

THE GREEK PROPOSALS FOR AN ALLIANCE WITH FRANCE AND GREAT BRITAIN, JUNE - JULY 1907

I.

In June, 1907, the Greek Prime Minister, Theotokis, made, with the approval of King George of the Hellenes, an approach to France, suggesting that Greece should become a member of a Mediterranean League, which appeared to Theotokis to have been formed by France, England, Spain, Portugal and Italy¹. The following month Theotokis, again with the approval of the King, made, through Sir Francis Elliot, the British Minister at Athens, a somewhat similar proposal to Great Britain². This approach, although made some four weeks later than that to France, was not in any way prompted by the failure of the French to respond; for, at the time that Theotokis broached the matter with Elliot, the French Foreign Office were still waiting for comments from their ambassadors in London, St. Petersburg and Berlin, and had therefore given no reply.

The double approach to France and Great Britain on the part of the Greek King and the Greek Prime Minister was the result of their new appraisal of the European situation and of their realisation that the Macedonian problem was for Greece much more urgent than the Cretan. The Cretan question, though not yet settled to the satisfaction either of the Cretans or the Greeks, was not likely to be resolved in a way perpetually damaging to Hellenism. The Macedonian situation, on the other hand, was, in the summer of 1907, highly critical for Greece. Although the Greek bands in Macedonia had begun to throw back the Bulgarians, there was still a possibility (or so it seemed to the Greek government, which at the

1. E. Driault et M. Lhéritier, *Histoire Diplomatique de la Grèce*, 5 vols. Paris, 1906, *Tome iv* (par Michel Lhéritier), p. 565. The documents seen by Lhéritier were subsequently published in *Documents Diplomatiques Françaises* (1871 - 1914), 2E Serie (1901 - 1911), *Tome XI*, Paris, M.C.M.L., which authority is cited below as D.D.F.

2. See *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1914 - 1918* (Ed. G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley), cited below as B.D., vol. VIII, pp. 36 ff.

time was not fully aware of the weakness³ of the Bulgarians) that the Bulgarians might increase their efforts and that the policies of the Great Powers might lead to a solution whereby Macedonia might become, like Eastern Roumelia in 1878, an autonomous province⁴, only to be incorporated, like Eastern Roumelia in 1885, within the confines of the Bulgarian Principality. There was, in short, a danger that Greek Macedonia⁵ might be irretrievably lost to Hellenism.

This danger to Hellenism in Macedonia and all that it implied was at first fully realised only by the more discerning minds in the national Greek Kingdom; and it was not until the *Ethnike Etairia*⁶ had been established for some time that the stern realities of the Macedonian problem were forced upon the attention of public opinion and of the Government. But the orientation of Greek foreign policy in the wider interests of Hellenism was never an easy matter. As a result of long neglect of her military establishments, of her weak financial position, and, above all, of her defeat in 1897, Greece possessed but little alliance value and her maritime strategic position was not fully appreciated by the Western Powers. Then again, the Greek King and his ministers had to grope their way in a maze of European diplomatic relations which were only partly known to them: the Great Powers aligned differently on different issues; they intrigued incessantly with the small Balkan Powers; and these small powers const-

3. Stancioff admitted in August 1907 to the British Agent at Sofia, Buchanan, that the Bulgarian element was being gradually exterminated in Macedonia. The situation was indeed vastly different from what it had been five years earlier when the Bulgarian Comitajis were almost unopposed. Inherent weaknesses in the Bulgarian movement were however evident in the abortive risings of 1902 and 1903. These weaknesses became more pronounced. The Bulgarian movement failed for a variety of reasons: party divisions; the energetic measures of the Turks; lack of support from the rural population; lack of sufficient aid from the Bulgarian government; shortage of funds; and the inferiority of the Bulgarian internal organisation to that developed by the Greeks.

4. Certain Bulgarian-Macedonians who were hostile to the Bulgarian Government genuinely favoured autonomy as a permanent solution; but many looked upon autonomy merely as a step towards union with Bulgaria. The idea of autonomy appealed to many Western Europeans and was favoured by Lord Lansdowne. Austria-Hungary and Russia however looked with disfavour on this solution and constantly obstructed the British proposal for the appointment of a Christian Governor.

5. That is to say, the major part of the Vilayets of Monastir and Thessalonike an area somewhat larger than that finally annexed by Greece.

6. This National League, which preached a crusade against the Bulgarians, had developed out of an earlier organisation, *Hellenismos*, which had been founded in 1891. Many young officers joined the *Ethnike Etairia*.

antly attempted combinations among themselves⁷. To all outward appearances Greece had friendly relations with other powers; in fact, however, she had potential enemies and only luke-warm friends; she was indeed in semi-isolation, and there was a constant danger that Greek interests would be ignored. These interests were extensive, for besides those in Crete and Macedonia, there were those in Thrace, Epirus, the Turkish-held Aegean Islands and Asia Minor.

II.

In 1898 King George and his cabinet had established good relations with Germany⁸—a policy which, at that time, in no way implied the renunciation of the traditional friendship between Greece and Great Britain. On the other hand, it was Russia, who, despite her support of Bulgarian and Exarchist aspirations, appeared most actively to promote Greek interests: she had taken a lead in checking the Turks in 1897; she had favoured the appointment of Prince George as Governor of Crete; and in April 1903 she had endeavoured to establish a concert of powers to settle the Cretan problem in a way not unfavourable to Greece. But Russian support was not an unmixed blessing: Russian good offices in Crete meant that Russia would have an excuse for obtaining “compensations” for the other Balkan powers, so that any Greek gains in that quarter might be offset by irreparable losses elsewhere.

By way of contrast to Russia, Austria, who showed antagonism in Crete, tended, under Goluchowski, to give Greece limited support in Macedonia. Goluchowski favoured for the Balkans the *status quo*: in any case he wished to settle the Balkan question slowly, his ideal being the ultimate replacement of Turkish domination by as large a Greece as possible,

7. For example, when in February 1904 Pašić became foreign minister at Belgrade, Serbia attempted to come to terms with Bulgaria. In the summer King Peter met Prince Ferdinand, who was hoping to form a Balkan League supported by Italy, which alignment, though regarded by Italy as defensive, was, on the Serbian side, aimed against Austria. (L. Albertini, *The origins of the War of 1914* (Trans. I. M. Massey), 1952, vol. I, pp. 142 ff.) Between 1904 and 1907 Pašić made numerous attempts to reach agreement with Bulgaria on spheres of influence in Macedonia, but, as he complained to the British envoy, Whitehead, these were always frustrated by Bulgarian chauvinism (Whitehead to Grey, 6 April 1907 F.O. 371/379, 19851). For further examples, see below.

8. In Athens, where the hostility of Germany towards Greece was not fully realised, there was much pro-German feeling which found expression in the Philadelphia Association.

by a large Roumania, a large Bulgaria, a weak Serbia, a small Montenegro and an independent Albania⁹. Goluchowski's declarations in favour of Greece—the full extent of his ideas were probably unknown in Athens—were welcomed by the Greeks, as was also his determination to maintain the *status quo* in Macedonia which for time being seemed best to serve Greek interests¹⁰. On the other hand, the Greeks were highly suspicious of Austria's understanding with Russia, which alignment, negotiated in 1897, had eventually, largely under English pressure, issued in a plan of reforms to be imposed on Turkey—reforms which were outlined in the "Vienna Scheme" of February 1903 and the "Mürzsteg Programme" of October 1903¹¹. But when in 1904 Russia became involved in war against Japan, then more than ever King George and his advisers leaned towards Austria¹², endeavouring at the same time to maintain friendly relations with

9. Report by Bülow (*Grosse Politik*, XVIII², 5609) cited by Albertini, *op. cit.*, pp. 134 - 35.

10. "At the actual moment the maintenance of Turkish authority [in Macedonia] is the solution which best guarantees the interests of Hellenism" (statement by the Greek Minister in Paris, February 1903, cited by Driault and Lhéritier, *op. cit* p. 508. The same idea was expressed in Delyannis's newspaper *Proia* (1 January 1903 O.S.) "Under the point of view of national interests, the maintenance of the *status quo* in European Turkey, improved as much as is reasonably possible by a more tolerable administration, is the policy which is necessary for Greece". As des Graz pointed out to Lansdowne, the Greek Government was hoping that the Powers would not restrain the Turks, but allow them to crush the Bulgarians in Macedonia (29 August 1903 F.O. 32/745). From time to time there were rumours of a formal alliance between Greece and Turkey; (See Egerton to Lansdowne, 18 April 1903 F.O. 32/744, Elliot to Grey, 6 October 1906 F.O. 371/81, 34774) and in March 1907 it was said that Turkey, Serbia, Montenegro and Greece were on the point of making an alliance against Bulgaria (Elliot to Grey, Report, 19 February 1908 F.O. 371/464 6413).

11. The Porte, wishing to avoid having to adopt a scheme of reforms imposed by the Powers, had drawn up its own scheme. Hilmi Pasha had been appointed to supervise the scheme in the three Macedonian vilayets of Thessalonike, Monastir and Uskub. Under the European scheme, he became Inspector General of the three provinces. His powers were not closely defined; nor indeed was the position of the two "Civil Agents" (one Russian, one Austrian), nor of the European financial delegates placed alongside him. Similarly, the position of the European gendarmerie officers was not made clear. All these problems were still under discussion when the Young Turk revolution broke out in 1908. The Greek Government supported the reform programme as it meant that the Powers would restrain Bulgaria and prevent a premature solution of the Macedonian question. The Greek Government, however, had no illusions about the futility of the proposed reforms.

12. See Driault and Lhéritier, *op. cit* pp. 513 - 14. It would seem that the Greek Government had no inkling of the more extensive Austro - Russian agreement

France and England, despite the former's link with Russia and the pro-Bulgar sympathies of the latter. Indeed King George continued to place hopes in Austria long after (as we now know) she had ceased to serve Hellenic ends. In the confused situation of the time, however, there were perhaps good reasons for maintaining close relations with Austria-Hungary, for, as we shall see, it was certainly not easy to substitute for Austria the Western Powers. In many ways, this difficulty which confronted Greece was very similar to that which faced Italy¹³, the chief difference being that Greece had relatively more at stake and, as we have seen, precious little to show by way of military preparations.

The involvement of Russia in Asia in the year 1904-5, which was momentarily favourable to Greece, eventually gave rise to, or at least speeded up, a diplomatic revolution, which, in its repercussions, worked later to the disadvantage of Hellenism in Macedonia. Germany seized the opportunity to thrust against France, whose alliance with Russia had enabled her to expand in Morocco. France, in turn, hastened to improve her relations with England and Italy, and in April 1904 made an *Entente* with England. The Kaiser's plan, attempted first in 1904 and taken up again at Björkö in 1905, of isolating England by aligning with Russia failed completely¹⁴. At the Algeciras Conference of January-April 1906 the *Entente* was strengthened and Russia refrained from supporting Germany. All this time, despite Russian antagonism to the Anglo-Japanese alliance, England attempted to improve her relations with Russia¹⁵ and the result was that, when Russia, after making peace with Japan in August 1905, resumed a more vigorous Near Eastern policy, she could count on some support from England. This collaboration developed when in May 1906 Isvolsky succeeded Lamsdorf at the Russian Foreign Office. He saw clearly that in the Near East Russia could not count on Germany who was the friend of Turkey and the ally of Austria¹⁶.

In the meantime, Austria, though in the process of completing strong military preparations, had by no means enjoyed a free field in the Balkans. She had been checked by the attitude of France and England, by the policy of Italy (who had conflicting Balkan designs) and by the

of 15 October 1904, which on the Russian side was aimed against England and on the Austrian side directed against Italy. (See Albertini, *op. cit.*, p. 138).

13. See Albertini, *op. cit.*, pp. 118 ff.

14. See Albertini, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-61.

15. This is clearly shown in Sir Edward Grey's *Memorandum* of 20th February 1906 (B.D. III, pp. 266-7).

16. Albertini, *op. cit.* p. 188.

steady support which Germany gave to Turkey. Moreover, she herself had been obliged to discourage the Bulgarians and Serbians, who might be tempted to make war in the hope of getting the spoils. She had therefore refrained from annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina. Her main efforts were directed towards an attempt to align the Balkan Powers and, in particular, Greece and Roumania.

But from such entanglements Greece remained aloof and, despite the rumours to the contrary, there was indeed little likelihood of a Greek alignment with Bulgaria, or with Roumania, or even with Serbia. The Greek King and his advisers were firm in their conviction that Bulgaria was the chief enemy: in so far as they favoured any Balkan Power, they favoured the Turks, being content to demand reforms in Macedonia and to leave it to the Greek bandsmen and consuls in Macedonia¹⁷ to win back for Hellenism the ground already lost.

Austrian policy received a great set-back when Greek-Roumanian relations deteriorated in August 1905¹⁸. A further set-back came, when early in 1906, the Serbians, with loans from France, began to arm. Austria re-acted by launching her famous "pig-war" against Serbia and redoubled her efforts to gain support in Athens. By that time Russia was acting more energetically in the Near East, and, although encouraged by England to use firm language to the Greeks, she nevertheless attempted not only to remake the unity of Slavism but to find favour with the Hellenes. This second objective was sought in Crete rather than in Macedonia¹⁹. Early in 1906 (the approach was made by Lamsdorf secretly through France) she proposed that the administration of Crete should be handed to Greece on certain conditions, one of which was that Greece should not oppose reforms in Macedonia. This move linked up for the moment the Cretan and the Macedonian problems; for Russia was not only attempting to steer Greece away from Macedonia but she was hoping that conces-

17. The Greeks had built up in Macedonia an elaborate organisation which was more efficient than the Bulgarian. The consulates, to which officers were attached, provided the divisional headquarters of the organisation. An adequate supply system was developed, and also a relatively complex organisation of guides and intelligence agents. A good description of the organisation in Thessalonike will be found in A. Soulioti-Nikolaïdis, 'Ο Μακεδονικός αγών, 'Η 'Οργάνωσις Θεσσαλονίκης [*The Macedonian Struggle. The Organisation of Thessalonike*] Institute for Balkan Studies, No 28, Thessalonike, 1959 pp. 12 ff.

18. Driault and Lhéritier, p. 522.

19. On 30 November 1905 Russia, in company with Austria, had declared in Sofia, Bucharest and Athens that she would not tolerate any change in the *status quo* of European Turkey.

sions to Greece in Crete would justify compensation for the Slavs elsewhere. These designs, however, were thwarted by Great Britain, who was determined to keep the Cretan and Macedonian questions apart. In May 1906 she proposed that the Greek King should nominate a High Commissioner for Crete; that Greek officers should be employed in the Cretan militia; and that, except for one hundred men who were to guard the Turkish flag, the international troops should be withdrawn. It was precisely because the British plan separated the Cretan and the Macedonian questions that it met with opposition from Isvolsky. Nevertheless, the two questions remained apart; and the Note of 23 July 1906, which resulted from a British revision of a French plan, led eventually to the appointment of Zaïmis as Governor of Crete — a sequel which removed, for the time being the urgency of the Cretan question²⁰.

This settlement in Crete was opposed by Austria, who, however, continued to favour Greece in Macedonia and again attempted the thankless task of reconciling Greece and Roumania²¹. The next important move came from Sofia. At the beginning of 1906 the Bulgarians, whose partisans in Macedonia were now hard pressed, made some effort to come to terms with Greece and Turkey and, when this futile manoeuvre failed, came out in support of the Roumanians. By August 1906 there was considerable tension between Turkey and Bulgaria, with the result that the Sultan, despite constant exhortations from Russia and England to crush all bands in Macedonia, was again by December 1906 inclined to favour the Greeks²². By that time Aerenthal had replaced (October 1906) Goluchowski as Foreign Minister at Vienna. The old understanding between Lamsdorf and Goluchowski was unlikely to continue under Isvolsky and Aerenthal. It was Aerenthal's policy to bring Turkey and Bulgaria together and to encourage the Sultan to put down the Greeks and Serbian bands in Macedonia²³. The result of this was the further *démarche* of 25 March 1907

20. Driault and Lhéritier, *op. cit.* 540 ff. The Note of 23 July 1906 was at first opposed by the Greek King but was accepted by Venizelos. Queen Alexandra and Crown Prince Constantine, who was in London, strongly advised King George to accept it.

21. The complete rupture of relations was announced by Greece on 15th June 1906. (Young to Grey, 19 June 1906, F.O. 371/81, 21605).

22. Driault and Lhéritier, *op. cit.* pp. 549 - 557.

23. This was but a part of Aerenthal's grand design. His wider aim was to bring Serbia within the Austrian - Hungarian Empire and to abandon her Macedonian claims to Bulgaria. He hoped to associate Serbia with Bosnia and Herzegovina, which provinces must be annexed. To make the plan palatable to Turkey and the

by Austria and Russia at Athens and the Turkish demand for the recall of Koromilas, the energetic Greek Consul - General in Salonika. In all this, Austria had strong support from Great Britain and it was at this time that Metaxas, the Greek Minister in London, did not dare to show his face inside the Foreign Office.

Of the change in Austrian policy the Greeks were well aware for they had been adequately informed by the Turks. They had moreover a shrewd idea of the pro-Bulgarian moves of Austria, for they were well aware that Bulgaria had renewed her activities in Macedonia. The Greek King himself was fairly conversant with the changing situation in Europe; and although much of the detail was unknown, the general lines of development, though clouded by much speculation, was common knowledge. The existence of a form of Mediterranean League had been mooted in the *Matin* as early as June 1905 and the results of the Algeciras Conference were an open book²⁴. Moreover, the Greeks were well aware of the tendency of Italy to gravitate towards the Western Powers. In Italy there was, as indeed in France, considerable pro - Greek feeling, and although the Greeks suspected Italy of designs which might conflict with Greek interests, it was reasonable to assume that either Austrian antagonism or the Western Powers would curb Italy, so that Greek interests in Epirus would not be jeopardised unduly. At all events the change in Austrian policy prompted King George and Theotokis to reflect upon Greek policy and to seek an escape from isolation by aligning with the Western Powers, who might be expected to value the strategic position of Greece and who, it was realised, were drawing closer to Russia—the third protecting power who had served Greece well in Crete and who might be expected to frustrate the pro - Bulgarian policy of Aerenthal.

European Powers he was prepared to give up the military occupation of the Sanjak of Novibazar and by implication the open road to Salonika.

24. On 16 May 1907 France, Britain and Spain exchanged notes agreeing the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Western Mediterranean. [See D.D.F. 2e série X, p. 804 and B.D., VII, pp. 1 ff. See also D.D.F. XI, pp. 5 - 6]. There was much speculation about the relations of France, Great Britain and Spain, and in June 1907 the newspaper *Messidor* went so far as to announce treaties of alliance between Spain and Great Britain and Spain and France guaranteeing their positions in the Mediterranean. These rumours were denied. (See D.D.F. XI, p. 45). When on 15 June 1907 the agreements were notified by M. Crozier to d'Aerenthal, the latter, no doubt making allusion to King Edward's springtime journey, stated that the news came as no surprise to him: he had been waiting for it for some time (D.D.F. XI pp. 49 - 50). These rumours alarmed Russia, who feared that agreements of this nature would aggravate French and English relations with Germany. (*ibid.* pp. 51, 86, 88, 89.)

III.

The Greek approach to France was made by Theotokis on 13 June 1907 through La Boulinière, the French Minister at Athens. Having complained of British hostility to Greece and partiality for Bulgaria and having once again made the unanswerable assertion that the Greek Government could not suppress the Greek bands while the Bulgarian bands were active, he went on to say that the question of the bands was a matter of detail and that what was more important was the political future of Greece. According to La Boulinière he developed this theme as follows:

Je vois se former un groupement des Puissances pour la défense des intérêts méditerranéens dont font partie, avec la France, l'Angleterre, l'Espagne, le Portugal, l'Italie. Je vois d'un autre côté l'Allemagne, l'Autriche et vraisemblablement la Turquie. La Grèce reste en l'air et isolée en cas de conflit. Sa situation lui donne cependant une valeur réelle. C'est vers la France que vont toutes ses sympathies; c'est vers la France que je désire orienter sa politique, c'est aux côtés de la France que la Grèce aimerait à prendre sa place dans le groupement des Puissances. Il y a des conditions à remplir! . . . L'armée, et particulièrement la marine grecques doivent-elles être complétées, réorganisées d'après un programme combiné? Je suis prêt à examiner toutes les demandes qui nous seraient faites dans ce sens par la France, à en tenir compte, et même d'accepter le concours d'officiers français pour l'organisation de nos forces navales; la France, de son côté, ne nous refuserait pas sans doute son appui financier . . . *Ce sont des ouvertures formelles que je vous fais, d'accord avec le Roi qui partage mon sentiment . . .*²⁵.

The approach to England, which was made early in July and which Sir Francis Elliot communicated on 8th July 1907 to Sir Edward Grey, was much the same. According to Elliot, Theotokis said:

. . . The Powers towards which Greece desired, both from inclination and from policy, to gravitate were the Western Powers, yet just now she was receiving nothing but knocks from them, and especially from England . . . England had . . . apparently abandoned Greece and adopted another protégée [Bulgaria] . . . Yet M. Theotoky could not believe it was part of the policy of His Majesty's Government to encourage Bulgarian aspirations. He knew there were people who imagined that Bulgaria could be erected into a barrier to check the advance of Russia upon the Bosphorus, but he did not suppose that His Majesty's Government cherished such an illusion, anymore than that either France or England could wish to see the Straits in Rus-

25. D.D.F. 2e Série, XI, pp. 43 - 4.

sian hands. If this were so, the interests of the Western Powers coincided with those of Greece, for if Bulgaria were allowed to gain a footing on the Aegean it would be the death blow of Greece... Granted the existence of this community of interests, would it not be possible to give some expression to it in a formal Agreement? Greece was of course a weak power; and had not much to offer; she had, however, her geographical situation, which would render alliance a valuable asset in conceivable eventualities, and she was on the point of reorganising and strengthening her fleet. She would do this with better heart if she saw that her efforts tended to a positive result, and she would gratefully adopt the suggestions of her allies on the subject.

On the other hand she asked for very little in return. She asked that some day, it might be in two years or it might be in fifty, when the break up of the Ottoman Empire should come to pass, her allies should see that she obtained satisfaction of her aspirations, that Epirus, her claim to which had already been recognised by Europe²⁶, should be given to her, and that her road to Constantinople should not be barred... If the Western Powers had so completely changed their policy as to be able to look with equanimity upon the prospect of a Slav advance to the Dardanelles and the Aegean, then, of course, Greece must abandon her reliance upon them, and must look for protection to other quarters²⁷, to which he (Theotoky) was already being cajoled to resort...²⁸.

26. Article XXIV of the Treaty of Berlin, citing the 13th Protocol of the Congress, reserved to the Powers their mediation in the rectification of the Greco-Turkish northern frontier. At the subsequent Conference of Berlin (1880) the Powers awarded the Kalamas - Salamyros frontier, thus ceding a large portion of Epirus. This the Turks would not accept. The subsequent convention of 24 May 1882 substituted the much less favourable frontier following the Arta, thus depriving Greece of a considerable area, including Jannina. See Hertslet, *Map of Europe by Treaty*, 1891, vol. IV, Nos. 530, 566 - 569, 584.

27. In a Foreign Office minute, Mallet gave the opinion that a Greek understanding with Germany was unlikely (B.D. VIII, p. 39) Elliot, however took the German "cajolery" more seriously. To Grey he wrote on 9 July 1907 (B.D. VIII, pp. 40 - 1): "If it be true that the Emperor Williams aspires to make Germany a Mediterranean Power, an alliance with Greece... might be a great advantage to His Majesty." Hardinge wrote in a minute: "The Greek Navy is valueless. In time of war the only advantage to be derived from a friendly Greece would be the use of Greek harbours. We need not be frightened by the German bugbear in the Mediterranean so long as we hold Gibraltar and have a powerful fleet." (B.D. VIII, p. 14).

28. B.D. VIII, pp. 36 - 37. It is interesting to note that the British Admiralty already had a "quasi-naval station" at Platea, near Astakos. There were stone quays, a chapel, slaughterhouses, a rifle range and so forth all of which had been built by H.M. Ships (Private letter of Elliot to Oliphant, 27 May, 1908).

These proposals found no favour with the British Government. In a minute to Elliot's despatch of 9 July 1907 Grey wrote:

An understanding of this kind with Greece is only to be obtained by offending Turkey and Bulgaria: I do not believe that any Power will incur these disadvantages for the sake of the friendship of Greece, which is only of use to the Power which has and can keep command of the sea in the Mediterranean and to which Greek harbours might be a convenience²⁹.

In his reply³⁰ to the Greek Government, Grey, having expressed concern at Theotokis's misinterpretation of Anglo-Greek relations, stated that "legitimate national aspirations of the Hellenic race" had always received sympathy in Great Britain, whose action in Crete had displayed her traditional friendship with the Greek Kingdom. Grey then pointed out that Great Britain could not bind herself by secret agreements. Finally he explained that British policy in the Balkans was to preserve the *status quo* and to do all possible to improve the conditions under which the Christian races lived. If Greece desired to maintain her friendship with Great Britain she should assist this policy by suppressing immediately the Greek bands which were operating in Macedonia.

IV.

At the time, the British Government was unaware of the earlier Greek approach to France, who tended to show a greater interest in the Greek proposal. In the summer of 1907 Admiral Fournier, a French naval expert, visited Greece and expressed views which were evidently highly acceptable to King George, who invited him to submit a Note³¹ to Theotokis formulating a naval plan. This apparent success of Fournier's mission impressed the French minister, La Boulinière, who, wishing to hasten negotiations for an alliance with Greece, asked Pichon, the French Foreign

29. B.D. VIII, p. 41. This was a most extraordinary statement from a Foreign Minister of a power which had vital interests in Egypt and the route through Suez, which was on the point of aligning with Russian and which had for some time been very sensitive to German naval competition.

30. B.D. VIII, p. 41 - 2.

31. A copy of this Note was sent by La Boulinière to the French Foreign Office on 3 July (D.D.F. XI, p. 105), but the document seems to have been destroyed. It is possible that the original may yet be discovered in the Greek archives. We have, however, Fournier's Memorandum of 8 September 1907, which was sent to Queen Alexandra and which is published in B.D. VIII, pp. 45 - 47. This presumably follows closely his Note to Theotokis.

Minister³², for authority to negotiate an agreement based on a resolution of the Greek Government to accept Fournier's plan for the Navy and a French plan for the Army, and the undertaking of France to furnish all necessary assistance, including presumably a loan to Greece. The French Foreign Minister, however, who was still waiting for replies concerning the proposed alliance from the French Ambassadors in Berlin, London and St. Petersburg, instructed La Boulinière "to gain time", making it clear moreover that France, though willing to give Greece assistance in improving her forces, could not undertake officially the elaboration and execution of Fournier's naval plans³³.

On 8 July Pichon received a reply³⁴ from M. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador at Berlin. Cambon's view was that the moment was inopportune to enter into any engagements with Greece. The Franco-Japanese agreement of 10 June 1907 and the Franco-Spanish alignment had caused such consternation at Berlin and Vienna that it would be most imprudent to make yet another agreement on these lines. Moreover an agreement with Greece presented special difficulties. Germany and Austria were so sensitive about the Eastern Question that any French move in the Balkans would only lead to serious complications. On the other hand, it would be regrettable if France were to drive Greece into the arms of Germany and thus strengthen Germany in the Mediterranean³⁵. It would therefore be better for Greece to apply to England for help with her navy. Greece, in making her approach to France, had obviously been under some misconception concerning English policy towards Bulgaria; for it was Austria and not England who was siding with Bulgaria³⁶.

Paul Cambon, French Ambassador in London, gave his comments on 17 July³⁷. Theotokis, he said, had evidently forgotten the guarantee given to Greece by Russia, France and Great Britain in the Treaty of 7th May 1832—which guarantee was renewed in the Treaty of 13 July 1863. The three powers had secured for Greece an armistice in April 1897 when the Turks were victorious at Pharsala (Ciatalgia) and the road to Athens was open: and France, in view of the Greek request for mediation, had associated in the intervention the Triple Alliance Powers—Germany, Austria,

32. 2 July 1907 D.D.F. XI, pp. 105 - 7.

33. 3 July 1907 D.D.F. XI, p. 110.

34. 3 July 1907 D.D.F. XI, pp. 110 - 12.

35. Cambon realised, however, that the movement of Greece towards the Central Powers might be offset by the withdrawal of Italy from the Triple Alliance.

36. As we have seen, the Greeks were aware of Aerenthal's policy.

37. D.D.F. XI, pp. 134 - 6.

and Italy. It was therefore not true to say that Greece was isolated and in danger. In any case, France was not free to negotiate with Greece a separate entente, which left out Russia and Great Britain. What was the object of the proposed entente? Surely not the defence of Greece, but the fulfilment of Greek aims in Crete and Macedonia. The Greeks (he went on) were seizing the occasion of the trials of the Creusot guns³⁸ to obtain French promises of assistance in their enterprises. France, he concluded, could not be a partner to an agreement, which, owing to the connections between the Greek and German courts, could not for long be kept secret: already the whole business had given rise to rumours³⁹ and to much ill-feeling in the German Press⁴⁰.

A quite different line was taken by Bompard, the French Minister at St. Petersburg⁴¹. Bompard thought that Theotokis ought to be encouraged, or else Greece would become a German outpost in the Mediterranean. It would however not be prudent, in view of the events of 1897, to place too much faith in the Greek army and naval forces and care must be taken not to drive Serbia, Roumania and, above all, Bulgaria into the hands of Germany. Greece, therefore, must not be encouraged to undertake political adventures, whatever hopes might be held out to her of eventual expansion. What is more, support of Greece must not be allowed to endanger French interests in Turkey; nor, in view of French ties with St. Petersburg, the interests of Russia.

Such, then, were the views of the French Ambassadors in London, Berlin and St. Petersburg. Pichon, as his minute shows⁴², agreed entirely with Paul Cambon. But no further reply seems to have been made to La Boulinière in Athens. Early in November, however, King George, who was staying in Paris, discussed the matter with Pichon⁴³: the Greek King not only asked that Admiral Fournier should be placed at the disposal of the

38. The Creusot guns were found preferable to the German guns. The German Press suspected "foul play", but toned down when the Creusot guns scored another victory in Spain. (See Jules Cambon to Pichon, Berlin, 25 July 1907, D.D.F. XL pp. 164 - 5).

39. On 14 July 1907 Pichon instructed French representatives to deny these rumours. (D.D.F. XI, p. 129).

40. Pichon's minute to this despatch ran: "Je partage entièrement l'avis exprimé par M. Paul Cambon".

41. Bompard to Pichon, 26 July 1907, D.D.F. XI, pp. 165 - 67.

42. See Note 40.

43. Pichon's despatch to Paul Cambon, reporting the conversation has not been found (see D.D.F. XI, p. 325, n. 3) but Cambon's account to Grey is reported in Grey's despatch of 7 November 1907 to Bertie (B.D. VIII, pp. 44 - 5). The Greek

Hellenic Government, but that a loan should be made available to Greece in order that she might undertake a reorganisation of her military forces. This approach was well received. On 12 November 1907 Pichon wrote at last to La Boulinière saying that as soon as the Greek Government informed him officially of its intention to entrust Fournier with the organisation of the Greek Navy, he would then write a letter to Theotokis containing the following words agreed upon with King George :

Partisan du *status quo* en Macédoine, le gouvernement de la République s'appliquera à ce qu'il soit maintenu; et dans le cas où le statu quo viendrait à être modifié il ferait tous ses efforts pour que les intérêts helléniques fussent sauvegardés⁴⁴.

The Greek demand for a loan, however, raised a difficult problem. For several years the Greek finances had been in some measure⁴⁵ under the control of an international commission. The French Government was, however, prepared to instruct the French delegate on this commission to facilitate the loan, and King George had reason to believe that the Italian delegate would be favourable. King George had already canvassed the idea with King Edward, whom he had met in Paris⁴⁶, and he had handed to Queen Alexandra a copy of a Memorandum⁴⁷ by Fournier on Greek naval requirements.

Vice-Admiral Fournier was a retired Naval Officer in the French Naval Reserve. He was noted for his advanced ideas on naval organisation — ideas which indeed were not widely accepted in France. He advocated above all the necessity of submarines and torpedoboats, and he attached less importance than the more conventional naval strategists to capital ships. It was said that he had financial interests in the ideas he sponsored

King is reported to have said that "if Greece were left to her fate, the Eastern Mediterranean, including the Adriatic, would eventually become a German lake".

44. Driault and Lhéritier, *op. cit.* 566.

45. Young, the British representative, pointed out that contrary to the general impression Greece was free to raise loans and had recently raised the Armaments Loan of 1907. There were indeed certain restrictions: the Greek Government could not raise money in the form of an issue of forced paper currency and it could not encroach on revenues already assigned for servicing her debts. (See Young's report enclosed in Elliot to Grey, 29 November 1907 F.O. 371/264, 41026). The Greek Government proposed to raise a loan of 60,000,000 francs in France and to service it by a surtax on tobacco. This proposal required at least the blessing of the Control Commission (Elliot to Grey, 14 December 1907. F.O. 371/264, 41025).

46. D.D.F. XI, p. 325.

47. See above, Note 31.

and that, in pressing his proposals on King George, he was endeavouring, with the support of the French Government, to secure orders for the French shipyards in which he himself was personally interested.

In his Memorandum Fournier argued that in the event of a war between the Western and the Central Powers, Greece would play an important part, and indeed a decisive part, if she were only appropriately armed; and he went on to advocate that Greece should substitute for her weak and costly existing fleet an entirely different naval establishment, one more appropriate to her resources and to her national aptitude, and one which exploited to the best advantage her geographical and strategic conditions. Her naval establishment should consist of numerous flotillas of torpedo-boats and submarines, supported by small, well-armed cruisers or destroyers, which utilising the Greek harbours and islands would constantly harry and ambush the enemy fleets. Naval forces of this kind could not easily be destroyed and they would be particularly harassing to the Western Powers if allied to and supported by the military forces of the Central Powers. If Greece possessed a fleet of this kind the two Western Powers would be bound to align with Greece and would therefore ensure the protection of Hellenic interests, notably in Macedonia and Crete.

Fournier's plan for the Greek Navy proved to be highly acceptable to the French Naval and political authorities. For one thing it obviated the immediate difficulties of the proposed alliance; for another it would transform the Greek Navy into a French auxiliary force, which, since moreover France would get the contracts for the construction of the vessels, would be so closely tied to the French naval system that it would be of little value if called upon to operate in the service of the Central Powers. Yet another advantage of the scheme was that English investors were likely to contribute to the loan. No wonder then that the French pressed hard for British co-operation in securing the blessing of the Control Commission for the loan. The British Foreign Office, however, first consulted ⁴⁸ Young who had become the President of that Commission and who was the only member of it who really did much work ⁴⁹. Young immediately enquired whether he could treat the problem as a purely economic one or whether there were political considerations to be taken into account ⁵⁰. Grey replied

48. Grey to Elliot, 21 November 1907 F.O. 371/264, 37612.

49. Young to Grey, 3 December 1907, F.O. 371/264, 40373. The Austrian member, Ippen, did indeed bestir himself, but mainly in order to push the sale of Austrian matches. Young pays tribute to the efficiency of the Secretary-General, M. Pappaloukas.

50. Elliot to Grey, 14 December 1907 F.O. 371/264, 41025. A minute by

that political considerations should not override the interests of the Bondholders: he added that Young should take care to keep the German Minister informed⁵¹ and that he should not take the initiative in opposing the proposed surtax on tobacco⁵². Grey indeed wished to avoid offending the French, who continued to press for British support⁵³. In the end the Bondholders, who were consulted in a somewhat perfunctory fashion, waived all objection, and Young was instructed to agree to the tobacco surtax for servicing the loan⁵⁴.

None of the delegates on the Commission raised any objection and even the German minister, much to everyone's surprise, let the matter pass without comment. It therefore seemed that Fournier would get the funds for his Greek Navy.

V.

Fournier's plan, news of which had leaked out in Greece⁵⁵, was however to meet with opposition in another quarter. It was attacked by Greek naval officers and by the newly-created naval general staff⁵⁶ which itself was the outcome of an agitation among naval officers amounting almost to complete insubordination. So fierce was the opposition that the Government in approaching the Chamber of Deputies for funds, was content merely to ask for £ 1450 in order to be able to appoint a foreign naval officer in accordance with the Naval Law of 1899⁵⁷. To stifle this demand two deputies, Miaoulis and Karaiskakis, who were also naval officers, organised a public protest, and Miaoulis made it clear that if Fournier were appointed he would be boycotted by the officers. This opposition was encouraged by Prince George, who fancied himself of greater use than Fournier and who was firmly convinced that Greece required a balanced and independent navy and not one which would be a mere auxilliary force subordinate to France⁵⁸.

Hardinge ran: "This is a very difficult and tiresome question which is likely to place us in opposition to both the French and the Greeks".

51. The German member of the Control Commission was absent from Athens.

52. Grey to Elliot, 18 December 1907, F.O. 371/264, 41025.

53. Geoffray to Mallet, 24 December 1907 F.O. 371/264, 42047.

54. Grey to Elliot, 31 December 1907, F.O. 371/264, 42721

55. Elliot to Grey, 26 March 1908, F.O. 371/464, 11143.

56. Young to Grey, 27 March 1908, F.O. 371/464, 11146.

57. The Law provided for the appointment of two foreign officers.

58. Elliot to Grey, 23 April 1908 F.O. 371/464, 14705. Some opposition in the Greek Press seems to have been stirred up by a Greek in the employ of a French

Fournier, however, continued to press for his plan. In an interview with the Greek newspaper *Embros*⁵⁹, he defended his honour, his naval reputation and his ideas. Denying absolutely that he had financial interests in his scheme, he went on to say that Greece had for twenty years been left out of all combinations and alliances as she could do no good to her friends and no damage to her enemies. Greece would waste her substance on big ships. Other powers (Turkey included) were going in for submarines. The moment Greece was able to conceal a flotilla of submarines in the Aegean, the Powers would take notice of her and solicit her friendship.

But despite this vigorous reply by Fournier, the whole scheme foundered in a sea of Greek politics and, much to the disappointment of Clemenceau, Theotokis himself decided against a navy of Fournier's specifications⁶⁰. As a consequence, Greek naval development set for itself a different course and Greek foreign policy resumed for a time its faltering steps along paths which seemed to lead nowhere. With the Young Turks who had come to power in 1908, the Greek Government, mindful of growing British influence at Constantinople, endeavoured to establish good relations, but not without the fear, however, that the Turkish policy of religious equality would reduce the power and influence of the Greek Pa-

firm, Chantiers de St. Nazaire—a firm which was a rival to that in which Fournier was said to have financial interests.

59. 5 May 1908. Earlier this newspaper (6 December 1907) had published an account of an interview with Levides, President of the Chamber, whom the King had tried to influence. Levides stated the King's opinion as being ". . . it is no use making schemes entailing an impossible expenditure. The expenditure must be kept within 60,000,000 francs. It should include the improvement of the three armoured cruisers and the strengthening of their armament. We have eight torpedo-boat destroyers, but they should be increased to twenty at least, and submarine boats are equally required. This is the preparation that is possible if the Chamber will accept it and the right man is found to carry it out. The right man is Admiral Fournier. . . ." Elliot to Grey, 21 December 1907 F.O. 371/264, 42221).

60. Young to Grey, 18 August 1908. F.O. 371/464, 30189. The British Government was somewhat afraid lest the French should attribute Theotokis's change of front to conversations he had with Captain Troubridge, Admiral Drury's Chief-of-Staff. Troubridge was questioned and confessed to saying: "possession by weak countries with weak frontiers of sea forces of a power and fighting value compelling their recognition is disadvantageous to Great Britain". (2 October 1908, F.O. 371/464, 37587). His remark nevertheless met with approval in British official circles. The implication was presumably that, in the event of war, a strong Greek navy would pass under the control of the Central Powers attacking Greece by land. Two wars have shown the fallacy of this statement.

triarch⁶¹. The Greek King, who still regarded Bulgaria as the constant enemy, continued throughout 1909 to maintain the friendship of Constantinople and the Government of Dragoumes (taking office in January 1910) pronounced firmly for that policy. But later that year affairs in Crete brought Greece and Turkey to the verge of war, and it was not till 1911, when the Italo-Turkish war broke out, that Greco-Turkish relations were improved. All this time Greece had tended once again to move closer to Austria, for, of the two dangers that confronted Greece—Slavism and Germanism—the former, which seemed to be favoured by the Western Powers, appeared to offer the greater threat⁶². The future was most uncertain, and the European scene when viewed from Athens, was most bewildering. As we know now, there were numerous possibilities—numerous turns which history might have taken from 1908 onwards⁶³. It so happened that Greece aligned with the Balkan Powers and defeated Turkey. In the Balkan wars her Navy (which had been developed with the assistance of a British Naval Mission) played a vital part. It would therefore seem that when the Greek officers strongly opposed Fournier's plans, they were right. Although their opposition prevented Greece from making a definite alignment with France, that loss, as things turned out, was not material. All that France had promised was that if the *status quo* in the Balkans could no longer be maintained then she would do what was in her power to promote Hellenic interests. But neither the method nor the end was in any sense defined. French policy however was clearly stated as the maintenance of the *status quo* and had Greece been closely aligned with France with her Navy fashioned according to Fournier's plan she would presumably have lost that freedom of action which enabled her to avenge the defeat of 1897 and to reap the advantage gained by the Greek *andartes* in Macedonia between 1903 and 1909.

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61. Young to Grey, 29 August and 7 September, 1908. F.O. 371/465, 30588, 31664. In November 1908 when Turkish-Bulgarian relations were much strained, there were again rumours of a Greco-Turkish alliance. (Elliot's Annual Report for 1908. F.O. 371/678, 16961.)

62. Driault and Lhéritier, V. p. 15.

63. See Albertini, pp. 190 ff.