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THE CHANAK AFFAIR

(SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 1922)

The victory of the Turkish Nationalists in Asia Minor, which culminated in their occupation of Smyrna on 8 September 1922, effectively concluded in its territorial aspects the Anatolian chapter of the peace settlement[1]. At the same time, as Lord Curzon, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, pointed out in a minute dated 9 September 1922, it opened in an acute form the question of the Straits, Constantinople and Thrace[2]. Though in the days immediately following their triumph the Nationalists issued no official statements regarding their intentions, reports from Ankara, Izmir and elsewhere

1. Following their victory in the First World War, Britain, France and Italy had attempted to impose a harsh settlement on Turkey. In the Treaty of Sèvres, 10 August 1920, they had provided for the cession of Eastern Thrace and the provisional cession of Izmir and its hinterland to Greece; the demilitarisation, neutralisation and internationalisation of the Straits; the imposition of extensive controls on the Turkish State which was to survive in Anatolia; and the creation of an independent Armenia and an autonomous Kurdistan. This settlement, however, the Turkish Nationalists had resisted fiercely. In the autumn of 1920, they had suppressed the Armenian Nationalist forces in eastern Anatolia; in 1921, they had compelled the French to withdraw from Cilicia and the Italians from south-western Anatolia; and, finally, in August 1922, they had driven the Greek forces from western Anatolia. Following their victory over the Greeks, they had at once turned their troops north to challenge the Allies in their possession of Constantinople, the Straits and Eastern Thrace.

Foreign Office, Cabinet Office, War Office and Admiralty records here cited (as F.O., CAB., W.O. and Adm.) are in the Public Record Office, London. Documentation relevant to the Chanak affair is published in *Documents on British Foreign Policy* (H.M.S.O., London, in progress), first series (here cited as D.B.F.P.), xviii; the background may be consulted in iv, vii, viii, xiii, xv and xvii.

The Treaty of Sèvres may be consulted in Parliamentary Papers 1900-1949; 1920, Cmd 964 li. 609. Relevant works include H. Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase, 1919-1925* (London, 1934); H. N. Howard, *The Partition of Turkey* (New York, 1966); L. Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey* (Baltimore, 1964); H. W. V. Temperley (ed.), *A History of the Peace Conference* (London, 1924), vi; D. Walder, *The Chanak Affair* (London 1969); Şevket Sūreyya Aydemir, *Tek Adam, Mustafa Kemal, 1922-1938* (Istanbul, 1965); Kâzim Karabekir, *Istiklâl Harbimizin Esaslari* (Istanbul, 1951). M. S. Anderson, *The Eastern Question* (London, 1966), is a useful history of the Eastern Question; Sir J.W. Headlam-Morley, 'The Black Sea, the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles', *Studies in Diplomatic History* (London, 1930), is a valuable account of the Straits Question.

suggested that they saw no reason to halt their advance until they had reoccupied the area of the Straits, Constantinople and those parts of Thrace which lay within the frontiers prescribed in the National Pact[3]. This, however, the Allies, and in particular the British, were committed, by their declaration of May 1921 regarding the establishment of a neutral zone and by notes exchanged on the occasion of the Greek threat to Constantinople of July 1922, to oppose[4]. Despite Curzon's later pronouncement, therefore, that it would be "a gross and ridiculous exaggeration"[5] to suppose that Mustapha Kemal would dare fire a single shot at the allied detachments, during the second week in September 1922 war between one or more of the Allies and the Kemalists seemed a distinct possibility.

The British, in particular, feared the consequences of a Kemalist attack. The forces on the Asiatic shores of the Straits were for the most part British, and hardly adequate to resist the onslaught of a Turkish army inflamed, as Nicolson later put it, by "victory, arson and blood"[6].At Chanak a solitary British battalion, supported by one quarter of an Italian battalion, stood in the path of a Turkish army numbering forty thousand men and more[7]. At Ismid eight thousand allied troops, defending an eighteen mile front, faced a force of twenty thousand Turkish regulars[8]. Moreover, the military weakness of the Allies on the Straits was compounded by that lack of unity which had characterised allied relations during the previous months. In August, 1922, indeed, this had reached such a point that, in a memorandum on the Near Eastern situation, it was possible for D.G. Osbourne, a member of the Eastern Department of the Foreign Office, to write:

> If French and British policy was once united on the desire for peace in the Near East, there has of late been an increasing divergence until recent events can very plausibly be interpreted as developments in a struggle between France and England for control of Constantinople and the Straits. According to this inter-

2. F.O. E 9046/27/44, Memo. by Leeper, 7 Sept. 1922, minuted by Curzon, 9 Sept. 1922.

3. F.O. E 9095/27/44, Graham to Curzon, 8 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 270; F.O. E9440/27/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 12 Sep. 1922, no. 801; F.O. E9357/27/44, Bentinck to Curzon, 15 Sept. 1922, no. 443 (R).

4. D.B.F.P., xvii, nos. 159, 698 and 700.

5. H. Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-25* (London,1957) (here cited as Nicolson), 271.

6. *Ibid.*

7. CAB. 23/31, C49, 22, Cab. meeting, 15 Sept. 1922.

8. *Ibid.*

> pretation, this struggle, which is rendered possible by the temporary elimination of Russia, against whom France and England had hitherto united in support of Turkey, has been carried on, not openly by the two protagonists but indirectly through the Hellenic and Turkish Nationalist armies[9].

Curzon, for his part, felt obliged to assign responsibility for the failure of the allied agreement of March 1922[10] to what he called "the consistent treachery of France".

Curzon expressed his doubts concerning the loyalty of both the French and the Italians to the Cabinet when they met to discuss the consequences of the Greek collapse on 7 September 1922. The French, he declared, had been in constant communication with Mustapha Kemal[11] and had urged him to pay no attention to the March proposals. Moreover, together with the Italians, they had armed and equipped the Turks, and, following the collapse of Greek resistance, delayed discussion of the terms of a possible armistice until such an arrangement became superfluous. He doubted whether either would adhere to the Paris Agreement, or support the British in resisting Turkish penetration of the neutral zone. It was necessary, therefore, for the Cabinet to decide what course of action it wished to pursue: to decide, in fact, how far the Greek collapse in Anatolia undermined what Curzon referred to as the European side of British policy, by which he meant British support for the retention of Greek sovereignty in Eastern Thrace, and the consequent exclusion of Turkey from the Gallipoli Peninsula[12]. During the discussion which followed Curzon, warmly seconded by David Lloyd George, Prime Minister, and Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, argued that on no account should they allow the Turks to seize Constantinople or the Gallipoli Peninsula by force. They might, however, call a conference of the European powers who had signed the Treaty of Sèvres, in order that the peace terms might be redrafted in accordance with the new position. The Cabinet, in general, agreed with Curzon. They concluded that he should continue to base his near eastern policy on the Paris Agreement of March 1922; that the naval forces

9. F.O. 800/240, Memo. on the Near Eastern Situation by Osbourne, 9 Aug. 1922.

10. In March 1922, the Allies had invited the Greeks and the Turkish Nationalists to conclude an armistice and negotiate a settlement which would provide for the evacuation of all Greek forces from Asia Minor, the restitution of Turkish sovereignty on the Asiatic shores of the Dardanelles, the division of Eastern Thrace between Greece and Turkey, and the creation of a neutral zone on the frontier.

11. The leader of the Turkish Nationalists.

12. CAB. 23/31, C48, 22, Cab. meeting, 7 Sept. 1922.

in the area should be increased in order to prevent the Kemalists gaining access to the Gallipoli Peninsula; that British troops should be sent to occupy the Peninsula alongside the French stationed there and that Sir Charles Harington, General Officer Commanding the British forces of occupation, should be informed that, in the event of a Turkish attack on the Ismid Peninsula, he could, if he wished, withdraw his troops to Constantinople, but that any attempt on the part of the Turks to cross the Bosphorus was to be resisted with the full strength of the British forces[13].

In Rome, the Italian Government viewed the possible consequences of the Greek collapse with equal concern. Where the British feared that the Turks might attempt to settle the issue by force, however, the Italians feared that the belligerents might come to an agreement among themselves to the prejudice of allied, and, in particular, of Italian interests[14]. On 8 September 1922, therefore, the Italian Foreign Minister suggested to Sir R. Graham, British Ambassador in Rome, that the Allies should at once invite the parties concerned to a conference at Venice, for the purpose of drawing up a preliminary peace between the belligerents, on the conclusion of which the Allies might negotiate a final settlement with the Turks[15]. This suggestion, however, Curzon was unwilling to adopt. He believed that it would be a mistake to negotiate with the Turks until such time as they had realised, as Sir. H. Rumbold, British High Commissioner in Constantinople, put it in a despatch communicated on 12 September 1922, "that a triumph over the Greeks is not necessarily a triumph over the Allies", and that, even though the Greeks had suffered a disaster in Asia Minor, they were far from being "down and out" in Thrace[16]. He wished first to discuss the new situation with the Allied High Commissioners, and, if possible, agree with them a common negotiating position. He accordingly rejected the Italian proposal, drawing attention in the course of his reply to a recent communication from Constantinople containing the joint recommendation of the allied High Commissioners to the effect that "any invitation to the Kemalist Government to a conference at this stage would be undesirable owing to the extravagant hopes raised at Angora by the recent Turkish victories and the danger that the Allied invitation might be regarded by Kemal at this moment as a sign of Allied weakness"[17].

13. *Ibid.*
14. F.O. E9095/27/44, Graham to Curzon, 8 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 270.
15. *Ibid.;* F.O. 371/7886, de Martino to Curzon, 9 Sept. 1922.
16. F.O. 371/7889, Rumbold to Curzon, 12 Sept. 1922, no. 801.
17. F.O. 371/7886, Curzon to de Martino, 11 Sept. 1922.

Meanwhile, in Constantinople, Rumbold and Harington, who had not, it appears, been made fully aware of the policy decided on by the Cabinet at their meeting of 7 September 1922, had, on their own initiative, instigated a series of measures designed to deal with a possible Turkish attack. At a meeting of High Commissioners and Allied Generals, held on 10 September 1922, they had persuaded their colleagues to join in sending the Ankara Government a reminder that the neutral zone round Constantinople and the Straits, which had been "maintained inviolate against the Greeks in July", would be equally defended in case of need against Kemalist aggression[18]. At the same time, Harington had persuaded his French and Italian colleagues to send detachment to Ismid and Chanak in order that their presence there might impress the Turks with the reality of allied unity[19].

Harington's account of these developments, despatched together with a request for reinforcements and a statement of policy, came as something of a surprise to Curzon, who had believed that the Command at Constantinople had been instructed to abandon Chanak and, if need be, Ismid, retire to the European shore of the Straits and hold the Gallipoli Peninsula and Constantinople. "I assumed", he minuted on 11 September 1922, "that after the Cabinet on Thursday (7 September 1922) Sir L. W. Evans had telegraphed a full explanation to Sir Charles Harington. But he appears to have done nothing of the kind which if true is most unfortunate... If we don't look out the Generals will land us in a first class mess"[20]. He accordingly raised the matter at a meeting of ministers held at Churt the same day. At this meeting it was agreed that, in order to avoid further misunderstanding, a telegram should be despatched to Rumbold, for communication to Harington and Admiral Brock, the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet, setting out British policy as clearly as possible:

> It was (Curzon who composed the despatch wrote) while liquidating the situation in Anatolia to maintain the position in Europe which was taken up at Paris in March and which can only be altered by conference of Powers concerned.
>
> Thus, as it was not contemplated to hold Chanak in March, so it is thought undesirable to hold it now unless, which is most unlikely, the French and Italians were prepared to join in its defence. H. M. Government do not contemplate holding it alone,

18. F.O. 371/7889, Rumbold to Curzon, 12 Sept. 1922, no. 801.
19. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 23, n. 4.
20. *Ibid.*, No. 21, n. 1.

> and War Office have authorised Commander-in-Chief to withdraw British Forces.
> On the other hand, H. M. Government have not the slightest intention of abandoning Gallipoli position and are prepared to send reinforcements to Harington to enable him to hold it. It will of course be better that this occupation should be Allied occupation, and we are addressing the French and Italian Governments in this sense. If however they refuse we should act alone, and British fleet would assist the operations.
> As regards the Ismid line H. M. Government did not think it likely that French and Italian troops would co-operate in their defence and therefore they propose to authorise Harington to withdraw British force sooner than incur defeat.
> In pursuance of principle previously laid down Constantinople should be held at all costs with assistance if necessary of fleet. It was deemed incredible that French and Italians would not join in this defence[21].

On receiving this telegram, Rumbold and Harington at once made it clear that they understood the policy decided on by the Cabinet and had in no sense acted contrary to its directives. The misunderstanding had arisen because, as Rumbold explained in a telegram dated 13 September 1922, Curzon's telegram of 11 September 1922 had crossed his own of 10 September 1922. In this he had reported that the allied High Commissioners were united in their determination to preserve the neutrality of the demilitarised zone[22]. The scepticism of the Cabinet regarding the probable response of Britain's allies to a request for support against the Turks had been misplaced.

Curzon was not slow to recognise the advantages offered by this unexpected display of allied unity. As he informed Rumbold on 13 September 1922, possession of Ismid and Chanak would constitute a useful pawn in negotiations with Mustapha Kemal[23]. Poincaré, the French President, too, appeared satisfied with the action taken by the men on the spot. No protests were passed to London regarding Harington's initiative, no thunderbolts flung at the heads of the French officials in Constantinople. Quite the reverse: when the French Government were asked their attitude to the threat posed by the Turks, they replied on 14 September 1922:

21. F.O. 371/7887, Curzon to Rumbold, 11 Sept. 1922, appendix 1.
22. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 23.
23. *Ibid.*, No. 26.

> ...the Government of the Republic is in agreement with H. M. G. that it is desirable without prejudicing the provisions of the future treaty of peace to maintain the neutrality of the zones actually occupied by the Allies in the region of Constantinople and the Straits. The French Government is ready to join the English and Italian Governments in informing the Government of Angora that the Allied Governments feel sure that this zone will be respected by its troops[24].

Yet, in spite of the apparent calm, Curzon remained uneasy. As he explained to the Cabinet, at a meeting held on 15 September 1922 to consider the latest developments, he had been disturbed by Rumbold's insistence on the need to hold both shores of the Straits[25]; and he remained sceptical regarding the good faith of Britain's allies. It had been reported that the French and Italian High Commissioners had met a representative of the Ankara Government at Constantinople and expressed their view that the whole of Eastern Thrace including Adrianople should be returned to Turkey. He recognised, however, that it was essential that Great Britain and France should continue to act together: he suggested, therefore, that he visit Poincaré in Paris immediately. In addition to co-ordinating their response to the present emergency, they might discuss the character and location of a possible conference at which a final treaty of peace with Turkey might be negotiated[26].

The Cabinet approved Curzon's proposal. Moreover, they agreed that Curzon should inform Poincaré that Britain would send a division to Constantinople if France would do the same. They also approved a proposal put forward by the Secretary of State for Ireland that the Dominions should be asked to aid the Allies in their defence of the freedom of the Straits, and a similar proposal, put forward by Churchill and Lloyd George, that the Governments of Serbia, Rumania and Greece should be invited to contribute a contingent. Chamberlain, Lord Privy Seal, alone appears to have struck a discordant note, pointing out that he had always understood that the object of keeping open the Straits was so that a fleet could sail into the Sea of Marmora and dominate Constantinople, and therefore the Turks. Yet it appeared they now held Constantinople but could not dominate Turkey. Did it make sense, in these circumstances, to hold the Straits permanently, particularly as it was evident Brit-

24. F.O. 371/7900, Notes on attitude of H.M.G. and Allies towards Turkey since the outbreak of war 1914, compiled by Forces Adam, 8 Oct. 1922.

25. Cab. 23/31, C49, 22, Cab. meeting, 15 Sept. 1922.

26. *Ibid.*

ain could not maintain a substantial force on the Straits over a long period? The Secretary of State for the Colonies and the Prime Minister replied emphatically that it did. Churchill indicated that he envisaged a permanent occupation of the neutral zone, including Ismid and Chanak, perhaps by an international force under the League of Nations. Lloyd George insisted that Britain had a "supreme interest" in the freedom of the Straits. He had taken little part in the Straits question so far: he had left it to the Foreign Office. He wished to make no new proposals now. But a permanent international force might grow out of the temporary arrangement they envisaged[27].

Identical telegrams, inviting the Governments of the Dominions to associate themselves with Britain and her allies in their determination to "resist aggression upon Europe by the Turks and to make exertions to prevent Mustapha Kemal driving the Allies out of Constantinople and in particular and above all to secure firmly the Gallipoli Peninsula in order to maintain the freedom of the Straits...", were despatched that evening[28]. On the Saturday following, Curzon having retired for the weekend to Hackwood, Churchill with what he later described as a "small group of resolute men"[29] — Balfour, Chamberlain, Birkenhead and Worthington Evans — decided that something more immediate and dramatic was required if the position of Britain and her allies on the Straits was not to be forfeited by default. Accordingly, on the afternoon of that day, they authorised the publication of the contents of the telegram despatched by the Cabinet to the Dominions. Churchill was given the task of drafting the communiqué.

> The British Government (he commenced) regard the effective and permanent freedom of the Straits as a vital necessity... It would be futile and dangerous, in view of the excited mood and extravagant claims of the Kemalists, to trust simply to diplomatic action. Adequate force must be available to guard the freedom of the Straits and to defend the deep water line between Europe and Asia against a violent and hostile Turkish aggression[30].

Whatever its effects on the Turks, at whom no doubt it was primarily aimed, this "bellicose" communiqué, as Nicolson called it[31], proved as far as

27. *Ibid.*

28. F.O. 371/7892, C.P. 4200, The Turco-Greek Situation, Co-operation of the Dominions, 23 Sept. 1922.

29. W. S. Churchill, *The World Crisis, The Aftermath* (London, 1944), 422.

30. Nicolson, 272, n. 1.

31. *Ibid.*, 272.

Britain's relations with her dominions were concerned an embarrassment, and as far as her relations with France were concerned a disaster. Churchill and his colleagues had failed to take account of the differences of time between Britain and her Dominions. As a result the Prime Ministers of Canada, Australia and New Zealand received their first intimation of the request in the morning papers the following Monday. Understandably they were not impressed by this somewhat unorthodox way of doing business[32]. More seriously, in France, Churchill's communiqué produced in the President what Nicolson later described as an "outburst of reckless indignation"[33]. Poincaré and his colleagues had worked hard to ensure that a grateful Turkish Nation would recover its patrimony in Europe. The defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor had removed the principal obstacle to this end. As for the neutrality of the Straits, this remained, as M. Laroche had informed Lord Hardinge, British Ambassador in Paris, on 12 September 1922, "a question of arrangement between the Turks and the Allies rather than one of principle"[34]. On these easy assumptions, the French Government had been prepared to go along with the British in their desire to remind Mustapha Kemal that he should respect the neutral zone. Yet now, it appeared, the British, without so much as a by-your-leave, intended to reinforce the Straits and challenge the Turks to do their worst. Well, the English might fight: the French would not. Scorning the consequences, Poincaré telegraphed orders that the French contingent despatched to Chanak should be at once withdrawn[35]. The Italians, who had already informed Mustapha Kemal that they intended to remain neutral, quickly followed suit. It all amounted, as D. G. Osbourne minuted on 19 September 1922, to "a pretty clear announcement of allied disunion"[36].

In communicating his indignation concerning the indescretion perpetrated by Churchill and his colleagues, Poincaré took the opportunity of informing Curzon of the line France intended to follow in dealing with the Turks. The French Government agreed that a régime should be established guaranteeing the freedom of the Straits, administered either by the League of Nations or by any other combination acceptable to the Turks. Smyrna and Eastern Thrace up to the Maritza, however, inclusive of Adrianople and the Gallipoli Penin-

32. F.O. 371/7892, C.P. 4200, The Turco-Greek Situation, Co-operation of the Dominions, 23 Sept. 1922.

33. Nicolson, 272.

34. F.O. 371/7887, Hardinge to Curzon, 12 Sept. 1922, no. 2139.

35. Nicolson, 273.

36. F.O. E9436/27/44, European Problem, File 7, Minute on no. 12 by D. G. Osbourne, 19 Sept. 1922.

sula, should be placed under Turkish sovereignty. If such terms were offered, they had reason to believe Mustapha Kemal would accept them: if, on the other hand, the Allies adopted a minatory attitude towards the Turks, there would, in all probability, be a "Turkish war throughout the world"[37].

Poincaré's anger did not quickly abate. When, on 19 September 1922, Hardinge complained to him of the failure of his Government to inform their chief ally of so important an event as the withdrawal of French troops, he became, so Hardinge reported, "very excited" and in a long tirade declared more than once that "His Majesty's Government were pursuing a policy of war'[38]. He confessed, however, that he was much preoccupied with the knowledge that the position at Chanak was in danger of a serious attack by Kemalist troops. Only the previous day the Ankara agent in Paris had informed the Minister for Foreign Affairs that Mustapha Kemal would not recognise any neutral zone on the Asiatic shore of the Straits or any other place as neutral which had been occupied by Greek troops[39].

It was at this point that Curzon, accompanied by Earl Beatty, First Sea Lord, left for Paris, in order, as the Cabinet minutes put it, "to induce the French Government to co-operate in holding the neutral zone on the Asiatic side of the Straits until the Conference meets"[40]. It is evident that the moment of his departure was hardly propitious. The diplomatic squall which had blown up following the publication of Churchill's communiqué had clearly made his task more difficult. And the response of the Dominions had not proved all that might have been expected. New Zealand alone had replied with an immediate declaration of support and the offer of a detachment[41]. The Newfoundland Government had merely indicated their support, while Canada and Australia had replied guardedly that, in certain circumstances, they might despatch a force. In South Africa, General Smuts, the Prime Minister, being at the time on a lengthy tour of the Union, had sent no word[42]. Nor had Britain's approach to her friends in the Balkans elicited any firm assurances of support. The Rumanians, who at first had appeared willing to contribute a force, had changed their minds on learning that Britain and France were not, as they had believed,

37. F.O. 371/7890, Meeting of Ministers, 18 Sept. 1922.

38. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 35.

39. *Ibid.*

40. F.O. 371/7892, Conf. of Ministers, 19 Sept. 1922.

41. Ibid., C.P. 4200, The Turco-Greek Situation, Co-operation of the Dominions, 23 Sept. 1922.

42. *Ibid.*

in complete agreement on the question[43]. As for the Serbs, they had shown no desire, as Nicolson put it, "to be dragged into a war for the purpose of aiding us (the British) to control the Straits"[44]. Nonetheless, Curzon believed he had yet a strong hand to play. During the fortnight that had elapsed since the commencement of the crisis, the military position at Chanak had been considerably strengthened[45].Also, a factor of some importance, the Admiralty had given assurances that, if allowed a free hand, the navy could prevent the passage of Turkish troops into Europe, even if Chanak and the Ismid Peninsula were no longer held by the Allies[46]. In these circumstances, Curzon believed the French would be unwilling to abandon the Straits completely, in case, as an intelligence report put it at the time, "Great Britain obtained a mastery over Constantinople or the Straits, either directly, or through the Greeks"[47]. When the conference opened on the morning of 20 September 1922, therefore, Curzon at once took the offensive. He made it clear that his Government had no intention of allowing the Turks to cross the Straits at any point, and that they would provide the military and naval forces required to stop them. They believed their procedure so far had been in full accord with the policy agreed on by the Allies in March: afterall, did it not follow the example set by the French, themselves, when in July last they had sent forces to prevent the Greeks seizing the Ottoman capital. They had been surprised by reports that the French were in fact withdrawing their forces from Chanak. Such a step seemed "a direct invitation to Kemal to pursue his designs, relying on France and on the fact that the British forces were faced with the alternative of either defending alone the neutral zone (which the other Allies nevertheless recognised) or of withdrawing and allowing Kemal to settle matters in his own way"[48]. Should the French continue with their withdrawal, he must warn M. Poincaré that Britain would "have to act alone". He thought it unnecessary to indicate "the grave consequences to the alliance and, indeed, to the future of Europe" that such a step would entail[49].

43. F.O. E 9508/27/44, Millington Drake to Curzon, 18 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 115; F.O. E 9888/27/44, Dering to Curzon, 19 Sept. 1922, no. 495; F.O. E 9889/27/44, Dering to Curzon, 20 Sept. 1922, no. 496.

44. F.O. 371/7889, Balkans, File 5, minute by Nicolson, 20 Sept. 1922.

45. W.O. 32/5743, Despatch by Gen. Harington on the British occupation in Turkey, Nov. 1920 to evacuation in 1923.

46. CAB. 23/31, C50, 22, Cab. meeting, 23 Sept. 1922, appendix III.

47. F.O. 371/7889, Eastern Summary, no. 862, 12 Sept. 1922.

48. F.O. 371/7892, Paris Conf., 20 Sept. 1922.

49. *Ibid.*

Curzon's determination to stand fast was, in part, motivated by a conviction that, in the event, the Turks would respect such a display of firmness and halt their advance. In his reply, Poincaré made it clear that he believed otherwise: he had been advised that Mustapha Kemal saw no reason to order his troops to stop until they had occupied all the territories claimed for Turkey in the National Pact. In any case, it was doubtful if he could halt them in their advance even if he so wished, a nation"fanatisée,enivrée de sa victoire"[50].He was informed the Allies did not possess naval forces sufficient to stop the Kemalists crossing into Europe. In such circumstances it was evident that the best course open to the Allies would be to bring the Turks to the conference table. In order to do this they must tell Mustapha Kemal plainly that he would obtain Constantinople, and offer him "an acceptable settlement in Thrace and Gallipoli"[51]. Moreover, in case Curzon felt that he alone could threaten unilateral action: "... if England thinks that she could not do this herself or join in such an Allied communication, France must do it alone"[52]. Whatever the outcome, the French Government would not send French troops to preserve the integrity of the neutral zones. It was true they had agreed to send the Ankara Government the allied note: they had never agreed to enforce it.

Curzon followed the logic of Poincaré's argument with increasing incredulity. When the French President had concluded his observations, he at once made it clear that he could not accept the French view that the allied declaration concerning the integrity of the neutral zones was not, as he put it scathingly, "a serious document" but merely "a pious supplication to Kemal"[53]. He would not accept that Franch had no obligation to share in any action taken to implement it. In order to induce Mustapha Kemal to attend a conference, the French apparently wished to concede to him in advance all the terms of the National Pact. This would not do. The major questions could only be decided at a final conference: in the meantime, it was "essential that the Allies stand together"[54].

Poincaré was not impressed. He was in no mood to exchange diplomatic niceties. A collision between Britain and the Turkish Nationalists on the Straits would be extremely damaging to France. A victory for Britain would increase her power and prestige in the area and devalue the currency of French patronage: a defeat would lead to accusations that France had deserted her

50. F.O. E 10809/27/44, French Text of Allied Conversations in Paris, 20-23 Sept. 1922.
51. F.O. 371/7892, Paris Conf., 20 Sept. 1922.
52. *Ibid.*
53. *Ibid.*
54. *Ibid.*

ally in her hour of need. The Entente could hardly survive such a calamity. Convinced, therefore, that at all costs conflict must be avoided, Poincaré, with some abandon, proceeded to impress on Curzon the dire consequences which might result from a conflagration at Chanak. Even supposing that the Allies could prevent the Turks reaching Europe, Mustapha Kemal might turn against Syria and Mesopotamia. Bulgaria might attack Yugoslavia, and Russia Poland and Rumania. Finally, they might expect "a big Moslem upheaval in Asia"[55]. On this cataclysmic note the morning session was brought to a close and the delegates retired for lunch.

During the afternoon session Curzon made one more attempt to impress on Poincaré the gravity of the position, as he saw it. He enquired, so he informed the Cabinet immediately following the meeting,

> whether French Government in issuing recent orders to withdraw all French troops from Asiatic side of both Straits meant to repudiate any allied obligation on Asiatic coast and whether they regarded it as a loyal proceeding to take such action in suppression of orders of their own commanders without any notice to their allies, leaving the latter to bear the sole brunt of Kemalist attack and the odium, if retreat were necessary, of that retirement[56].

If such were the case, he would have to report to his Government that so far as Asia was concerned the Entente was at an end[57]. Britain would then be forced to act alone. But all to no avail. Poincaré, exhibiting what Curzon later described as an "extreme irritation at revival of this question in so embarrassing a form"[58], merely replied that neither the French Government, nor the French Parliament, whose sovereignty was involved, was prepared to allow French commanders to expose French troops to the danger of being shot by Turks.

In his stand Poincaré received the support of Count Sforza, the Italian Ambassador, who had joined the afternoon session of the conference. Italy, he declared, like France, would not fight against Turkey, nor run the risk of Italian soldiers being attacked in Asia Minor[59].

Having failed to persuade Poincaré to recognise the obligation of France

55. *Ibid.*
56. F.O. 371/7891, Telephone message from Curzon to Cab. and P.M., 20 Sept. 1922.
57. F.O. 371/7892, Paris Conf., 20 Sept. 1922.
58. F.O. 371/7891, Telephone message from Curzon to Cab. and P.M., 20 Sept. 1922.
59. F.O. 371/7892, Paris Conf., 20 Sept. 1922.

to defend the neutral zone, Curzon decided to attack the essential premise of Poincaré's argument, which was that, with the forces available, the Allies, could not stop the Turks crossing the Straits, and that any attempt to do so, therefore, would end in disaster. He accordingly asked that Earl Beatty be called to give an expert opinion on the question. Poincaré, not to be outdone, asked that Admiral Grasset be allowed to attend. Beatty explained that, with the forces available on the Straits, or on their way, the Allies could hold "all the waters from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea"[60]. Admiral Grasset explained that they could not. Earl Beatty explained that, even if the Turks were able to bring up heavy artillery, the British navy "ought to be able to bring a direct fire in return upon them and make their position untenable"[61]. Admiral Grasset explained that this might be so in theory: experience in the recent war had shown that it was not so in practice. He would go even further: if the Turks had only medium artillery on the Asiatic shore, not only would they be able to make the passage of the Dardanelles by ships-of-war very difficult, they might even threaten the position of the Allies on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Curzon seized on this admission with alacrity. As the later informed the Cabinet:

> I at once used his argument, which is I believe wholly fallacious, to point out to Poincaré that if Gallipoli is to be held, which he admitted, Chanak must therefore either be held also or be demilitarised as proposed in March. This he could not deny...[62]!

Poincaré, indeed, did not attempt to deny it. He merely drew attention to the fact that, as he put it,

> in Marshall Foch's opinion, it was essential to have armies and not outposts of men on the southern shores of the Straits in the present military situation. To control the whole of the Straits one must have forces echelonned along their whole length... There was no military expert who would now claim that the Allies could defend the Asiatic shores against a Turkish attack[63].

It was evident that little was to be gained by pursuing so unproductive a discussion. Following a break for tea, therefore, Curzon proposed that a conference of the principal allied powers, together with Greece, Turkey, Russia,

60. *Ibid.*
61. *Ibid.*
62. F.O. 371/7891, Telephone message from Hardinge, 21 Sept. 1922.
63. F.O. 371/7892, Paris Conf., 20 Sept. 1922.

Serbia and Japan, be called, at which Bulgaria and other interested states might be allowed a hearing. He also suggested that, provided they could obtain the authorisation of their respective governments, they might remain in Paris and attempt to reach agreement on the main points of a settlement. In the meantime, he would urge the French Government to use their "very well-known influence to stop Kemal from precipitate action"[64]. Both Curzon's proposals were adopted. While agreeing to do his best to control Mustapha Kemal, however, Poincaré, suggested that Curzon might use his influence to persuade the Greeks to agree in advance of a conference decision to return Eastern Thrace to the Turks.

That evening Curzon informed London by phone of his failure to persuade the French to alter course. The Cabinet were, therefore, called on to decide whether to stand and fight alone, or to withdraw. At a meeting held the same evening, they decided to stand[65]. The combined Chiefs of Staff were quickly consulted, following which a telegram, drafted by Churchill, was despatched to Harington informing him of the "relative importance" that was attached to the various positions committed to his charge:

> ... the foundation of British policy in that region, was the Gallipoli Peninsula and the freedom of the Straits. It was of the highest importance that Chanak should be held effectively for this. Apart from its military importance, Chanak had now become a point of great moral significance to the prestige of the Empire. It would be regarded as a valuable achievement if it could be held. A blow at Chanak would be a blow at Great Britain alone, whereas, Constantinople and Ismid were of international consequence, affecting the whole of the Allies. In comparison with Chanak, the Cabinet regard Constantinople as second and Ismid as third[66].

At the same time, in a telegram to Paris, the Cabinet informed Curzon of their admiration for the manner in which he had conducted the talks and instructed him to continue along the lines he had suggested.

Curzon appreciated the admiration and support of his colleagues. He was aware, as he informed the Cabinet the following day, that it would not be easy

64. *Ibid.*

65. F.O. E 9773/27/44, Conf. of Ministers, 20 Sept. 1922.

66. F.O. 371/7891, Conf. of Ministers, 20 Sept. 1922; W.O. 32/5740, Near Eastern Situation 1922, W.O. to Harington, 20 Sept. 1922.

to arrive at a preliminary understanding with the Allies[67]. The French would almost certainly continue to press for the complete and immediate evacuation of Eastern Thrace by the Greeks, and for recognition of the Maritsa frontier. Britain's interest as ever, lay in ensuring that the Turks should not recover complete control of both shores of the Straits, and in particular of the Gallipoli Peninsula, dependent to a large extent on the position in Eastern Thrace. As far as the short term position was concerned, he proposed to suggest that the Greeks might be persuaded to evacuate Eastern Thrace up to the Enos-Istranja line, provided Mustapha Kemal agreed to respect the neutral zone. As regards the long term position, he was considering reverting to a proposal, first mooted in March, for the creation of an autonomous state in Eastern Thrace under the League of Nations. On this occasion they might allow a symbol of Turkish sovereignty "in the shape of a flag or some other innocuous emblem"[68]. In this way Eastern Thrace would be demilitarised, an effect which would accord well with British interests in the area. On the Dardanelles, too, the occupying forces might be placed under the auspices of the League. In order to counter what he called French pretensions, Curzon informed the Cabinet that he intended to point out "absurdity of convoking conference in which Roumania and Serbia are to take part and then decide issues in advance and in their absence". He also intended to play on Poincaré's awareness of the moral weakness of the French position, and on his apprehension that the British would, if need be, act alone[69].

The Cabinet approved Curzon's proposed strategy, with the proviso, insisted on by Churchill, that the Asiatic side of the Dardanelles must be considered an integral part of the problem of the maintenance of the freedom of the Straits, which, in effect, meant that the agreed zone on the Asiatic side of the Straits should be subject to the same regime as that adopted on the Gallipoli side[70].

In considering his position, Curzon had realised that, as regards both the Straits and Eastern Thrace, the attitude adopted by Rumania and Serbia might prove crucial. As the King of Serbia, supported by his ministers, happened to be in Paris, Curzon decided to approach him. At the same time he approached the Rumanian Minister, M. Antonescu. The results were not encouraging. Both made it clear that there was little hope of their contributing a contingent; they feared France and felt that they could not oppose her. Accord-

67. F.O. 371/7891, Telephone message from Hardinge to F.O., 21 Sept. 1922.
68. *Ibid.*
69. *Ibid.*
70. CAB. 23/31, C50, 22, Cab. meeting, 23 Sept. 1922, appendix VI.

ing to Curzon M. Pasitch, the Serbian Prime Minister, exhibited "an obstinate stupidity", declaring that Serbia had no interest in either question, except to see that Thrace did not become Bulgarian, and that her own frontiers were not infringed. The Rumanian Minister, while expressing general support for the British view, proved scarcely more forthcoming[71]. Curzon accordingly concluded that he could expect little support from the Balkan quarter. Papers despatched from London confirmed this conclusion. On these, Nicolson had minuted, on 20 September 1922, that, though both Serbia and Rumania had interests in common with Britain in the Near East, His Majesty's Government could expect little help from either[72].

When, therefore, on the afternoon of 22 September 1922, the Allies met once again in conference, Curzon was aware that he could expect little support from any quarter for a strong policy. Nevertheless, he refused to alter course. Whatever happened, he informed Poincaré and Sforza, the Turks must not be allowed to march into Europe and pre-empt the decisions of a peace conference. He hoped they would be able to reach agreement on the main points in dispute between them. He had various proposals in mind, in particular that Eastern Thrace might be turned into an autonomous buffer state under the League of Nations, subject perhaps to nominal Turkish sovereignty. His attitude, however, was one of resolution and determination:

> If he were compelled to fight the Turks and withdraw from the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles or of Ismid, the fault would not be wholly that of Great Britain. Public opinion would remember that in the circumstances Great Britain had been abandoned by Allies, and public opinion would appreciate the very heavy blow thus dealt at the Alliance by those who had chosen to desert us[73].

Poincaré was in no mood to brook such charges of disloyalty. More than ever he was convinced of the need to avoid war. Only the previous day he had received from General Charpy a telegram confirming the weakness of the allied position on the Straits.

> D'une part, forces ennemies, nombreux matérial et moral exalté, decidées à lutter pour conquérir capitale et territoire national. D'autre part, terrain peu propice à la défensive favourable aux

71. F.O. E 9688/27/44, Hardinge to F.O., 21 Sept. 1922, no. 471.
72. F.O. 371/7889, Balkans, File 5 and others, minuted by Nicolson, 20 Sept. 1922.
73. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 48.

> infiltrations, nécessite grande densité troupes défense, large front, aucune profondeur pour la défense, mer à dos. Eléments turcs zone occupation hostiles.
> Nécessité surveiller efficacement front Tchataldja à cause d' efférvescence Thrace, organisation de bandes.
> Entre ces fronts, danger agglomération Scutari, Constantinople, où soulèvement certain en cas de lutte contre Kémal à courte distance capitale.
> Occupation de Tchanak excentrique, éloignée troupe de ce secteur isolé. Dans ces conditions, convenir pas engager bataille avec plusieurs fronts et insécurité lignes intérieurs, échec certain, prestige militaire allié, insulté. Plan action est basé sur moyens actuels très nettement insuffisants. Si on envisage moyens réellement nécessaires, il faudrait véritable corps expéditionnaire; dans ce cas, effectifs actuels même renforcés immédiatement par plusieurs bataillons seraient insuffisants pour permettre lutter avec chance réussite contre Kémalistes, qui ont tous leurs moyens à pied d'œuvre, tandis que l'arrivée renforts alliés forcement echelonnée et tardive[74].

Yet still, it seemed, the British would not budge. In Constantinople, they were busy preparing for battle, while in Paris Curzon had been "tampering", as Nicolson later put it, with the Little Entente[75].

When Curzon had concluded his opening statement, therefore, Poincaré, quoting at length from Charpy's report, drew, in as dispassionate a manner as he could afford, a detailed picture of the position as he saw it. Then, angered, perhaps, by Curzon's unresponsiveness, he drew attention to an invitation, issued by Harington at a meeting of allied generals on 18 September 1922, requesting his colleagues to participate, with all the forces at their disposal, in the defence of the neutral zones, "conformément à la décision qui aurait été prise par les Gouvernements alliés"[76]. The previous day, in a note dispatched to the British Embassy protesting the incident, Poincaré had admitted that Harington's premature assumption of allied policy was "sans doute, le résultat d'un malentendu"[77]. In the explosive atmosphere of the conference chamber, however, angered by Curzon's "precise but cutting phrases"[78], enraged by his

74. F.O. 371/7893, Hardinge to Curzon, 23 Sept. 1922, no. 2222, enclosure 2.
75. Nicolson, 273.
76. F.O. 371/7893, Hardinge to Curzon, 23 Sept. 1922, no. 2222, enclosure 1.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Nicolson, 273.

accusations of betrayal, he allowed no such draughts of moderation to blow through the heavy clouds of his indignation. What happened next, at this "meeting of quite unprecedented description"[79], as Curzon called it, is perhaps best described in the Foreign Secretary's own words:

> Poincaré then commenced a second speech by a bitter attack on Harington whom he accused of having deliberately misrepresented to his colleagues the attitude of the French and Italian Governments. I instantly and indignantly repudiated this charge; whereupon Poincaré lost all command of his temper, and for a quarter of an hour shouted and raved at the top of his voice, putting words into my mouth which I had never uttered, refusing to allow the slightest interruption or correction, saying that he would make public the insult to France, quoting a telegram from Athens to the effect that the British Minister had asked the Greek Government to furnish 60,000 men for the defence of Thrace and the Straits, and behaving like a demented school master screaming at a guilty school-boy. I have never seen so deplorable or undignified a scene. After enduring this for some time I could stand it no longer and rising, broke up the sitting and left the room[80].

After an interval, the minutes of the conference record, during which private explanations were exchanged, the sitting was resumed[81]. Though tempers had cooled somewhat, reason did not at once prevail. Poincaré continued to insist on the restoration of Turkish sovereignty up to the old frontiers. He agreed, however, that a strip on the Turkish side of the boundary and a corresponding strip on the Greek side might be demilitarised. Curzon, for his part, seeing that another impasse was rapidly approaching, produced a draft invitation to the Ankara Government, which, he declared, indicated in general terms the limits to which he was prepared to go. This Poincaré showed little inclination to accept. Nonetheless, he agreed to consult his colleagues on the question. It was decided, therefore, that the conference should meet again to discuss the formula the following day[82].

Curzon reported the "painful" character of the day's proceedings to the

79. F.O. 371/7892, Hardinge to F.O., 22 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 472.
80. *Ibid.*
81. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 48.
82. *Ibid.*

Cabinet that evening[83]. At the same time he made it clear that, as things stood, he could not hold out any hope that he would reach agreement with Poincaré at the meeting arranged for the following day. At best he might secure a collective invitation. At worst the alliance in the Near East would break and the Powers would have to address Mustapha Kemal each in its own way: the British Cabinet would appreciate that "by these steps we have gained another day both here and at the other end, and that Mudania will mean several days more. Before the end of this time our preparations should be complete..."[84].

On receiving Curzon's report, the Cabinet recognised that they had reached a crossroad.They could go on alone, or turn and compromise. With the support of the allies, they might have decided to see it through. Alone, in the light of British public and world opinion, they dared not. Without further ado, therefore, they decided that, rather than risk war, they would change the direction of their policy sufficient to enable Curzon to draw up with the allies a joint invitation to the Turks to attend a conference. The policy of confining Turkish rule to the Turkish people, the Cabinet minutes record with an appropriate sense of the dramatic, being no longer practical in view of the failure of France to accept a mandate for Cilicio, the United States for Armenia, Italy to remain in south-western Anatolia and Greece in western Anatolia, Britain could not alone prevent the return of the Turks to Eastern Thrace. It needed, however, to be made perfectly clear that effective guarantees for the security, protection and the enjoyment by all nations of the freedom of the waters between the Mediterranean and the Black Sea remained indispensible[85].

The decision of the Cabinet to abandon Eastern Thrace to the Turks removed the main obstacle standing in the way of allied agreement on the general principles of a peace settlement. When they met on 23 September 1922, therefore, the allied leaders were quickly able to agree the appropriate wording of an invitation to Mustapha Kemal. In this, the Turks were invited to send a representative without delay to a meeting to be held at Venice or elsewhere to negotiate a final treaty of peace between Turkey, Greece and the Allies. Rumania, Yugoslavia and Japan were also to be invited. The Turks were informed that the Allies "viewed with favour" their desire to recover Thrace so far as the Maritsa and Adrianople. Prior to the opening of the conference the Allies would use their influence to persuade the Greeks to retire to a line fixed by the allied generals in agreement with both the Greeks and the Turks:

83. *Ibid.*, n. 34.
84. *Ibid.*
85. CAB. 23/31, C30, 22, Cab. meeting, 23 Sept. 1922.

in return the Turks would be expected to engage not to send troops into the neutral zone nor attempt to cross the Straits or the Sea of Marmora. In order to define the proposed line, the allied generals might meed Mustapha Kemal at Mudania or Ismid[86].

Curzon, on the whole, was satisfied with the outcome of his meeting with Poincaré and Sforza. As he informed the Cabinet, he had obtained "every one of its desiderata"[87]. In that part of the note which referred to the future frontiers of Turkey, Poincaré had wanted to include the phrase "in accordance with the full terms of the National Pact"[88], but this he had rejected. He had also frustrated Poincaré's desire to turn the Mudania Conference into a preliminary peace conference. He had insisted the allied generals deal with one point only: settlement of the line behind which the Greek forces would be withdrawn. On his return to London, Curzon was congratulated by the Cabinet. There was, however, no rejoicing: the Cabinet secretary merely recorded the comment, received without dissent, that "French desertion of the British troops at Chanak was a most formidable historical event"[89].

Curzon was aware that the despatch of the allied note of 23 September 1922 did not obviate the danger of war. At any moment an irresponsible act on the part of Turkish regular or irregular forces could ignite a fire which it would be hard to control and harder still to put out. Nevertheless, signs suggested that the forces of peace might yet prevail. From Paris, Hardinge reported that the French Government had promised to do everything in its power to persuade Mustapha Kemal to withdraw his forces from the neutral zone[90], while from Rome Sir Robert Graham advised that the Italian Foreign Minister had assured him that both France and Italy were "deluging" the Turks with good advice[91]. Another report suggested that Mustapha Kemal might have ordered his agents in Constantinople to prevent a rising against the Allies in the city[92]. At Chanak, it was reported that a force of one thousand Turkish cavalry advancing on the town, on being confronted by a British squadron, had withdrawn. Provided the Ankara Government replied promptly to the allied note, therefore, and provided they took firm steps to ensure that their

86. F.O. 371/7894, Paris Conf., 23 Sept. 1922, annex.
87. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 52.
88. CAB. 23/31, C51, 22, Cab. meeting, 25 Sept. 1922.
89. *Ibid.*
90. F.O. E9965/27/44, Hardinge to Curzon, 26 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 481 (D).
91. F.O. E9916/27/44, Graham to Curzon, 23 Sept. 1922.
92. F.O. E9965/27/44, Hardinge to Curzon, 26 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 481 (D).

troops at the front acted with restraint, there was no reason why the catastrophe of war should not be averted.

Hopes raised following the despatch of the Paris note, however, soon faded. Mustapha Kemal gave no sign that he would respond to the allied initiative. Quite the reverse, his attitude became, if anything, even more belligerent. When Harington telegraphed, demanding the withdrawal of Turkish Cavalry from the neutral zone, he once again denied any knowledge of the existence of such a zone, and declared the only object of his troops to be the pursuit of the beaten Greek army[93]. At Chanak his troops continued to disregard the existence of the zone and to collect inconsiderable numbers close to the British defences. On 28 September 1922, Rumbold reported:

> Turks are evidently acting under clear orders and it is evident from Mustapha Kemal's accurate information about demolitions in Chanak area that Turkish force is not out of touch with its General Headquarters. British military authorities at Chanak have pushed restraint to the utmost possible limit... Situation evidently contemplated by Mustapha Kemal is that British and Turks watch each other whilst Turkish forces are piling up until Mustapha Kemal thinks that he is strong enough to attack[94].

Other factors, too, added to the supposition that the Turks might decide to push forward regardless British Intelligence suggested that the military party, which favoured strong action, was in the ascendant in Ankara[95]. They also suggested that the Soviets were urging Mustapha Kemal to attack the Allies on the Straits; they were said to be considering a plan to support him either by direct military action in Europe of by offering assistance in the transportation of troops from Zonguldak to Midia[96]. Finally, in Greece, on 27 September 1922, units of the Greek armed forces had revolted against the King, overthrowing his Government and setting up a Revolutionary Council, dedicated to the defence of Eastern Thrace[97].

It was in these circumstances that, at a meeting held on the morning of 29 September 1922, the British Cabinet decided that the time had come to call a halt. After consulting the Chiefs of Staff, the ministers agreed that, in view of the seriousness of the position at Chanak, Harington should be instructed as follows:

93. D.B.F.P. xviii, No. 62.
94. *Ibid.*, No. 68.
95. F.O. E 10516/27/44, Eastern summary, A. 1, No. 887, 22 Sept. 1922.
96. *Ibid.*, No. 892, 25 Sept. 1922.
97. F.O. E10037/27/44, Lindley to Curzon, 27 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 496 (R).

> The Turkish Nationalists are obviously moving up troops and seeking to net your forces in. Cabinet are advised by the General Staff that if we allow continuance of this, the defensive position will be imperilled and that the moment to avert the disaster has arrived. It has therefore been decided by the Cabinet that the Officer Commanding the Turkish forces around Chanak is immediately to be notified that, if his forces are not withdrawn by an hour to be settled by you, at which our combined forces will be in place, all the forces at our disposal—naval, military and aerial—will open fire[98].

Curzon was not entirely happy with this decision.That evening he endeavoured to persuade his Cabinet colleagues to suspend the ultimatum for twenty-four hours, or to extend it. In the course of the afternoon, he explained, he had seen Nihad Rechad, the Kemalist representative in London, and informed him of the action decided on by the Cabinet, and the reasons for it:

> Mustapha Kemal having, in spite of the Paris note and in spite of frequent protests, absolutely declined to withdraw his forces from the Chanak neutral zone, and these forces having continued to advance until they were in a position where we were informed that they even made grimaces at the British troops on the other side of the barbed wire, a situation had arisen which could not be tolerated by any army—it would not be tolerated by Mustapha Kemal himself... Orders had therefore been given this morning to the British Commander to call upon the Kemalist forces to retire, and, in the event of their refusing, to compel them to do so. Thus we might, owing to the culpable action of these forces, find ourselves within a few hours of the edge of war[99].

Nihad Rechad had expressed the utmost alarm at this situation and promised to inform Mustapha Kemal at once. Would it not be wise, therefore, to allow the Turks a little more leeway[100]? The Cabinet decided, however, that they could not alter their decision. Chamberlain thought the danger too great; a change of mind would undermine the confidence of Britain's representatives on the spot. Birkenhead saw no reason to reconsider. The Chancellor of the Exchequer concluded that Nihad Rechad was merely trying to "blind" them.

98. CAB. 23/31, C52, 22, Cab. meeting, 30 Sept. 1922, appendix 5.
99. F.O. 371/7796, Curzon to Rumbold, 29 Sept. 1922, no. 959.
100. F.O. E10399/27/44, Conf. of Ministers, 29 Sept. 1922.

The Chief of the Imperial General Staff closed the argument by pointing out that he believed a counter order would, in any case, arrive too late to affect the situation: and to countermand the order, after the event, might prove fatal[101]. When Curzon retired to bed that evening, therefore, he believed that, one way or another, the issue would within twenty four hours be decided.

The following morning the Cabinet awaited with some trepidation reports from Constantinople on the initial reaction of the Turks to the delivery of the ultimatum. At this first meeting they were informed that no reply had as yet been received. This they found "rather perplexing"[102]. Had not Harington reported that the situation at Chanak was critical? Had not the Chiefs of Staff sent "peremptory orders" for the delivery of the ultimatum, receipt of which had been acknowledged by the Naval Commander-in-Chief the previous afternoon[103]? The Cabinet could only suspect that General Harington was so intensely preoccupied with the political situation that he was no longer paying sufficient attention to the military side of the question. It appeared that, notwithstanding the "truculent attitude of Mustapha Kemal and his flagrant disregard of the Paris note", Harington and Rumbold were treating the Turks with a forebearance which contrasted sharply with the harshness of their approach to the Greeks, on whom they were bringing pressure to bear in regard to the movement of warships in the Straits and the withdrawal of the Greek army from Eastern Thrace[104].

In Constantinople Harington had received the War Office order regarding the communication of an ultimatum with some surprise. He was, perhaps, not fully aware of the impression his reports on the situation at Chanak had created in London. In any case he believed that, during the last day or so, he had made substantial progress towards a settlement. On 28 September 1922, he had received from Mustapha Kemal a message informing him that the Turkish leader had issued orders to his troops at Chanak to avoid any kind of incident[105]. Kemalist sources at Constantinople had informed him that the Ankara Government was on the point of despatching a formal reply to the allied note of 23 September 1922, and that they would probably accept the allied invitation to attend a meeting at Mudania[106]. In the circumstances, so he informed the War Office in a telegram despatched on 30 September 1922,

101. *Ibid.*
102. CAB. 23/31, C52, 22, Cab. meeting, 30 Sept. 1922.
103. *Ibid.*
104. *Ibid.*
105. F.O. E10491/27/44, G.H.Q. Constantinople to Troopers, London, 30 Sept. 1922.
106. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 79, n. 1.

he found it inconceivable that he should "launch avalanche of fire which will put a match to mine here and everywhere else and from which there will be no drawing back"[107]. He requested, therefore, that the matter be left in his hands for the moment. In a telegram to Curzon despatched the same day Rumbold supported Harington. General Marden had reported a distinct improvement at Chanak. He no longer believed Mustapha Kemal meant business. In any case, they could not lose anything by delaying action for two or three days to see whether a meeting at Mudania would materialise[108].

The Cabinet were greatly relieved to discover that the situation at Chanak was not as bad as they had assumed. On 10 October 1922, therefore, they instructed the Secretary of State for War to inform Harington that he need not act on the War Office telegram ordering the delivery of an ultimatum, unless and until he considered it necessary to do so[109]. They also instructed the War Minister to send a separate telegram emphasising that the sole function of the allied generals at Mudania under the terms of the Paris note was to fix, in accordance with the Greek and Turkish military authorities, the line to which the Greeks were to be asked to withdraw in Eastern Thrace[110]. On Curzon's prompting, they agreed, in addition, that, as difficulties might arise at the Mudania meeting in regard to the extent of the neutral zone on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, the question should be examined as to whether it would be practicable to provide for the freedom of the Straits with a reduced area, in order that, if pressed to do so by Mustapha Kemal, General Harington might be in a position to make some concession[111].

Having taken on themselves the responsibility of suspending a Cabinet order, Harington and Rumbold had no intention of allowing their catch to escape them. On 1 October 1922, therefore, in agreement with Admiral Brock, the recently appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Mediterranean fleet, they informed Hamid Bey that the Allies expected to meet the Nationalist Commander at Mudania on 3 October 1922, and that if no meeting took place on that day, they would "draw their own conclusions"[112]. Faced with this less immediate ultimatum Hamid Bey confirmed that his Government expected to send delegates to the proposed meeting: Ismet Pasha, Commander of the Western

107. *Ibid.*
108. *Ibid.*, No. 79.
109. CAB. 23/31, C55, 22, Cab. meeting, 1 Oct. 1922.
110. *Ibid.*
111. *Ibid.*
112. F.O. E10286/27/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 1 Oct. 1932, tel. nos. 498 and 499; D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 83.

Army, would most probably represent them[113].

The Mudania Conference proved a trying experience for Harington. Although it had been agreed that military representatives alone would attend, politicians of every description arrived from Ankara[114]. Negotiations were carried on in an atmosphere which Rumbold later described as "that of a bazaar combined with that of a coffee house"[115]. At first the Turks refused to negotiate. Then they grew arrogant. They acted as if Thrace were already theirs. Backed by the French, who claimed credit for their presence at the Conference, they sought to inveigle the allied Generals into discussing political questions. The ubiquitous Franklin Bouillon, who sought to play the role of mediator, proved, according to Harington, "a perfect curse"[116]. On the third day Ismet put forward a series of demands which amounted, in Harington's view, to a demand for the immediate repossession of Eastern Thrace[117]. If his demands were not met, he "intimated", as Rumbold put it, that he would set his troops once more in motion[118]. At this the French general announced that his Government was prepared to accept the restitution of Eastern Thrace to Turkey before the conclusion of a peace treaty and without supervision[119]. In view of the attitude adopted by the French, which Rumbold characterised as "a treacherous surrender inspired by Franklin-Bouillon"[120], Harington concluded that he had no alternative but to return to Constantinople and place the question in the hands of the allied High Commissioners. Failing to agree, they, in turn, passed it to their respective Governments. Curzon, for his part, at once decided to cross to Paris to consult Poincaré. At 11 p.m. on the night of 6 October 1922, therefore, the British Secretary of State once again faced the French President across the green baize of a table at the Quai d'Orsay.

In the opening discussion, Curzon explained that he considered the situation to be "very serious"[121]. The allied generals had drawn up an excellent convention, which would provide for a Greek evacuation of Eastern Thrace to be completed within fifteen days. As the Greeks withdrew the Allies, represented by mixed allied commissions, would take over civil power, and pass it

113. *Ibid.*
114. *Ibid.*, No. 91.
115. F.O. 371/7903, Rumbold to Curzon, 9 Oct. 1922, no. 882.
116. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 91.
117. F.O. 371/7903, Rumbold to Curzon, 9 Oct. 1922, no. 882.
118. D.B.F.P. xviii, No. 96.
119. *Ibid.*
120. *Ibid.*
121. *Ibid.*, No. 106.

to the Turks, at the latest within thirty days. When offered this convention, however, the Turks had put forward "a series of preposterous demands"[122], to which it was impossible to accede. Upon which General Charpy, on instructions from his Government, had seceded from his colleagues and supported the demands of the Turks. Was M. Poincaré committed to this position? Or was he prepared to adopt the sole feasible course by which the Paris note and the alliance could be maintained: the temporary occupation of Eastern Thrace by allied troops pending the gradual introduction of a Turkish administration? And if, as he anticipated, the Turks were to cross, or indeed, had already crossed into the Ismid zone, what was he prepared to do?[123]

Poincaré's response was not encouraging. He believed the Allies should stand by the Paris note, and he approved the instructions sent to Harington, which he had been shown. Nevertheless, he believed that these should be pressed only in so far as they were "capable of realisation and could be reconciled with the possibilites of the case"[124]: he had, therefore, advised General Charpy that, if the British instructions could not be realised, he should "try to harmonise them with Turkish claims"[125]. If concessions were necessary to avoid war, they must resign themselves to the fact. Being at Constantinople, at Chanak and Gallipoli, the Allies could still be masters of the situation and have "their hands full of levers at the Peace Conference"[126]. If the Turks advanced, however, he would do nothing: "In no circumstances, anything"[127].

At this stage, it looked as if Curzon and Poincaré had once again reached deadlock. After further discussion, however, it transpired that Poincaré had not realised the full extent of the Turkish claims: what he thought Charpy had conceded was merely a demand for the institution in Eastern Thrace of a civil administration by the Turks[128]. With this misunderstanding out of the way, it became possible for the two statesmen to consider the details of the proposed convention. In the discussions which followed, both continued to take a hard line. Nevertheless, after further talks they were able to agree the

122. F.O. E10667/27/44, Hardinge to F.O., enclosing a note from Curzon for the P.M., 7 Oct. 1922.

123. *Ibid.*

124. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 106.

125. *Ibid.*

126. *Ibid.*

127. F.O. E10667/27/44, Hardinge to F.O., enclosing a note from Curzon for the P.M., 7 Oct. 1922.

128. *Ibid.*

terms of a draft agreement which it would be possible for them to put jointly to the Turks[129].

Harington received the telegram instructing him to return to Mudania and re-open the negotiations with considerable relief. As he had informed Rumbold on 7 October 1922, pending word from London, he had already twice postponed further sessions of the conference[130]. In the meantime, Turkish cavalry and infantry had crossed into the neutral zone on the Ismid Peninsula[131]. Any further delay would have seriously compromised his military position. On returning to the conference room, however, he soon discovered that a more show of allied unity was not sufficient to convince the Turks that they must adopt a more flexible approach. Ismet proved if anything even more intractable. Nevertheless, after further discussion, the delegates were able to narrow the points in dispute down to six. One of these concerned the future status of the neutral zones, or zones of allied occupation as the Turks preferred to call them[132]. Here Curzon's foresight proved of advantage. On the basis of advice received from a conference of experts held at the Admiralty on 3 October 1922, Harington was able to offer a substantial reduction in the size of the Chanak zone, which might, he suggested, be confined to an area approximately ten miles in depth running from Ezine to Karabigha[133]. After a long night of diplomatic fencing, Ismet accepted this proposal. Other differences, too, were in time ironed out, and an agreement was finally signed at 7.45 on the morning of 11 October 1922. The signature of the Convention, Rumbold reported, was largely due to the "patience, tact and spirit of conciliation shown by General Harington. Factors which probably determined Turks to sign were knowledge of arrival of British reinforcements, presence of British warships, and the fact that these would be used in last resort. Policy of His Majesty's Government has in fact been fully justified"[134].

How close the British and the Turks came to war at Chanak remains uncertain. There is little doubt that Mustapha Kemal intended to press his advantage, in the hope, perhaps, that Harington would follow the example set by his French and Italian colleagues and withdraw his troops from the Asiatic shores[135]. It is equally probable that he underestimated the determination of

129. D.B.F.P., xviii, Nos. 107 and 108.
130. *Ibid.*, No. 112.
131. *Ibid.*
132. *Ibid.*, No. 118; F.O. E 10838/27/44, Harington to W.O., 9 Oct. 1922.
133. CAB. 24/139, C.P. 4256, Chanak Neutral Zone, Meeting at Adm., 3 Oct. 1922.
134. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 119.
135. Kâzim Karabekir, *Istiklâl Harbimizin Esaslari* (Istanbul, 1951), 1166.

the British, deserted by their allies, to make a stand. Mustapha Kemal, however, as Curzon, Churchill and others had confidently predicted, had no desire to become involved in a war with the British Empire. His tardiness in replying to the allied note of 23 September 1922 may, perhaps, be explained in part by a desire to play his hand for what it was worth, aware, as he was, that should an untoward incident occur he could always withdraw his men and lay the blame at the door of the British, and in part by a genuine need to consult the Grand National Assembly before negotiating an agreement that might prove unpopular. An incident, followed by a withdrawal, would, however, inevitably involve some loss of prestige both at home and abroad. It may be supposed, therefore, that when it became clear that the British might themselves take the initiative, he quickly agreed to meet the allied generals at Mudania, and, as happened on 4 October 1922, formally accept the invitation of the Allies to attend a peace conference[136].

Whatever the dangers of war, it is evident that the crisis at Chanak brought into play forces of far ranging significance. The British imperial dominions, after some preliminary grumbling, rallied round and assured the mother country of their support. The Balkan powers, to whom the position on the Straits remained as ever a matter of importance, found themselves for the most part squeezed between British demands that they provide diplomatic, and, in some cases, military support and French demands that they do not. In the end, neither the Serbs nor the Rumanians sent a contingent[137]. As for the Bulgarians, secure as they were in their enforced neutrality, they were content to exploit the rivalries of the moment, offering support for every party, seeking in return assurances that they would obtain free access to the Aegean by way of Dede Agatch[138]. The Greeks alone among the Balkan powers were prepared to offer the British whole-hearted support against the Turks. In India, the Khalifate agitation continued, though, according to the Viceroy, the movement had been on the wane for some time, its leaders suspected of being the tools of Hindu politicians; nevertheless, the Moslem peoples of India continued to support the Turkish Nationalists, reports of whose victories were re-

136. F.O. E 10569/27/44, Rumbold to Curzon, 5 Oct. 1922, tel. no. 516.

137. F.O. 371/7898, Young to Curzon, 23 Sept. 1922, no. 413, and Diamandy to Lloyd George, 29 Sept. 1922; F.O. 371/7899, Conversation between P.M. and Diamandy, 1 Oct. 1922; F.O. E10290/27/44, Dering to Curzon, 30 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 128.

138. F.O. E10089/27/44, View of Bulgarian Government on Near East Settlement, despatch from Balfour, 25 Sept. 1922; F.O. E11086/27/44, F.O. minute (Nicolson), 27 Sept. 1922.

ceived with "great rejoicing"[139]. In the United States the President, who according to the British Ambassador had become "violently anti-French", was persuaded on 26 September 1922 to issue a statement declaring that the American Government was "gratified to observe that proposal of 3 allied governments seeks to insure effective liberty of Dardenelles, Sea of Marmora and Bosphorus as well as protection of racial and religious minorities"[140]. The British valued Harding's moral support. Yet the unwillingness of the United States to involve herself in the settlement of the Straits question continued to amaze them: "This is very reminiscent", Osbourne minuted on 26 September 1922, "of the Wilsonian era. It is pathetic that in a crisis like this the immense naval force of America should not have expressed itself"[141]. No such surprise was expressed regarding the increasing interest of Russia in the area, which by the time of Chanak had become a factor of considerable significance.

Throughout this period, the Russians continued to base their policy on the considerations which had inspired the Moscow treaty of March 1921. They wished to see the imperial powers expelled from Turkey and to this end supported the Turkish Nationalists in their struggle. As regards the passage of the Straits, they insisted that this question should be settled by a conference of riverain states: in this way they would obtain a decisive voice in the proceedings. During the crisis, however, reports from British Intelligence and other sources suggested that the Russian leaders could not agree on how far they should carry their support of the Kemalists. It was reported that Trotsky and Bukharin advocated military intervention, more particularly against Rumania, should she send a contingent to support the British[142]. Chicherin, on the other hand, was reputed to favour moderation, on the grounds that Russia could not afford open conflict with the western powers, on whom she was dependant for the supply of capital equipment and other goods essential to the reconstruction of her industry[143]. In the end, Chicherin's view prevailed. The Russians decided against direct military intervention. Nonetheless, throughout the period of the crisis at Chanak, they continued to egg the Turks on, urging them to drive the Allies from the Straits and to occupy Constantinople.

Russian support for the Turks was, however, never unconstrained. To

139. F.O. 371/7901, C.P. 4263, Viceroy to S. of S. for India, 3 Oct. 1922.

140. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 60, n. 3; F.O. E9951/57/44, Geddes to Curzon, 25 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 376.

141. *Ibid.*, minute by Osbourne, 26 Sept. 1922.

142. F.O. E 10892/27/44, Relations between Soviet Russia and Angora, minute by Edmonds, 10 Oct. 1922.

143. F.O. 371/7899, Soviet Russia and the Near East Crisis, memo based on S.I.S. sources, 29 Sept. 1922.

the Soviets, Mustapha Kemal remained a bourgeouis nationalist, whose overthrow by the Communist Party of Turkey they would have welcomed. Moreover, they feared that the Turks would betray them and go over to the French. In particular they were said to suspect that the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement of 20 October 1921[144] contained a secret undertaking by the Turks to invade the Caucasus, should Russia attack the western powers in Europe. The Russians were careful to stress, therefore, that their aid and support was at all times dependant on the assurances of the Ankara Government that they would continue to base their policy on the Moscow Agreement of March 1922, and, in particular, according to a report received by British Intelligence, that they would in the future allow Russia to "assist" Turkey in any negotiations which she might undertake with the western powers regarding the Straits[145].

The unwillingness of the Soviets to become too deeply engaged with the Turkish Nationalists was increased by their awareness that the Straits Question would, in all probability, be decided by a conference of the powers. They recognised that it would be to their advantage to attend such a conference, and made great efforts during the period of the crisis at Chanak to ensure that they would receive an invitation. On 12 September 1922, M. Karakhan, Russian Commissar for Foreign Affairs, pointed out to the British that his Government would not recognise decisions regarding the Straits taken in the absence of the Black Sea States[146]. On 24 September 1922, in a note despatched to the Foreign Ministers of Great Britain, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Greece, and the Prime Minister of Egypt, he repeated this assertion: the Soviet Government would not recognise "any decision taken without its participation and against its interests... the freedom of the Straits which Great Britain has in mind signifies only the desire of a strong naval power to control a route vitally necessary to other States in order thereby to keep them under a constant threat. This threat is directed in the first place against Russia and Turkey"[147]. On 26 September 1922, M. Berzine, Assistant Official Agent of the Russian Soviet Government in Britain, enquired of Gregory, Head of

144. In March, 1921, the French had negotiated with the Turkish Nationalists an agreement known as the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement providing for the evacuation of French forces from Cilicia and the delineation of a new frontier between Turkey and the mandated territory of Syria.

145. F.O. E 10892/27/44, Relations between Soviet Russia and Angora, minute by Edmonds, 10 Oct. 1922.

146. F.O. E 9243/27/44, Karakhan to Curzon, 12 Sept. 1922.

147. J. Degras (ed.), *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy* (London, 1951), 334; F.O. E 9970/27/44, Karakhan to Curzon, 24 Sept. 1922, tel. no. 1130.

the Northern Department at the Foreign Office, why Russia had not been invited to the conference on the Near East proposed by the Allies. The Soviet Government's view on the freedom of the Straits, he declared, was "a communistic one, namely, that Turkey should be trusted to see to it herself"[148].

The extent of Russia's concern regarding the Straits was made clear to the Allies when, in the midst of the Chanak crisis, the Soviets were led to believe that the British intended to impose, and indeed, had actually imposed, a blockade on the narrows. In a note dated 1 October 1922 Karakhan informed Curzon that his Government could not accept any such restriction. He pointed out that Russia's recovery depended on supplies coming from Europe and America, most of which passed by way of the Straits to the ports of the Black Sea:

> La Russie a déjà protestè contre l'établissement dans les détroits par les puissances victoirieuses d'un régime dirigé contre ses intérêts et ceux de ses alliés. Le blocus des détroits declaré aujourd'hui donne une nouvelle preuve de ce que les puissances, pour qui la navagation dans la Mer Noire ne presente pas un intérêt vital mais qui grace à leurs forces armées exercent le contrôle des détroits, auraient toujours la possibilité de menacer la vie économique pacifique des états riverains de la Mer Noire. La liberté des détroits au nom de laquelle l'Europe se prépare de nouveau à répandre le sang, ne signifie que liberté pour les puissances de l'entente de bloquer à tout instant et sous prétexte quelconque les détroits et de séparer ainsi toute la Mer Noire du reste du monde. Le gouvernement Russe est pour la liberté des détroits, mais pour une liberté qui appartiendrait aux seuls navires de commerce et qui libérerait complètement aussi bien les détroits que la Mer Noire de la présence de forces navales étrangères. La Grande Bretagne et ses alliés ne voient pas leurs routes maritimes d'intérêt vital coupées grace au blocus des détroits; ce blocus ne peut avoir de répercussion sur leur économie nationale — par contre il boulverse la vie économique des états riverains de la Mer Noire. Ce n'est que par l'indifférence totale aux intérêts de ces états qu'on peut expliquer la légèreté avec laquelle les autorités britanniques agissent dans les mers at aux territoires qui ne leur appartiennent pas[149].

148. D.B.F.P., xviii, No. 61.
149. F.O. 371/7897, tel. from Karakhan, 10 Oct. 1922.

In the event the Russian protest proved somewhat misplaced. The British Government had, indeed, authorised Admiral Brock to control shipping in the Dardenelles, the Sea of Marmora and the Bosphorus, should he consider such action necessary. They had, however, decided against instituting blockade measures. They were able, therefore, to inform the Soviet Government that no blockade had in fact been imposed, though some restraint of vessels bound for nationalist ports in the Sea of Marmora (but not the Black Sea or the Mediterranean) had been enforced[150]. Nevertheless the significance of the concern shown by the Russians regarding the Straits was not lost on the British, who during this period were increasingly prepared to admit there might be some advantage in allowing them to play a part in the ultimate settlement of the question[151].

The conclusion of the Armistice of Mudania, made possible by the decision of the Allies to recognise the right of the Turks to the repossession of Eastern Thrace, marked a further stage in the long retreat that had characterised allied policy in the Near East since the end of the First World War. The principal landmarks on this retreat — the refusal of the British Cabinet to approve the expulsion of the Turks from Constantinople, the evacuation by France and Italy of their forces in Cilicia and south western Anatolia, the negotiation of the Franklin-Bouillon Agreement, the extensive concessions granted to the Turkish Nationalists at the London and Paris conferences of March and June 1921, the further concessions offered following the Paris Conference of March 1922, and the ultimate betrayal of the Greek forces fighting in Anatolia — illustrate clearly enough the weakening determination of the allies, and, in particular, of the British and the French, to secure strategic control of the area. Yet until Chanak, the British, at least, had continued to insist that, come what may, Eastern Thrace, and in particular the Gallipoli Peninsula, should not be returned to Turkish sovereignty. Only in this way, they had argued, could the freedom of the Straits be effectively secured. During the Chanak crisis, however, fearful of the consequences of war and of the end of the entente, even they had decided — one can be precise, at a Cabinet meeting held on 23 September 1922 — to abandon this last insurance of strategic control. At the peace conference, which it was agreed should be held at Lausanne starting on 20 November 1922, it remained, therefore, only for the Allies, and in particular for the British, to endeavour to salvage something profitable, in the form perhaps of a favourable Straits convention, from the wreckage of allied policy.

150. *Ibid.*, Alleged Blockade of Dardanelles, Papers Submitted, Nos. 2, 5, 11, 12, and minute, undated.

151. F.O. E 10727/27/44, memo. by Forbes Adam, 27 Sept. 1922.