closed to commercial navigation. [27] However, when the driving successes of the Bulgarians presented the possibility of a new geographic demarcation in the Aegean-

Black Sea area, which might have given equal claims for free passage through the Straits to the Bulgarians also, the Cabinet, which had not committed itself to any steadfast policy, was reluctant to support any plan proposed by Russia to remake the Straits Convention. [28] Indeed, Asquith even proposed to the French Chargé - de Fleuriau - that a scheme for the neutralization and the internationalization of Constantinople, with consequent effects on the Straits, might be the best solution, if the Bulgarian advance was successful. Paris, doubtful that Russia would accept such an idea, discouraged the project. [29]

With the failure of the Bulgarian attempts to take the city, all thoughts of neutralization and internationalization disappeared. Now London told St. Petersburg that she had British sympathy, if she wanted to discuss the Straits question once the Balkan conflict had been settled. There was one condition: it was to be preceded by a Russo-Turkish agreement - the solution of the Straits would not be forced unconditionally on the prostrate Turk. [30]

As a result, when Grey discussed with Cambon the proposed agenda for the Conference of Ambassadors, he said:

> ... after what had passed in 1908, we could not object if Russia desired to raise the question of the Straits; but it was not for us to suggest that this question should be raised. [31]

For this reason, when Cambon suggested that the question should not be raised at the Conference, Grey did not object. London had not substantially moved from the position of 1908, though she had reasserted her willingness to consider a well-planned, fair, and well-timed modification of the existing Straits Convention.

Throughout the remaining conflicts, until the Treaties of Constantinople and Athens officially brought the wars to a close, the status of the Straits remained unaffected. France and Great Britain, once more, had offered promises and no more. For Russia, a solution to the Straits question remained as distant as it had ever been.

2 - The Aegean Islands and the Straits Problem: When the Italians began leisurely and systematically to occupy the Islands in the Aegean, shortly after their bombardment of the Dardanelles in April 1912, a problem of international proportions, not to be solved with any degree of satisfaction for a dozen years, was born. We are interested in this question - the disposition of those islands strategically placed near the entrance to the Dardanelles - because through it we can receive a further demonstration, from a somewhat different view-point, of the French and British policies with regards to the Straits.

So important to the defence of the Straits were these islands considered, so vital a hold on the Black Sea commerce could be maintained in time of war by a hostile fleet harboured among these islands, that the French quickly determined that if the Porte could not retain possession of them, the islands should be neutralized. More than this, Poincaré was greatly disturbed by the Italian and later by the Greek occupation, lest the Porte, as a defensive measure, should once again close the Straits and so disrupt international trade. Above all, France was opposed to the development of either a Greek or an Italian naval base in that part of the Mediterranean, as Russia and other powers would undoubtedly demand compensation of the same kind. Control of the Straits again would be the Russian demand. [32] As a result, at the Conference of Ambassadors, in December 1912, Cambon was firmly instructed to press for the neutralization of those islands commanding the entrance to the Dardanelles. [33]

In pressing for the same type of solution - neutralization - British policy was as definite. An Admiralty memorandum had pointed out in June that a determined enemy could present a real problem by holding certain Aegean Islands as points of refueling and rearming. Besides this:

> ... A fleet making use of the harbours of any of these islands, can control the exit of the Black Sea trade through the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. [34]

A later note from the same source further advised the Foreign Office that His Majesty's Government, along with the other signatory powers of the Straits Treaties should protest against any permanent occupation of the islands by any of the principal naval powers. [35] When later the Greeks occupied some of these strategic islands during the Balkan conflicts, realizing that she might be forced to enter the scramble for a new base in the Eastern Mediterranean, since Cyprus was so unsuitable, London maintained her hostility to any occupation. With the Conference of Ambassadors in session, Grey spoke to Venizelos and outlined both British and French apprehensions in this regard. The two powers would not interfere in the peace-making, as long as this particular problem was amicably solved.

Throughout this aspect of the problem, we can see that neither Paris nor London had altered their policies towards or interest in the Straits. Two principles underlay their demands for neutralization: strategically, they could not tolerate a third naval power in that part of the Mediterranean; economically, the obvious threat to their vested interests and to their vast sea-borne trade through the Straits was also intolerable. As ever these two outstanding principles determined their policy in the matter of the Straits.

C - The Effect of the Sanders Affair on the Straits Question

In the autumn of 1913, word spread from Constantinople that a German Military Mission under General Liman von Sanders would arrive to train the Sultan's badly-shaken armies. Sanders, as General of the Turkish Army Corps stationed in Constantinople, was to act as Inspector-General of the Turkish Army, a position of authority and wide influence.

Just as Russia had feared a Bulgarian victory, which would have recreated in one blow a new situation at the Straits, so too now she feared a German military 'coup' in Constantinople. Here again, as in the question of the strategically-placed Aegean Islands and in the Bulgarian episode, the essential difficulty involved in the Straits question did not arise, as it had in 1911 and in 1908. Yet by a careful consideration of French and British diplomacy involved in the Sanders Affair, we can once more adequately demonstrate their policies in the matter of the Straits.

The real heart of the problem in this crisis, which France had to face, was not in Constantinople, but in Berlin. Here again, she was not prepared to abandon her interests at the Straits. She fully discerned that Russia's consternation arose not so much from the emergence of a German military threat, as from the fear that her own ambitions in that sphere

would be defeated. What support she offered to her ally was motivated chiefly by the desire to display the solidarity of the Alliance and to bolster Russian 'amour propre.' This she had declined to do in the Tcharykoff affair. [36] Throughout the crisis, as far as France was concerned, the question of the Straits, though always in the background, never really boiled over. What is of interest here is, on the one hand, her efforts to enlist British opinion to support the Russian proposals, and on the other, her care, when the Straits question became the chief concern, to advance no further in the matter than Great Britain.

France was not unsympathetic. As long as Russia was not weakened by a diplomatic defeat, France would be content. She was not prepared to initiate a new policy in the matter of the Straits, and she was unwilling to foster Russian ambitions linked with the question. From the moment that Sazonoff intimated that French diplomatic support was required, [37] the policy that Paris would pursue would determine the degree of success his protests would achieve. [38] Pichon complained to the Turkish Ambassador, while Bompard spoke to the Grand Vizier. Both threatened that compensations 'moraux et matériels' would be exacted unless either the Mission was stopped or the contract was modified. [39]

This support did not slacken, despite the fact that by the end of November France knew that Sanders' duties would not include the administration, discipline and supply of the troops used for the defence of the Straits, or the organization of these defences. [40] Indeed, the same day as this news was received, Pichon reaffirmed his policy, when he interviewed the British Chargé. [41]

Only when Grey proposed to modify the original strength of his support to the Russian protest, on December 10, after it was discovered that the Military Mission would have no authority over the defences of the Straits, did Paris begin to doubt the advisability of supporting the Russian protest. She shied away from associating herself with the proposed identic note to the Porte. [42] On December 16th, Doumergue, Pichon's successor, declared that he would await the outcome of the Russo-German pourparlers over the problem, before he would give his approval to such a note. [43] French enthusiasm was visibly waning. The following day, Isvolsky expressed his annoyance at what he felt was a lack of Anglo-French interest. In denying this charge, Doumergue displayed increased reluctance to support the Russian protest. He insisted that a modified protest was warranted, since this information concerning the nature of Sanders' duties virtually nullified the Russian proposal. [44] Even when St. Petersburg was prepared to present a second note at the end of December, Paris remained

unenthusiastic. Following closely the lead now given by London, she demanded prior agreement on ultimate policies in the matter of the Straits before she would offer further assistance. [45]

By the middle of January 1914 the crisis had passed. Sanders was promoted by the Kaiser, which forced him to relinquish his command of the Army Corps stationed in Constantinople. This had been the chief point of contention. [46]

Thus after having insured that her interests in the Levant were secure, France had resolved to aid her ally. This diplomatic assistance was sustained despite the fact that she shortly became aware that the German Mission had no direct control over the Straits defences. Serious hesitations had developed only when the British, for this very reason, proposed to modify their original position.

What was the original British policy, and why was it altered? When Sazonoff had first indicated his need for assistance to protest Sanders' appointment, the Foreign Office showed sincere interest, partially because it sympathized with the Russian feelings of insecurity in the Black Sea, but mainly because the German stroke threatened the entire 'status quo' of the Straits area. It was one thing to acquiesce in a Russian occupation of the Straits; it was quite something else to sanction a similar German ambition. Grey visualized

the total eclipse of the Ottoman power. To him, the Straits would become a German pawn, if the German Mission was given 'free-rein' in the Sultan's army. [47] So serious did he consider the threat to be, that he immediately consulted his Cabinet colleagues to ascertain the exact policy to be undertaken. Dispatches were sent to Buchanan in St. Petersburg, to Mallet in Constantinople, to Bertie in Paris, and to Rodd in Rome. All were instructed to cooperate in the formulation of an identic - but not a collective note - to be communicated to the Porte:

> ... the effective executive command of the Constantinople Army Corps by a German Officer would involve the control of the Straits ... [48]

A change in policy developed almost immediately. By the end of the first week in December, when Mallet reported that, contrary to what had been supposed, the defence of the Straits was not within Sanders' command, the affair assumed a totally different complexion. Mallet discouraged the idea of demanding compensations, and he suggested that only individual verbal approaches be made to the Porte. [49] Simultaneously, after consulting the Admiralty, Grey realized that the German Mission was preparing to do to the Sultan's Army exactly what the British Mission was attempting to do with the Sultan's Navy. He was now prepared only to make an official inquiry; he felt he could not support an identic note. His interest had been in the security of the Straits. When

it was clear that the Straits were not directly involved, he did not feel directly concerned. [50] Henceforward, London took a more detached view. On December 27, when Sazonoff made a second proposal, Crewe, in Grey's absence, put several questions to Benckendorff, which indicated that London was more interested in Russian ultimate aims and intentions than in the immediate means to solve the problem. [51]

The 1908 arrangement over the Straits remained as secure as it had been before the crisis. Even in the face of growing tensions in Europe, circumstances had not developed which would force the Quai d'Orsay or the Foreign Office to make the slightest concession to Russia in the Straits question. Indeed, Russia soon became convinced that the real opposition to her ambitions at the Straits, as in the Balkans, lay in Berlin, not in Paris and London. So rather than initiate a new crisis over the Straits, Russia, in 1914, to the satisfaction of France and Great Britain, steered clear of the political aspects of the problem, and seemed interested only in the more precise reconstitution of the 'triple entente.' [52] Sazonoff's proposal for a conference of the French and Russian Ambassadors in London, under Grey's presidency, specifically to discuss problems and policy of the Near East, was a clear indication of that. [53] Thus, as Europe unknowingly moved closer to war, there seemed little prospect of a crisis developing, which would induce either Paris or London to modify their Straits policies.

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1. - For the text of the proposal see LN Vol. II, pp. 462-64; See also Mandelstam -- La politique ..., p. 694; Potiemkine -- Histoire ..., Vol. II, p. 233.

2. - LN Vol. I, pp. 140-41; F.Stieve -- Isvolsky and the World War, p. 36.

3. - BD - IX i, p. 312; Stieve -- Isvolsky ..., pp. 39-40; LN - X, p. 146; Bompard to de Selves, DDF - II - 14, pp. 615-16, 647-48; Caillaux -- Mémoires, Vol. II, pp. 194-95.

4. - For Sazonoff's opinion see BD - IX i, p. 361.

5. - Taylor -- Struggle ..., pp. 474-75; P.Renouvin -- Les questions méditerranéennes de 1904 à 1914, pp. 28-9; Fay -- Origins ..., Vol. I, p. 414; Shotwell & Deak -- Turkey ..., p. 88.

6. - Panafieu to de Selves, 16 October, DDF - II - 14, p. 660.

7. - ibid., pp. 688-89; Bompard had spoken in this fashion in February and in April 1911, DDF - II - 13, pp. 270, 412-14.

8. - To O'Briene and Lowther, 23 October, BD - IX i, 313, see also pp. 350-51; G.A.Schreiner & B. de Siebert -- Entente Diplomacy and the World: 1909-1914, p. 323; H.Nicolson -- Sir Arthur Nicolson - First Lord Carnock, pp. 359-60.

9. - O'Briene to Neratoff, LN - II, p. 467; Grey to Goschen, BD - IX i, p. 321; Benckendorff to Neratoff, 8 Nov., S & S, p. 328; Bompard to de Selves, 8 Nov., DDF - III - i, p. 56.

10. - LN - II, p. 467, 19 Oct.

11. - Grey to Bertie, 18 Nov., BD - IX i, p. 323; Potiemkine - Histoire ..., Vol. II, p. 224.

12. - P.P.Graves -- The Question of the Straits, pp. 140-41; M.Hoschiller -- L'Europe devant Constantinople, p. 64; M. de Taube -- La politique russe d'avant-guerre et la fin de l'empire des Tsars: 1904-1917, p. 268; Dascovici -- La Question ..., p. 266.

13. - To de Selves on 8 December, DDF - III - 1, pp. 312-14.

14. - For the text of the January 4th memo see ibid., p. 441; and LN - I, p. 179; see also Stieve -- Isvolsky ..., p. 43; F.L.Schuman -- War and Diplomacy in the French Republic, pp. 190-91.

15. - To the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères on Jan. 13, DDF - III - I, p. 479.

16. - To achieve this, they suggested that Constantinople and the Straits should be neutralized, see Paget (Belgrade) to Grey, BD - IX ii, p. 71, and Bax-Ironside (Sofia) to Grey, 5 Nov., ibid., p. 101.

17. - Spender -- Fifty Years ..., p. 347; BD - IX ii, p. 51; S & S, p. 381.

18. - Sazonoff to Isvolsky, 4 Nov., BD - IX ii, p. 116; KA - I, p. 174.

19. - DDF - III - 4, p. 323.

20. - To Poincaré, 20 Nov., ibid., p. 513.

21. - LN - I, p. 356; Mandelstam -- La politique ..., p. 726.

22. - Sazonoff to the Tsar, 17 Aug., 1912, LN - II, p. 339; Stieve -- Isvolsky ..., p. 83; Headlam-Morley -- Studies ..., p. 250; Taylor -- Struggle ..., pp. 487-88.

23. - M.A.Bider -- The Anglo-French Military and Naval Staff Conversations: 1906-14, pp. 170-227; M.V.Brett (Ed) -- Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher, Vol. III: 1910-15, p. 96; Schuman -- Diplomacy ..., p. 157.

24. - DDF - III - 4, p. 636, 3 Dec.

25. - DDF - III - 5, pp. 84-7; Gooch -- Before the War ..., Vol. II, p. 192.

26. - Lichnowsky to the Ministère des Affaires Etrangères, GP(ET) - IV, p. 150.

27. - Grey to Lowther, 21 Oct., and Grey to Elliott (Athens), BD - IX ii, p. 51.

28. - Bertie to Grey, 4 Nov., ibid., p. 96.

29. - Bertie to Grey, ibid., p. 109; Shotwell & Deak -- Turkey ..., p. 90; DDF - III - 4, p. 381, Fleuriau to Poincaré, 6 Nov.

30. - Benckendorff to Sazonoff, 2 Dec., S & S, pp. 417-18.

31. - Grey to Bertie, 11 Dec., BD - IX ii, pp. 277-78.

32. - Renouvin -- Les questions méd..., p. 31; Bertie to Grey, 1 Nov., BD - IX ii, p. 77.

33. - DDF - III - 5, pp. 84-7; Poincaré to Cambon, 15 Dec. 1912.

34. - 20 June 1912, BD - IX i, p. 413f.

35. - ibid., p. 413-14; T.L.O'Neill -- British Policy in the Italo-Turkish War: 1911-1912, p. 85; Renouvin -- Les Relations ..., Vol. Vi, p. 228.

36. - R.J.Sontag -- European Diplomacy: 1871-1932, p. 187.

37. - Delcassé to Pichon, 17 Nov., 1913; DDF - III - 8, p. 623.

38. - S.Sazonoff -- Fateful Years: 1909-1916, pp. 119, 123.

39. - Isvolsky to Sazonoff, 1 Jan. 1914, S & S, pp. 700-01; R.J.Kerner -- The Mission of Liman von Sanders (Slavonic Review - Vol. VI; 1927) p. 355; L. von Sanders -- Five Years in Turkey, p. 6; Renouvin -- Les Relations ..., p. 334; Renouvin -- La Question Méd..., p. 44; Stieve -- Isvolsky ..., p. 197; de Taube -- La politique ..., p. 312.

40. - Maucorps (Military attaché - Constantinople) to Etienne (Min. de Guerre), 29 Nov., DDF - III - 8, pp. 692-93.

41. - Grenville to Grey, BD - X i, pp. 394-95.

42. - Grey to Bertie, 9 Dec., BD - X i, p. 364.

43. - To Paleologue, Mandelstam -- La politique ..., p. 747.

44. - Bertie to Grey, BD - X i, p. 388.

45. - KA - Vol. I, pp. 57-8, Isvolsky to Sazonoff; Kerner -- Mission ..., Vol. VI, pp. 558-59; Isvolsky to Sazonoff, 30 Dec., S & S, p. 697.

46. - Sanders -- Five years ..., p. 6.

47. - Buchanan -- My Mission to Russia, Vol. I, p. 148; Gooch -- Before the War ..., Vol. II, p. 109; Cambon to Pichon, 27 Nov., DDF III - 8, pp. 675-76; Kerner -- Mission ..., Vol. VI, p. 357; H.N.Howard -- The Partition of Turkey: 1913-1923, pp. 41-2.

48. - 3 Dec., BD - X i, p. 354.

49. - Mallet to Grey, ibid., p. 355.

50. - G.W.Prothero (Ed) -- Turkey in Europe, p. 56; Mandelstam -- La politique ..., pp. 747-48; Buchanan -- Mission ..., Vol. I, pp. 148-49; Cambon to Doumergue, 11 Dec., DDF - III - 8, p. 766.

51. - Kerner -- Mission ..., Vol. VI, p. 558; Howard -- Partition ..., p. 43.

52. - Buchanan -- Mission ..., Vol. I, p. 183; Kerner -- Mission ..., Vol. VII, pp. 106-07; Headlam-Morley -- Studies ..., p. 253; Buchanan to Grey, 3 Apr., 1914, BD - X ii, pp. 781-82.

53. - Sazonoff -- Fateful ..., pp. 129-31.

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CHAPTER - IV

WAR BRINGS A SETTLEMENT, 1914-1917

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The difficulties of the World War, which threatened Russia with an early collapse, were the real reason why a solution to the Straits problem was demanded while the War was still in progress. The immediate cause was the Russian suspicion that Anglo-French policy in the eventual peace-making would deny them their 'heritage' of the Straits. Once the settlement was agreed to, neither France or England thought of breaking their promise, so great was their regard for the Russian war contribution. But once this war effort had collapsed, and once the Russians themselves had purposely abandoned that heritage, France and Great Britain did not hesitate to propose a solution for the Straits problem vastly different from the one they had agreed to in 1915.

A - First Hints of the Need for a New Arrangement

With the outbreak of War, Turkey, as had been expected, immediately declared her neutrality. She also proposed to mobilize her armies as a defensive measure. For the Straits this would mean increased preparedness among the forts. There

was no cause for alarm in Paris or London. Merchant shipping would move as usual through the passage. However, when the two German warships - the battle cruiser 'Goeben' and the cruiser 'Breslau' - applied for permission to enter the Dardanelles and were immediately granted it, the security and neutrality of the Straits suddenly became highly problematical. When, after repeated protests, the Porte appeared to have no intention of demanding that they withdraw, the suspicion grew that Turkey itself would not remain neutral. [1]

French policy did not appear to be deeply concerned over the possibility of a closed Strait, which would result from the Turkish entry into the war. [2] Delcassé felt that the Porte should be shown a strong hand by being clearly warned of the dire consequences she would suffer, if she persisted in her German flirtation. [3] Although Paris associated itself with the Russian-initiated collective note to the Porte on August 30, which offered the Ottoman Empire a territorial guarantee if she remained neutral, the French were unenthusiastic about matching German bribes. Above all for France the Turkish problem was of secondary importance:

> Dans le fait, on attend le résultat de la première bataille pour se prononcer. [4]

British policy, as ever interested in the maintenance of international trade, viewed with alarm the steady movement

by the Porte towards the Central Powers. Yet it does not seem possible that London fully appreciated the consequences of such an alliance. At any rate, she took little action which was capable of achieving her avowed desires. On the one hand, Churchill was prevented from sending the Fleet through the Dardanelles, because of British regard for Moslem opinion in India; [5] on the other hand, Grey felt that it would be very awkward for Britain in Egypt and in India if the Porte "came out against us." [6] It must be remembered that, above all, 'entente' diplomacy needed a victory in Belgium of sufficient proportions to impress the Porte, before any hope of diplomatic success could be harboured. In this war, diplomacy was bound to follow the battles. Without a striking success in Europe, the 'entente' policy could not succeed at the Straits.

When it became apparent, once the Straits were closed late in September 1914, that war with the Porte was merely a matter of time, the problem of the Straits, for France and Great Britain, acquired a new complexion. Paris and London, as ever, were content to let Russia take the lead in these affairs. During the period when it was still believed that the Porte would remain neutral, Russia had suggested that the Straits should be given a new régime, once victory had been achieved, by which all the coastal states of the Black Sea would receive identical privileges of passage. [7] The day the Porte closed the Straits, Petrograd spoke again. Buchanan

and Paléologue were advised that Russia would demand the permanent freedom of the Straits to be guaranteed by the internationalization of Constantinople, the neutralization of the Straits themselves, with a Russian naval station at the mouth of the Bosphorus. [8]

There were many arguments in Sazonoff's favour. The old Byzantine dream of Russian domination over Tsargrad was reviving, [9] while the closure of the Straits, coming as it did a full month before the Turkish declaration of war, a crippling effect had set in on Russia. The Baltic was closed; the coast of the White Sea and the Arctic Ocean were seldom free from ice for more than four months of the year and the few existing railways were wholly inadequate, there being only one between Archangel and Moscow. [10] To encourage the scheme in Russia, Isvolsky had reported that they could depend on complete support from France towards the freedom of the Straits, and that they could look to her to soften the path in London. [11]

With the unprovoked attack of the Ottoman fleet upon Russian naval units and installations along the Black Sea coast, which induced the Russians to declare war, the fate of the Ottoman Empire at the Straits was sealed. To Russia it necessitated a new and decisive approach to the whole Near Eastern problem, which in turn would have profound effects on the Straits. [12] Sazonoff immediately made this clear to

Paléologue and Buchanan. As far as he was concerned, the Porte could retain Constantinople, but Russia must demand guarantees at the Straits or be doomed to many years of economic weakness and to the continued possibility of external attack in that quarter. [13]

The German armies were lying but seventy kilometers from Paris, so the French were bound to be sympathetic to the Russian plan. Yet they were not willing to give their ally a 'carte blanche' in an area in which her financial, intellectual, political and religious interests were so deep-seated. On November 7, Delcassé told Isvolsky that it would be advisable to develop a plan of common action with regard to the Ottoman Empire, in view of the complexity of interests involved. [14] At the same time, he desired to know Russia's exact intentions in the matter of the Straits. [15] Delcassé was motivated not only by respect for his ally's ambitions, but also by the reports received from the Balkans - especially from Roumania - which told of widespread uneasiness at the Tsar's recent declarations about the Straits. It was here in the early months of the War, that the heart of French policy can be found. Her ever-riding concern was not with her ally's ambitions at the Straits, but how these ambitions would effect the intervention on the side of the 'entente' of those still-uncommitted Balkan powers.

British policy appeared to be somewhat more receptive to the Russian suggestions. To the British, the Porte had acted in an unpardonable manner. Asquith had called it the political suicide of the Ottoman Empire. With the Turk an enemy, it meant the end of the long-standing policy of backing the Porte. It meant also the end of the well-established axiom that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire was worth preserving. The British naval units watching the mouth of the Dardanelles took immediate action and, for a short time, bombarded the outer forts. [16] Simultaneously, Grey told Benckendorff that, once Germany was defeated, the fate of the Straits and of Constantinople could only be decided in conformity with Russian interests. The Russian immediately reported:

> ... Sir Edward Grey estime que la conduite du gouvernement turc rend inévitable la solution de la question turque dans son ensemble, y compris la question des Détroits et de Constantinople, d'accord avec la Russie. La solution de cette question ne pourra intervenir naturellement qu'après la défaite de l'Allemagne. [18]

The King, the day before had expressed similar sentiments, and is reported to have said:

> Quant à Constantinople il est clair que c'est à vous qu'elle doit appartenir ... [19]

Later when he visited Paris, Grey further clarified his statement when he told Bertie that he felt that Great Britain must execute her promise of 1908 to give Russian vessels freedom of movement in the Straits. [20]

At the same time, there had developed a small but undefined group in the Cabinet, in the War Office and in the Admiralty, lead by Churchill, whose ideas moved along more definite, more concrete paths. They proposed a plan for an attack on the Dardanelles with a force sufficient to knock the Turk out of the War in one blow by sending the Fleet to Constantinople. The plan was first officially discussed at the November 25 meeting of the War Council. The attack was ostensibly intended for the protection of Egypt. [21] Other motives were not difficult to uncover: Turkey would be forced out of the War in one dramatic blow; Germany would be gravely shaken; arms would flow into Russia from the West; wheat and oil would return from Russia; the economic balance in Russia would be restored; the uncommitted Balkan states would be greatly impressed.

B - Russian Fears and Suspicions force a Settlement

1 - Suspicions aroused: Primarily it was Russian fears and suspicions over the ultimate intentions of the Allied attack on the Dardanelles that moved Sazonoff, early in March, to demand, in an unprecedented fashion, an immediate settlement of the future disposition of the Straits. Yet the immediate motivation for the expedition had been supplied by the Russians themselves. In late-December 1914, Grand Duke

Nicholas, knowing his own inability to launch either a military or naval attack of any kind against the Straits or elsewhere, told the British representatives at his headquarters that he felt threatened on his Caucasian flank. What could his allies do to relieve the pressure? The Dardanelles attack was the answer.

Enthusiasm for the Dardanelles scheme, as a solution for the Russian embarrassment, lay chiefly with the British. Most French opinion, by contrast, was reluctant to admit of any secondary fronts. For Frenchmen, the War would be won or lost in Europe. Delcassé, like Grey, felt that the Straits question could be adequately solved in the future Peace Treaty. But in London, it gave an opportunity for the 'Dardanelles Party' to display its wares:

> The Russian appeal was welcome in London, where many ministers dreaded the deadlock on the western front and wished to find a way around it by the use of sea-power. [22]

By the end of January, French cooperation for the attack had been secured, though Augagneur, the Minister for Marine, had little faith in the proposed scheme. [23] While the Russian statesmen remained suspicious, their admirals and generals were enthusiastic. [24]

In the preparations for the siege, Anglo-French policy showed no signs of attempting to exclude Russia from the Straits. On the contrary, it was anxious to enlist Russian

aid. With the initial successes of the attack, both London and Paris pressed Russia to make a similar attack on the Bosphorus, so that all three could meet simultaneously off the Golden Horn. [25] But though various schemes were advanced, no practical assistance of any worth ever arrived from Russia.

Russian suspicions, aroused by the very idea of the attack itself, were now strengthened by the attempts made by Paris and London to enlist the assistance of Greece in the attack, and later of Bulgaria and of Roumania. When the Greeks had first volunteered their assistance in January, Sazonoff had made no objection, though he had warned them against a Greek attempt to challenge Russian interests at the Straits or in Constantinople. [26] On March 3, Sazonoff heard that both Paléologue and Buchanan had reacted favourably to the advances made by the Greek Minister in Petrograd, who had made the same kind of offer. His suspicions were not allayed despite the fact that Delcassé told him that there was no evidence to suggest that London was encouraging Venizelos in this scheme. Yet the Cabinet's enthusiasm for such a scheme could easily be suggested. Not only would Greek assistance greatly aid the actual attack, but the effect on the other Balkan powers would not be inconsiderable. [27] The Quai d'Orsay was thinking along the same lines. Yet both realized that if Greece was allowed to take part in the campaign, little could prevent Bulgaria, Roumania or even Italy from also similarily ex-

pressing their desire. The future payment of compensations would present a problem of incalculable difficulties. [28] The Russia veto, on March 7, to the Greek plan solved the problem.

2 - France and Great Britain accept the Straits Accord: It was solely through Russian initiative that a solution for the Straits problem was determined in the heat of war. Both Paris and London had expected that this question would be solved jointly in the Peace Treaty, once Germany was defeated. Grey had expressed these very sentiments, on February 25, in answer to a question raised in the House of Commons. There he expressed his complete sympathy with the Russian desire to solve the political and economic problems bound up with the question:

> The precise form in which it will be realized will no doubt be settled in the terms of the peace ... [29]

Not only did Sazonoff find this insufficiently precise, but he saw also the confusion and conflict that would ensue once the victorious powers came to draw up the Peace Treaty. He decided to risk the passions of war rather than await the rivalries and jealousies of peacemaking. Not even a joint Anglo-French proposal which stated that if the Dardanelles attack was successful, no peace, but only a severe armistice, would be granted to the Porte, could remove those suspicions. [30]

Sazonoff had made up his mind. The prospect of continued economic weakness due to the insecure passage was intolerable; while Tsargrad presented itself as the only possible compensation to the Russian people equal to the sacrifices they had already made and would be called upon to make. [31] He insisted that the problem of the Straits be solved at once rather than in the conditions of peace. He assured Paris and London that Petrograd would scrupulously guarantee their interests at the Straits. [32]

Paris disliked the proposal, and undoubtedly would have found arguments to show how inopportune it was had not the European picture looked so grave for her. The importance of this is paramount in the understanding of French policy in this question. As it was, France did her best to avoid the agreement, and gave her final reply a full month after Great Britain had submitted hers. Delcassé was most hostile to the proposal. Isvolsky was unable to convince him otherwise. He felt that Russia had always desired only the international guarantee for merchantmen in peace and war. [33] Poincaré too felt that since Russia was to play no real part in the Dardanelles attack, that since the proposals would prove unpalatable to both Greece and Roumania, and that Russia, assured of her prize, would lose interest in the destruction of Germany, the proposal could not be accepted at that time. [34] Paris immediately suggested, however, that the proposal was

so portentous, it ought to be submitted to the direct examination of the three Foreign Ministers. [35] This was unacceptable to Petrograd. On March 8, Paléologue verbally informed Sazonoff that France would not oppose the Russian annexations on the condition that some definite guarantee for international commerce in the Straits be secured. [36] Sazonoff was not satisfied with the form of the French reply, for by March 12 he received a written reply from the British. Isvolsky was instructed to bring this to Delcassé's notice. Although the Frenchman twice subsequently indicated that he would so instruct Paléologue, we find that at the beginning of April, Isvolsky was forced to ask a second time.

French hesitation manifested by Delcassé, was deep-seated. Poincaré, early in March, had written privately to Paléologue that he fully understood Russian motivation behind the Sazonoff proposal, yet he was not prepared to sacrifice French aspirations and interests to it. [37] Delcassé had echoed these sentiments, for Isvolsky reported:

> La France ne contestera pas notre prise de possession de Constantinople et des Détroits. Ce qui est important pour elle, c'est principalement la garantie de la liberté du commerce international dans les Détroits et elle espère que de notre côté nous consentirons à donner des garanties suffisantes à ce sujet. [38]

Still a third time Isvolsky went to see Delcassé to get a written acceptance for the March 4th proposal. The Russian ambassador was highly suspicious for he well knew of the

influential spheres of opinion in France, which would be satisfied with an international control for the Straits, rather than a Russian control:

> ... des importants intérêts financiers que la France possède en Turquie et de l'influence des financiers intéressés sur le Gouvernement et sur la presse ... l'opinion personelle et invariable de Poincaré, toujours imprégné des traditions séculaires de la politique française en Orient. [39]

But on April 10, the French submitted their written acceptance, on the condition that a final victory was achieved:

> ... sous réserve de la réalisation par la France et l'Angleterre de leurs projets en Orient, et ailleurs, conformément au memorandum russe ... [40]

The 'projets en Orient' vague as the term was could well be guessed at by the Russians. For the French, as Paléologue had already suggested in earlier discussions, in a Peace Treaty with the Porte, Syria must be secured as a beginning. [41]

British policy had been less hesitant, though it had made its demands far more precise. Somewhat surprised at the form in which the Russian proposal had been presented, Grey quickly realized that Sazonoff had to be supported, for by agreeing to the Russian memorandum he would thereby be strongly encouraging the Russian war effort. [42] It meant of course that he, like Delcassé, would have to reverse his policy and agree that the Straits should be secured for Russia at that moment rather than later at the Peace Conference. [43] It was

on March 3rd that he had told Benckendorff that, though he had no objections to discussing the Straits at that time, he first felt that he must consult French views. The Russian note was submitted to the Cabinet for study, while at the same time some interest was shown Delcassé's plan for a meeting of the three Foreign Ministers. The issue was not pressed when Sazonoff objected. By the 12th, Buchanan had received his instructions to submit the official communiqué:

> If war ends in a triumphant conclusion, and if the aspirations of Great Britain and France in the Ottoman Empire are realized, as exposed in the Russian communication ... [44]

The conditions of acceptance were, indeed, very wide and obscure. The following day, Buchanan added a cautionary note by explaining that Great Britain was not altogether pleased to promise outright such vital territories to Russia before the general war aims had been jointly formulated. He wished to impress upon Sazonoff that the British acquiescence in the Russian scheme was a vital change in British policy; at the same time he assured the Russian that the British would remain loyal to their promises. [45] He further gave warning that Great Britain would make certain demands with regard to the Anglo-Russian 1907 Accord. [46] By the 20th, the Cabinet had formulated its desires: Constantinople was to be a free port for goods in transit; there was to be commercial freedom for merchantmen of all flags; Russia was to make no difficulties

for the powers interested in investment in that area; Russia was to continue strenuously to influence Bulgaria and Roumania to intervene on the 'entente' side; Russia was to bear in mind, at all times, 'entente' interests in Asiatic Turkey; the neutral zone in Persia would revert to British control. [47] London, secure in Egypt, had now found security in Persia, and had developed unlimited prospects in Asiatic Turkey. Vistas were now opening which, before the War, were unimagined.

Thus, the French, besides making vague reference to their future 'projets en Orient', had made but one condition to their approval of the Sazonoff note - the successful completion of the War. It was shortly apparent to the Russians that the French note of acceptance had not been as wide as it had appeared. France planned to return to her position of power in Constantinople by once again controlling large portions of the commercial and financial institutions as well as the civil administration. Even while the Russian demands were still being debated upon in Paris, there were indications that both the French and British directors of 'La Banque Ottoman' and probably the delegates of the 'Le Conseil de la Dette' fully intended to return immediately to their former positions in the city, once the Fleets had broken past the Dardanelles defences and the Porte had capitulated.

Russia knew well that if she was to control the city and the Straits in anything more than in name, she would have to reconstitute and control such institutions. Paris, at one time, suggested that commissions be appointed by the three 'entente' powers, which, under the military commander, would control the administration, and the financial and commercial institutions in the city. [48] When Petrograd substituted a modified plan, Delcassé, in an interview with Isvolsky, re-asserted the profound interest France had in the future administration of the city and the Straits. It left no doubt in the mind of the Russian that whether France approved or rejected the Sazonoff memorandum, the vast financial interests of France would never be discarded. [49] On March 26th, Isvolsky further reported that a group within the Quai d'Orsay, in concert with Bompard, was preparing a plan for the recapture of all formerly-held French commercial and financial interests. It appeared to him that the power of Anglo-French capital in the city would make the Russian control of Constantinople and of the Straits no different from that of the Porte. [50]

Throughout the spring and the summer of 1915, there continued unabated this stream of diplomatic correspondence between Paris and Petrograd in an attempt to finalize the plan for the detailed administration of Tsargrad. In the end, it was decided that until peace was declared from the time that the Straits were captured, a system of joint control would

be employed. The dream was shattered and the plan was never tested for towards the end of December 1915 and in early January of the following year, Gallipoli was abandoned, and so too went many of the Russian dreams.

C - The Straits Settlement of 1915 Confirmed

From the moment when Paris and London gave their consent to the Russian plan for the future disposition of the Straits, to the time, in the spring of 1917, when the Provisional Government in Russia renounced that heritage, we can discern no change in the attitudes of the two towards the Straits question. Despite this, frequent reports reached Petrograd which indicated that the allies might forget their promises. On the other hand, frequent reports reached Paris and London, which indicated that Russia might accept a separate peace from the Central Powers, if, while maintaining the 'open' Straits, she renounced her plan to annex Constantinople. The Russian fears, in this matter, as ever, were deepest. Ever distrustful of her allies, ever fearing that they would attempt to avoid their promises, Russia sought more binding assurances.

Though Russia had been assured of achieving her 'historic task', upon the successful completion of the War, in all subsequent pourparlers and negotiations with France and Great

Britain over the further partition of the Ottoman Empire, she insisted that these discussions, and any agreements that might evolve from them, were entirely dependent upon the Straits Settlement of March and April 1915. Thus, in March 1916, Sazonoff warned both Paléologue and Buchanan that Russian adherence to the proposed Tripartite Agreement for the partition of Asiatic Turkey was directly dependent upon a further Anglo-French assurance that they would stand by the Straits Settlement:

> ... l'acquiescement de la Russie ... reste conditionné par l'éxecution de son accord avec la France et l'Angleterre au sujet de Constantinople et des Détroits. [51]

A few days later, he re-emphasized this when he wrote to Isvolsky. To him, the secret treaty with France and Great Britain must remain inviolable and must never be questioned, while no future arrangement must disturb the binding power of the agreement over the Straits. [52]

As a result of this, France and Great Britain reaffirmed their determination to grant to Russia the Straits and Constantinople, by making a clear declaration of this intention in the initial article of the Tripartite Agreement. Similarily, in later discussions over the further division of spoils in Asiatic Turkey with France, in April 1916, Russia once more insisted on this pre-requisite and was duly granted it. [53]

Sudden generosity had not been the only moving spirit which had advised France and Great Britain to make these further concessions. They both well knew the importance of the continued Russian contribution to the war effort. Here too, as in March and April 1915, it was more a question of expediency than of generosity or selflessness. But even here the two did not depart empty-handed. First of all, they insisted that Russia once more outline the special privileges that would be granted to France and Great Britain: Constantinople was to be a free port for merchantmen, which also would enjoy free unhindered passage; Great Britain was to control the neutral zone in Persia; the Holy Places of Islam were to remain inviolate; Russia was to recognize the Anglo-French division of the Ottoman Empire, once it was precisely determined. [64] Their second move was to proceed with the actual division of the Ottoman Empire. In this way the Straits Settlement became the true progenitor of the Sykes-Picot Agreement - the original Anglo-French settlement for the future control of Asiatic Turkey. [55] Despite the fact that this agreement too was made on the avowed assumption that the Straits would become a Russian-controlled waterway, it had been conceived by both the French and by the British, partly at least, as a counterbalance to the Russian advance in the Straits area. Russia had furnished them not only with the pretext for negotiations but also with the solid base from which discussions could begin. [56]

Though there were still elements of French public opinion that found the Straits Settlement distasteful, and though these came to be expressed rather pointedly in the press and in parliament, the Quai d'Orsay did not seek to challenge the 'fait accompli.' [57] By the end of 1916, Isvolsky was able to report that both governmental and public opinion in France were thoroughly convinced that the Straits and Constantinople were necessary bait to whet the appetite of the Imperial Government and of the Russian people to persuade them to persist in their ever-depressing and ever-lengthening war. He noted that even the socialist minority, who had been so outspoken in their denunciation of Russia, realized the importance of this factor and were silent. [58]

However, without changing their policy towards the Straits Settlement, France did attempt, in February and March 1917, to achieve one real advantage. When the Straits Accord had been agreed upon in the spring of 1915, Great Britain had been careful to demand territorial as well as economic and political concessions, or at least the promise thereof from Russia. France had sought no definite concession for herself. Criticism of Delcassé for this short-sightedness culminated in a formal communiqué, which was presented by Paléologue on 17 February 1917. France sought a precise guarantee from Russia to persist in her war effort until Alsace-Lorraine once again formed part of the Republic. This was to be given

in return for the French acquiescence in the Russian plan for the Straits. [59] At the Inter-Allied Conference in Petrograd, Doumergue emphasised the French concern over this point. In Paris, Isvolsky saw no reason to re-open the question. [60] Overruling his ambassador's hesitations, Pokrovsky insisted that Isvolsky act in a conciliatory manner towards the French proposals. The agreement was concluded on March 11th. [61]

Great Britain was equally steadfast in maintaining her policy towards the Straits Accord. Indeed, the British Government went out of its way to reaffirm its determination to abide by its promises. In September 1916, King George V wrote to the Tsar, in an attempt to counteract the propaganda of German agents and sympathisers in Petrograd, who were trying to convince the Tsar and the Russian people that the Allies would not remain faithful to their promises. The King stated categorically that his government had no intention of obstructing the Russian possession of Constantinople and the Straits. Leaders from all sections of the House of Commons were of the same opinion:

> Moi et mon gouvernement considérons la possession par la Russie de Constantinople et des autres territoires déterminés par le traité que nous avons conclu avec la Russie et la France au cours de cette guerre, comme une des garanties premières et permanentes de la paix, après avoir abouti à la fin heureuse de la guerre. [62]

Three days later, Benkendorff verified this feeling of goodwill. In a letter to Sturmer, he insisted that Great Britain

would not disappoint Russia once peace had been achieved, just as she was not a disappointment in the War. He felt that the British policy in the matter of the Straits had been most conciliatory throughout the many difficult crises of the War. [63]

The contingencies of war, which had practically forced the hands of Paris and London to accept the Russian plan for the future régime at the Straits, proved as equally unrelenting throughout 1915, 1916, and until the Tsar had abdicated. At that juncture the Provisional Government determined on the policy of 'no annexations.' Undoubtedly had Russia remained in the War until the final victory had been achieved, the Straits and Constantinople would have been hers. Paris and London never again appeared officially hostile to the proposed Russian annexation once the Straits Settlement had been agreed upon. It was only the Russian abandonment of her 'heritage' that forced France and Great Britain to reappraise their policies in the matter of the Straits.

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37. - Arthur -- Poincaré ..., Vol. IV, pp. 54-5.

38. - Lapradelle, Vol. I, p. 198.

39. - ibid., pp. 223-25; LN, Vol. III - i - bk. 2, pp. 71ff, Sazonoff's memo of 12 April.

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54. - For text see Mears -- Modern Turkey, pp. 617-18; see also: Lyautey -- Le Drame ..., p. 234.

55. - For text see Mears -- Modern Turkey, pp. 614-16; Lenczowski -- Middle East ..., pp. 70-2; see also Toynbee & Kirkwood -- Turkey, p. 70.

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57. - Poincaré -- Mémoires: Au Service de la France, Vol. VII, p. 306.

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61. - ibid., pp. 451-52, for the text of the draft agreement see p. 455.

62. - ibid., pp. 393-94, 11 Sept.; Lazarevski -- Archives secretes de L'Empereur Nicholas II, pp. 155-56.

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CHAPTER - V

PEACE-MAKING PRODUCES A SETTLEMENT: 1917-1923

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The existence of an active and at times hostile rivalry between France and Great Britain by the end of the War, and which was much in evidence during this immediate post-War period, will form the background in the analysis of the Straits question between 1917 and 1923. Yet, whatever rivalry was brewing in the Near and Middle East, during the closing months of the War, at the Peace Conference in Paris, throughout the period of the Graeco-Turk War, and up to the signing of the Lausanne Treaty, one field remained comparatively free of controversy between the two - that of the Straits Question. Both France and Great Britain became convinced, for one reason or another, after Russia's defection, that a Straits open and free for navigation in peace and war for merchantmen and warships alike was the most desirable solution. In this regard, President Wilson's Twelfth Point, in his famous declaration, was merely an accurate rephrasing of Anglo-French feeling. On the other hand, the French and British policies, in the matter of the Straits, were subtended by their approach to the Bolshevik 'menace' in Russia. From a commercial and military as well as a political point of view,

the 'open' Straits principle would provide a quick and direct line to Russia.

A - Anglo-French Reaction to the Russian Abdication of Her Heritage

The overthrow of the Tsarist régime in Russia and the emergence of first the Provisional Government and later of the Bolsheviks had wide and immediate repercussions on the Straits question. Both France and Great Britain, already committed to the Russian scheme for the Straits since 1915, found the new circumstances far from being displeasing or unacceptable.

It was the change in Russian policy in the matter of annexations in general, which required the French and the British to similarily modify their Straits policies. At first Milioukoff, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, insisted that Russia would remain strictly faithful to the international obligations concluded by the Tsar. He soon found himself in a minority of one. [1] Kerensky, by the end of March 1917, had hinted that Russia really had no need of the Straits, but that they should be internationalized, thereby creating an effective protection to ensure the free flow of commerce. [2] Prince Lvov, a week later, gave a fuller explanation of this startlingly new foreign policy. He declared that Russia did not seek to dominate foreign peoples, nor to destroy their

nationalistic aspirations, nor to annex foreign territories, but sought only to establish a firm peace on the basis of self-determination. [3]

The Provisional Government, which sustained increasing pressure from the Soviet workers deputies, was continually urged to make official their renunciation of the secret treaties which involved the Straits. Despite further official declarations of foreign policy in this matter, in May, at the end of July and at the end of September, the Government failed to comply with these wishes. [4] It was not until the Bolsheviks took power in November and quickly declared that they had no ambitions to satisfy by the occupation of the Straits, that the Russian abandonment was complete.

It was the collapse of the Russian war effort and this policy of 'no annexations', which reopened the Straits question. The French, who had reconciled themselves to the Russian possession of the Straits, and who with the British had subsequently embarked on a whole series of treaties contingent on the maintenance of this agreement, felt that if the Provisional Government unilaterally disregarded the Straits Settlement, the subsequent partition of the Ottoman Empire might be invalidated. [5] Paléologue advised his Government to address a strict note to Petrograd which would emphasize: "l'impossibilité d'une révision des accords interalliés." [6] To Albert Thomas, the special envoy from Paris to Petrograd, it was

evident that Milioukoff's opinion held little authority, and that such a statement could not be made. Finally on May 26th, Paris sent an official reply to Lvov's statement of policy of April 9th. It was mild and vaguely sympathetic, but giving a hint of disapproval more by what it left unsaid than by what it said, it remained non-committal. Paris was still very suspicious. During the summer of 1917, when there arose the question of the possible publication of the secret treaties, it became clear from her hostile attitude, that France intended to hold Russia to her international committments.

British reaction to the 'no annexations' policy of the Provisional Government was far more favourable. By the end of March 1917, the tendency, in the British press and among certain parliamentarians, towards a policy which demanded internationalization for Constantinople and neutralization for the Straits was much in evidence. [7] London took Petrograd at its word and congratulated it for its stand. Russian withdrawal from the Straits would certainly solve the problem of an unwanted competitor for Turkish spoils. Yet at the same time, the usefulness of France, who had always acted as an intermediary in the Anglo-Russian disputes in the matter of the Straits, could now be questioned; and the long history of Anglo-French rivalry in the Levant would again have the opportunity to reappear. [8]

It was the Bolshevik formal declaration of disinterest in the Straits, however, which forced the British Government to seek a new formula for the Straits. On 2 January 1918, Curzon composed a memorandum in which the Straits and Constantinople were to be entrusted to the hands of a Power or group of Powers other than the British Empire. The Straits were to be given an international guarantee under the protection of the League of Nations, with a regulatory commission, under the chairmanship of the United States, and charged with the task of securing the open passage of the Straits and of safeguarding Constantinople. [9] Three days later, in a carefully prepared address, Lloyd George further clarified British policy:

> ... While we do not challenge the maintenance of the Turkish Empire in the homelands of the Turkish race, with its capital at Constantinople - the passage between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea being internationalized and neutralized - Arabia, Syria, Armenia and Palestine are to our judgment entitled to a recognition of their separate national conditions. [10]

Thus, from the reaction of France and of Great Britain to the Russian abandonment of her heritage at the Straits, a number of conclusions can be drawn. France found the 'no annexations' policy disagreeable as she visualized the whole basis of the secret agreements over Asiatic Turkey being shattered. More deeply than this, she saw the Russian war effort collapse; she knew the immediate effects this would have on her own war in Flanders. The problem of the Straits itself

was far from her mind. On the other hand, Great Britain welcomed the changed situation. Though she saw the disappearance of a powerful rival, nevertheless she also realized that the Russian capitulation would have serious repercussions on the War. Yet rather than take calculated steps to secure the Straits for herself, once Turkey was defeated, she resurrected the time-worn scheme to internationalize and neutralize the Straits.

These were the policies that molded the peace settlement for the Ottoman Empire at Sèvres in 1920. From a study of the negotiations which culminated in that settlement, we can further determine more precisely the respective French and British policies in the Straits question.

B - Towards the Peace Treaty of Sèvres

When President Wilson first announced his scheme for the future peace of the world, in his Fourteen Points, much apprehension was aroused in many quarters. Yet no complaints came either from Paris or London over that part of the Twelfth Point which dealt with the future of the Straits:

> ... and the Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to the ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees. [11]

This declaration was entirely compatible with Lloyd George's public statement and with Curzon's private memorandum. Although we find less precise declarations of French policy in the matter of the Straits, nevertheless France, vitally concerned with the attempt to create an Anglo-French Pact or better still a wider agreement with the United States to act as a counter balance to the future rise of German power, [12] would do nothing to oppose the determined policy of these her two greatest friends. It was that concern with the German 'menace', even as Germany lay in military, political and economic collapse, which moved the French to allow the British to assume the initiative in the determination of the future régime at the Straits.

1 - The Straits and the Turkish Armistice: Even before the final victory in Europe was achieved, France had given Great Britain the opportunity to take the initiative in the matter of the Straits. It is doubtful, indeed, if she could have prevented it. On 8 October 1918, General Franchot d'Espérey, Commander-in-Chief of the French forces in the Balkans, was enjoined by Paris to send the British divisions under his command against Constantinople. [13] This order left the British under General Milne in unquestioned supremacy in the Straits region once the Turk had been overwhelmed. This concession, which Lloyd George had obtained from Clemenceau, enabled Great Britain to impose an armistice on the

Turks almost without having to consult either France or Italy.

Clemenceau, however, attempted to prevent the British from also holding the future naval command in the Straits. He felt that, since the supreme naval command in the Mediterranean was held by a French Admiral, and since France had the greatest financial interests in the Levant, a French Fleet was needed to protect them. He took little note of the fact that the vast majority of the naval forces in the Aegean were British. [14] Two factors prevented him from insisting on this point. He was not prepared to press his demands to the point of controversy. Secondly, the British armies, under Allenby in the South, and under Milne in the North, were working their way steadily towards the encirclement of the Turks. His insistence would have meant little.

While the Anglo-French discussion went on in Paris, Admiral Calthorpe, the Commander of the British Mediterranean Fleet, hastened from Malta to Mudros to open negotiations with the Turks. He found them more willing to deal with the British, from whom the Turks hoped to get easier terms, than with the French. [15] With official sanction, he set to work immediately with the assistance of General Townshend - a prisoner of the Turks - to achieve an armistice, which was signed on October 30th. It left Constantinople and the Straits under occupation by the allied forces, which were

composed almost exclusively of elements of the British Expeditionary Force in the East. The British troops and warships had made themselves the guarantee of Turkish submissiveness.

British policy had dictated the terms of the armistice; yet, in the articles concerning the Straits, France had not been opposed. Clemenceau took an opportunity to express his dislike for the way in which Admiral Amet - the French delegate at Mudros - had been overlooked. French popular opinion felt that the British had set a pattern for future aggrandizement in the Levant. They knew well that now France could initiate no policy in the Straits question which was contrary to the British attitude. It meant that she was dependent on British policy in that sphere. Yet, so great was her concern in Europe that she would not think seriously of questioning that attitude.

For the moment, the two did not find their policies in the matter of the Straits diverging. Both felt that the Straits had to be made secure by adequate naval and military occupation. What is of interest now is to discover how these attitudes toward the internationalization and neutralization of the Straits would be applied in the Turkish Peace Treaty.

2 - <u>New Straits Régime Evolves from the Treaty of Sèvres</u>: Once Russia had expressed her disinterest in the Straits and the Porte lay defeated at the feet of the Allies, one should

expect that the creation of a new régime at the Straits would be a comparatively straight-forward affair. This is especially true, since it was manifestly clear that the Straits should be open and free to navigation, and that they should be controlled by no single power. But it was the fact that the Straits problem was so closely bound up with the whole question of the partition of the Ottoman Empire, with all its jealousies and rivalries, which delayed its solution for two years.

A hint of this rivalry has already been given in the rather ill-humoured diplomatic negotiations between France and Great Britain, which ensued over the Armistice with Turkey. The question of prestige in the Moslem world and in Europe, the question of securing former investments in the Ottoman Empire, and of pursuing new ones, provided the sharp edge to these discussions, though both France and Great Britain had felt that the Porte could not be left as the 'guardian of the gates.'

In the Straits question during the years of peace-making, French policy did not differ widely from the British. It was felt in London that, for reasons of expediency, France had disinterested herself in Constantinople and the Straits, and was prepared to follow the lead set by the British, as she intended to adhere with passionate intensity to her Syrian pretensions. [16] At any rate, she abided by the policy that

the 'freedom of the Straits' was to be guaranteed by an international force or by a power sufficiently powerful to police the zone, and sufficiently disinterested not to pursue a covetous policy. They did not want the British in control, just as the British did not want to see them in control. The result was that they strongly seconded Lloyd George's ill-fated suggestion that a mandate over the Straits and Constantinople should be held by the United States. [17]

It was really British policy which determined the régime at the Straits which was contained in the Sèvres Treaty. Influenced by the fear of a strong and hostile force in possession of the narrows, conscious of the difficulty of occupying the Straits themselves in the face of French opposition, the Cabinet sought an agreement which would guarantee the 'open Straits.' As Lord Robert Cecil had said in the House of Commons, in November 1918:

> ... we must secure that the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles are absolutely free ... if we can go straight through to the Black Sea the actual technical sovereignty of Constantinople becomes of less importance. [18]

The British policy was not anti-French, on the contrary it was international. The Straits régime would come under the 'aegis' of the League of Nations, the administration of which, it was hoped, would be assumed by the United States. [19] On 2 January 1919, the Foreign Office presented the British delegation to the Paris Conference with these views:

> ... the zone of the Straits should be separated entirely from Turkey and formed into an independent State, and the League of Nations should then appoint a Mandatory who ... would have the double duty of supervising the local administration ... and of guarding a great international interest - the passage of the Straits. [20]

But despite the urgings of several Ministers, especially Curzon and Balfour in the Foreign Office, Wilson and Churchill in the War Office, and Montagu in the India Office, to deal promptly with the Turkish question, it was shelved with French approval until the United States Senate decided on the proposed Mandate.

Not until the end of November 1919 was it apparent to the French and the British that the United States would not accept the Mandate. Into its place returned the earlier scheme of neutralization under a strict international guarantee. As a prelude to serious and detailed negotiations on the Eastern question, Pichon met Curzon in London. A plan was elaborated along lines very similar to the one Curzon had conceived in January 1918: absolute freedom of the Straits to be guaranteed and controlled by some unspecified form of international organization under the auspices of the League of Nations. [21] In December, Clemenceau was invited to London, where the talks were continued. [22] Clemenceau elaborated on the statement he had made in August at a meeting of the Supreme Council. To him the Straits should be placed under Allied

control, and taken altogether out of Turkish hands. He suggested that the Turks could remain in Constantinople, but that a firm control had to be placed over their military operations by demilitarizing a Straits zone deep into Anatolia. [23] These concepts were embodied in the draft proposal drawn up by Berthelot:

> La garde des Détroits, de la Mer Noire à la Méditerranée, sera confiée à une organisation internationale assurant la neutralité effective du passage. [24]

Clemenceau's greatest concern, which he openly expressed, was to avoid Anglo-French friction. For him, France and Great Britain would play the preponderant role in this proposed international organization. As their interests were greatest, it would be their military and naval forces which would serve as the guarantee for the security of the Straits.

London permitted Paris to make these proposals, all of which she had suspected beforehand and all of which agreed with her own views. The scheme proposed by Berthelot was, in fact, Curzon's and Lloyd George's. But they went further than the Frenchmen. With French consent, they determined to constitute a new state - the Straits zone. It was to be financially and administratively distinct from the rest of Turkey. [25] The neutrality clauses, both agreed, would serve as a guarantee against a future Russian resurgence of power in the Black Sea, while the proposed demilitarized zone would

serve to discourage any sudden move by the Turkish military authorities. [26]

Once these preliminary discussions were satisfactorily completed, the two were prepared to broaden the scope of the negotiations and enter into the formal discussions with the other interested powers and Turkey to effect a Peace Treaty. Though unofficial, but nevertheless very real, suspicions of each other's ultimate intentions in the defunct Ottoman Empire were rampant, the official attitudes of Paris and London, in the matter of the Straits, did not vary once Clemenceau returned home.

But let us examine the background of these policies, so akin to each other. Though the French colonial party and much of the French press were convinced that the real enemy in the Levant, was not Russia or Turkey, but Great Britain - self-confident and victorious, Paris acquiesced in the Straits project. Though the French diplomats could discover many points of contention with Great Britain in the affairs of the Near East, yet little criticism arose over the proposed régime for the Straits. Paul Cambon, one of France's elder statesmen and authority both on Great Britain and on Turkey, fully agreed with the international solution for the Straits. He was under no delusions, for he was fully aware of the serious decrease in French prestige in the Levant. He saw clearly that the chief

cause of this had been the British ascendancy in the same area, as a result of their triumphal march from Suez to Aleppo. [27] Millerand, the chief French delegate at the London Conference in February 1920, also felt that it was indispensable to establish an international control over the Straits. At the same time he, like Cambon, saw the necessity to revitalize Turkey, as France still had there financial interests of wide extent. [28] He emphasized this at the Conference of San Remo in April of the same year, in which the principal business had concerned itself with the Turkish Treaty:

> The French Government had deemed it indispensable to organize a revitalized Turkey ... This conception is very compatible with that indispensable clause: freedom of navigation in the Straits, which must be safe-guarded by an international organization. [29]

When the formal negotiations began in February 1920 towards the creation of a Treaty of Peace with Turkey, British opinion held sway. In his opening address to the Conference, Curzon pointed out that both Great Britain and France were determined to establish an international control for the Straits. [30] Having stated the principle, he was prepared only to discuss the details. What authority ought to exercise control at the Straits? Should it be a commission? If so, how should it be composed? What forces should be at its disposal? What should be the area of its jurisdiction? What should be the area of its administrative or executive powers?

These questions flowed naturally from the assumption made by Lloyd George that the Straits problem was chiefly naval and military: control over the Straits depended directly upon the size of the force which the signatory powers were prepared to maintain at Constantinople to oversee the workings of the Turkish Government. [31] This he said in the House of Commons, on February 26th, when he pointed out that London would thereby exercise pressure on the Porte to ensure good treatment was meted out to the various racial minorities of Anatolia, while the Royal Navy would have access to the littoral states of the Black Sea. Of the Straits, he said:

> It is essential that we have a free road ... whatever the opinion of the Turks may be. His keeping of the gates prolonged the war, and we cannot have that again ... Her forts are to be dismantled. She is to have no troops anywhere within reach of these waters. [32]

It was this absolute determination that gave the Treaty of Sèvres its character of a peace dictated to a reviled and prostrate foe. [33] According to Article 37, the Straits would be open in peace and war to all vessels, merchantmen and warships alike, without distinction of flag. [34] By Article 38, a Straits Commission was sanctioned, whereby the Porte delegated all its powers of control over the Straits to this international body, composed of the United States, if she signed the Treaty, of the British Empire, France, Italy, Japan, Greece and Roumania, and of Russia, Bulgaria and Turkey, if they

joined the League of Nations. In Article 178, all fortifications, within the closely defined demilitarized zone, would be dismantled and demolished, while reconstruction or further building of strategic roads and railways was strictly forbidden. [35] The Straits were to become an international highway free of menacing forts and fleets. Still the Royal Navy would reign supreme in those waters, on the one hand, acting as a deterrent to any threat, on the other, acting as a threat to the littoral powers of the Black Sea.

But the Treaty had been signed by a defunct administration whose power and prestige were dwindling daily. The Turkish nationalist movement, under Kemalist direction in Ankara, aroused chiefly in opposition to the Greek and Italian intrusions into Anatolia, played havoc with the Treaty even before it was signed. More than this, opinion in France, discouraged by the cost of maintaining large bodies of troops in the Near and Middle East for little gain, grew hostile to the settlement. Even in Great Britain, though for her the settlement appeared far more satisfactory, opposition to Lloyd George's anti-Turk policy intensified. The need for a revamped Treaty was shortly brought home both to Paris and to London. This movement towards the revision of Sèvres, which had some effect on the Straits Convention, will be the next consideration.

C--Revision of the Peace Treaty and its Effect on the Straits.

The Treaty of Sèvres proved to be a dead-letter even before it was signed. Despite this, though dissenting voices found many items worthy of criticism, little unfavourable comment arose over the Straits Convention. A good example of this is found in the attack on the Treaty launched by Lord Wester Wemyss in the House of Lords. In a brilliant speech, which was in part replied to by Curzon, he touched on every aspect of the Treaty except the articles dealing with the Straits. [36] By the end of 1920, it was generally agreed upon in London that a revision was needed. Townshend, who had played such an important part in the formation of the original Turkish Armistice, strongly advised that a delegation in concert with the French be sent to the Kemalists immediately. [37] Lloyd George was opposed to this. In February 1921, Churchill further urged the Prime Minister to set in motion a machine which would work for an immediate peace with Turkey, not one forced on her. Otherwise he feared that she would fall into the arms of the Bolsheviks, while Great Britain would be courting disaster in her relations with France. [38] Two factors induced London to seek revision: firstly, London became aware that the unchecked force of the Kemalists, who refused to recognize the Treaty, was rapidly increasing; secondly, London realized that the French had lost faith in the Treaty. [39]

Indeed, before the Treaty had been signed, elements in French public opinion had appeared who supported the attitude that, in the interests of France, even a restoration of unfettered Turkish sovereignty over the Straits might be preferable to, what they felt was, British control. Whenever hesitation develops, on the part of France, to align herself quickly and responsively to British proposals in the matter of the Straits, it is not because she disagrees with the proposals, but it is partly her distrust of British ultimate intentions in the Levant, and partly it is her preoccupation with the German question. In the first instance, Lloyd George's continued support for the Greeks in their war against the Kemalists, unofficial as it was, and his apparent hostility towards the Turks was incomprehensible to the French, who could detect no British interest underlying it and as a result suspected all sorts of motives. [40] In the second instance, Paris felt that, as a necessary prelude to peace in the Near East, the European picture had to be secure. This she felt was best achieved by the signing of an Anglo-French pact against a possible rise of German power in Europe. [41] Both Briand and his successor Poincaré stood in substantial agreement over this point. Their interests in the Straits question or in the financial questions of the Levant were of secondary importance. If the Turk could be of assistance, and if French policy in the matter of the Straits could be employed as a lever against the British

to induce them thereby to enter into the proposed European pact, so much the better.

Though Poincaré had compared the Treaty of Sèvres to the fragility of the porcelain for which this town was famous, Paris would not oppose the scheme for the newly-constituted international waterway. Even in her agreement of October 1921, [42] when she gave her 'de facto' recognition to the Kemalist régime in Ankara, despite the fact that she had not bothered to consult the British, Paris would not permit the question of a revision for the Straits Settlement to enter these conversations with the Turk.

Concerted Anglo-French action to propose a change in the Peace Treaty, which would at the same time attempt to put a stop to the Graeco-Turk War, began at the Paris Conference of January 1921. As a result of these discussions, towards the end of February a second conference was held, in which the military restrictions on the Turks, imposed by Sèvres, were whittled down, the size of the demilitarized zones surrounding the Straits was considerably reduced, and an early evacuation by the Allies of Constantinople was promised. [43] Neither the Greeks or the Turks were interested, so a second offer of concessions was made in March 1921. The Turks were granted the chairmanship of the Straits Commission, while the military status of Constantinople would be revised, and again the area

of the demilitarized zones would be diminished. [44] For a second time the offer was refused. Annoyed at their inability to solve the problem of the war in Anatolia, the Allies officially proclaimed their neutrality on May 15th, and simultaneously declared the existence of a neutral zone, to be respected by both belligerents, which extended on both sides of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. [45] A third attempt to effect a satisfactory revision, in June, also failed. Further attempts were made in February and March of 1922, and though the concessions at the Straits and elsewhere were considerable - Turkish sovereignty was to be restored over the Asiatic shore of the Straits, while the European shore as far as Rodosto on the Sea of Marmara would be constituted as a zone of permanent Allied occupation, and again an early evacuation of Constantinople was promised - they were unable to satisfy the Kemalists, who felt that the position of dependence on the Allies at the Straits would not thereby be fundamentally altered. [46] In the end, it was diplomacy which followed upon the heels of war:

> Les victoires de Moustafa Kemal en Anatolie devaient annuler cet instrument diplomatique (Treaty of Sèvres), dont le résultat eût été de supprimer l'indépendence turque. [47]

From the signing of the Treaty of Sèvres, in August 1920, to the final victory of Turkish arms over the Greeks, in September 1922, the policies of France and of Great Britain,

in the matter of the Straits, did not essentially change. Concessions of detail, rather than of a vital nature, had been offered. The premise on which the Anglo-French policy had been based was: the Straits would not be allowed to be closed by the attitude or the forces of any individual power, to the detriment of the other interested powers. Thus under no circumstances would the Porte be allowed to control both shores of the Dardanelles. This was the very point that Curzon stressed, and to which Poincaré readily agreed, when he addressed the allied conference in March 1922, which had met to consider certain further amendments to the Treaty of Sèvres. [48] This was the principle underlying the Anglo-French policy in the Straits question.

With the Turkish victory, it was evident that a new Treaty of Peace would have to be drawn up. We shall now finally consider the policies of France and Great Britain in the Straits question during the Peace Conference of Lausanne, and in the crisis which immediately preceded it.

D - The Straits Question Finally Settled

1 - The Tchanak Crisis Forces an Immediate Solution:

The attitudes adopted respectively by Paris and London, when the Kemalists forces, flushed with their dramatic and overwhelming victory, threatened the neutrality of the Straits,

affords one of the best illustrations of the French and British policies in the matter of the Straits during the post-War period. The British, especially through the Prime Minister's insistence, decided to take vigorous action, and thereby undoubtedly prevented an Anglo-Turk war, while they succeeded in maintaining the neutrality and the freedom of the Straits. The French, on the other hand, refused to associate themselves with any plan which contemplated a possible war in the Near East, so concerned were they with the German problem. They refused to oppose the Kemalist advance with military naval forces, though they were prepared to discuss proposals for a peaceful solution.

After a brief moment's hesitation, the British Government resolved to protect the threatened Straits. On 11 September 1922, in concert with the French, the British High Commissioner in Constantinople clearly warned the Kemalists of this intention. [49] British troops and warships were rushed to the threatened area, while reinforcements were ordered from Cyprus, Malta and Egypt. The French and Italian generals in Constantinople resolved to 'show three flags instead of one' and followed suit. Meanwhile a strong group in the Cabinet, composed of the Prime Minister, of Churchill, Balfour, Austin Chamberlain, Birkenhead, Horne, Worthington-Evans, along with the three Chiefs-of-Staff, Beatty, Cavan and Trenchard expressed their preparedness to fight for the security of the

Straits, if necessary. [50] On September 15th, Churchill was instructed to draft a letter to be sent to the Dominions and to the Balkan powers, which asked them to come to the defence of the Straits. [51] While claiming that French support was assured, the letter gave warning of the possible consequences to India and in the rest of the Moslem world, if a humiliating exodus from Constantinople was forced on the Allies. It also pointed out that the War would probably be carried on into the Balkans, giving rise to untold complications. The whole victory of the Allies over the Turks would be forfeited. [52]

At this point, French opinion reversed itself. On September 12, and again on September 14, first the French Chargé in London and then Poincaré himself, had said that France was in complete accord with London in the maintenance of the freedom of the Straits, if Turkish rights were taken into consideration. Poincaré had insisted that any violation of the Straits neutral zone should be strongly resisted. [53] Now that the British Government had publically committed itself to that very policy by the 'call to arms', without having previously consulted with the French, Poincaré used this opportunity to extricate himself from the controversy, and so ordered the French forces to be withdrawn to the European shore of the Straits. On the 18th, he wired to London:

> The French Government has been profoundly surprised at the serious initiative publically announced by the British Government

> on the subject of the affairs of the East, before any entente with its allies and particularly with France ... [54]

He reaffirmed the determination of the French Government to preserve the freedom of the Straits, but he differed in the means to attain that end. Behind his statement was his suspicion that the French Government, which ordered a shot to be fired in the East, would not survive a single day. Above all, he wanted a peaceful solution at the Straits, and was prepared to make any concessions the Kemalists might ask. With his eyes fixed on the Rhine, he refused to be committed to a war over an Eastern question, especially when it appeared to many of his colleagues that only British interests were at stake. [55]

London was stunned by the French withdrawal. Curzon was despatched to Paris to ask Poincaré for naval cooperation in the defence of the Straits, and to demand an immediate explanation of the:

> astonishing news that the French, after suggesting solemn warning to Kemal, upon which we at once and loyally acted, had withdrawn from Tcanak. [56]

He pointed out that a French retreat, at that moment, would give the Turk the impression that there existed a lack of solidarity among the Allies. Great Britain, he explained, wanted to be firm with the Kemalists, yet she did not want to destroy the chances of a future conference on Near Eastern affairs from taking place. The French agreed that such a

conference should be convened. An invitation was sent to the Turks on September 23rd, to this effect. [57] Two days later, Lloyd George elaborated on Curzon's policy:

> ... the freedom of the Straits remains. That is a vital interest to us as a maritime and commercial power ... Whatever happens at the Conference we shall not abandon the policy of securing the freedom of the Straits. [58]

He went on to say that Great Britain had no intention of making the Dardanelles into a second Gibraltar; it would be the League of Nations, which would guarantee the Straits to remain open for navigation to all nations. [59] In a letter to the London Times, on October 6th, Bonar Law lent his support to that policy:

> ... the retention also of the freedom of the Straits is not especially a British interest, it is also the interest of the world. We are at the Straits and in Constantinople not by our action alone, but by the will of the allied powers which won the War. [60]

After much haggling, agreement was reached and the Armistice was signed on October 11. British and French policy had been vindicated. It had sacrificed Eastern Thrace, which was to revert to Turkey, for the principle of the 'Freedom of the Straits.' The Turk would find it difficult to ignore this equality of interest once the peace conference was summoned.

2 - Straits Problem Solved at Lausanne: In the matter of the Straits, the Lausanne Conference was a complete success for British and French policy, though the terms of the Straits Convention were far different from those of Sèvres. Curzon had insisted that, before Great Britain would participate in the conference, a formal and explicit understanding was to be arrived at beforehand, so that the three powers - France, Italy, and Great Britain - would present a unified policy to the Turks. On November 18th, at a special Allied Conference in Paris, Poincaré gave his consent to this. A communique was made public, to the effect that these preliminary discussions: "fully confirmed the complete accord between the allies on the matters to be discussed ..." [61] At the same time, it had been decided to outline individual interests in the Levant, which would be of most concern to one power rather than the other. The French confirmed their historic interest chiefly in the financial, administrative and juridic fields; while Great Britain found her interest to lie in the problems of the Straits and of the 'minorities.'

The British delegation, [62] lead by Curzon and Rumbold, set the pace when the Straits question came under discussion during the first week in December. Curzon, who had been appointed chairman of the commission dealing with the Straits problem, dominated the discussion and pursued the Turk even into the most minute details, whenever the subject arose.

The British, who had long since reconciled themselves to the return of Turkish rule in Constantinople, insisted upon the creation of a sound Convention for the regulation of the Straits. They pushed along three main lines: demilitarized zones, international Straits Commission, absolute freedom of passage in the Straits. Despite his determination, Curzon had to surmount certain grave difficulties: Turkey, victorious, would demand a victor's peace; Anglo-French rivalry might reappear, at a most inopportune moment; the Mussolini 'coup' might have serious repercussions in this international conference. The suspicion that the public at home had lost interest in the Straits question at all times remained with him. Despite all this, he set himself the task of keeping open the sea-lanes to the Caucasus. To do this he had first to destroy the Russo-Kemalist accord, which had sanctioned the closure of the Straits to warships. [63] To achieve that, he had to force the Kemalists to disavow that Treaty and in turn accept the Anglo-French plan for the Straits.

In opposition to the Russian plea for the 'closed' Straits, on December 6th, Curzon, in speaking for the Allies, proposed a scheme for an 'open and free' Strait, but one which would in no way threaten the security of Turkey itself. [64] He suggested that there should be complete freedom of passage through the Straits for warships as well as merchantmen, in times of peace

and war, if Turkey remained neutral, and freedom for neutral shipping, if Turkey was a belligerent.

France, Italy, the United States and the Balkan powers quickly supported him.

It was, however, the decision of the Kemalists to trust to the Russian scheme less than to the one proposed by Curzon, that gave the Anglo-French policy its victory. Ismet Pasha, though he knew of the grave concessions that Turkey would be called upon to make - the greatest of which was the proposed demilitarized zone - found the Russian proposals basically unsatisfactory. They promised only a return to the former Russo-Turkish rivalry in the Black Sea. [65]

The Turks asked for several minor amendments to be made to Curzon's proposals, the most important of which was to limit the size and number of foreign warships in the Black Sea. These the Allies immediately conceded. [66] A draft proposed for the Straits Convention was submitted on December 14th, and within a week the Turk had accepted it. [67]

But all was not well in London. At the end of December, Curzon visited Bonar Law, the new Prime Minister, and found him ready to "clear out of Mosul, the Straits and Constantinople." [68] The Prime Minister, who had come to Paris to dissuade Poincaré from occupying the Ruhr after the failure of the Reparations Conference in London, was willing to forfeit

all the gains that Anglo-French policy had made at the Conference, lest a split with France should materialize.

Further trouble developed; this time at Lausanne. Throughout January the Conference had dragged on. By the end of the month, Curzon, anxious to draw some sort of conclusion, attempted to accelerate the proceedings. He proposed that a draft copy of the Treaty be presented to the Turks as a final offer. The French accepted the idea, though they realized that most of the problems still unresolved were of interest to her and not to Great Britain. When the draft was presented, a press report appeared, which was later disavowed, which claimed that the French really did not consider the draft Treaty to be final. The Turks turned it down. The rumour of an Anglo-French split had been sufficient to encourage the Turk to hold out for further demands. Curzon, deeply annoyed, left the Conference on February 4th; and the Treaty went unsigned. Yet before he had departed, Curzon had heard Ismet Pasha, on February 1st, accept fully the draft Convention for the Straits. [70]

Towards the end of April, the Conference resumed its sittings; and the Treaty was finally signed on July 24th, without any changes in the Straits Convention having to be made. [71] By Article 23 of the main Treaty, all contracting parties accepted the principle of the freedom of the Straits, which meant the freedom of transit and navigation, in peace and war

in the Straits for all shipping. [72] The Straits Convention itself appeared as an annex to the main Treaty. In Article 2 of that annex, the various ramifications of that principle are clearly written down. [73] It was ordered that no one power could have warships in the Straits and in the Black Sea which together exceeded the size of the largest fleet in the Black Sea. It also determined that, even in wartime, Turkey could not take such measures to prevent enemy shipping from using the Straits, which would hinder the movement of neutral shipping. The demilitarized zone was to enclose both shores of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, while for the most part the Sea of Marmara would be free of this restriction. [74] Constantinople would become the headquarters of the International Straits Commission, whose functions were to be carried out under the 'aegis' of the League of Nations. Finally, in Article 18, to secure the Straits from threat of attack or actual attack, the contracting parties determined to meet such threats or attacks by all the means that the League might decide were necessary. To the statesmen of 1923 this was the surest guarantee imaginable.

The factors that had permitted the Allied success in the matter of the Straits, at Lausanne, were chiefly two. The first was the determination on the part of France and of Great Britain to present a unified front at the Conference

by supporting each other's policies. The second was the decision of the Kemalists to look to the West and accept the Allied scheme for the Straits rather than the Russian.

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Throughout the period of this study, ever since the original Straits Incident of 1903, no essential clash of interests between France and Great Britain is detectable in the matter of the Straits. What there has been was for the most part a difference in degree of interest, sometimes a difference in time, a natural difference found between two distinct peoples, the difference of arriving at the same conclusion through different means. Generally speaking, this is a period of the closest intimacy between the two nations. In their relations over the Straits question their policies sometimes seem as one. The danger, commonly conceived until 1918, had much to do with this. The need for common action to make peace in the first years after the War also had much to do with it.

Yet an adequate understanding of the French and British policies, in the matter of the Straits, is impossible to achieve, unless we have continuously been made aware of their individual interests and over-riding concerns involved. For France, her policy in the Straits problem was forever but a reflection of her European preoccupation. Prior to the War,

her Straits policy was modified by her Alliance with Russia; in the post-War period, it was modified by her quest for an Anglo-French pact against the expected resurgence of German power in Europe. Yet at both times, her policy was subtended by her persistent concern to protect her enormous financial interests in the Levant.

For Great Britain, though the problem of the Straits had been clothed in a diplomatic ensemble, it can be readily asserted that it was essentially a question of naval strategy. For this reason, the Straits problem ceases to be a question of primary importance for her, once the Straits can be circumvented by air and by rail. As early as 1920, one observer had noted:

> ... the great strategic waterway from the Dardanelles is of diminishing value daily. The routes to the Caucasus in the future will not lie through water. The most important military routes, and eventually the passenger and goods carrying routes will be by air. [75]

It must be added, however, that for Great Britain, it was also her concern for India, as the jewel of her colonial power, which would not allow her to tolerate any threat to the Imperial sea-lanes through Suez. It was only when she was secure in Cyprus, and in Egypt, and had excellent prospects in Arabia, with the Russian fleet scattered and destroyed, and with her own fleet at its zenith in the Mediterranean, only then did she sanction the policy of the 'open' Straits.

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APPENDIX - A

List of Ambassadors

1. In Constantinople:

French	British	Russian
Montebello: 1886-91	White: 1886-91	Nelidoff: 1883-97
P.Cambon: 1891-98	Ford: 1892-93	Zinovieff: 1897-1909
Constans: 1898-1909	Currie: 1894-98	Tcharykoff: 1909-12
Bompard: 1909-1914	O'Conor: 1898-1908	Giers: 1912-14
	Lowther: 1908-13	
	Mallet: 1913-14	

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2. In St. Petersburg:

French	British
Laboulaye: 1886-91	Morier: 1884-93
Montebello: 1891-1903	Lascelles: 1894-95
Bompard: 1903-08	O'Conor: 1895-98
Louis: 1908-13	Scott: 1898-1904
Delcassé: 1913-14	C.Hardinge: 1904-06
Paléologue: 1914-17	Nicolson: 1906-10
Noulens: 1917-19	Buchanan: 1910-17

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3. In Paris:

British	Russian
Lytton: 1887-91	Mohrenheim: 1884-98
Dufferin: 1891-96	Ouroussoff: 1898-1904
Monson: 1896-1905	Nelidoff: 1904-10
Bertie: 1905-18	Isvolsky: 1910-17
Derby: 1918-20	
Hardinge: 1920-22	
Crewe: 1922-	

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4. In London:

French	Russian
Waddington: 1883-93	de Staal: 1884-1903
Courcel: 1894-98	Benckendorff: 1903-17
P.Cambon: 1898-1920	
St. Aulaire: 1920-	

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APPENDIX - B

Outline of French and British Interests in the Levant: 1902-1914

I - French Interests on the Eve of the War:

A. Creusot and Chantiers de la Méditerranée were building submarines and destroyers for the Sultan;

B. Other groups owned the greater part of the wharves, docks, warehouses, waterworks, the Electricity board and telephones in Constantinople;

C. The lighthouses administration was French controlled;

D. Also the Heraclea coal mines;

E. As well as the Balia-Karaidin lignite and lead mines;

F. The Arghana and Ak Dagh syndicates;

G. The Karvel mines;

H. The Pilot, Tugboat and Salvage concern was French;

I. And the Orosdi Back concern;

J. French finance controlled the:
   1 - Société Immoblière Ottomane,
   2 - Société Nationale de Commerce, d'Industrie et d'Agriculture,
   3 - Société Générale d'Entreprise des Routes;

K. France had acquired from the Porte concessions for port construction in: Haifa, Jaffa, Tripoli, Beirut, Zunguidak, Panderma, Ineboli;

L. As well as concession for railway construction in Syria, Armenia and Anatolia;

M. She had already built and controlled the railway net-works:
   1 - Panderma-Soma-Magnesia,
   2 - Smyrna-Kassaba-Aifium-Karahissar,
   3 - Mudania-Brusa,

4 - Beirut-Rayak-Damascus,
5 - Rayak-Homs-Hama-Aleppo,
6 - Tripoli-Homs,
7 - Jaffa-Jerusalem;

N. They controlled the main financial houses in Beirut;

O. The Smyrna Quai Company;

P. The Land Bank;

Q. 30% share in the Baghdad line;

R. The Crédit Lyonnais was firmly entrenched throughout;

S. 63% of the Ottoman Public Debt was due to France;

T. The Imperial Ottoman Bank, which enjoyed the prerogatives of a State Bank, was controlled by French-British capital;

U. This Bank in turn controlled:
1 - The Tobacco monopoly
2 - various utilities,
3 - the railway and industrial issues;

V. The Civil Police was trained and under French direction;

W. The Inspector-General of Finance was a Frenchman;

X. Finally, a third compatriot directed the Tobacco Monopoly.

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II - <u>British Interests on the Eve of the War</u>:

A. Controlled almost 40% of Turkish trade;

B. Controlled the Smyrna-Aidin railway and all its branches;

C. Sir Ernest Cassel had founded and controlled the National Bank of Turkey;

D. Armstrong and Vickers owned the Golden Horne and Stenia docks;

F. They held orders for two dreadnoughts, two cruisers, six destroyers, and two submarines;

G. The Anglo-Persian Oil Company and Shell possessed 75% of the shares of the Turkish Petroleum Company, which had a monopoly in the Sultan's realm;

H. E.Abbot and Co. controlled the lucrative emery deposits in Aidin;

I. In Constantinople the British controlled:
   1 - the largest cotton mill,
   2 - much of the shipping and insurance business,
   3 - the Telephone Company,
   4 - the most prominent mercantile firms;

J. They ran the largest cotton-seed oil plant at Mersina;

K. As well as machinery stores in Beirut, Aleppo and Baghdad;

L. In Smyrna, they further controlled:
   1 - two factories for yarn dyeing,
   2 - a cloth mill,
   3 - limited liability companies dealing in carpets, cloth, figs and oil,
   4 - and held a commanding position among the European Commercial Houses (MacAndrew & Forbes, Whittal)

M. They were paramount in Turkey's exports of textiles and coal;

N. Had concessions for:
   1 - shipping on Lakes Beyshehir and Egerdir,
   2 - road transport between Baghdad and Bakuba,
   3 - lead mining near the Dardanelles,
   4 - railway extensions and port development in Trepizond and Samsun;

O. The British controlled the Euphrates and Tigris Steam Navigation Company;

P. 22% of the Ottoman Public Debt was held by Great Britain;

Q. - The British Naval Mission controlled the Sultan's Navy;

R. An Englishman had effective charge of the Turkish Customs;

S. Another was the Chief Economic Advisor to the Porte;

T. Finally, other Englishmen acted as advisers to the Ministries of:

1 - Interior,
2 - Justice,
3 - Public Works,
4 - Civil Service.

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