

**BRITISH POLICY ON THE FATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE
AND
THE ALLIED OCCUPATION OF THE CITY ON MARCH 16, 1920**

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Great Britain's policy aims after World War I towards the defeated Ottoman Empire markedly included that wherever Armenians, Kurds, Greeks and Arabs constituted a majority Turkish rule must cease, and that the Turkish capital and the Straits must be taken from Turkish control to secure a free road to her far-flung dominions in Asia, India in particular¹. Combined with the British desire to end the continuance of Turkish power as an effective administration in any part of Europe, David Lloyd George, the Prime Minister of the British coalition government, followed a policy for the expulsion of the Turks from Constantinople, even though there was a great degree of opposition within his own cabinet. Lloyd George and his supporters on the subject expressed the correctness of their theory of turning the Turks out of Constantinople, the seat of the Ottoman Sultanate and the Caliphate, under twelve principal themes:

- Constantinople was neither the national capital of the Turks, nor were the Turks a majority of the permanent population of the city.
- There was not the slightest ground for accepting that Constantinople was an established holy city for the residence of the Caliphate, nor that the Ottoman Sultan was the Caliph of the Muslims.

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¹ Lloyd George's statement in Parliamentary Debates - PD(Commons), 26 February 1920, vol. 125, pp. 1966-7.

- Constantinople had always been the theatre for every disreputable European intrigue. Therefore, it was vital that the Ottoman government should once and for all be removed from European diplomacy and that Turkey must be deprived of her European possessions: Constantinople, the Straits and Thrace.
- The Committee of Union and Progress (CUP), which governed the country before and during the war, had betrayed Britain by entering World War I on the side of Germany and should now pay the price of betraying the British by losing control of the Turkish capital.
- The Ottoman government had always been a source of oppression and misrule to the subject nationalities. The Turkish wartime leaders in the CUP, Enver, Talat and Cemal Paşas, too, had followed an extermination policy towards foreign elements, namely the Christians. Therefore, there was a great necessity to end Turkish rule over subject races of another faith and thus assure an unobstructed opportunity of autonomous development for the non-Muslim Ottoman subjects.
- The Turks should be deprived of Constantinople as the crowning symbol of their defeat in the war. Muslim opinion in India and elsewhere should be made to realise that Turkey, having been completely defeated in the war, could no longer pose as the triumphant soldier of Islam.
- The Turkish Nationalist Movement under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal, which flourished in the inner part of Anatolia in 1919, and what remained of the old CUP increasingly became a cause of disturbance against both the Sultan's authority and the Allied designs for Turkey. Unless they were taught a harsh lesson they would continue to fight the British with the weapons of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism. The value of the victory obtained and the results of the war would thus be undermined; this would create

negative repercussions in the Middle East from the eastern shores of the Mediterranean to the borders of India, and in the Muslim world in general for the honour of the British, and might even shipwreck the coalition of the victorious Allied powers.

- The Nationalist Movement might have been a hard nut to crack. But a Nationalist party with its sovereign in Constantinople, even if his forts and warships had disappeared, would be a much more anxious problem.
- The control of the Straits was absolutely necessary and this would be easier if the Allies had Constantinople.
- Any possible Bolshevik plan to unite themselves with the Turks still in possession of Constantinople and the Straits would create a great danger for the British position in the Middle East, as well as for peace in the region.
- If Constantinople were taken away from the Turks and entrusted to other hands it would serve to satisfy the Greeks perfectly.
- It would be advantageous to dismiss the Sublime Porte from governing Constantinople until an Allied-type of harsh peace treaty was accepted by the Turks.²

Britain had to balance her desire to destroy Turkish power once and for all with her need to keep Turkish rule somewhere between 'dead and alive' just for the sake of British imperial interests in the East. Besides, the

² For themes, see Lord Cecil's statement in PD (Commons), 26 February 1920, vol. 125, pp. 1973-5; Sir Donald Maclean's statement in PD (Commons), 26 February 1920, vol. 125, pp. 1951-4; Viscount Bryce's statement in PD (Lords), 11 March 1920, vol. 39, pp. 397, 400-3; Henry Asquith's statement in PD (Commons), 25 March 1920, vol. 127, pp. 640-2; Lloyd George's statement in PD (Commons), 23 June 1920, vol. 130, pp. 2260-1; CAB23/37, Conference 18, Conclusions of a Conference, London 5 January 1920; Br. Doc. IV: 999, Memorandum by Curzon on the future of Constantinople, 4 January 1920. See also H. Nicolson, *Curzon: The Last Phase 1919-1925*, London 1937, pp. 76-80.

trade of the British Empire would be lost if Turkey fell into chaos. British trade before the war with Turkey was 26% as against Germany's 14% and France's 12%; in other words, British commercial interests had been nearly twice as large as those of any other power³. Therefore, it was essential for the British to keep the Ottoman government in power either in Constantinople or, preferably, somewhere remote from Constantinople, but strictly on the condition that the master of the Turkish capital should be under British guidance. It was also extremely important for the British to overcome the problems that appeared at the end of the war due to the need for a reshuffle in the Middle East in the balance of the Great Power's spheres of influence. The complications which arose from the impossibility of realising the Allied war-time treaties had to be disentangled in a short period of time. In the Constantinople Agreement of May 18, 1915, for instance, Britain had agreed that the Tsarist Russian Empire should obtain, in complete possession, Constantinople and the Straits. However, in 1918 this treaty was no longer valid since Russia had voluntarily relinquished her claims against Turkey in 1917 shortly before the advent of the Bolshevik revolution⁴. As a consequence of the disintegration of the Tsarist Empire, there seemed no obligation for the Allies to grant Russia a warm-water port in the interest of peace. This, at least for a short period of time, created a breathing-space for the British. However, a new participant in post-war Allied policies, Greece, had entered the war without an explicit agreement concerning post-war territorial benefits. She had to be satisfied by territorial gains in Asia Minor, and Britain was the only country among the Allies that could possibly give support to Greek designs. Moreover, while trying to minimise their secret treaty obligations towards France and Italy, the British had to get rid of in particular, French efforts towards political preponderance in the Middle East.

3 CAB23/37, Conference 18, **Conclusions of a Conference**, London 5 January 1920.

4 Five secret agreements made during the course of World War I foretold the break-up of the Ottoman Empire. The nations involved in this prospective carving-up of the Ottoman realm were Britain, France, Italy, and Russia. Details in Nicolson, **Curzon**, pp. 82-8; H.H. Cumming, **Franco-British Rivalry in the Post-War Near East: The decline of French influence**, London 1981, chapter III. For texts, see J. C. Hurewitz, **Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record 1914-1956**, vol. II, New York 1956, pp. 7, 11, 18, 23.

This study aims to review the fundamental difficulties and fallacies to which, in the years immediately following the signing of the armistice of Mudros with Turkey on October 30, 1918, the British policy-makers were exposed in determining, particularly, the future position of the Turkish capital. As far as the fate of Constantinople was concerned, the main problem was 'who would govern Constantinople and the Straits and how'. If Britain undertook that responsibility, even indirectly, this would no doubt place a financial burden on her shoulders. Moreover, any dominant presence of Britain in the Turkish capital and the Straits would irritate the other Allies, as well as the Russians, who had always placed prime importance on those places. There was also an unavoidable reality in view that the Sultan-Caliph, Mehmed Vahideddin, was, for some time, almost unable to exercise any real authority over his officials in central Anatolia, and that any increasing image of 'the Sultan under close British supervision' would further destroy his chance for restoring his authority *vis-à-vis* his own people in Anatolia. Britain, too, had to confront these new currents of racial and political aspirations in Anatolia--namely, the Nationalist Movement⁵. This rebellious movement was, in British eyes, the old CUP revived⁶. The fear of its consolidation thus created a common ground for an alliance between the Sultan, his government and the British. This common ground might have put the British in a superior position in Constantinople, but it was not out of the realm of possibility that a too cordial relationship between London and Constantinople might have confounded the confusion in the Turkish question.

5 In May 1919 the Ottoman War Ministry had dispatched Mustafa Kemal Paşa, already a well-known general, to the interior as inspector-general of troops in eastern Anatolia. Mustafa Kemal resigned his army commission in July and assumed command of the Nationalist Movement, which defied the acrimonious Allied designs of partitioning Turkey and criticised the inefficiency of the Sultan's government in thwarting such activities of the Allies. For the rise of Mustafa Kemal, see B.C. Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne: Britain's Frontier in West Asia, 1918-1923*, New York 1976, pp. 166-81.

6 P.C. Helmreich, *From Paris to Sévres: The Partition of the Ottoman Empire at the Peace Conference of 1919-1920*, Ohio 1974, p. 108; E.J. Zürcher, *The Unionist Factor: The Role of the Committee of Union and Progress in the Turkish National Movement 1905-1926*, Leiden 1984, pp. 68-9.

I. INITIAL CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING THE FATE OF CONSTANTINOPLE PRIOR TO THE OCCUPATION

The events following the armistice of Mudros indicated that the Allies meant to grant the Turks almost no space for survival. The arrival of the Allied fleet in Constantinople on November 13, 1918, only two weeks after the signing of the armistice, gave an immediate hint that the freedom of the Turkish administration and security in Constantinople itself were to be non-existent. But during the war the British Prime Minister had made a speech on January 5, 1918 in which he had promised that they were not fighting for Constantinople and for Asia Minor and Thrace, 'the homelands of the Turkish race'⁷. Now, with the end of the war, Lloyd George claimed that this statement had not been intended as an offer to the Turks but as a reassurance to Britain's own people, especially the workers and the disturbed Muslim population of India, as to the purposes for which the British were waging war⁸. Lord R.Cecil, the member for Hitchin, too, confirmed that as the Prime Minister said it was necessary at the beginning of 1918 to conciliate labour opinion. It was then thought that two of the Allied opponents, Turkey and Austria, were weakening in the struggle and the Allies were anxious to separate them. Therefore, the whole of that statement bore the intent of that desire⁹. The fact that Lloyd George's statement was not an offer of peace to the Turks but only a war move, clearly indicated that the British designs for the future of Turkey were never bound to change for the better.

Nevertheless, the Paris peace conference which opened in January 1919 was eager to carve up the Ottoman Empire. The victorious Allied powers, with the exception of the absent Russia, propounded the tem-

⁷ Lloyd George's speech of 5 January 1918 in D. Lloyd George, *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, vol. II, New Haven 1939, p. 809.

⁸ PD (Commons), 26 February 1920, vol. 125, pp. 1960-2.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 1976.

porary ceding of disputed Ottoman lands, including Constantinople, to themselves under the mandate system. A great portion of Turkish optimism that the doctrine of self-determination outlined by American President Woodrow Wilson was to be accorded to the Turks, was thus ruined. When the Big Four (Britain, France, Italy and the United States) met in Paris in January the broad line of British hopes favoured leaving the Turks a purely Asiatic Empire--while placing the rest of Turkey under the mandatory control of the United States. They also favoured transferring control over Constantinople and the Straits to an international body--if possible, under the mandatory power of Britain or the United States. However, in the following few months President Wilson gave clear signs to the British that the United States would not accept such a vast mandate. French Premier Benjamin Clemenceau, on the other hand, suspected that the British were trying to put the Americans in Asia Minor in order to oust the French¹⁰. In short in Paris, French and British policies on the Turkish question became increasingly divergent. British hopes that America would pleasantly accept responsibility for both Anatolian Turkey and Constantinople started to fade.

In May 1919, the Turkish question reached an explosive point with the occupation of Smyrna (a city which had been promised in 1917 to the Italians) by the Greeks on May 15. It was only a couple of days before this event that the Three (Lloyd George, Clemenceau and President Wilson) had agreed in Paris, on May 13, to allow the establishment of a Greek zone in western Anatolia, including Smyrna. Surely, these two events were connected with each other. In other words, the Greeks had been encouraged by the increasing leniency of the powers, and especially by the support of Lloyd George, in Paris towards Greek claims to territory in Asia Minor. The provisional resolutions of May 13 were also about to take Con-

¹⁰ N. Petsalis - Diomidis, *Greece at the Paris Peace Conference (1919)*, Thessaloniki 1978, pp. 129-32. For the Paris peace conference of 1919, see Cumming, *Franco-British Rivalry*, chapter VIII; L. Hankey, *The Supreme Control at the Paris Peace Conference 1919*, London 1963.

stantinople and the Straits away from Turkish sovereignty and place them under a mandatory responsible to the League of Nations and to allow the establishment of an independent Turkish state in Asia Minor, though under the shadow of the various Allied spheres of influence. These resolutions met with strong opposition from the Indian representatives, the Agha Khan, the Maharaja of Bikaner and Lord Sinha, and from Lord Curzon, the Lord President of the Council, and Winston Churchill, the Secretary of State for War. Edwin Montagu, the Secretary of State for India, opposed mandates for Turkey, as well as the continuation of the Greek occupation of Smyrna. Lord Balfour, the Foreign Secretary, and Curzon were, as always, strongly insistent in turning the Turks out of Europe. But Curzon also pointed out that it would be an irreparable mistake to partition what remained of Turkey after she had been deprived of Arabia, Mesopotamia, Palestine, Syria, Armenia and Constantinople. Balfour, too, proposed that Turkey should remain considerably diminished but undivided. In the end, pressure from the opposition led the Three to conclude that their provisional resolutions to divide Anatolia were impracticable. They were even prepared to contemplate allowing the Sultan to stay in Constantinople under the tutelage of a special mandatory or depriving the Sultan of his sovereign rights over Constantinople, but giving him the right to administer his Anatolian state from Constantinople under an arrangement similar to the Pope at the Vatican in Rome¹¹. In short, the discussions in Paris closed with rather sharp differences not only between Lloyd George and Clemenceau, but also among the British policy-makers, a situation which meant that a solution in the Anatolian question would not be quickly and easily reached.

In the summer and fall of 1919, controlling the events in Turkey was getting more complicated for the Allies. Although the existing government of Damad Ferid Paşa, who was pro-British and anti-Nationalist, was un-

¹¹ Details in *ibid.*, pp. 200-32.

likely to take up an aggressive attitude towards the Allies and although, in the bad financial circumstances, his cabinet would probably do its best to keep the Allies happy, there was still a possibility that the cabinet might dance to the tune of the authors of the Nationalist Movement in national matters¹². In Anatolia, on the other hand, the heavy sense of hopelessness throughout the country, and perhaps the hints that there was no real union among the Allies, created the occasion for two Nationalist congresses, one in Erzurum in late July and the other in Sivas in early September, to convene. The Nationalist leaders then declared all Anatolia, and all European Turkey, to be an indivisible whole. The increasing force of the Nationalist Movement, the hothouse political atmosphere due to the Greek occupation of Smyrna, and also the complete failure of Damad Ferid Paşa in advocating the Turkish case *vis-à-vis* the Big Four in Paris in June 1919, all contributed to the fall of the Damad Ferid Paşa government in early October. This result was also partly due to the British hesitancy in giving active support for Damad Ferid Paşa's extreme anti-Nationalist designs. Now, with the elimination of Damad Ferid Paşa, it was highly possible that the Nationalists would intensify their pressure on the newly constituted Ali Rıza Paşa government, and that the British High Commissioner, Admiral de Robeck, and other Allied representatives in Constantinople would face even greater difficulties in their relationships with the Constantinople authorities. It was also quite certain that the Nationalists would resist the Allies, and above all, Britain, with the weapons of pan-Turkism and pan-Islamism. As Robeck put it into words, the Nationalists to the north-east saw the British abandoning the Caucasus and leaving behind between Ararat and the Caspian a fruitful field for pan-Islamic and pan-Turkish propaganda, and to the west they saw a more hopeful situation in the Smyrna area due to the occupation which they still held Britain more responsible for than the other Allies¹³.

¹² Br. Doc. IV: 806, **Robeck to Curzon**, No. 1836, Constantinople 10 October 1919.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 808.

An important phase of re-opening the talks over the whole Turkish question was realised in London in December 1919 between the British and French. On December 10, 1919, selected ministers met with Lloyd George for the purpose of establishing the policy lines for the forthcoming talks with Clemenceau. During these discussions Lloyd George, aided by Lord Curzon¹⁴ and Lord Balfour¹⁵, indicated his own preference for internationalisation of the Straits and Constantinople. As a sop to Indian and Muslim opinion Lloyd George and Lord Curzon opened the discussion over the possibility of allowing Sultan Vahideddin to remain in Constantinople in his position as Caliph, but in a situation equivalent to that of the Pope. The general conclusions of the meeting resulted in allowing internationalisation and a special position for the Sultan-Caliph. The following day, during the meeting of the two Prime Ministers, Lloyd George stated that the British government felt that complete control of the Straits would not be assured unless Constantinople was also in the hands of some international force. If the Sultan and his government were in Constantinople, this would cause constant intrigues to divide the powers. Curzon supported his Prime Minister by saying that if the Sultan at Constantinople was under the control of a party nationalist in sentiment, there must inevitably be trouble for the French in Tunis, Tripoli and Algeria no less than for the British in Egypt and India. What Clemenceau wanted, on the other hand, was to join Constantinople to the Dardanelles and Bosphorus under a single inter-allied European authority and to govern Turkey through the Sultan as an intermediary--for this reason, it would be better to leave him in Constantinople. Clemenceau was strongly opposed to the creation of a Pope-like symbol in the East. During the second meeting of the Anglo-French conference on December 22 the British and French points of view differed this time as to the most suitable town in which the new Turkish government in Asia Minor should be established. The British pushed the view that the Turkish capital should be established in a city close to Constantinople, *e.g.* Bursa, which would be easier to transfer the

¹⁴ Foreign Secretary in Balfour's place since October 1919.

¹⁵ Lord President in Curzon's place since October 1919.

administration to and would be more easily overawed in case of necessity by the Allies. But Phillippe Berthelot, Secretary-General of the Quai d'Orsay, for the very same reasons rejected the alternative of Bursa. He favoured a city distant from Constantinople, such as Konya, instead. The December Anglo-French talks resulted in Curzon's persuasion of the French delegation to adopt the 'Gladstonian precept'¹⁶ of complete expulsion of the Turks from Europe, even from Constantinople. The French had surrendered to the British view, however, due to Clemenceau's fervent opposition the Vatican solution was ruled out in the final agreement. The change of policy on the part of the French was possibly affected by Clemenceau's realisation of the weakness of the Sultan's government, by the French desire for not alienating the British, and also by the opinion of the French Etat-Major General that the presence of the Sultan in Constantinople would endanger Allied control of the Straits. While Curzon was quite surprised at the French acceptance of the British argument for withdrawal, Berthelot was pleased with the change of policy on the part of the French. He believed that the French acceptance of the British scheme represented a triumph.¹⁷

The outcomes of the Anglo-French talks in December 1919 were extensively discussed in a conference of British Ministers held on January 5, 1920 and the day after. With joint pressure from the War and India Offices the decision for taking Constantinople from the Turks was overruled in order not to add one more spark to the spreading conflagration in Turkey and India. During these cabinet meetings Montagu, Churchill and Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, debated

¹⁶ This attitude had been expressed by the Liberals in Gladstone's day. This, Curzon said, was the policy favoured by a triumvirate: the Prime Minister, Balfour and himself. C. J. Lowe and M.D. Dockrill, *The Mirage of Power*, vol. II, London 1972, p. 365.

¹⁷ For the December Anglo-French talks, see Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres*, pp. 191-4; Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, pp. 192-6; E.L. Knudsen, *Great Britain, Constantinople, and the Turkish Peace Treaty 1919-1922*, London 1987, p. 139; Br. Doc. IV: 993, Memorandum by Curzon on the future of Constantinople, 4 January 1920; Br. Doc. IV: 959, Minutes of Second Meeting of the Anglo-French Conference, 22 December 1919.

against the Prime Minister and the Foreign Office¹⁸. Montagu strongly emphasised the necessity of conciliating pan-Islamic apprehensions in India. He pushed the view that the expulsion of the Turks and the Caliph from Constantinople would strike a fatal blow at the already diminished loyalties of the Indian Muslims and the British might have a movement, comparable to the Sinn Fein movement¹⁹, breaking out in India in favour of complete separation from England. But Curzon ridiculed the Indian argument. He strongly believed that the Caliph was Caliph wherever he resided and Constantinople had never had any associations of peculiar sanctity or prestige to the Indian Muslims. The Turkish presence in Constantinople had poisoned the atmosphere of Eastern Europe, and if left, there would remain a 'plague-spot of the Eastern world'. Finally, in reply to various criticisms, it was pointed out that although there might be considerable agitation in India over the Turkish treaty, this agitation was fictitious and would be short-lived. The feeling of unrest and hostility to Britain in India could be mitigated by letting the Sultan remain in Constantinople with an international force controlling the Straits. In respect to the military difficulties which had often been emphasised by Henry Wilson, the cabinet indicated that the military problem might be reduced in proportion, but it would not be solved by leaving the Turks in Constantinople. The problem was Mustafa Kemal who was a nationalist and snapped his fingers at the Sultan. If Mustafa Kemal were left there the whole Muslim world would say that he had triumphed after all and there would be the potential hand of the pan-Turanian movement in Constantinople. Moreover, a victorious Bolshevik Russia would be infinitely more powerful with the Turks at Constantinople. But if the Turks were relegated to Anatolia, the Bolsheviks would get little by attempting to co-operate with them owing to the in-

¹⁸ For details, see CAB23/37, Conference 18, Conclusions of a Conference, London 5 January 1920. See also Knudsen, *Great Britain*, pp. 143-7; M.L. Dockrill and J.D. Goold, *Peace Without Promise: Britain and the Peace Conferences, 1919-23*, London 1981, pp. 206-7; S.D. Waley, *Edwin Montagu: A memoir and an account of his visits to India*, London 1964, p. 243.

¹⁹ On 21 January 1919, the victorious seventy-three Sinn Fein MPs meeting in Dublin as the Irish Parliament, had issued a declaration of independence and ratified the existence of the Irish Republic that had been publicly proclaimed in Dublin on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916. The year of 1919 was a quiet year, but by the beginning of 1920 Ireland was sliding into anarchy. R.R. James, *Churchill: Study in Failure 1900-1939*, London 1970, p. 125.

different communications. In short, during the cabinet meetings in January a two-headed set of opinions regarding the expulsion of the Turks from Constantinople, one 'refusing' and the other 'supporting', was put in view: Montagu rightly saw that if Britain wanted a facile and lasting settlement with Turkey the loss of Constantinople would not be the way to go about getting it. Curzon, on the other hand, wrongly regarded the loss of Constantinople by the Turks as a mere symbol of the end of the Turkish power in Europe for good. In the end, the British cabinet surprisingly rejected its own Foreign Secretary's proposals.

By February a radical change was observed in French sentiment, too. Alexandre Millerand, who had recently replaced Clemenceau, favoured the maintenance of the Turks at Constantinople and was supported by Italy. Having already been defeated by their own cabinet, Lloyd George and Curzon had no choice but to comply with the French view. The decision to allow the Turks to continue in possession of Constantinople was confirmed by Lloyd George and Millerand in the Allied conference in London in February²⁰. The British incentive of allowing the Turks to retain Constantinople was worded, in the British Parliament, by Lloyd George as 'the main influences which came directly from India'. He also expressed his fear that underneath the agitation in India there was not only the movement for the expulsion of the Turk, but there was something of the old feeling of Christendom against the crescent²¹. However, some Parliament members found it unfortunate to make the concession with regard to Constantinople in such a way that it could be represented as being a surrender to agitation in India.²²

While the Allied conference in London considered the decision to not relegate the Turks to the inner part of Anatolia with no hold over Constantinople, the political scenery in Turkey was dramatically changed by

20 Knudsen, *Great Britain*, pp. 150-2; M.L. Smith, *Ionian Vision: Greece in Asia Minor 1919-1922*, London 1973, pp. 119-20.

21 PD (Commons), 26 February 1920, vol. 125, pp. 1964-5.

22 See, for instance, Viscount Bryce's statement in PD (Lords), 11 March 1920, vol. 39, p. 394.

Nationalist actions such as the acceptance of the *National Pact*²³ by the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies and the Akbash depot incident²⁴. Specifically, the sudden news of a serious defeat of General Gouraud's French troops in Cilicia, and of the bloodshed of Armenians in Marash, the largest city in Cilicia, by the Nationalist forces interrupted the Allied conference in London²⁵. The attacks of the Nationalists on the French and their lowering the French flag were regarded by British politicians as the best proof of the way in which their spirit and their hope were revived. Although discussions were going on between the powers, they did not hesitate to attack the French and to commit these 'massacres'²⁶. To the British, it was quite clear that Ali Rıza Paşa's government had participated in the Nationalist atrocities in Cilicia. Robeck informed Curzon that the Turkish War Office as well as the divisional commanders of the Turkish army in the provinces, had generally been engaged in providing assistance in arms and ammunition to the Nationalist levies who attacked the French forces in the Marash area²⁷. To counter-act these Nationalist activities, Curzon suggested that the Allied High Commissioners should warn the Grand Vizier that if they permitted the massacres to continue the powers would have no alternative but turn their government out of Constantinople. In Curzon's opinion it would be wrong to let the Grand Vizier wash his hands of the whole business, saying that he had absolutely no hold over Mustafa Kemal and the Nationalist Turks in Cilicia²⁸. Lloyd George, too, spoke with anger. He suggested that the Grand Vizier and his War Minister, along with other Ministers, should be arrested until steps had been taken by the Ottoman government to remedy the situation²⁹. Accordingly, the Supreme Council

23 The *National Pact*, a manifesto of the Nationalist Movement, was accepted on January 28 by the Ottoman Chamber of Deputies in Constantinople as a result of the activities of Nationalist nominees. This pact asserted quite uncompromisingly the rights of Turkey to Constantinople and to the parts of the Empire inhabited by a Ottoman Turkish majority, and also demanded complete emancipation from any form of European control. See text in Hurewitz, *Diplomacy*, II, p. 74.

24 On the evening of 26 January 1920, the Nationalists stole arms during a raid upon the Allied ammunition depot at Akbash (on the Gallipoli Peninsula). FO371/5166/E2306/262/44, Robeck to Curzon, No. 358, Constantinople 15 March 1920.

25 Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p. 120; Knudsen, *Great Britain*, pp. 154-5.

26 See, for instance, Viscount Bryce's opinion in PD (Lords), 11 March 1920, vol. 39, p. 398.

27 FO371/5044/E1777/3/44, Robeck to Curzon, No. 307, Constantinople 1 March 1920.

28 Br. Doc. VII: 298-9, British Secretary's Notes of a Meeting, London 28 February 1920.

29 Br. Doc. VII: 302, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 28 February 1920.

warned Ali Rıza Paşa's government³⁰. In the end, Nationalist activities and external pressures from the Allies played an important role in forcing Ali Rıza Paşa out of office at the beginning of March.³¹

In the final analysis, it may be said that although the Supreme Council's announcement about the retention of the Turks in Constantinople seemed, at first sight, to be a temporary reprieve for the Ottoman government, the turmoil in Cilicia brought into the open that the Allies had not, in fact, done a genuine favour to the Constantinople government, but only desired to hold it as a hostage for every possible Nationalist aggression. While events in Cilicia touched a raw nerve regarding French pride, the British had a better chance to exert pressure on the French. Besides, upon Britain's having yielded on the question of the future of the Turkish capital, there was now at least one solid reason for the British to hope that the pro-British elements in Turkey would now gain prestige and coincide more with British views. However, as far as the Nationalists were concerned, the case was the opposite. Mustafa Kemal and his followers were still determined to insist on the retention of Constantinople, Smyrna, Adrianople and Cilicia by the Turks. Also, according to information obtained by de Robeck, Mustafa Kemal had issued a circular stating that the decision of the Supreme Council to maintain the Turks at Constantinople was due to the influence exerted on Allied opinion by the Nationalist forces³².

II. THE OCCUPATION

The Cilician affairs of the Nationalists created the occasion for Lloyd George and Curzon to hold the Ottoman government responsible for anti-Allied activities in Anatolia. Both politicians were adamant that the Constantinople authorities must be held responsible for the Cilician massacres.

30 Br. Doc. VII: 422, appendix I: Draft Telegram to the British High Commissioner.

31 FO371/5166/E2306/262/44, Robeck to Curzon, No. 358, Constantinople 15 March 1920.

32 FO371/5166/E1782/262/44, Robeck to Curzon, No. 314, Constantinople 3 March 1920.

Lloyd George said on March 5, 1920 at the Allied conference in London that Mustafa Kemal should have been stopped from attacking the Allied forces. He pushed the view that the Allies should take some action, such as first demanding Mustafa Kemal's dismissal, and then occupy Constantinople. He also gave a clear message to the other Allies that if a negative decision were taken, Britain would be compelled to act independently³³.

Meanwhile, the Allied High Commissioners in Constantinople advised the Supreme Council to be easy on the Turks and suggested the imposition of the *bloc* policy³⁴. They thought that the events in Cilicia did not constitute a true basis to impose drastic measures which would most probably cause serious consequences³⁵. But their hope that the Supreme Council might alleviate peace terms was completely ruled out with its decisions in the first week of March 1920 that:

1. The Ottoman government should be required to dismiss Mustafa Kemal whose responsibility for the recent occurrences in Cilicia was not open to doubt;

2. If there was any recurrence of similar outrages, the proposed terms would be rendered even more severe, and the concessions already made would be withdrawn;

3. The Ottoman government should be informed that the military occupation of Constantinople would continue until the terms of the peace treaty were accepted and put into effect³⁶.

33 Br. Doc. VII: 412, 414 and 417, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 5 March 1920; Br. Doc. VII: 293, British Secretary's Notes of a Conference of Foreign Secretaries and Ambassadors, London 28 February 1920.

34 Robeck, de France and Marquis Imperiali advocated that the Allies should form a *bloc* with the Sultan, rally the moderate elements around him, and stiffen them in their resistance to the irreconcilable attitude of the extreme Nationalists. For the *bloc* policy they urged a lenient peace; that was, that the Allies should leave the Turk at Constantinople, expel the Greeks from Smyrna, allow the Turks to remain in Thrace, and destroy the hopes of a reconstituted Armenia. Curzon's statement in Br. Doc. VII: 413, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 5 March 1920.

35 Br. Doc. XIII: 9-10 (FO371/5042/E1093/3/44 or FO406/43/E1093/3/44). Robeck to Curzon, No. 191, Constantinople 5 March 1920.

36 FO406/43/E946/3/44, Curzon to Robeck, No. 187, FO 6 March 1920.

The Supreme Council's decision about the occupation of Constantinople came along with other drastic terms--such as complete international control of the Straits, close financial supervision of the Ottoman government, and the cession of Smyrna (subject only to Turkish suzerainty) and Thrace (up to the lines of Chatalja) to Greece³⁷. The Supreme Council thus made a great mistake by deciding to impose a drastic peace, but an even greater mistake by converting the existing position of the Allies in Constantinople into a definite occupation in order to forestall resistance to these drastic peace terms.

The stiffening of the Supreme Council as regards the Turkish terms, with the excuse of the recent events in Cilicia, meant the exclusion of the *bloc* policy which the High Commissioners had advocated for so long. Robeck and his advisers were flatly opposed to the proposal to dismember the Ottoman provinces of Turkey in the interests of Greece which, they believed, would possibly destroy the chance for a lasting peace in the Near East and drive the Turks into the arms of the Bolsheviks. Robeck, as well as the British military authorities in Constantinople, were worried that if the Allied governments insisted on drastic peace terms grave danger to the Christian population would be inevitable³⁸. Similarly, Churchill believed that an occupation of Constantinople would needlessly irritate the Turks and that attacking the Turkish government at Constantinople, but ignoring Mustafa Kemal, would constitute a one-sided way of treating the problem. But Lloyd George was of the belief that the prowess of the Turks should not be exaggerated³⁹ and that the policy suggested by the High Commissioners would merely tend to lower the prestige of the Allies throughout the Turkish Empire⁴⁰. Curzon, too, believed that the *bloc* policy was far

37 Further information in Br. Doc. VII: 422, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 5 March 1920, appendix I.

38 Robeck criticised the proposed cession of all Thrace up to the Chatalja lines and Smyrna to Greece, but supported the internationalisation of the Straits and the imposition of a close financial control on Turkey. Br. Doc. XIII: 17-9, Robeck to Curzon, E2291/56/44, Constantinople 9 March 1920. See also Br. Doc. XIII: 53-4, Robeck to Curzon, No. 317, Constantinople 1 April 1920.

39 Br. Doc. VII: 364, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 3 March 1920; Br. Doc. VII: 456, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 10 March 1920.

40 Br. Doc. VII: 417, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 5 March 1920.

removed from the terms of the treaty which the Allies were discussing and must sooner or later impose⁴¹.

The Supreme Council's decisions confused inter-Allied relations as well as the British cabinet itself. The French Ambassador in London, Paul Cambon, gave his support to the policy suggested by the High Commissioners and said that the Allies must now envisage a situation which was practically the resumption of war⁴². Cambon's attitude was criticised by Greek Prime Minister Eleutherios Veniselos who claimed that, provided that the Allies or the British occupied Constantinople and the immediate surroundings, the Greeks could advance to Afyon Karahisar which would give the Allies command of the whole railway system of Anatolia and compel the Ottoman government to sign the peace⁴³. Sniffing a possible war with the Nationalist Turks, for which he well knew that the Allies strongly needed the Greeks, Veniselos tried to place himself in the front seat. He hurried to London to meet with Lloyd George, Curzon, Churchill, and the other Allied representatives. Finally, the Allies cleared the whole issue regarding the future of the Turkish capital and decided on two purposes for the Allied occupation of Constantinople, namely:

1. to prevent further massacres;
2. to ensure the acceptance of the terms of peace and their eventual execution⁴⁴.

In summary, on the issue of the occupation of Constantinople, the India and War Offices were no match for the duo of Curzon and Lloyd George-- aided by Veniselos. The worries of the opposition were ignored and the most drastic measure to force the Ottoman government to submit

41 FO406/43/E946/3/44, Curzon to Robeck, No. 187, FO 6 March 1920.

42 Br. Doc. VII: 417, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 5 March 1920.

43 Br. Doc. XIII: 20-1, E1371/106/44, Note from P. Kerr (Private Secretary to Lloyd George) to R.H. Campbell (Private Secretary to Lord Curzon), London 9 March 1920, enclosure in No. 18.

44 Br. Doc. VII: 450-7, British Secretary's Notes of an Allied Conference, London 10 March 1920.

to the Allied peace terms and to control the indigenous events in Turkey took place with the military occupation of Constantinople on March 16. As a body of British, French and Italian forces marched into Constantinople, arrested the Nationalist leaders in the city and occupied the various Ottoman Ministries, the Allied communiqué of March 16 absurdly announced that the occupation was 'provisional', that the Allies had no intention of destroying the authority of the Sultan and his government, and that they intended not to deprive the Turks of Constantinople unless widespread disturbances or massacres occurred⁴⁵. Another manoeuvre was initiated by Ryan; at about 9.25 a.m. he called at the Grand Vizier's house and told him that the Allies did not wish to weaken the legitimate government, but the illegitimate government which had existed for some time in the past⁴⁶. The Sultan, according to the British representative's observation, was relaxed due to the arrest of the leading Nationalists whose separatist activities had necessarily involved a more or less veiled hostility to the Sultanate⁴⁷. Although this observation might have contained some truth, it was still a big mistake to expect that the Sultan and his government would not be dejected at seeing their capital under foreign boots. It was even greater mistake to imagine that the Turkish people would, at any rate, accept it calmly.

Conclusion

The Allied occupation of Constantinople on March 16, 1920 trapped the British position in Turkey between a rock and a hard place, although opposite expectations had initially been held in British circles. The fact that the greater part of the occupying force had been supplied by the British further harmed Britain's good reputation in Anatolia--if it had any

⁴⁵ English translation of French text of communiqué issued by the Allied High Commissioners in Br. Doc. XIII: 45 (FO406/43/E1993/3/44 or FO371/5044/E1993/3/44), Robeck to Curzon, No. 262, Constantinople 21 March 1920.

⁴⁶ FO371/5045/E2781/3/44, Robeck to Curzon, No. 373, Constantinople 18 March 1920, enclosure 6 in No. 1: memorandum by Ryan.

⁴⁷ FO371/5046/E3046/3/44, Robeck to the Secretary of Admiralty, No. Z.361/6793/8, Constantinople 18 March 1920.

left⁴⁸. This occupation and other Allied decisions regarding Turkey created such grave results that only an anti-Nationalist and pro-British government, such as that of Damad Ferid Paşa, could possibly want to handle them. Moreover, the existing Ottoman government, the leniently pro-Nationalist Salih Hulusi Paşa's government, preferred to cling to office at almost any cost. As the British were alarmed, this attitude of the Ottoman government possibly meant that the government might have tried to help the Nationalists gain time. The British, therefore, felt that they had no choice but to support Damad Ferid Paşa's return to power in order to be able to considerably influence political issues in Constantinople. However, as Robeck pointed out, in case of such an event, Allied moral support was essential, including a free hand in the repression of the Nationalists⁴⁹. But the other Allied powers did not really desire it, and Britain was incapable of doing so on her own.

The logic in the occupation of Constantinople was paradoxical. On the one hand, it was impossible to strengthen the authority of the Sultan's government while it was under such suffocating Allied, particularly British, control. On the other hand, the occupation may be regarded as sensible--only if it is assumed that the Nationalist presence in Anatolia had become an agonising threat to the authority of the Sultan and his government. With the Allied arrests of the Nationalist leaders in the capital, the Sultan and his entourage might have had a chance to relax to a certain extent--at least in their residential city. But in reality the opposite happened. Following the occupation a great number of Nationalists in Constantinople fled to join Mustafa Kemal and thus the Nationalist Movement had a greater opportunity to get stronger in the interior. By the beginning of 1920 no-

48 The military occupation of Constantinople was, mostly, British deed. In the proceedings of the occupation, British General Milne assumed, in theory and in practice, sole military command of not only Constantinople but the Straits zone as well. Br. Doc. XIII: 41-2, Curzon to Derby (Paris), No. 955, FO 17 March 1920; Br. Doc. VII: 458-62, British Secretary's Notes of a Conversation between British and French Delegates, London 10 March 1920.

49 Br. Doc. XIII: 52, Robeck to Curzon, No. 310, Constantinople 30 March 1920. See also FO371/5046/E3046/3/44, Robeck to the Secretary of Admiralty, No. Z. 361/6793/8, Constantinople 18 March 1920.

body could say that there was not plenty evidence about Mustafa Kemal's programme--though not to the fullest extent. But the moral and spiritual force of his movement had at first been misinterpreted, in particular by the London-based policy-makers. The British had taken sides in the contest between the extreme Nationalists and the moderates by declaring that they regarded the attitude of the former as definitely hostile, and by stating that it was that attitude which compelled them to occupy Constantinople. But, as Robeck pointed out, it was a mistake that they had not, however, any positive basis on which to found a policy of collaboration with the moderates⁵⁰. Consequently, the lack of understanding of the agony of the Anatolian people and the cause--the desire for survival of a nation-- which gave impetus to the rise of the Nationalist Movement cost the British too much.

The British plans for the partition of the Ottoman Empire were motivated by a long-time desire to knock down Turkish power in the Middle East and Europe for good. However, in order to conceal such racial --if not religious-- prejudices, the real British aims were often disguised under the cloak of 'what provisions ought to be made for the liberation of the Christian minorities and of subject races of the Ottoman Empire from any possible recurrence of the calamities' from which, according to the British, they had suffered for centuries. As Lloyd George said, British war aims were generally introduced as for:

1. the freedom of the Straits;
2. the freeing of the non-Turkish communities from the Ottoman sway;
3. the preservation for the Turk of self-government in communities which were mainly Turkish⁵¹.

50 FO406/43/E2327/3/44 (FO371/5045/E2327/3/44), Robeck to Curzon, No. 285, Constantinople 25 March 1920.

51 PD (Commons), 26 February 1920, vol. 125, p. 1966.

But in reality, the third aim was never sincerely desired by the British. Instead, they hoped not to grant much to the Turks. This hope was sometimes so domineering that British ministers in the post-war coalition government and their advisers could not help getting too emotional or illusory. However, in view of the drastic nature of the Allied terms, they should have estimated from the start that there was an indubitable necessity to put the Ottoman government under good care of the Allies, since it could never be done via private enterprise alone. It should have also been foreseen that neither France nor Italy was a reliable ally. And perhaps, the French and Italians were not completely wrong in being so, since the issues in the Allied agenda were mostly dominated by the British Prime Minister himself and determined mostly for the benefit of Britain herself.

What made the Turks fight was the fear of dismemberment of the Turkish part of the Ottoman Empire. If the Turks knew they would retain, for instance, Constantinople, Smyrna and Thrace, they might probably have been less inclined to resist. With regard to the Turkish peace, as Aubrey Herbert put into words, there were two possible policies that the British might have pursued. They might have followed, first, what was known as the 'bag and baggage' policy: They might have said to the Turks, 'You have fought us. There have been atrocities committed in your country during the war. We have won and you must go out of Constantinople'. On the other hand, the British might have adhered to their Prime Minister's promise made on January 5, 1918 that the Turks would not be turned out of Constantinople and Anatolia. If the second alternative had been followed the British might then have been at peace in India, less troubled in Egypt, and trouble free in Turkey. They would have had peace from Anatolia to Bokhara, Turkestan and Central Asia. But the Prime Minister did neither of these two things. He obtained for Britain by the delay in this peace with Turkey the maximum disadvantages of both these policies⁵². As some

52 : D (Commons), 12 February 1920, vol. 125, pp. 348-9.

members of the British Parliament pointed out, British policy-makers should not have broken their word and not have forgotten that they had been on friendly terms with Turkey since the Crimean War of 1854. It was wrong now to judge Turkey by the CUP who had brought so much ruin on Turkey herself as well. Since the British identified themselves with the Turkish authorities in Constantinople, the British should have done nothing to lessen the Sultan's power and prestige. Not only should the Sultan-Caliph be allowed to remain at Constantinople, but there should be no mandate to any European power over the Sultan and over what would remain of the Sultan's dominion after Syria, Mesopotamia and Armenia were cut off⁵³.

In British political circles uneasiness and differences of opinion regarding the significance of the occupation never ceased--some complained about the severity of the occupation, some otherwise. On the one hand, Robeck, for example, advocated even after the occupation that it would still be better for the British to alleviate the peace conditions and to pursue the *bloc* policy round the Sultan⁵⁴. But the Supreme Council did not hold out such a prospect. On the other hand, there were some who were dissatisfied with the 'provisional' nature of the occupation. For instance, the speech of Herbert Henry Asquith, liberal MP for Paisley, in the House of Commons on March 25 carried the signs of regret that the British government for a long time, almost up to the end, were in favour of the actual expulsion of the Turks from Constantinople itself. Now they yielded in that respect, not perhaps from any conviction based upon expediency or the policy of the case, but they yielded to the expression of religious and traditional sentiment on the part of British Muslim subjects in India⁵⁵.

In the making of British policy on the fate of Constantinople policy-makers had different preferences and contradictory approaches. That is, the

53 See, for instance, Colonel Yate's statement in PD (Commons), 25 March 1920, vol. 127, pp.702-5; Colonel Wedgwood's statement in PD (Commons), 26 February 1920, vol. 125, pp. 2021-5.

54 FO406/43/E2327/3/44 (FO371/5045/E2327/3/44), Robeck to Curzon, No. 285, Constantinople 25 March 1920.

55 PD (Commons), 25 March 1920, vol. 127, p. 640.

three Secretaries of State in the cabinet had different opinions⁵⁶. Edwin Montagu's emphasis was on the need to ease tension among the Muslims in India, and he therefore advised being less harsh on the Turks both in Constantinople and even in Anatolia. His interest and aspect on the subject thus appeared to be so different from those of his colleagues that his case might sometimes be ignored or undermined by his colleagues in the cabinet who even claimed that Montagu's enthusiastic support for the Indian Muslims was due to his Indian ancestry⁵⁷. Lord Curzon, from the point of view of the need to secure the routes to India from any potential foe, desired to expel Turkish rule from Constantinople and to suppress the Nationalist elements in revolt in Anatolia. In Curzon's opinion, if the Allies had to face a new form of Turkish nationalism, whether it be founded on religion or on race, or whether it be pan-Islamic or pan-Turanian, it would make no difference whether the Sultan was in Constantinople or not⁵⁸. One of his main errors was to misjudge the real nature of the Nationalist Movement which did not actually aim to follow a religious or racial intransigence, but only aimed to find a space for the Turks to exist. On the other hand, Winston Churchill passionately advocated the containment of Soviet Russia, but a closer entente with France, which would enable Britain to get a good peace with Mustafa Kemal and to recreate the Turkish barrier to Russian ambitions. He was right in thinking that peace with Mustafa Kemal would secure British interests in Constantinople and at the same time ease the position in Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia and India. Unlike Curzon, Churchill did not believe that giving in to Mustafa Kemal would lead to attacks all along the line against the British positions in the East⁵⁹. Above all, he was not wrong in considering that everything else that happened in the Middle East was secondary to the reduction in expense⁶⁰. On the other hand, their Premier Lloyd George failed to recognise the risk involved in

⁵⁶ Details in E. Maisel, *The Foreign Office and Foreign Policy, 1919-1926*, Brighton 1994, pp. 220-1.

⁵⁷ Waley, *Edwin Montagu*, p. 269. Montagu had many enemies. Busch, *Mudros to Lausanne*, p. 333.

⁵⁸ Br. Doc. IV: 999, Memorandum by Curzon on the future of Constantinople, 4 January 1920.

⁵⁹ For Churchill's views, see Smith, *Ionian Vision*, p. 163.

⁶⁰ M. Kent (ed), *The Great Powers and the End of the Ottoman Empire*, London 1984, p. 189.

being enticed by Greek ambitions. Although many among the British policy-makers and military experts had occasionally warned him⁶¹, Lloyd George stubbornly stuck with his philhellene policies. This attitude of his was partly due to his profound confidence in Veniselos, but -probably-mostly due to his desire to take advantage of the fact that Greece always needed British friendship for her own security in the Mediterranean. However, he should have foreseen that Greece would do the military matters of the Allies only on condition that her territorial aspirations were fulfilled at the expense of territories where Turkish people presently resided. If such a fulfilment were carried out, this would mean that a clash between the two absolutes--the Greeks and Turks-- was certain and would be too dangerous. He should have also known that any concessions to be given in Anatolia to Greece meant concessions in districts where mostly Italian interests were concerned, and that neither the French nor the Italians were as philhellene as Lloyd George himself was.

It can also be added that the British policy-making system that let Lloyd George dominate the Foreign Office, India Office, the military and the British High Commission gave impetus to face the most disastrous results. These policy-making mechanisms were sometimes forced to follow the indecisive or wrong policies of Lloyd George⁶². But in fact, their advice should have been listened to more carefully, since few of them at least, with the experience of some years in the Middle East or perhaps in Turkey, might have possibly been able--if they were given a space to breath--to more successfully adapt British policy to the new realities in the Middle East. The India Office might have perhaps achieved this. Sir George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, for instance, had before his departure for India favoured turning the Turk out of Constantinople. But after

61 Curzon, though strongly advocated the liberation of Europe from the Ottoman Turks, opposed to allow the Greeks to establish a zone in Asia Minor. Churchill and Henry Wilson, too, believed that the Prime Minister's policy would be likely to throw the Turks into the arms of the Bolsheviks, with serious repercussions for the British throughout the Middle East and India. Further information in *ibid.*, pp. 191-2; Nicolson, *Curzon*, pp. 94-114.

62 For Lloyd George's single-pronged policies, see Maisel, *Foreign Office*, pp. 60-8; Cumming, *Franco-British Rivalry*, p. 134; Helmreich, *From Paris to Sèvres*, p. 317.

he had a chance to become acquainted with the realities in India himself, he came to the conclusion that it would be the greatest possible mistake to do this. Besides, all Indian and Mesopotamian experts, with the exception of Colonel Wilson and Miss Bell (two ex-Viceroy), too, consistently shared views similar to that of George Lloyd⁶³.

In determining the future position of Constantinople great stress was laid upon the effect which the expulsion of the Turks would have in India. The importance in the Muslim world of this subject were surely not very easy for the British to assess. Owing to Nationalist propaganda, the fate of Constantinople and the Caliphate loomed large in India. It was a factor of some weight in Egypt where there was an important Turkish element among the notables, as well as in Arabia, Afghanistan, Mesopotamia, Syria and Azerbaijan where the question was always used as a political weapon when required by their leaders⁶⁴. Therefore, the British should have followed such a course that Constantinople would not be a cause of Muslim agitation. Even though Constantinople had no better claim than any of other cities which had entertained the Caliph in the past, and even though it was almost impossible for the Ottoman Sultan-Caliph to be able to wage a holy war with limited efficacy, it was still dangerous to undermine the reality altogether, because the reaction of the Muslim world still had to be counted carefully. As Montagu repeatedly said, the peace that Britain intended to reach with Turkey should not have been disruptive to the British Empire. For a start, the retention of Constantinople should have been made as a partial fulfilment of the Prime Minister's pledge. Regarding religious questions, it would be perfectly correct for the British not to interfere with any arrangement of a religious nature which the Caliph's Muslim followers in any state, whether of old or new Turkey, might make with him of their own accord⁶⁵. However, the top British policy-makers had been in con-

63 CAB23/37, Conference 18, Conclusions of a Conference, London 5 January 1920.

64 WO106/64, 'The Situation in Turkey, 15th March, 1920'; WO106/1505, 'Appreciation of the Situation in Turkey, 9th March, 1920'.

65 CAB24/103, C.P. 1046, Montagu to Hankey, 'The Draft Peace Treaty with Turkey', 9 April 1920.

stant ignorance of this necessity. Instead, they considered the "Vaticanising" of the Sultan, a course which would shut the Sultan up in Constantinople with only his spiritual and religious attributes and thus squeeze the head of the Turkish Empire⁶⁶. But the spiritual authority of the Caliphate was entirely different from the spiritual authority of the Pope. 'Vaticanising the Sultan' was, even as the Prime Minister himself admitted in the end, something that would not in the least meet the necessities of the case⁶⁷. Islamic feeling regarding the Caliphate was more corporate than any similar feeling in Christianity, a feeling which had been previously used by the CUP in the guise of pan-Islamism for their own ends. However, there was also an important reality that the discrepancy between the Nationalist Movement and the Caliphate movement, as well as between the pan-Turanian activities of the exiled CUP leaders, Enver and Cemal Paşas, in Russia and the activities of the Nationalists in Anatolia, was not small. The British should have used both discrepancies in their handling of the Indian agitation.

One of the reasons which led the British to occupy Constantinople was the desire to stop Bolshevik expansion on the route to India. It was important for the British to prevent the Bolsheviks from obtaining full control of the Caspian, overrunning Georgia and Northern Persia, and, from the British point of view of peace in Turkey, joining forces with Mustafa Kemal. If it were not prevented, there might have been formed a *Turk-Tartar-Bolshevik bloc* capable of inflicting immeasurable injury to British Muslim dependencies in particular. It was for this reason that the British government, in securing *de facto* recognition for the Transcaucasian states, was actuated by the desire to constitute these republics into a buffer against Bolshevism⁶⁸. But in fact, they could not really foresee that the reaction to the occupation of Constantinople and the consequent increase of anti-

66 See Asquith's statement in PD (Commons), 25 March 1920, vol. 127, pp. 642-3.

67 PD (Commons), 25 March 1920, vol. 127, p. 658.

68 FO371/5046/E3046/3/44, Robeck to the Secretary of Admiralty, No. Z. 361/6793/8, Constantinople 18 March 1920. See also CAB23/21, C24 (20), Conclusions of a Meeting of the Cabinet, London 5 May 1920.

British feeling in Anatolia would be a greater danger for the British and strengthen the Nationalist cause, a cause which would find a place in the Caucasus to sound against the British⁶⁹.

What really made matters more complicated for the British was the increasing number of unforeseen developments relating to the Turkish question. Although, with the signing of the armistice of Mudros with Turkey the Allied powers had created for themselves a right to occupy the country, the greater part of the country was under the control of the Nationalist forces. Curzon, Churchill, de Robeck and the military authorities in Turkey were extremely alarmed as the size of the Turkish regular army had constantly exceeded the strength specified under the armistice. Therefore, it was essential to avoid further delays in order to make the Allies capable of imposing their will upon Turkey, and in order not to permit the Nationalist leaders to increase their morale and again consolidate the Nationalist Movement⁷⁰. However, the making of an immediate peace settlement with Turkey was almost impossible due to a great number of accumulating complications, such as:

- the quarrels and mistrust among the Allies themselves on the Turkish question as well as on Middle Eastern and European affairs;
- military insufficiencies of the Allies to take drastic action in Anatolia;

69 Mustafa Kemal's entourage was much disturbed by the Allied recognition of Azerbaijan and Georgia. The Nationalist nervousness was due to the fear that Britain would complete blockade of Anatolia by action in Persia and the Caucasus States. FO371/5042/E1052/3/44, Director of MI, No. 0152/5274 (M.I.2), Constantinople 5 March 1920, enclosure.

70 Details in Knudsen, *Great Britain*, pp. 141-2; Nicolson, *Curzon*, p. 75. FO406/43/E2327/3/44 (FO371/5045/E2327/3/44), Robeck to Curzon, No. 285, Constantinople 25 March 1920. Similarly, Lord Bryce regarded the armistice as a capital error and said that the armistice had provided for the immediate demobilisation of the Turkish army, except for such troops as were required for the surveillance of frontiers and the maintenance of internal order, but those troops had actually been the principal source of the disorder. PD (Lords), 11 March 1920, vol. 39, p. 395.

- involvement of Greek ambition in Allied policies and the uneasiness both in Turkey and in Allied circles due to British support for Greek ambitions;
- the reluctance of the United States in undertaking the policing and control of the Straits and Constantinople which the British sincerely hoped to obtain; and thus, the consequent loss of time by the British in order to reverse America's attitude;
- the differences of opinion between the offices of British foreign policy-making, the cabinet and the British High Commission in Constantinople;
- the internal problems following the war and the uneasiness in Britain regarding British war aims;
- Muslim feelings in India;
- threats and uncertainties of the newly emerged Bolshevik policies;
- the procrastinating policy of the Ottoman government on making peace with the Allies; and finally,
- the rapidly increasing solidification of the Nationalist Movement.

Not only long delays in making peace with Turkey, but also great errors of misjudgement were indubitably committed by the London-based politicians in trying to re-make the boundaries of Turkey. For instance, they could not successfully assess whether the presence of the Greeks in Smyrna would loom large in Nationalist eyes. In the case of determining the future position of Constantinople they were even more ineffectual. When they came to the point of realising what had been impressed on them by their advisers, especially the High Commissioners in Constantinople,

that the Turks would resist an occupied Constantinople just like they would resist a Greek Smýrna, there was little for the British to do. They could only convince the Ottoman government to sign the treaty and to use Greek military power to enforce it on the Nationalist Turks. Lloyd George and his entourage favoured the reduction of Turkey to a rump state without Constantinople and control of the Straits. However, although the Allied occupation made Constantinople a city under siege, it was not realistic to expect that the Turks would accept this imposition on a city which had been their capital for centuries.

ÖZET

İNGİLTERE'NİN İSTANBUL POLİTİKASI VE İSTANBUL'UN 16 MART 1920'DE İTİLÂF DEVLETLERİ'NCE İŞGALİ

İstanbul'un her dönemde gündemde kalmasını sağlayan jeopolitik konumu ve tarihsel önemi, aynı zamanda bu şehir için sınırsız zorlukları da beraberinde getirmiştir. Birinci Dünya Savaşı sonrasında İstanbul, hem uluslararası politikaların merkezinde yer alması hem de Avrupalı devletlerin gözünde Türklere vurulacak son öldürücü darbenin simgesi olması bakımından dikkatleri üzerine toplamıştır. Savaşın Osmanlı Devleti'nin aleyhine sonuçlanmasının ardından, başta İngiliz Başbakanı Lloyd George ve İngiliz Dışişleri Bakanı Lord Curzon olmak üzere birçok İngiliz üst düzey politikacı, İstanbul'un Türkler'in elinden alınması zamanının geldiği yolundaki düşüncelerini başlıca şu temalar üzerinde yoğunlaştırmışlardır:

- Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na Almanya'nın yanında giren Osmanlı Devleti İngilizler'e ihanet etmiştir. Türkler bu ihanetin bedelini, İstanbul'u kaybederek ödemelidirler.
- İstanbul'un Türkler'in elinden alınması, onların savaş yenilgisinin en belirgin kanıtı olacaktır. Böylece İslam dünyası da artık Türkler'i 'İslam'ın muzaffer askeri' olarak görmeye son verecektir.
- İstanbul tarihte Avrupa güç dengelerini altüst eden entrikaların merkezi olmuştur ve Türkler'in elinde kaldığı sürece böyle olmaya devam edecektir. Bu nedenle Osmanlı Devleti'nin Avrupa politikası üzerinde etkinlik sahibi olacağı uzantıları, yani İstanbul, Boğazlar ve Trakya, Osmanlı hükümetinin denetiminden alınmalıdır.

- Türkler'in yüzyıllardır gayrimüslim azınlıklara karşı uyguladıkları adaletsiz politikaya son verilmeli ve hükümet merkezleri olan İstanbul şehri ellerinden alınmalıdır.
- İstanbul ne Türkler'in 'millî' başkenti ne de onların çoğunluk teşkil ettiği bir şehir olma özelliğini taşımaktadır.
- Osmanlı Sultanı'nı dünya Müslümanlar'ının Halifesi ve İstanbul'u da Halifelik makamının merkezi olan kutsal bir şehir olarak kabul etmek büyük bir hatadır.
- Boğazların, savaş galibi devletlerin veya uluslararası bir komisyonun denetiminde kalması şarttır. Eğer İtilâf Devletleri İstanbul'u ellerine geçirirse, bu gereklilik daha kolay yerine getirilebilecektir.
- Mustafa Kemal önderliğindeki Millî Mücadeleciler ve dağılan İttihat ve Terakki Partisi mensupları, hem merkezi hükümet otoritesine hem de İngilizler'e karşı Anadolu'da bir tehdit unsuru oluşturmaktadırlar. Bu isyancı hareketin İstanbul'u eline geçirmesi ve burada faaliyetlerini arttırması, engellenmesi çok daha güç bir tehdit olacaktır. İslamcılık ve Türkçülük gibi akımlar aracılığıyla güçlerini sürekli arttırmakta olan Millî Mücadelecilere, İstanbul Türkler'in elinden alınarak iyi bir ders verilmeli ve böylece Ortadoğu'da İngilizler'in aleyhine geliştirebilecekleri tehditlerin önü alınmalıdır.
- Batılı devletler aleyhine Millî Mücadeleci kadrolar ile işbirliği yapan Bolşevikler, İstanbul'un Türkler'in denetiminde kalması halinde Türkiye, Kafkasya ve Ortadoğu'ya yönelik emperyalist planlarını daha kolay uygulayacaklarından, bu gidişin önü alınmalıdır.

- İstanbul'un Türkler'in elinden alınması, İtilâf devletleri safına sonradan katılan Yunanlılar'ı memnun etmesi açısından da önemli bir adım olacaktır.
- İstanbul'un Türkler'den alınacağı tehdidi, Osmanlı hükümetinin İtilâf Devletleri'nin ağır barış şartlarını kabul etmesinde ikna edici bir rol oynayacaktır.

Savaş sonrası Osmanlı'ya yönelik İngiliz dış politikası, Türk nüfuzunu Avrupa'dan tamamen silmeyi amaçlayan tarihsel bir özlemin izlerini taşımaktaydı. İngilizler kısmen 'dinsel ve ırksal önyargıları'da içeren bu özlemlerini, bir maske altında gizlemeyi yeğlediler. Türk gücünü yoketmeye çalışmalarının görünürdeki gerekçesi ise, Türkler'in yüzyıllardır azınlıklara –özellikle Hıristiyanlara– yaptıkları baskılardı. Lloyd George'nin sözleriyle, İngiliz savaş hedefleri:

- Azınlıkları Osmanlı'nın adaletsiz yönetiminden kurtarmak,
- Boğazları Türkler'in elinden almak ve
- Türkler'e kendi kendilerini yönetme hakkını tanımaktı.

Oysaki savaş sonrası İngiliz tutumu, üçüncü hedefin gerçekte arzulanan bir hedef olmadığını açıkça göstermekteydi. Türkler'e sunulan barış şartları o kadar ağırdı ki, Osmanlı yönetiminin bu şartları kabullenmesi durumunda saygınlığını yitirmemesine ve Batılı güçlerin denetimi altına girmemesine imkan yoktu. İstanbul'un işgali de, benzeri paradoksal bir özellik taşımaktaydı. İngilizler'in iddiasına göre İstanbul'un işgali Sultan'ın otoritesini zayıflatmak için değil, aksine Sultan'ın itibarını zedeleyen Anadolu hareketinin başkentte güçlenmesini engelleme ve Osmanlı hükümetine bir an önce İtilâf Devletleri'yle barış yapmasını sağlayacak uygun ortamı hazırlama amacını güdüyordu. Her ne kadar Millî Mücadele hareketinin 'Rus yanlısı ve İttihat- Terakki uzantısı' olduğu endişesini taşıyan Sultan için işgal sırasında Milliyetçi liderlerden ba-

zılarının tutuklanması rahatlatma hissi yarattıysa da, başkenti düşman işgali altına alınmış ve bu yüzden Anadolu halkının gözünde saygınlığı daha da yıpranmış merkezi yönetimin bu tür yapay tedbirlerle itibarını artırmak kuşkusuz imkansızın da ötesindeydi. İşgalin ardından birçok üst düzey Osmanlı subay ve bürokratin başkent İstanbul'dan Anadolu'ya geçmesiyle Millî Mücadele kadroları daha da çeşitlenerek güçlendi. Buna karşın İngilizler, gittikçe güçlenen Millî Mücadele hareketinin gücünü küçümsemekte ısrarlıydılar. Bu ısrar, onların İtilâf Devletleri'yle az-çok uzlaşabilecek olan –kendi tabirleriyle– 'ılımlı Milliyetçi' kadrolara bile uzak kalmak gibi bir hataya düşmelerine yol açtı. Dahası, Ocak 1920'de Millî Mücadele temsilcilerinin son Osmanlı Mebuslar Meclisi'ne kabul ettirmeyi başardıkları *Misâk-ı Millî*, yabancı işgal ve denetimine karşı mücadele edileceğini ve İstanbul, İzmir ve Trakya konusunda taviz verilmeyeceğini ısrarla vurgulamasına rağmen, yaklaşık iki ay sonra İstanbul İngilizler'in önderliğindeki İtilâf askerî güçlerince işgal edildi. İngilizler'in "*Türkler bize karşı savaştı ve kaybettiler. Şimdi biz savaş galibiyiz; o halde onlar da yenilgilerinin bedelini İstanbul'u kaybetmekle ödesinler*" mantığının tipik bir örneğini ifade eden bu yaklaşım ile, Lloyd George'nin 5 Ocak 1918'de İngiliz Parlamentosu'nda İstanbul'un Türkler'e bırakılacağına dair verdiği söz bir kalemde unutuldu. Bu da İngiliz sözüne güvenilmeyeceğine güzel bir kanıt ve İngiltere'nin Doğu'daki sömürgeleri üzerinde olumsuz bir etki demektir. Bu noktada, İngiliz politik çevrelerinde, işgalin gerekliliğine yönelik sorgulamalar sık sık gündeme geldi. İşgal sonrasında bile, İstanbul'daki İngiliz Yüksek Komiseri Amiral de Robeck Londra'daki üstlerine, Türkler'e daha ılımlı barış koşulları sunulmasının gerekliliğini telkin etmeye çalıştı. Öte yandan bazı İngiliz Parlamento üyeleri, geçici olduğu ilan edilen işgalin nitelik olarak yeterince ağır olmadığını, Hintli Müslümanların tepkilerinden aşırı ve gereksiz yere çekinmenin yanlış olduğunu belirterek, Türkler'e ödün verilmesinin sakıncalı olduğuna yönelik bir tavır sergilediler. Diğer bir deyişle, hem hükümet uzantıları ve hükümet-dışı çevreler arasındaki hem de İngiliz dış politika mekanizmalarının kendi aralarındaki uyumsuzluk, İstanbul'un işgali konusunda belirgin bir şekilde gözlemlenebildi.

İstanbul'un işgaliyle İngilizler, kendilerini –beklentilerinin aksine– çok güç bir durumda içinde buldular. Koşullar kısa sürede Anadolu ve Ortadoğu'daki İngiliz prestijini hızlı ve olumsuz bir şekilde etkiledi. Millî Mücadeleciler'e kısmen tavizkâr davranan ve iktidarda kalmak için çabalayan Salih Hulusi Paşa hükümeti çok geçmeden düştü ve Anadolu'daki kargaşa böylece İstanbul'daki yönetim kadroları içinde de sürmeye devam etti. Mevcut olan bu gerginliğin ortadan kaldırılması için –İngilizler'in nazarında– Sultan'ın ve İtilâf Devletleri'nin çıkarlarını destekleyecek tek alternatif olarak görülen Damad Ferid Paşa, dördüncü kez hükümet kurmaya çağrıldı. Bu hükümet değişikliği aynı zamanda, İstanbul kanadının Anadolu'ya karşı çok daha sert bir tavır takınacağına da habercisi oldu. İngilizler artık ağır barış şartlarını kabul ettirme ve Millî Mücadele hareketini yoketme umutlarını tekrar Damad Ferid Paşa ve Sultan Vahdettin'e bağlamak durumundaydılar. Bu bağlamda –Robeck'in de dediği gibi– İtilâf Devletleri'nin Damad Ferid Paşa hükümetine maddi-manevi destek vermesi zorunluydu. Ancak bu destek ne tatmin edici ölçüde verilebilecek, ne de İtilâf kanadındaki tüm devletler bu konuda mutabık kalabileceklerdi. Sonuçta İstanbul'un işgali, İtilâf kanadı içindeki liderlik çatışmasını kamçılacağı gibi, İngilizler'in Anadolu politikasının iflasında önemli bir dönüm noktası olarak tarihteki yerini alacaktı.