

BRITISH POLICY IN THE ITALO-TURKISH WAR

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In September, 1911, Italy declared war on Turkey and proceeded to the conquest of the vilayet of Tripoli, a North African province of the Ottoman Empire. This thesis will attempt to determine the effect of this war upon British policy during the critical period just prior to the First Great War.

I

The Italo-Turkish War was singular in many respects. Although most of the fighting took place in Africa the real importance of the war lay in its effect upon European politics. Because of Italy's naval superiority the Turkish forces in Africa could not be reinforced, with the result that the two opponents could not actually come to grips with one another. It became a war which was at once half European and half colonial, and one in which no decisive battle could be fought between the belligerents. The question posed by this war was not who would possess Tripoli, but rather, what would the effect of the war be upon Italy, upon Turkey, and upon European politics in general. In particular, there was the very real possibility that if the war were prolonged it would invite an attack by the Balkan states upon Turkey;

and secondly, the war brought the future relationship of Italy to the two European groups - - the Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente - - sharply to the front.

Because these problems were of much more importance than the war itself, the course of the war will be briefly outlined in this chapter, and the issues which faced the British Government in its various phases lightly sketched. This was a war in which the centre of interest lay in the diplomatic, rather than the military, field. Once the course of events in Tripoli has been outlined they can largely be set aside to give way to the diplomatic problems with which later chapters will be primarily concerned.

When Italy declared war the attitude of the British Government was two-fold. On the one hand Britain privately disapproved of Italy's action, as she was well aware that a war which involved Turkey would touch the conflicting interests of so many Powers that it was not easy to see where war would end. On the other hand, once it was certain that Italy was bent upon war, the British Government was not prepared to push its disapproval to a point at which Italy would be driven back for support upon her connection with the Central Powers. At that time Italy's attachment to the Triple Alliance was uncertain and it was obviously the interest of the Entente Powers to weaken that connection still further. The problem facing British statesmen was how to strengthen and cement the

Triple Entente, and conversely, to weaken the Triple Alliance. As far as Turkey was concerned, England was in the happy position of being able to refer the Turks to their friends, the Germans. Germany, however, was placed in the extremely embarrassing position of having her allies, the Italians, attack her friends, the Turks. If there was to be interference, therefore, England preferred to leave it to the Central Powers who would reap the blame from either the one or the other of the belligerents.

The war fell into three clearly defined periods:

- (a) The first period comprised the time from the Italian declaration of war on September 29, 1911 to the Italian decree of the annexation of Libya on October 4, 1911. During this period Italy seized and occupied the principal coast-towns of Tripoli and Cyrenaica.
- (b) The second stage of the war was from the annexation to the Italian attack on the Dardanelles on April 18, 1912. The chief characteristics of this period were the almost complete standstill of military operations in Africa and Italy's inability to make the annexation effective because of the local resistance of the Arab population, and Turkey's refusal to surrender her rights of sovereignty.
- (c) The six months from April 18, 1912, until October 18, 1912, when peace was signed at Lausanne, comprised the final phase of the war. During this period Italy extended the war to other parts of the Ottoman Empire in order to force Turkey to surrender

on Italian terms, and resumed military operations in Africa in an attempt to crush the local opposition.

II

On the 1st of October Tripoli was blockaded, and three days later, following a naval bombardment, the town was occupied. The Turks, faced by superior forces and armament, merely put up a token resistance and then retired from the town to the edge of the oasis. Tobruk was occupied on the same day as Tripoli, and, during the rest of the month, further operations along the coast resulted in the occupation of Derna, Homs and Benghazi.

A minor naval engagement which took place in the Adriatic aroused the apprehensions of Austria-Hungary concerning Italian designs. An Italian squadron sank three Turkish torpedo-boats, which were based at Prevesa, and exchanged shots with an Albanian shore battery. Austria lodged an energetic protest against such actions and Aehrenthal, the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a note delivered to the Italian Government on the 1st of October, said that he would not countenance the continuation of operations in the Adriatic or the Ionian Sea, and that if they did not cease the consequences might be serious. The Duke of Abruzzi, who was in charge of the Italian naval squadron, received stringent orders from his superiors that, in future, operations should be limited to patrolling the sea, and that he should refrain from landings

and land bombardments. The Italians had received their first warning that attacks against those parts of the Ottoman Empire which lay outside Africa could easily involve them seriously with other Powers.

At sea the Turks had nothing to match the modern Italian navy. The Turkish fleet therefore, upon the declaration of war, retired to a place of refuge and during the war avoided any naval engagement which could only result in their own defeat. Italian naval supremacy meant that the Turkish forces in Tripoli could not be reinforced and only a few supplies, those which could evade the Italian blockade, could be brought to them.

By the end of October, the Italians could congratulate themselves that their operations had been carried out more or less according to plan. They had, without too much trouble, established themselves in the principal coast towns of Tripoli and Cyrenaica. There had been minor setbacks. One of these occurred on October 23, when Arabs attacking the Italian lines about Tripoli from the desert were suddenly aided by a surprise uprising of the oasis Arabs who attacked simultaneously from the Italian rear. A regiment of Bersaglieri, crack troops from Northern Italy, was virtually wiped out in this engagement. This resulted in severe reprisals against the Arabs in the oasis of Tripoli, an action which aroused much criticism in England.

With the outbreak of hostilities the British Government

found itself confronted with many problems. Its first action was to declare Great Britain neutral and to announce that they would not allow Egyptian territory to be used as a base for military operations.¹ Repeated requests by the Turkish Government for British intervention - - and even one offer of an alliance - - had to be refused in such a manner that no offense would be given. Since the war could not be prevented, the hope was expressed to the Italian Government that it would be localized. No sooner had hostilities broken out than the Powers began to plan for mediation between the belligerents. The British Government exercised great care in the manner in which these mediation proposals were handled. Although England wished to bring the war to an end as soon as possible, she was anxious that the Entente Powers should work together, and that no negotiations should be undertaken which might leave either the Italians or the Turks with the belief that one had been less favoured than the other.

III

The Italian Government feared that co-operation between the Powers might bring the war to an end before they had accomplished their purpose. If this happened, they might be forced to accept as a condition of peace the nominal suzerainty

(1) Great Britain kept an army of occupation in Egypt, but her legal position would be difficult to define. According to the Suez Canal Treaty of 1888, Turkey's position as territorial sovereign was expressly reserved.

of the Sultan over Tripoli, that is, instead of outright possession, they would get some sort of protectorate only. To forestall such an eventuality, the Italian Government, on November 4, announced the annexation of Libya although it had not yet been subdued. All future negotiations had therefore to be based on the assumption of complete Italian sovereignty over Tripoli and Cyrenaica. No room was left for compromise.

At the time of the annexation the war was fast approaching a stalemate. The Italians held many of the coast towns but the rest of the country which lay outside their lines was still in the hands of the Turkish forces. Prior to the war the Arab population had quarrelled constantly with their Turkish overlords. The Italians had hoped that these dissensions would deprive the Turks of the active support of the native people. It had also been more or less taken for granted that when the North Africans were faced with the overwhelming might of Italy's modern navy and army they would quickly realize the hopelessness of their situation and accept the inevitable. The hopes of the Italians were rudely blasted. The natives of those towns which were occupied by the Italian army gave their allegiance, although, as the army had found to its cost, their support was not to be relied upon; but most of the desert Arabs actively supported the cause of their co-religionists, the Turks. The Turkish army was small in numbers, but it supplied the leadership and provided the nucleus for those Arabs who took up arms against the Italians. It was impossible for the Turkish forces to

recapture the coast towns in which the Italians had established themselves. The Italians, on the other hand, were not prepared to pursue the enemy into the desert where they would have to face his light irregular forces and where they would also have to contend with difficulties of procuring water and other supplies. The campaign degenerated into guerrilla warfare; the inability of the Italians to inflict a decisive defeat encouraged the desert tribes in their opposition.

with the exception of a few minor engagements and skirmishes, military operations in Africa came to a halt. The Italian Government felt that Libya should be surrendered to them as it was futile for the Turks to offer resistance which could only prolong the war, but not change the final result. The logic of the Italians had little effect upon the Turks who were faced with a dilemma. If the war dragged on into the spring there was the danger of trouble at home in the Balkans; if they surrendered to the Italians and deserted the cause of their subjects and fellow Mohammedans in Africa, public opinion in Turkey would probably force the Government from office. There was also the opinion of the Moslem, and particularly of the Arab, populations in the rest of the Ottoman Empire to consider. The Turkish Government, therefore, refused to consider peace on any terms unless at least the nominal suzerainty of the Sultan was recognized in Tripoli. As little aid could be sent to the Turkish forces in Africa, the cost of prolonging the war was negligible. On the other hand, the Italian nation suffered the

daily loss of an important export trade with Turkey and was burdened with the expense of keeping thousands of soldiers on active service.

The situation was fast becoming intolerable for Italy. A decision had not been forced in Tripoli and the slow progress of the war was giving rise to increasing criticism at home. With every day that passed, the danger of trouble in the Balkans grew, and it was the hope of both belligerents that the Powers, to avoid the international complications to which this might give rise, would intervene and force a satisfactory peace. The period was characterized by diplomatic action, but none that succeeded in bringing hostilities to an end.

During this stalemate England was concerned over the effect of the war upon her commerce. The extinction of the lights in the Red Sea which belonged to the Turks was causing inconvenience to British shipping. The fear that Italian action might force the Turks to close the Dardanelles aroused much apprehension. The most important consideration of the Foreign Office, however, was the part to be played in the mediation proposals which were brought forward by the Russian Government. None of these proposals were successful, but in the spring of 1912 the British Government joined Russia, France, Austria-Hungary and Germany in asking Italy and, later, Turkey their terms for bringing the war to an end. Conditions acceptable to both Italy and Turkey could not be found.

The Italian Government had hoped that the five Powers would persuade Turkey to acquiesce in the cession of Libya. Their failure to do so and Turkey's continuing guerrilla warfare in Africa finally convinced the Italians that they would have to adopt sterner methods. The Italians decided to strike at some vulnerable part of the Ottoman Empire - - a thing they had so far avoided - - which would force the Turks to sue for peace. The Ottoman Empire was hedged by the conflicting interests of so many Powers that it was difficult for Italy to attack it anywhere without disturbing some commercial or political sphere of influence. Turkey could afford to be complacent, sheltering behind foreign interests, because whether Italy struck in the Adriatic, Ionian or Red Seas, the Dardanelles or at Turkey itself, she would certainly find herself at odds with at least one power. Italy decided to take a step which would extend the war in spite of the fact that her diplomatic difficulties would probably be increased by doing so.

IV

In April Italy extended the war to the Aegean Sea. On the 17th an Italian squadron arrived at the entrance to the Straits and, upon their discovery by the Turks, shots were exchanged with a Turkish shore battery. Two hours later the Italian ships withdrew. As a result of this attack, the Turks declared the Dardanelles closed to international traffic.

Although Turkey had an excuse to close the Dardanelles her real object in doing so was that this action would irritate the Powers and that Italy would be blamed for extending the war. The two most interested powers were England and Russia. England was annoyed because most of the Russian wheat leaving Black Sea ports was carried in British ships which were now immobilized because of the closure. In their anxiety to have the Straits reopened as soon as possible, England and Russia failed to work together. England expressed her concern to Italy, and added that the Turks could not be blamed for the closure of the Straits which was causing grave damage to British commercial interests. The Russians sent an energetic protest to the Turkish Government demanding the immediate reopening of the Straits and threatened to exact reparations if their demand should be refused. Because of Russian pressure the Dardanelles were reopened on the 1st of May.

On April 23, the Italians occupied the island of Stampalia, capturing the Turkish garrison and establishing a naval base. During May, further action was taken against Turkish islands. The most important, Rhodes, was taken on May 4. Ten more islands were seized on May 12, including Scrapanto and Cos. The remainder of the Dodecanese group were taken the following day.

Italy took the precaution of advising the Powers that the occupation of the islands was merely a temporary measure forced

upon her by the necessity of bringing Turkey to terms and that they would be returned when the war had been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. The loss of the islands did not have the desired effect upon Turkey, however. The Turks were reasonably sure that, whether they wished to or not, the Italians would not be allowed to retain the islands after the war; and in the meantime, since the populations were Christian, it was not a matter of much importance. As a measure of reprisal for their loss, the Turkish Government decreed the long threatened expulsion of Italian subjects from the Ottoman Empire. As there were about seventy thousand Italians living in the Ottoman Empire this was a grave measure against Italy, but it was in fact never seriously carried out.

The British Government was quite concerned over the seizure of the islands although only Austria made any formal protest to Italy. Possession of Libya by Italy, dependent as it was upon Anglo-Italian friendship, did not unduly worry the English statesmen. The British fleet was supreme in the Mediterranean, and Tripoli was wedged between the French forces in Tunis and the British forces in Egypt. In case of a war between Italy and the Powers of the Entente, Tripoli would be lost more quickly than it was being conquered. Possession of the islands presented an entirely different problem. It was against British naval policy to allow potential naval bases, from which an enemy fleet could strike at her communications in the Mediterranean, to fall into the hands of any strong sea-power.

With the islands in the hands of Turkey, the danger was negligible, but it was not desirable to have them in the possession of Italy who could use them as advanced bases for her modern navy. This question was especially important at a time when many units of the Mediterranean fleet were being withdrawn to reinforce the North Sea fleet to counteract the increasing German threat. The Admiralty was disquieted, but in view of the Italian declaration that the occupation was only a temporary measure, diplomatic action was not taken at this time.

Italian moves in the Aegean stirred diplomatic circles, but as far as Tripoli was concerned the situation was as unsatisfactory as ever. The Italian army was still cooped up in a few towns along the sea-board. After several months of inaction it was at last resolved that more vigorous action would be necessary in this theatre and the Turkish-Arabic forces decisively defeated if the annexation of Tripoli was to become a reality. The Italian army in Libya was reinforced and reorganized for desert fighting and the offensive resumed in the beginning of the summer with the intention of making it clear that further resistance was useless. On June 16 the Italian army moved against Misurata, a strong enemy stronghold, and occupied it on July 8. Further operations during July and August resulted in more defeats for the Turkish-Arab forces.

The new and energetic Italian offensive in Tripoli left the Turks unmoved, but by the autumn of 1912 it was becoming increasingly obvious that the long prophesied war in the Balkans was about to break out. In order that her hands might be free to deal with this new menace, which was expected at any moment and which was of more importance than the lost vilayet of Tripoli, Turkey decided that the time had come to make peace with Italy so that her full attention might be devoted to this fresh trouble. On October 18, the protracted war came to an end when the Peace of Lausanne was signed between Italy and Turkey. By the terms of the treaty Turkey received more or less what she had been offered at the beginning of the war. The Sultan issued a proclamation decreeing the autonomy of Libya, and Italy undertook to pay Turkey a lump sum to compensate her for the loss of taxes which had been devoted to the Ottoman debt.

When Italy went into Tripoli it was with such a preponderance of strength that the war was not expected to last very long. As a matter of fact, it was expected that it would be all over before the spring so that Italy would be prepared for any situation she might have to meet in the Balkans; there was little danger from that quarter while winter snow lay on the ground. As expected, the Turkish defences in Tripoli were easily brushed aside and the principal coast towns occupied with little trouble. What was not expected was Turkey's refusal to surrender the provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica in spite of the fact that she was unable

to protect them. For Turkey to have signed away her provinces at this time would have looked like desertion of her Arab subjects, and Turkey could not afford the loss of prestige in the Mohammedan world which this would have entailed. The Italians soon found that getting a colony was not as simple as it had seemed. When military operations in Africa became protracted Italy found that it was difficult to exert pressure on Turkey by attacking elsewhere. According to Giolitti, the Italian premier, ". . . to attack Turkey in a vital point was a fine phrase which had no basis in reality. When we thought it convenient to move the field of the war from Libya to the Aegean, everywhere we turned we found British, German, Russian, French, and even American, but never Turkish interests." A minor operation against Turkey in the Red Sea area brought protests from as far away as India and China where Mohammedans feared that Italy's action might interfere with pilgrimages to the Holy Places, Mecca and Medina. Italy was unable to force the Turks to surrender their sovereign rights nor could they crush the resistance in their prospective colony. As a matter of fact, Arab tribes in the interior continued to resist the Italians for many months after the Sultan had surrendered his sovereignty and the Powers had recognized Tripoli

and Cyrenaica as Italian colonies.¹

The signing of the peace did not satisfactorily decide the fate of the islands which Italy had occupied. According to the treaty, Italy was to remain in possession until such time as the Turks had fulfilled their engagements. As the weeks and months passed, however, the Italian Government found many excuses to explain why they did not terminate their 'temporary occupation'. This created a problem for the British Government which lasted until the eve of the First Great War.

(1) The best book for a detailed account of the war in Tripoli is "Italy in North Africa" by W.K. McLure. Giovanni Giolitti, who was the Italian premier during those years, in his "Memoirs of my Life" also gives a good general account of the war. There are also such accounts as "With the Italians in North Africa" by Tullio Irace which give highly coloured and biased accounts of the campaign. As stated at the beginning of this chapter, the details of the war are of little importance, but only the general course of the campaign.

CHAPTER II

BACKGROUND

The aspirations of Italy in North Africa were of long standing. Even before the country became a united nation many of her statesmen had looked to the day when Italy would possess territory on the southern shore of the Mediterranean. As early as 1838 Mazzini is reported to have said, "North Africa belongs to Italy."¹ In Italian political circles it was believed that when the anticipated break up of the Ottoman Empire took place Tunis would fall to Italy's share. However, the ambitions of Italy in Tunis were suddenly brought to nought in 1881 when the government of France declared a protectorate over the coveted territory without evoking a protest from either England or Germany. Shocked at the loss of a piece of property to which they had expected to be the heirs, yet realizing that they could do nothing because of their isolation and weakness, Italy looked to the Powers of Central Europe for the support which she needed if her overseas interests were to prosper. It was under these circumstances that Italy joined Germany and Austria-Hungary in 1882 to form the Triple Alliance. As the hope of some day possessing Tunis was dead Italy began to look elsewhere along the North African littoral for a future colony.

(1) Great Britain, Foreign Office, Historical Section,
Italian Libya p.18

After 1881 it became a cardinal principle of Italian foreign policy that, Tunis being lost, Italy must some day compensate herself by gaining possession of Tripoli. Despite the fact that much of Tripoli was a desert wasteland, in Italian eyes it had much to commend it. Tripoli was fairly close to Italy and its geographic position in the Eastern Mediterranean gave it strategic value. Tobruk was reputed to be the finest natural harbour along the entire coast. The fact that Tripoli had been part of the Roman Empire from 46 B.C. until its loss to the Vandals in the 5th century, carried much weight with the nationalists who planned for a restoration of a Third Roman Empire. The Italians hoped that under their management the country, which had had a reputation for great productivity in ancient times, might become once more a garden. Most important of all, it was the only area to which Italy could aspire without coming into conflict with the interests of England or France. It became axiomatic to any Italian government, no matter what its political complexion, that Tripoli must some day belong to Italy.¹

During the two decades which preceded the declaration of war Italy prepared the ground for the anticipated establishment of her sovereignty over Tripoli in two ways. Understandings were reached with the various European Powers which assured Italy of their benevolent neutrality and disinterestedness

(1) Idem.

in regard to her prospective action, and the attempt was made to gain control of the future colony through a policy of economic penetration.

The first Powers to whom Italy turned for support were naturally those with whom she was allied. When the Triple Alliance was renewed in 1891, Italy was able to increase the price of her adhesion, and in the separate treaty which was signed between Italy and Germany the following was included as Article IX:

Germany and Italy engage to exert themselves for the maintenance of the territorial status quo in the North African regions on the Mediterranean, to wit, Cyrenaica, Tripolitania, and Tunisia. The Representatives of the two Powers in these regions shall be instructed to put themselves into the closest intimacy of mutual communication and assistance. If unfortunately, as a result of a mature examination of the situation, Germany and Italy should both recognize that the maintenance of the status quo had become impossible, Germany engages, after a formal and previous agreement, to support Italy in any action in the form of occupation or other taking of guaranty which the latter should undertake in these same regions with a view to an interest of equilibrium and of legitimate compensation. It is understood that in such an eventuality the two Powers would seek to place themselves likewise in agreement with England.¹

In 1902 there was some question concerning the position of Germany in regard to Tripoli. Any Italian uneasiness was allayed when von Bulow told the Italian Ambassador that nothing was further from their intention than to begrudge the Italians their possession of Tripoli, or to place difficulties in the way of their acquiring it.²

(1) George B. Manhart, Alliance and Entente, 1871 - 1914 (New York, 1933) p.27

(2) Memorandum by Count von Bulow, Jan. 12, 1902; G.D.D. 111 p. 166

When the Triple Alliance was renewed for the fourth time in June, 1902, Italy managed to get the support of the Austrians for their project. The terms of the fourth treaty between Austria and Italy were exactly identical with those of 1891, but two days after the renewal had been signed Baron Pasetti, the Austrian Ambassador to Italy, made the following written declaration at the request of the Italian Government:

. . . the Austro-Hungarian government, having no special interest to safeguard in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, has decided to undertake nothing which might interfere with the action of Italy, in case, as a result of fortuitous circumstances, the state of things now prevailing in those regions should undergo any change whatsoever and should oblige the Royal Government to have recourse to measures which would be dictated to it by its own interests.¹

The seizure of Tunis by France was followed by strained relations between France and Italy which continued for several years. Toward the end of the 19th century, however, there was a rapprochement between the two countries which in December, 1900, led to an exchange of letters between Marquis Visconti-Venosta (Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs) and M. Camille Barrere (French Ambassador to Italy). The gist of these letters was that Italy would give France a free hand in Morocco in exchange for which Italians were given a similar privilege in Tripoli. In July, 1902, Signor Giuli Prinetti, Marquis Visconti-Venosta's successor, confirmed the earlier agreement by an exchange of notes with M. Barrere in which it was stated:

(1) Manhart, op.cit., p. 54

. . . that each of the two powers can freely develop its sphere of influence in the above mentioned regions (Tripolitania-Cyrenaica and Morocco) at the moment it deems opportune, and without the action of one of them being necessarily subordinated to that of the other . . .¹

These letters between the two countries did more than provide a demarcation of French and Italian interests in the Mediterranean. A practical result of the agreement was the abandoning of the concentration of the French and of the Italian armies on the Franco-Italian frontier. From the moment Italy began to look for French support her position in the Triple Alliance grew extremely shaky.

The Italians knew, however, that it was not enough to secure the support of France unless she could also assure herself that England, the Mistress of the Mediterranean, would not be antagonistic to her plans. Following the policy of keeping her hands free to do as she pleased when the occasion arose, England had, until 1902, been reluctant to make any declaration. In 1901 Prinetti found his opportunity to force England's hand. The Italians were grumbling about the imposition of English as the official language of Malta; and Lord Currie, the British Ambassador to Italy, gave them something additional of which to complain when he committed the political blunder of drinking a toast to the supreme Pontiff at a dinner party.² When in December

(1) Ibid., p. 33

(2) J.L. Glanville, Italy's Relations with England (Baltimore, 1934) p. 96

of the same year Italy published the Franco-Italian agreement England became alarmed.¹ If the other Powers had made concessions, as Prinetti had stated, and the English government did not, it would be difficult to hold the old traditional Anglo-Italian friendship. Lord Lansdowne decided to recognize Italy's priority of interest in Tripoli, and Prinetti was able to secure gratuitously an adhesion which formerly England had shown some hesitation in giving. A note was delivered to the Italians in the summer of 1902 in which Lord Lansdowne declared that:

His Britannic Majesty's Government have no aggressive or ambitious designs in regard to Tripoli as above described; that they continue to be sincerely desirous of the status quo there, as in other parts of the coast of the Mediterranean and that if at any time an alteration of the status quo should take place it would be their object that, so far as is compatible with the obligations resulting from the Treaties which at present form part of the public law of Europe, such alteration should be in conformity with Italian interests. This assurance is given on the understanding and in full confidence that Italy on her part has not entered and will not enter into arrangements with other Powers in regard to this or other portions of the Mediterranean of a nature inimical to British interests.²

Lansdowne's declaration was not as specific as those which Italy had obtained from the Central Powers and France, but at least they could be certain that Great Britain would not interfere with their designs on Tripoli.

(1) Ibid., p. 110
(2) Ibid., p. 118

In the autumn of 1909 the Tsar of Russia paid a visit to Italy in an effort to detach her from the Triple Alliance. In the agreement which was signed between the two countries at Raconigi the following article was included:

Italy and Russia agree to consider with benevolence, the one, Russian interests in the question of the Straits, the other, ¹ Italian interests in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.

Assured that the Powers recognized her predominant interests in Tripolitania, Italy was for many years satisfied to follow a policy of economic penetration to achieve her ends. Before 1911, two-thirds of the total tonnage of ships calling at Tripoli and Benghazi were Italian, and of these more than 70% were subsidized mail steamers. The only lines which called at Tripolitanian ports regularly were those of the subsidized Societe Nazionale di Servizi Maritimi. The Banco di Roma took a special interest in the country and had branches at Tripoli and Banghazi. This bank furnished funds to Italians for the acquisition of land, and provided capital for many industrial undertakings such as flour-mills, oil and soap factories, and presses for Esparto grass. The Italian Government maintained a system of both elementary and technical schools, and established a hospital with an Italian staff.²

During the decade which preceded the war there was a tendency on the part of the Italians to treat Tripoli as territory over which they had already established their sovereignty. In 1906, the French occupation of the oasis of Bilma, which lay on the

(1) Manhart, op. cit., p. 62

(2) Sir Thomas Barclay, The Turco-Italian War and its Problems, (London, 1912) pp. 57-58

route between Tripoli and Lake Chad, but which was well within the French sphere of influence, evoked protests from the Italian press. The increasing German influence at Constantinople about 1908 aroused their suspicions in case the Germans should be granted any concessions in Tripoli by the Ottoman Government. In the spring of 1908, the Italian Government made a naval demonstration to obtain satisfaction for some complaints and to obtain recognition of an Italian post-office which they had established in Benghazi. In February, 1910, attention was drawn in the Italian Chamber of Deputies to encroachments by France upon the Tripolitanian frontier, as though the country were already an Italian colony.¹

Before the summer of 1911, it was the policy of Italy to proceed with caution and to prepare for the eventual occupation by peaceful infiltration. There was no reason for taking such a brusque action as a declaration of war when they needed only to wait and Tripoli would be theirs. After all, her priority rights had been recognized by the Powers. It was not expected that the Ottoman Empire would last much longer, and on that indeterminate date when it broke up, Tripoli would fall to Italy's share. On the other hand, Italian patience was beginning to wear a little thin. Friction between the Royal Government and the Porte was frequent. The disinclination of Italian statesmen for political adventure was well known, but the exasperating state of

(1) Ibid., pp. 55-56

affairs in Tripoli was continually before them, and there was a growing anxiety in Italy to end all these vexations by seizing the vilayet. It was the course of events in the Western Mediterranean during the summer of 1911 which made Italy decide on an active policy. Before that time Italian statesmen would seem to have preferred the policy of patient waiting in spite of Turkish pin-pricks and an unsatisfactory situation.

Until the three months immediately preceding the outbreak of war, the Italian Government had several times announced its policy to be the maintenance of the 'status quo' in the Mediterranean. Sir Rennell Rodd, the British Ambassador in Rome, on February 15, 1910, reported a declaration, in the Chamber of Deputies by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, that the integrity of the Ottoman Empire in Africa, as elsewhere, had always been a principle of Italian foreign policy. Rodd believed that Italy perceived the hopelessness of realizing her long desired territorial aspirations in Tripoli, and that the Italian Government sincerely wished to support the new regime¹ in Turkey.² The British Government considered this statement an important declaration of Italian policy.³ On the last day of December, 1910, Rodd reported irritation between the Italian and

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- (1) In 1908, the Young Turks, a group which believed that their country was in need of reforms and that they should be carried out by Turkish hands, led a successful revolution against Abdul Hamid, the autocratic Sultan, and forced him to grant the country a Constitution.
- (2) Rodd to Grey, Feb. 10, 1910; B.D., 1X (1) p. 262
- (3) Idem., Minute signed by Crowe, Langley, Hardinge and Grey.

Turkish governments. The Italian Secretary-General admitted, however, that despite their dissatisfaction with Turkey, they felt obliged to temporize as they could not give practical effect to their resentment.¹

As late as June 21, 1911, San Giuliano, the Minister for Foreign Affairs in speaking of Italy's foreign affairs said, "Our policy, like that of the other Great Powers, had for its foundation the integrity of the Ottoman Empire." This statement was, however, qualified to a certain extent when he continued, "All the Great Powers, bearing in mind the peculiar conditions of the historical phase through which Turkey is now passing, have up to now deemed it advisable to treat the various incidents which are continually arising in the Eastern states in a broad spirit of benevolent equanimity. Nevertheless, bearing in mind also the gravity of the considerations which have up to the present justified this attitude, we should not by any means be acting loyally towards everybody concerned, and especially towards Turkey herself, if we did not frankly express our firm resolve to protect our dignity and our interests whenever such a duty is imposed upon us by the attitude of the Ottoman government towards the legitimate activity in Tripoli and Cyrenaica being contrary to the repeated promises made by the Turkish authorities."² In spite of San Giuliano's rather

(1) Rodd to Grey, Dec. 31, 1910; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 263-64
(2) The London Times - Sept. 30, 1911, page 5.

vague threats concerning the protection of Italy's dignity and interests, the decision to wrench Tripoli forcibly from the Turks had not yet been taken. Although such an eventuality was always kept in mind, the government was still satisfied with its policy of peaceful penetration, watching, and waiting. It was the news of German interference in Morocco which finally galvanized the Italians into action. The despatch of the cruiser Panther to Agadir was a direct cause of the Italo-Turkish war.

On the 1st of July, 1911, von Jagow, the German Ambassador to Italy, called on San Giuliano at the Italian Foreign Office and announced that for the protection of German firms in the south of Morocco the cruiser Panther had been sent to Agadir. Naturally enough, the reasons offered to excuse the German action were received with a great deal of scepticism. Two years later San Giuliano related to Sir Rennell Rodd that upon von Jagow's leaving his room he had called in Prince Scalea, the Under-Secretary of State, and, taking out his watch, which marked five minutes before midday, observed to him that from that moment the question of Tripoli had entered on an active phase. Immediately following this, began the process of preparing public opinion for what was to take place at the end of September.¹ Two days after the German

(1) Sir J.R. Rodd, Social and Diplomatic Memories, 1884-1919,
(London, 1922-5) Vol. III, p. 141

Ambassador had informed him of the despatch of the Panther, San Giuliano advised Rodd that if, in the early future, there should be any occasion for the Powers to exert pressure on Turkey, Italy would welcome the opportunity to make a demonstration in Tripoli.

The Italian Premier, Signor Giolitti, had for years been a firm advocate of the policy of peaceful penetration and the maintenance of the status quo in North Africa, but in the summer of 1911 the decision was taken to settle the Libyan question by force of arms. This volte-face by the Giolitti government was the result of several considerations. Things had changed a great deal in Tripoli since the advent of the Young Turks to power in 1908. The Turks, aware of Italy's intentions in North Africa and contemptuous of their ability to do anything to accomplish them, put as many difficulties as possible in her way and daily became more intransigent. One result of this was that the Banco di Roma found its operations much curtailed, and consequently used what influence it had to hasten the establishment of Italian sovereignty over Tripoli. The bank tried to impress its views upon public opinion through control of certain sections of the press and worked with the nationalists who were anxious that Italy

should take action.¹ A war at this time would help the Government overcome strong opposition which was developing in the House of Deputies towards their domestic policies.² To be at loggerheads with the Turks, was nothing new. The influence of the Banco di Roma was strong, but not strong enough to force Giolitti's hand. When Giolitti declared war it was for more fundamental reasons than these, reasons which were entirely concerned with foreign policy.

The important consideration in the decision for a show-down with Turkey was, nevertheless, the German coup at Agadir. When the Germans took action in Morocco it meant that the status of that country would be changed.

(1) In the House of Deputies Giolitti had to contend with a stiff opposition from the conservative elements, who were aroused over two bills which were sponsored by the Government concerning an extension of the franchise and making life assurance business a state monopoly, and because certain Radical members had been taken into the Cabinet. As the opposition had little chance of defeating the Government measures they were prepared to use other means to achieve their ends. The conservatives demanded action in Libya which they did not believe Giolitti would take. If the country could be sufficiently aroused over this question the government might be overturned and the two bills they opposed quashed. Giolitti however, an astute politician who well understood this manoeuvre, considered that the time was ripe for aggressive action in Tripoli, and decided to adopt it himself and thus leave the opposition hoist by their own petard. He realized that war with Turkey would tend to diminish the conflict of interests and opinions at home. In part the enterprise in Tripoli was a price he paid for his domestic policy. See Pinon's "L'Europe et la guerre Italo-Turc" in *Revue de Deux Mondes* for March, 1912.

(2) Idem.

Whether it became a French Protectorate or whether it was divided between the French and the Germans made little difference to the Italians. The point was that the balance of power in the Mediterranean was about to be disturbed, and to the disadvantage of Italy. The Italians felt that if they stood idly by and did nothing the Mediterranean would soon become a French lake. Besides, the Germans claimed that, as a first class Power, they were entitled to compensations if the French changed the status of Morocco. The Italians were convinced that they had the same excuse, that they also should get compensations, and they would take them in Tripoli. Then there was the fear that if they did not move quickly enough they would lose Tripoli to some other Power as they had Tunis. Tripoli was all there was left in North Africa, and it would be well for the Italians to establish their claims. Events in the Western Mediterranean had as one of their immediate results the Italian decision to take action in Tripoli.

The Royal Government of Italy agreed that something should be done, but the opinion of the leaders differed as to the time for striking. San Giuliano thought that the question of Tripoli should be settled while the Powers were still embroiled over Morocco, and before that subject was settled. Tittoni, the Italian Ambassador to France, urged immediate action as he was certain it would have the loyal support of the French Government, but that if it was postponed until

the Morocco business was settled, the French colonial party might use its influence to place obstacles in Italy's way. Giolitti himself was convinced that the time had come to act, but only after the quarrel between France and Germany was settled, and it was his view which prevailed. In case the dispute in Morocco should lead to a European war, he wished to keep his hands free. Also, he considered that if he waited until the question of Tripoli was the only one in the diplomatic field, it would be easier to settle.¹

(1) Giolitti, op. cit., pp. 254-5.

CHAPTER III

PREPARATION

Before taking precipitate action against the Turks the Italians were careful to carry on a work of diplomatic preparation with those Powers who would be in any way interested in the question of Tripoli. The object of this preparation was to enlist the sympathy, or, if this was not possible, at least to avert the open hostility of the Powers towards Italy's enterprise. The Powers, however, were not to be told of Italy's intention to declare war as there was always the danger of a premature general discussion of the Ottoman question which would compromise the whole thing. The Italian Government, therefore, kept the Powers constantly advised of their difficulties with Turkey, but in case they should become apprehensive said nothing definite about their plans.

Great Britain was the first country to be approached by the Italians, and, according to Giolitti, their task at the Court of St-James was an easy one.¹ On the 26th of July, Marquis Imperiali, the Italian Ambassador to Great Britain, called on Sir Edward Grey.

(1) Giovanni Giolitti, *Memoirs of My Life*, (London & Sydney, 1923)
p. 262.

The Ambassador said that the situation in Tripoli was becoming difficult and that Italy might be forced to take some step. He complained that an Italian could not buy land in Tripoli whereas a German could buy as much as he pleased, and now Italians were to be excluded from tendering for port works. In Italy public opinion was becoming sensitive and discontented on the subject. Grey's reply, which was the basis for England's foreign policy in this regard, is worth quoting in full:

I said that I desired to sympathize with Italy, in view of the very good relations between us. If it really was the case that Italians were receiving unfair and adverse economic treatment in Tripoli, - a place where such treatment was especially disadvantageous to Italy, - and should the hand of Italy be forced, I would, if need be, express to the Turks the opinion that, in face of the unfair treatment meted (sic) out to Italians, the Turkish Government could not expect anything else.¹

Grey's reply convinced the Italians that they could depend upon the sympathy of the British Government.

On the 31st of July, Rodd asked San Giuliano whether the departure of the Italian Consul-General in Tripoli and the simultaneous change of Italian Ambassadors in Constantinople would indicate any change in Italian policy toward Turkey. San Giuliano replied that some change of policy might be forced upon the Italian Government. A year or two ago, he continued, the question had not existed, but it had been called into being once more by the policy pursued towards their colonists in Tripoli by

(1) Grey to Rodd, July 28, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 264

the Young Turkish party, and he feared that public opinion would sooner or later force the government's hand. If France established a protectorate over Morocco, this current of public opinion would acquire such force that it would be difficult to resist. Rodd warned the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs that the action advocated by certain sections of the Italian press would involve the country in great difficulties, and Tripoli was a dangerous hornet's nest to disturb. Rodd was convinced that the question of Tripoli was causing San Giuliano great concern, and that it was closely connected with the contemporary Franco-German negotiations for a settlement in Morocco.¹ The permanent officials of the British Foreign Office took the view that if other Powers gained special advantages in Morocco, Italy would seek compensations in Tripoli and they regarded this possibility with some apprehension.²

Towards the beginning of August several unfortunate incidents caused dispute between Italy and Turkey. In the course of a conversation with the Italian Ambassador on the 16th of August, which dealt with the sending of mails from Malta to Tripoli, Grey said: "It would, I thought, be much better that we should show our good-will to Italy by giving her our diplomatic support in Constantinople if she had occasion to protest against Italian interests being treated by the Turks in Tripoli more unfavourably than those of other Powers."³ This policy was put into effect

(1) Rodd to Grey, July 31, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 264-6

(2) Idem., Minute signed by Crowe and Langley.

(3) Grey to Rodd, Aug. 16, 1911, B.D. 1X (1) p. 266.

the 30th of August when Sir G. Lowther, the British Ambassador to Turkey, was advised of the conversation which had taken place between Grey and Imperiali on July 26 on the subject of Tripoli, and instructed to inform the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, Rifaat Pasha, that: ' His Majesty's Government understands the complaint of the Italian Government to be that they receive less favourable treatment in Tripoli than other nations.' ¹

It had been the policy of the Italian army in making its military dispositions to take into consideration the probability that Italy might undertake some overseas action, and particulars concerning the formation of an expeditionary force had been prepared some time before. This machinery was now put into action. In August Signor Giolitti sent for Major-General Pollio, Chief of Headquarters Staff, and instructed him to examine the question of an occupation of Libya and to decide on the number of troops which would be necessary. When General Pollio later submitted his report he estimated that a force of 20,000 would be sufficient to effect the purpose. It was Giolitti's intention that Tripoli should be occupied with such overwhelming strength that the Turks would see the futility of resistance and come to terms more easily. With this in view, the Prime Minister directed that plans be based upon an expeditionary force of 40,000, double the number asked for by

(1) Grey to Lowther, Aug. 30, 1911, B.D., 1X (1) pp. 266-7

the Staff. Military preparation was conducted secretly, and further to avert any suspicion concerning their plans, the Ministers of the Government left Rome for the summer holidays. Giolitti himself remained at Anticoli, which was a two hour drive by motor-car from the capital.¹

Although the deserted aspect of Rome gave to the casual observer the impression that nothing untoward was in prospect, Sir Rennell Rodd suspected that all was not quite as it seemed. In a report written on September 4 he warned his Government that the attitude of Italy required careful watching, and that for several reasons. The Minister for Foreign Affairs had hinted broadly that any extension of French influence in the Mediterranean would bring up the question of compensations for Italy. The Turkish Government had been going out of its way of late to eliminate causes of friction between the two countries, which suggested an anxiety lest Italy be given any pretext for complaint. The British Ambassador was positive that public opinion in Italy would overthrow any Ministry which stood idly by and watched the French establish a protectorate over Morocco without making an effort to obtain a similar hold upon Tripoli for Italy.² Grey was aware of this theory of compensations for Italy. He comments in a minute attached to this report that the Italian Ambassador, Imperiali, always contends that Italy should get

(1) Giolitti, op. cit., pp. 269-272

(2) Rodd to Grey, Sept. 4, 1911, B.D. 1X (1) pp. 267-8

Tripoli if the French get Morocco. Grey did not consider, however, that the two questions were related; the break-up of Morocco did not necessarily imply the break-up of the Ottoman Empire.¹

In the beginning of September, the Italian press began to circulate rumours concerning impending action in Tripoli, even going so far as to describe the constitution of the expeditionary force which, they claimed, would be despatched in October. These rumours were contradicted by an official agency in what was evidently an inspired article. The 'Tribuna', the semi-official organ of the Government, rebuked the opposition press severely for attempting to force the Government to make a definite pronouncement of policy. It was the duty of every newspaper, it continued, to refrain from publishing every rumour which was in the air as, whether it was true or false, it could only be injurious to the interests of the country.² On the other hand, the Turkish Charge d'Affaires asked San Giuliano (on September 13) to issue a statement dissociating the Italian Government from the vigorous campaign in the Italian press advocating action in Tripoli. The Minister for Foreign Affairs refused. He replied that he did not feel called upon to make any such public announcement. The Royal Government's policy towards Turkey had been defined in statements in the Chamber, and he had nothing to add to them.

(1) Idem., Minute by Grey.

(2) Rodd to Grey, Sept. 14, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) pp.269.

In any case, he added, he could not interfere with the freedom of the press in Italy, which expressed public opinion.¹

On the 14th of September, Rodd had an interview with the Minister for Foreign Affairs who was in Rome for the day. San Giuliano said that he would be returning to Anticoli the next day to 'finish his cure'. Rodd surmised that this was an excuse to be close to the Prime Minister who was still on holiday there. San Giuliano was of the opinion that the crisis over Morocco was now practically over and he further admitted that Italian opinion in favour of action in Tripoli was very strong and almost unanimous.²

When Giolitti was convinced that the Moroccan question would be settled peaceably he decided that the time had come to strike. On Sept. 17, quietly so that attention would not be aroused, he motored to Racconigi and called on the King who was in residence there. The situation was explained to the King, who thereupon gave his consent for the impending action and authorized all the necessary orders and decrees.³

The day after his meeting with the King, Giolitti telegraphed his Minister for Foreign Affairs and instructed him to hurry on the preparations for the occupation, but to do so with caution and secrecy. Provision was made for the mobilization of the 1888 class of soldiers, who had been discharged but whom General Pollio

(1) Rodd to Grey, Sept. 14, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 270

(2) Idem.

(3) Giolitti, op. cit., pp. 275-6.

had insisted should be recalled to the colours if the expeditionary force was to have the necessary elasticity and if the regiments left in Italy were not to be too weakened. A little later he authorized the despatch of ships to Tripoli for the security of the Italians there. On the 18th of September definite steps were taken which would result in the occupation of Libya.¹

Although it was not known that Italy intended the occupation of Tripoli, apprehensions regarding her future actions there became more noticeable abroad. Lowther reported on the 18th from Constantinople that Government circles were becoming increasingly nervous, and what they particularly feared was that some fresh incident, such as a spontaneous boycott of Italian goods by the people, would give the Italians an excuse for retaliation in Tripoli.²

Grey now suspected Italy's true intentions, and in a private letter on the 19th to Sir Arthur Nicolson, his Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, said:

"It will be tiresome if Italy embarks on an aggressive policy and the Turks appeal to us. If the Turks do this I think we must refer them to Germany and Austria as being allies of Italy. It is most important that neither we nor France should side against Italy now.

I promised Imperiali that if Italy showed that the Turks were not treating her as well as others in Tripoli, we would tell the Turks that any action Italy took to defend her interests had been brought by the Turks upon themselves.

(1) Idem.

(2) Lowther to Grey, Sept. 18, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 272

We must hope that before Italy does anything the Turks will have done something to enable us to give this answer, if the appeal is made to us." ¹

Grey did not approve of an adventure by Italy in Africa, but neither did he intend to balk her. The balance of power in Europe was of more importance than Tripoli, and to oppose Italy now would only result in her closer adhesion to the Triple Alliance, something which was to be prevented if at all possible.

Before taking the final and decisive step, the Italians, at the last moment, took the precaution of once more sounding the British Government. On September 20, the Italian Ambassador called at the Foreign Office and saw Nicolson. Imperiali professed to be unaware what line his government intended to follow in Tripoli, but said that he had instructions to say that his Government would follow the policy of the open door and that there would be no question of rectification of frontiers. The Ambassador then asked for the attitude of the British Government in regard to the question. Nicolson replied that it had already been given on a previous occasion. The Marquis Imperiali agreed, but said that he had only wished to make certain that there had been no change.²

During the next few days Rodd reported the calling up of the class of 1888, the concentration of warships in southern ports and the collecting of transports. It was becoming clearer every day

(1) Grey to Nicolson, Sept. 19, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 274
(2) Grey to Rodd, Sept. 27, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 281

that war was in the offing.¹

On the 25th the Grand Vizir sent for the British Ambassador to show him a note which he had received from the Italian Charge d'Affaires complaining of the actions of certain members of the Committee of Union and Progress in Tripoli. The Grand Vizir asked for advice. Lowther replied that he was not in the position to give advice, but suggested that Germany and Austria, as they were the allies of Italy, were the ones to be approached in this matter. The following day the Grand Vizir replied to the Italian Note in conciliatory terms.²

Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, in a private letter which he wrote to Nicolson three days before the outbreak of war, gives us a good insight into the reasons and motives which British statesmen who were responsible for England's policy took into account when they decided to do nothing which Italy could possibly consider as antagonistic to her plans for the conquest of Tripoli. As we have already seen, the British Government did not approve of Italy's action at this time, but neither did it intend to take any line which might cost England the friendship of Italy.

On September 26 Churchill wrote:

. . . Will it not if it comes to war or warlike tension throw Turkey into German arms more than ever - thus making the complete causeway:
Germany - Austria - Roumania - Turkey.

(1) Rodd to Grey, Sept. 24, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 276

(2) Lowther to Grey, Sept. 25, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 276

Will it not 2ndly detach Italy openly from the Triplice, and consequently make her desirous of the support of France and England.

Will it not thirdly increase or revive the irritation of Germany at being left out when "the vanquished nation" secures Morocco, and the poor spirited ally the noble possession of Tripoli.

The reactions to this Italian adventure threaten to be deep, and we stand both to gain and lose by it. But clearly we must prefer Italy to Turkey on all grounds - moral and unmoral. Do you think it possible that Germany had been marking time for this to happen in order to secure an atmosphere more suited to the thunderbolts?

On the whole, the balance seems to turn to our advantage.

On September 28 the Italian Charge d'Affaires at Constantinople delivered an ultimatum to the Turkish Government. This ultimatum declared that in view of the impossibility of obtaining any satisfaction in Tripoli in relation to Italian interests, Italy had decided to occupy the province. The hope was expressed that Turkey would give the necessary orders so that this occupation would not be opposed. Turkey was given twenty-four hours in which to reply.² The Turks replied to this Note in a conciliatory tone, declared their readiness to give Italy satisfaction and expressed their willingness to go far in meeting Italian demands: ". . . Thus, if the Royal Government will acquaint it (Turkey) with the nature of these guarantees, it will willingly subscribe to them so long as they do not effect its territorial integrity." Any reply which did

(1) Churchill to Nicolson, Sept. 26, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 278

(2) Lowther to Grey, Sept. 28, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 282

not include the complete and absolute surrender of Tripoli would not have sufficed. At 10:00 p.m. on September 29 the Italian Charge d'Affaires handed to the Ottoman Government a Note which declared that since the term of the ultimatum had expired and no satisfactory reply had been received, Italy was henceforth at war with Turkey.¹

A few hours before the declaration of war the Italian Ambassador in London sounded the British Government for the last time. The Marquis Imperiali called on Grey on September 29 and delivered a long statement of Italian grievances against Turkey and asked for the views of the British Government. Grey in his reply showed that he was disturbed by the prospect of an Italo-Turkish war, but he said nothing which Imperiali could interpret as opposition to Italy's plans. As to the attitude his government would take, Grey made the following statement:

In 1902 we had made an agreement with Italy respecting Tripoli. From this we realized that in Tripoli especially Italy could not tolerate her interests being thrust aside or unfairly treated. Besides that the traditional friendly relations between England and Italy, the friendly feelings of the two peoples were such that steps, which were forced upon Italy in any part of the world to redress the wrongs of Italian subjects or protect Italian interests from unfair treatment would have our sympathy. But the outright and forcible annexation of Tripoli was an extreme step that might have indirect consequences very embarrassing to other Powers, and amongst others to ourselves, who had so many Mohammedan subjects. I hoped therefore that the Italian Government would conduct affairs so as to limit as far as possible the embarrassment to other Powers.

The Ambassador said that it would be impossible for Italy

(1) Barclay, op. cit., p. 50

to retire from Tripoli and asked me what precisely I meant by suggesting that Italy should limit the consequences of her action.

I replied that we could not foresee what developments would follow the action of Italy and I hoped that in any developments which occurred Italy would so conduct affairs that the consequences might be as little far-reaching and embarrassing as possible.

The Ambassador asked whether I meant that we might intervene if there was war between Italy and Turkey. I replied that I was speaking from the point of view of non-intervention.

Italy was assured of the sympathy of the British Government.

On the following day Imperiali informed Grey of the declaration of war. Grey replied that the British Government would at once issue a proclamation of Neutrality.²

(1) Grey to Rodd, Sept. 29, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 285
(2) Grey to Rodd, Sept. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 287

CHAPTER IV

DECLARATION OF WAR

This chapter will deal with British policy between the declaration of war (September 29, 1911) and the Italian proclamation formally annexing Libya (November 25, 1911). It was the policy of the British Government to retain the friendship of Italy, and during the first days and weeks of the war we shall see their anxiety lest the hostile tone adopted towards Italy by certain sections of the English press might undo their good work. Whatever the rights or wrongs of the aggression in Tripoli, the Government had to take the long view and consider the question in relation to the balance of power in Europe and England's best interests. Disapproval of Italy on moral or ethical grounds would have to give way to the practical consideration that Italy's friendship must not be sacrificed. This was the time to earn Italian gratitude and make her continued adherence to the Triple Alliance a matter of some doubt. This policy was pushed to the extent of considering some sort of Anglo-Italian agreement in the Mediterranean. As for Turkey, her requests for British intervention were turned down and the Turks allowed to reflect on the advice given Lowther on September 25, that since they were on such good terms with Germany they could turn to the Germans for help in their hour of need. Britain desired that the Triple Entente should work as a group, and we see a certain hesitation among British statesmen

to take any step without consulting their friends. There was also the question of Egyptian neutrality to be solved in a war involving Turkey since Great Britain occupied that country although it was nominally under the suzerainty of the Sultan.

The first action taken by England after the declaration of war was to declare her neutrality and that of Egypt. The Italian Ambassador was told of England's intention of issuing a proclamation of neutrality¹ and, on the same day, a telegram was despatched to the British Ambassadors in Paris and St-Petersburgh advising them of the decision and asking whether France and Russia intended to do likewise.² From the beginning of the war Grey made certain that his policy was in line with that being followed by the other members of the Entente.

II

The declaration of war by Italy was a sudden and unexpected shock to public opinion in England, which had had no previous warning of Italy's intentions. The reply of the Turkish Government to the Italian ultimatum, which showed their willingness to settle the differences between the two nations in an amicable manner, did much to gain English sympathy. The Italians had made certain complaints and the Turks had answered that they would do their best to correct the causes of these complaints. The Italian action seemed to be one of unprovoked aggression upon an innocent nation.

(1) Grey to Rodd, Sept. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 287

(2) Grey to Bertie and O'Beirne, Sept. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 286

Although the Times and certain other English newspapers were neutral in their attitude, a large section of the English press was extremely hostile to Italy. The criticisms of Italy in the press were deeply disturbing to those who were responsible for British policy, as the accusations hurled at Italy in the daily papers would undo much of their work in building up Italian good-will. Rodd reported on September 30 that the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs had spoken to him of the marked hostility in the British press. San Giuliano added that as Italians were deeply sensitive to British opinion he was anxious that at the present moment there should be no alienation of traditional friendship with England; San Giuliano then went on to justify Italy's action.¹ That the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs was not the only one to regret the outburst in the English papers the following minutes added to Rodd's despatch amply testify:

The line taken by the English press (with some exceptions) is deplorable and I think serious endeavours should be made to induce them to observe neutrality. The only result of the abuse they are hurling at Italy will be that we shall lose Italian sympathy, which has been ours from the time of Italian unity and throughout the Boer war; and that we shall encourage Turkey to expect material support and prolong and possibly extend the area of the war. It ought to be possible to induce some of the less unreasonable Editors to maintain a decent neutrality and they might be reminded that their hysterical outburst² against Austria 5 years ago did not improve matters.

Grey added his own minute which shows that he was upset by what many of the papers were writing:

(1) Rodd to Grey, Sept. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 288
(2) Ibid., Minute signed by Mallet and Nicolson

I have already shown this telegram to Mr. Braham of the Times and had a conversation with the Italian Ambassador before seeing these minutes; the Ambassador did not seem dissatisfied with what I said to him and I drafted a telegraphic report of it to Sir R. Rodd. E.G. 1

Grey's reply to Rodd's despatch explained that the Italian declaration of war had taken everyone by surprise and that Italy's extreme step had checked the sympathy of the British press.²

However, it must not be thought that British friendship for Italy did not exist. Nicolson wrote in a private letter that: "I am exceedingly vexed at the tone of our press here towards Italy, as I fear that it may arouse such feelings in that country as will take some time to obliterate. It seems to me exceedingly foolish that we should displease a country with whom we have always been on the most friendly terms and whose friendship to us is of real value."³ The officials of the Foreign Office were much upset by the line adopted by the press, which ran counter to their own policy.

Rodd in a private letter to Grey on October 16, suggested that in view of the expected Italian conquest of Tripoli, which would probably alter the position in the Mediterranean to a considerable extent, and the fact that the time was not far distant when there might be a possibility of a break in Italian-Austrian relations, it was possible that Great Britain might come to some sort of understanding with Italy. It was a difficult question of course, as an agreement of this nature would probably mean the end of the Triple Alliance.⁴ On October 25, in another letter Rodd further elaborated on his suggestions. It might be

(1) Ibid.

(2) Grey to Rodd, Oct. 2, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 296

(3) Nicolson to Cartwright, Oct. 2, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 297

(4) Rodd to Grey, Oct. 16, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 309

possible, he said, to get Italy into some sort of tripartite agreement between England, France and Italy for reciprocally guaranteeing their positions in the Mediterranean. He believed that an agreement between the three powers most interested in the Mediterranean and the North African coast "- - though nominally for Mediterranean purposes only - - would take all the sting out of the Triple Alliance, as far as Italy is concerned..."¹ A few days later Rodd again wrote to Grey on this subject:

Following up the ideas mooted in my last private letter of a change in the Mediterranean frontier, brought about by recent events, I have a further item of information to record which points in the same direction. Signor Giolitti, the Prime Minister, the other day talking to a friend of mine, an ex-diplomat, who repeated the conversation, said that henceforth Italy would have to be very careful not to alienate the goodwill of the two great Maritime powers in the Mediterranean, France and England, on which her position in Tripoli would make her much more dependent. This does not necessarily mean that he is actually contemplating the possibility of a withdrawal from the Triple Alliance, but it would seem to indicate that if Italy should renew, her continuance in the association with Germany and Austria-Hungary will be even more of a mere form than it has been in the past.²

Before Grey replied to Rodd's suggestions an event took place which put any move in the direction of closer relations with Italy other than those of strict neutrality out of the question. Public opinion in England flared up against Italy towards the end of October when the news was received of Italian reprisals taken against the Arabs of Tripoli following the Italian defeat of October 23. In the English newspapers the Italian army in Tripoli was accused of unsoldierly conduct, of massacring men,

(1) Rodd to Grey, Oct. 25, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 315

(2) Rodd to Grey, Nov. 6, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 320

women and children, and of perpetrating atrocities. This violent criticism, backed by a large body of humanitarian opinion in England, resulted in a newspaper war between Great Britain and Italy. It was enough for Grey to keep his country neutral towards Italy. Certainly public opinion would not have understood any overtures of a friendly nature towards Italy at this time. Even in the House of Commons, Grey had to deal with questions from members who, critical of Italian action, asked questions of a highly embarrassing nature. On November 2, he was asked whether he would do anything to put a stop to the killing of Arabs by the Italians. Grey replied, "The military operations of the Italian Government in Tripoli are a matter in which His Majesty's government cannot interfere, and any other attitude would not be consistent with the Declaration of Neutrality that they have issued. I understand that the statement implied in the question has been denied on the highest authority, and I must earnestly deprecate the putting of questions on the Notice paper of the House of Commons in a form which must be offensive to other countries."¹ It became practically a daily practice for some member of the House of Commons to ask a question concerning the alleged atrocities in Tripoli. It was even suggested-- -- the last thing Grey could have wanted at this time-- -- that the question of the occurrences in Tripoli made the subject of a full fledged debate.² On the 10th, the Government was asked what

(1) Parl. Deb., House of Commons, Ser. V, Vol. XXX, p. 981
(2) Ibid., p. 1644

action it meant to take concerning the shooting order of General Caneva, the Italian General in Tripoli.¹ On the 16th, in reply to another question concerning the massacres Grey explained that, " - unless they are prepared to intervene in the war, neutral powers cannot undertake to investigate or control the military operations of either belligerent."² Certainly the time was not ripe for negotiating a political agreement with Italy.

Although Rodd's suggestions came to nothing, Grey's reply is interesting as it shows that the idea of some arrangement with Italy would, under other circumstances, not have been beyond the realm of possibility, and that he was not averse to it. On November 14 Grey replied to Rodd:

It will not be possible for us to make any agreement with Italy at this moment. Feeling here has been very much stirred by the accounts of the massacres in Tripoli; the expression of this feeling in the British press has annoyed the Italians; and the feeling being what it is, I should not be justified in making overtures to Italy for any political understanding.

We cannot ask anything from Italy without implying a promise of support in her Tripoli venture; and that we cannot give. But your letter of October 25 is very interesting and I am glad to have both the information you give and the suggestions you make

Rodd's suggestion of an agreement with Italy appears, nevertheless, to have been more than the British Foreign Office intended. The policy of the British Government was to build up

(1) Ibid., p. 2043

(2) Parl. Deb. House of Commons, Ser. V, Vol. XXXI, p. 526

(3) Grey to Rodd, Nov. 14, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 322-3

goodwill in Italy and so weaken Italy's connection with the central Powers. It did not necessarily follow that this policy should lead to an agreement. On December 18, 1911, Eric Drummond, Assistant Clerk in the Foreign Office, wrote in a minute that: "It seems to me to be preferable that she (Italy) should continue as a somewhat doubtful factor in the Alliance than that she should be in open opposition to Austria and Germany."¹ This was realized by Rodd who, writing on February 5, 1912, to remind his superiors that the time for the renewal of the Triple Alliance was comparatively near, said that: "I have up to now always understood that you (Grey) and a series of your predecessors at the Foreign Office have, on the whole, regarded the participation of Italy in the Triple Alliance as rather desirable than not from the point of view of the peace of Europe."² Germany was not so likely to put the Alliance to the test of war as long as the allegiance of Italy remained doubtful. The best way to achieve this was to have Italy remain in the Triple Alliance as an uncertain quantity.

III

During the first few days of the war Turkey made several vain appeals for intervention. The Grand Vizir, through Tewfik Pasha the Turkish Ambassador in London, on September 30 appealed to the British Government to intervene with Italy to put a stop to this useless spilling of blood and to convince Italy of Turkey's

(1) Minute by Drummond; B.D. 1X (1) p. 351

(2) Rodd to Grey, Feb. 5, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 366

desire to treat with them. Grey replied that Italy had not consulted the British Government concerning either the ultimatum or the declaration of war and therefore probably desired to avert intervention. Since the Turkish attitude was that the territorial integrity of Turkey must not be infringed and since the Italian Ambassador had informed him that Italy, although she was willing to offer moral and material compensation, would not withdraw from Tripoli, he could not see any opening for intervention.¹ By October 3 Grey had received two more requests from the Turks for intervention. The British Ambassador at Constantinople was instructed to advise the Turks that intervention by the British Government on the basis requested by Turkey would be regarded by Italy as an unfriendly step and would be quite ineffectual.²

None of the Turkish requests for intervention could succeed as no Power was willing to risk offending Italy. The Turks decided to try a different approach, and made the specific offer of an Alliance with Great Britain. On October 30 Tewfik Pasha delivered a communication to the British Government which said that they were prepared to enter into conversation for the conclusion of an Alliance with Great Britain alone, or to participate eventually in the Entente which existed between her and the other Powers. In return for this alliance England would be expected to guarantee the integrity of the Ottoman Empire

(1) Grey to Lowther, Sept. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 287
(2) Grey to Lowther, Oct. 3, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 298

and use her power to intervene effectually with Italy and get her to accept a settlement which would recognize the suzerainty of Turkey in Tripoli and Cyrenaica.¹ Grey replied that:

. . . His Majesty's Government have declared and observed an attitude of strict neutrality in the state of war which has unhappily arisen between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Italy. This attitude is one from which His Majesty's Government cannot depart during the existence of hostilities, and they are therefore precluded from entering on any negotiations which the Imperial Ottoman Government may wish to initiate for the purpose of investing with a more formal and binding character and of extending to a wider scope the friendly relations happily existing between the Ottoman Empire and this country . . .

IV

Although Turkey's requests for England's intervention came to nothing, the five Powers began to exchange opinions concerning how the war might be brought to an end. The Central Powers had been the last to be informed by their ally of her intention of taking Tripoli by force. We are informed by Cartwright, the British Ambassador to Vienna, that when Aehrenthal learnt of Italy's impending action he flew into a perfect fury as he felt that by this act Italy would increase the danger of war in the Balkans.³ The German viewpoint is expressed by Professor Schiemann, who wrote on September 27, "It is an unprovoked war of conquest and a danger to European peace. The Eastern

(1) It is of interest to note that the Turks renewed their offer of a defensive Alliance with Great Britain in June, 1913, but that it was again turned down. See Appendix, B.D. X (1) pp. 901-902

(2) Memorandum by Grey, Nov. 2, 1911; B.D. IX (1) p. 780

(3) Cartwright to Nicolson, Oct. 12, 1911; B.D. IX (1) p. 307

Question will be reopened in its full scope. Injury to Turkey is injury to our interests. Germany did not expect it, and cannot approve." ¹ The Central Powers were annoyed at their ally, yet afraid to offend her in case she should refuse to renew the alliance when the time came; fearful about the Balkans and lest the work of building up Turkish friendship during the past years be ruined, they were most anxious to bring the war to an end. The members of the Entente also wished to see peace restored, but no nation or group wanted to take the initiative in approaching the belligerents in case such action should be regarded as an unfriendly act." Both groups of Powers were wooing Italy, and neither wished to do anything which might antagonize her and thus strengthen the other group." As the Triple Entente would reap the blame or praise, as a group, for any action taken by an individual member of the group, the British Government was most anxious that they should work as a team. It became the policy of England to work with France and Russia to find conditions for ending the war which would be suitable to Italy and Turkey, and, in Paris at any rate, this was held to imply that the Entente should anticipate, "any action by the German Emperor as the honest broker to gain the goodwill of both those countries with all the consequent political advantages."²

(1) G.P. Gooch, History of Modern Europe.

(2) Grey to Lowther, Oct. 5, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 300

The French Minister for Foreign Affairs, M. de Selves, expressed the desire that Britain and France should on the first favourable opportunity be instrumental in bringing about an arrangement between Italy and Turkey. Grey replied that he was ready to consider at any time anything that M. de Selves had to suggest. Sir G. Lowther at Constantinople was instructed to keep in close touch with his French colleague and to keep London informed of any indication that mediation was possible.¹ It was hoped that a stop would be put to the supremacy of the German Embassy at Constantinople. A few days later Lowther was further instructed to keep in close touch with the Russian Embassy, as he already was with the French. The Russians were most anxious that the three Embassies should co-operate closely.²

From Berlin came the first definite plan for mediation by the Powers. The Turks had sent an identical note to all the Powers asking for mediation. Lord Granville, the British Charge at Berlin, reported on October 9 that the German Ambassadors to Great Powers had been instructed to ask for support in proposing an armistice on terms of Italian occupation of the town of Tripoli and a strip of surrounding country.³ The anxiety of the British Government to work with their friends is seen in the minute appended to Granville's despatch by Louis Mallet:

(1) Idem

(2) Grey to Lowther, Oct. 16, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 308

(3) Granville to Grey, Oct. 9, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 303

I don't think we should answer this without consulting France and Russia first.

It does not look as if Turkey would for a moment look at such a proposal yet, and we do not know whether Italy would consent to such a curtailment of her demands.

I should temporize and wait for France and Russian views and endeavour to ascertain whether Italy is privy to this proposal.

If there is truth in the story that Germany knew and approved of Italy's action, the 2 countries may be still collaborating. A direct refusal would lay us open to the charge of wishing the war to continue but, with our present knowledge, I should be very reluctant to join.

The Germans want kudos for bringing hostilities to an end, but don't want to risk anything by failing and for this reason propose to include all the Powers.¹

Grey instructed Granville to inform the German Government that until the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs had stated upon what ground he would accept mediation it did not seem possible to make any concrete proposals.²

On the same day that this telegram was sent to Berlin, Grey instructed Rodd that he wished to ascertain facts and not to make proposals which would be futile and unacceptable;³

Lowther was to inform the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, in reply to Turkey's last request for mediation, that England would be glad to co-operate with the other Powers to whom the request was made, but that she must first be certain that there was ground for a rapprochement between Italy and Turkey.⁴

The failure of the German proposal was succeeded by a suggestion from her ally Austria-Hungary. Count Aehrenthal

(1) Idem., Minute by Mallet.

(2) Grey to Granville, Oct. 11, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 306

(3) Grey to Rodd, Oct. 11, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 306

(4) Grey to Lowther, Oct. 11, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 306

greatly feared that unless the war was terminated quickly it would spread to the Balkans. Aehrenthal, in spite of his surprise and annoyance at the Italian declaration of war, had controlled his feelings and concentrated on keeping up cordial relations between Austria and Italy. On October 24, Count Mensdorff, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, enquired of Grey what his opinion was as to the advisability of Great Britain, France, Russia, Germany and Austria-Hungary exchanging views with the object of finding some plan of common action which could lead at the opportune moment to collective action to procure a settlement on the base laid down by Italy. Grey replied that this would mean collective action at Constantinople. The Ambassador agreed, and said that collective action might make it easier for the Turks to accept. Grey replied that generally he was glad that Count Aehrenthal had launched an idea which might become fruitful, but that it would not do to give advise at Constantinople which would be rejected, and that the first step would be for each country to ascertain from its Ambassador at Constantinople his opinion as to Turkish feeling.¹ Grey's attitude toward the Austrian suggestion is understandable in the light of instructions sent to Sir F. Cartwright two days later when he said, "I particularly wish to avoid taking the initiative of bringing pressure to bear either at home or Constantinople though I sympathize with Count

(1) Grey to Cartwright, Oct. 24, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 314

Aehrenthal's desire that five Powers should keep in touch and shall co-operate therewith." ¹ Grey declined to take part in any mediation proposals which he could not be certain would be welcome to both belligerents. To do otherwise would be to abandon neutrality.

All the Powers wished to see peace restored, but none was willing to risk initiating any steps which might be considered by either of the belligerents to be an unfriendly step. Grey absolutely refused to associate Great Britain with any proposal to which all the Powers were not a party. In this way, if there were to be any offense given to either of the belligerents, the blame would be shared equally by the five Powers. In particular, however, he wished the members of the Triple Entente to work closely together.

The offer of the Turkish Alliance throws an interesting light on the closeness of England's relations with France and Russia. When Tewfik Pasha delivered his communication to the British Government, Nicolson reports of the Turkish Ambassador that: "He said he had been requested to decypher the telegram himself as the matter must be kept most secret."² Nevertheless, the Ambassadors of both France and Russia in London were advised of the proposal soon after. In a minute added to the Turkish Note on November 2, Nicolson said: "I gave M. Cambon, for his confidential information, a summary of the proposal which had

(1) Grey to Cartwright, Oct. 26, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 317
(2) Minute by Nicolson, B.D. 1X (1) p. 780

been made to us by Said Pasha. I did not say that an Alliance had been proposed, but that the Turkish Government had expressed a wish to strengthen and consolidate the existing relations, and had also stated that they would be prepared to revolve eventually within the orbit of the Triple Entente if so desired. . . I gave M. Cambon the substance of the reply to the communication which we were to make to Said Pasha." ¹ The same information was given to the Russian Ambassador on the same day by Grey. In a telegram to Mr. O'Beirne at St-Petersburgh on November 3 he says: "I told Count Benckendorff of the nature of the Turkish overture to us in favour of strengthening the good relations with us and eventually with Russia and France, and of the reply which we had made." ²

V

Egypt nominally was under the suzerainty of Turkey, but in actual practice the country had been occupied by the British for many years. On September 30, San Guilliano informed Rodd that the Italian naval commander had been instructed to regard Egyptian territorial waters as neutral, and he hoped that he would find the attitude of Great Britain reciprocal in that Turkey would be denied the use of these waters as a naval base. ³ The question of the status of Egypt evoked a reply from Grey, who telegraphed to Rodd on October 2, that: "You can inform Minister

(1) Minute by Nicolson; B.D. 1X (1) p. 780

(2) Grey to O'Beirne; Nov. 3, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 780-1

(3) Rodd to Grey, Sept. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 286

for Foreign Affairs that it would not be consistent with neutrality proclaimed by His Majesty's Government that they should allow Egyptian or any territory or territorial waters in their occupation to be used as a base of operations for war."¹

Great Britain might have been placed in an embarrassing position if Turkey had insisted upon the exercise of her rights in Egypt. Legally Turkey had the right to call upon Egypt to contribute forces for the Turkish army and also had the right to pass troops through the country. Turkey, however, apparently waived her rights and thus eased the situation for Britain.²

Lord Kitchener arrived in Egypt, on the same day as that on which war was declared, to take up his post as British Agent and Consul General, Minister Plenipotentiary. In his address to the Khedive upon presenting his credentials, Kitchener made a 'protective' speech in which he said: ". . . the task I have at heart - namely, watching over to the best of my power and with approval and support of your Highness the prosperity of Egypt."³ The neutrality of Egypt was understood, and during the war Lord Kitchener saw to it that this neutrality was maintained; he used his power and influence to prevent all help, either of men or of material from crossing into Cyrenaica.⁴

(1) Grey to Rodd, Oct. 2, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 296

(2) Barclay, op.cit., pp. 92-3

(3) Idem.

(4) Lord Kitchener in Egypt, Fortnightly Review, March, 1912; pp. 507-520

The question of the demarcation of the Egyptian frontier also had to be settled. The Italian Government notified the British Government on October 3 that an effective blockade had been established off the two provinces of Tripoli and Cyrenaica between $11^{\circ}32'$ and $27^{\circ}54'$ long. east of Greenwich. The boundary between Libya and Egypt had never been satisfactorily defined between Great Britain and Turkey, but as it ran through desert territory in which there was no material interest, its exact determination had previously been of little importance. The British Government had always claimed that the frontier included the Bay of Solum, which was to the west of the boundary claimed by Turkey who had always maintained that Ras-el-Kanais was the limit of Egyptian jurisdiction. The Egyptian Government was quite aware of the importance of the Bay of Solum as an important strategical position for Egypt if Italy should realize her intention of converting Tobruk into a naval base, and therefore sent a detachment of troops to the spot.¹ On October 25, the Italians recognized this rectification of the Egyptian boundary and the blockade was extended only as far east as $25^{\circ}11'$ east long., the Bay of Solum.²

On November 6, the Italian Ambassador announced to Grey the formal annexation of Tripoli by Italy.³ The result of

(1) As a matter of fact, when Italy declared war, Giolitti thought it possible that Anglo-Egyptian forces might occupy Tobruk itself. Giolitti, op. cit., p. 281.

(2) Barclay, op. cit., p. 97

(3) Grey to Rodd, Nov. 6, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 319

Italy's notification of annexation before she was yet in possession of the country was to postpone the peace indefinitely as it made compromise impossible.¹ From this time on mediation proposals were faced with the difficulty that Italy had announced to the world that she would be satisfied with nothing less than complete sovereignty over Tripoli.

(1) Cartwright to Grey, Nov. 6, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 318.

CHAPTER V

STALEMATE

I

Italy's proclamation of the annexation of Libya made the problem of mediation extremely difficult. On the one hand Italy had, by taking this action, burnt her boats behind her as she could not, after this public announcement, accept anything less than the complete possession of the provinces without suffering a loss of prestige; Turkey, on the other hand, although she was willing to grant far-reaching concessions to the Italians, was not prepared at this time to consent to the absolute surrender of her sovereignty over Tripoli. The result was an impasse. No settlement was possible which would be acceptable to both belligerents. Both Italy and Turkey hoped, however, that the Powers, in their anxiety to end the war, might be induced to intervene on their side.

During the period which followed the annexation, until April 18, 1912, when the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles were attacked by the Italian navy, the diplomatic initiative was taken by Russia. The Russian proposals which were concerned with the war may be divided into three groups, as follows:

(1) The attempt by M. Tcharykow, the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, to get permission for Russian warships to pass out through the Straits. These negotiations lasted from the middle of October until the 13th of December, when they were dropped.

(2) Contemporaneously with the above proposals was the attempt by the Russian Government between November 22 and 30 to get the Powers, acting together, to get guarantees from Italy and Turkey that the Dardanelles would be neither blockaded nor closed.

(3) Between December 12 and the attack upon the Dardanelles, M. Sazonov, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, made two proposals for mediation in the war.

This chapter will be chiefly concerned with the reception accorded to these successive Russian proposals by the British Government.

II

The Tcharykow Kite was an attempt, on the personal initiative of the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople, at one and the same time to prevent the Italo-Turkish War expanding into a general Balkan conflict, and to take advantage of the war to solve the long standing question of free passage of the Straits for Russian warships.

On October 23 Count Benckendorff informed Grey that Tcharykow - - in a private conversation with the Grand Vizier, not in an official communication to the Turkish Foreign Office - - had suggested that in return for Turkish permission for Russian men-of-war to pass out through the Straits, Russia might guarantee the possession of Constantinople to Turkey and induce the Balkan states to come to an agreement with Turkey on the basis of the status quo.

The Russian Ambassador asked Grey whether the British Government would support negotiations on this basis. Grey was noncommittal and replied that he doubted whether England could give any guarantees of Turkish territory, but that he would give the support which he had promised to M. Iswolsky three years previously.¹ Three days later Grey got in touch with the French to learn what they intended to do concerning this Russian proposal.²

The policy followed by the British Government towards the Russian proposal was to do nothing either to encourage the Russians or to do anything which could be interpreted as opposing them. Grey informed the German Ambassador on November 6 that:

" . . . I told him that, in 1908, I had promised M. Iswolsky not to oppose the opening of the Straits on fair conditions. The question had slept since then, and I thought that, while war was going on, no Power could enter into fresh political relations of an intimate kind with one of the belligerents without a breach of neutrality. . .

I said that our position was that we no longer contended that the Straits should be kept closed. The actual conditions on which they might be opened would, of course, be for discussion with the Powers."³

Grey was able to take this position because he was certain that Tcharykow's negotiations would come to nothing; Germany and Austria-Hungary would never give their consent.

On December 2, Lowther reported that Tcharykow had presented his proposals to the Turkish Government; the proposals had now assumed an official character.⁴ The British Government soon had

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- (1) Grey to O'Beirne, Oct. 23, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 313
(2) Grey to Carnegie, Oct. 26, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 317
(3) Grey to Goschen, Nov. 6, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 321
(4) Lowther to Grey, Dec. 2, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 340

cause to believe, however, that Tcharykow's scheme would be opposed by Germany¹ and Austria-Hungary.² Mr. Parker, Clerk in the Foreign Office, commented that: "Germany and Austria would probably object more strongly than we should to the opening of the Dardanelles."³ The Tcharykow proposals were openly disavowed by the Russian Government on December 8. An inspired article in the "novoe Vremya" denied that the Russian Foreign Office had made official representations to Turkey, and expressed the opinion that it would serve no good purpose to open the question of the Dardanelles at the moment.⁴ Turkey, on December 13, decided to regard the proposals as dropped.⁵

III

Following the Italian declaration of annexation there were rumours in the various European capitals that the war was to be extended to the Aegean Sea. On November 7 it was reported through the Russian Ambassador at Rome that Italy intended to attack the Dardanelles, but this was promptly denied by the Italian Ambassador in St-Petersburgh.⁶ Following this, the Turks hinted in an aide-memoire delivered to the British Government on November 18 that the Italians intended to attack towns along the Turkish coast, and that they would probably have to take defensive action.⁷

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- (1) Lowther to Nicolson, Dec. 6, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 346
 - (2) Cartwright to Grey, Dec. 7, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 348
 - (3) Idem., Minute initiated by Parker, Dec. 18, 1911
 - (4) Buchanan to Grey, Dec. 11, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 349
 - (5) Lowther to Grey, Dec. 14, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 350
 - (6) Lowther to Grey, Nov. 7, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 322
 - (7) Communication from Turkish Ambassador, Nov. 18, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 324

Grey did not take the threat of either side too seriously as he felt that it was a ruse to force the Powers to interfere in the war. On November 22 Grey, in conversation with Count Mensdorff, the Austro-Hungarian Ambassador, gave it as his opinion that Turkey could take any defensive measures she wished, providing:

" . . . that they did not infringe the rights which neutrals might have under the treaty respecting the Straits, and under a general convention drawn up at the Hague and ratified by Turkey and Italy. . . ."

Grey went on to say:

" . . . As to an opportunity for mediation, from the Italian talk as to extended operations and the Turkish communication as to defensive measures it was obvious that each party of the war hoped that, by making the neutral Powers uncomfortable, intervention on its behalf could be brought about. But the Italian Ambassador here continued to affirm that the annexation of Tripoli must remain absolute, while the Turkish Government would talk of nothing more than the retention of Turkish suzerainty, with an autonomous Tripoli, under a Mussulman Prince. Neither party gave the least intention to depart from their respective positions, and as long as this continued to be the case, there did not seem to be any opportunity for mediation." ¹

Although London did not take these threats or counter-threats seriously, their Russian friends were worried lest the Straits should be closed and they decided to take steps to prevent this happening. A proposal was received from the Russian Government on November 27 ² stating that, because of the importance of keeping the Straits open, the five Powers should deliver simultaneous Notes to the belligerents. In order not to offend Italy it was suggested that, in Italy's case, the Notes should not be delivered at Rome but to the Italian Ambassadors accredited to the five Powers. The Russian proposal, not being in line with the policy

(1) Grey to Cartwright, Nov. 22, 1911; B.D. LX (1) p. 327

(2) Benckendorff to Grey, Nov. 26, 1911; B.D. LX (1) p. 331

of refraining from any action which might incur the disfavour of either belligerent, was given little support by the British Government. The following day, therefore, Grey instructed Buchanan:

"You may inform Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs that we agree as to importance of keeping Straits open for commercial navigation, but in view of assurances given at Rome that Italian Government have no present intention of blockading Dardanelles it seems unnecessary to do anything there. Statement as regards Italian intentions might be used for communication at Constantinople if it is thought that Turkish Government really contemplate closing Straits. You may tell Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs that we have informed Turks that we cannot object to defensive measures that are not contrary to rights of neutrals as regulated by international treaties or practice.

You may however tell the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs that I should not regard this as authorizing a step that would be equivalent to blockade of whole Black Sea and its trade.¹

The Russian Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs agreed with Grey that there was no need to take action at Rome. However, he maintained that, in view of the fact that the Ottoman Government had made an official communication indicating the possibility of the closure of the Straits, a reply should be made to them warning them that any defensive measures taken by Turkey must not interfere with neutral rights.² Grey refused to accede to this request because as he said, with good reason; "Some odium would be incurred if representations made were unnecessary and an opening would be given to the Turks to request intervention in the war."³ The net result of Russia's action was that the Russian Embassy in Rome felt that the favourable position held by Russia in Italian estimation had been ". . . not a little

(1) Grey to Buchanan, Nov. 28, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 334

(2) Buchanan to Grey, Nov. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 338

(3) Grey to Buchanan, Nov. 30, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 338

compromised." ¹

IV

On December 26 the Russian Government proposed to the governments of Great Britain, France, Germany and Austria-Hungary that steps should be taken to mediate between Turkey and Italy. Sazonov, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed serious apprehensions of complications arising in the Balkans if the war were to continue much longer, and especially if it lasted until the spring. He suggested that an armistice should be declared; that Turkey should not sign a treaty with Italy -- thereby evading the question of annexation -- but should simply withdraw her troops from Tripoli; Italy would pay Turkey an indemnity and the Powers would severally recognize the annexation of Tripoli by Italy. Sazonov sounded the Italian Government before making this proposal and had reason to believe that they would accept it, but in regard to Turkey he felt that it might be necessary to exert "friendly, but very serious pressure." ²

The British Government treated this Russian proposal with caution. Grey feared that the Powers of the Triple Entente would be placed in the position of putting pressure on Turkey, and that if Turkey yielded as a result of this pressure she would probably ask that she get some sort of guarantee against trouble in the Balkans; something which England was not prepared to give. ³

(1) Rodd to Grey, Nov. 28, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 356

(2) Buchanan to Grey, Dec. 26, 1911; B.D. 1X (1) p. 352

(3) Idem., Minute initialed by Grey, Dec. 27, 1911.

In any case, it was the opinion of officials of the Foreign Office that these mediation proposals should not be encouraged as they were bound to end in failure.¹

Bertie reported on January 3 that the Russians had further proposed to M. de Selves, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, that France should bring this mediation proposal to the notice of the Turks. M. de Selves had replied that he would give M. Sazonov's scheme careful consideration. This was a matter in which France would have to proceed carefully as it would not suit them at all to give the German Government a chance to tell the Turks that France had been prompted by unfriendly feelings towards Turkey. In any case, M. de Selves was convinced that the whole scheme had originated with M. Tittoni, the Italian Ambassador to France, and had been passed through the Russian Ambassador to M. Sazonov.²

M. de Selves was probably correct in his belief that the proposal had had an Italian origin. On January 8 the Marquis Imperiali asked Grey what attitude the British Government would take towards the mediation proposal. Grey was noncommittal in his reply except to say that he considered that if any action was taken by the five Powers it should be collective; they should use identical language and act with equal decision.³ The fear of

(1) Minutes initialed by Vansittart, Parker, Maxwell and Mallet, B.D. 1X (1) pp. 355-6.

(2) Bertie to Grey, Jan. 3, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 357

(3) Grey to Rodd, Jan. 8, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 358

the British Government was that even though Austria and Germany might join them in bringing pressure to bear on Turkey, the Central Powers certainly would not fail to let Turkey know that the proposal had originated with the Russians, and the Triple Entente would bear the brunt of Turkish ill-will which this action would surely provoke at Constantinople. It was aptly put by Vansittart when he wrote in a minute that: ". . . we and France would be tarred at Constantinople with the same brush as the Russians."¹

It soon became clear that British fears were not without foundation for it was learnt confidentially that the Baron Marschall when asked his views by the Turks had replied that Turkey "cannot and ought not accept it."² In view of the attitude of the German Government and because it was certain that the Turks would not accept mediation unless serious pressure were brought to bear upon them the British Government decided that the proposals must be dropped. Sir A. Nicolson told the Russian Ambassador that:

" . . . the moment was not opportune for making tentative efforts at mediation - but that we should be quite ready to participate in any collective action which assisted towards the conclusion of peace. An essential condition however was that all the Powers should be thoroughly and sincerely in accord."³

Sir F. Bertie reported on February 4 that France would not, without the co-operation of the British Government, support the Russian proposals, and would not join in any pressure on Turkey unless Germany and Austria-Hungary were parties to it.⁴

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- (1) Minute by Vansittart, B.D. 1X (1) p. 361
(2) Buchanan to Grey, Jan. 14, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 362
(3) Grey to Buchanan, Jan. 12, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 361
(4) Bertie to Grey, Feb. 4, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 365

Without the support of England and France, the Sazonov proposal came to nothing. The war continued and the fear of a war in the Balkans increased with the approach of spring. Grey was well aware of the danger which threatened from that quarter. As early as December 29, 1911, at the time of the Russian proposal for mediation, he had stated in a confidential telegram to Sir G. Buchanan that:

"I am alive to risk of complications in the Balkans in the spring and they would be most unwelcome, but the risk is one primarily for Turkey to consider. Russia and Austria are the two great Powers most directly concerned. Extent to which complications in the Balkans would be embarrassing to Europe generally would depend upon whether Russia and Austria could agree as to limits of their action and the nature of settlement, but I am doubtful if it's being discreet to suggest to Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs an agreement with Austria." ¹

Grey's fear was that trouble in the Balkans might precipitate a European War in which it would be of vital interest to England to play her part if the Entente was to survive. If, however, the spark which brought about a general war were an incident in the Balkans, it might be difficult to convince the English public that it was in their interest to play a part. The connection between events in the Balkans and the interests of England would not be obvious to the man in the street.² Grey saw this clearly and hoped that the danger might be averted by an agreement of some sort between the Russians and the Austrians. An understanding might have the added effect of diminishing

(1) Grey to Buchanan, Feb. 29, 1912; B.D. IX (1) p. 353

(2) It will be remembered that when war actually was declared on August 4, 1914, it was not the tragedy of Sarajevo which aroused the British peoples, but the German attack upon Tiny Belgium whose neutrality they had guaranteed.

Austria-Hungary dependence upon German support and so make her less anxious to co-operate with the senior partner of the Triple Alliance. On January 9, 1912, Grey wrote to Bertie that:

". . . I can understand a dislike on the part of Germany to an understanding between Russia and Austria: for, if Austria was sure of being able to avoid a quarrel with Russia, she would be more independent of Germany than she now is.

What makes me wish for a working understanding between Russia and Austria is that a war between them would be very inconvenient. I do not think that we could take part in it, and intervene on the Russian side in a Balkan war; and yet our abstention would prove a danger to the maintenance of the present grouping of the European Powers. I do not think that France would like to see a war between Russia and Austria.

On the whole, it seems to me that, unless France and we were prepared to go to war on behalf of Russia, the danger of upsetting the present grouping of the Powers would be far greater if Russia became involved in a war with Austria than if she came to a working agreement with that country." ¹

Grey told the French Ambassador on February 3 that, "If Russia fell out with Austria, we, and I supposed France also would have to consider the lengths to which we would be prepared to go in support of Russia." ²

On February 21 Sazonov made a new proposal for mediation. Sir G. Buchanan was handed an aide-memoire which suggested that:

"When once the opportuneness of such an intervention had been unanimously established in principle by the Powers, the latter should invite Turkey to entrust her cause to the five Powers, who, after having taken council together, and having consulted Italy confidentially, should elaborate conditions of a cessation of hostilities, and then advise the Porte to accept them."

(1) Grey to Bertie, Jan. 9, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 527
(2) Grey to Bertie, Feb. 3, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 364

Sazonov thought that if the Powers associated themselves in this manner of proceeding the question of the decree of annexation might be avoided. Buchanan reported that the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs was anxious that his proposals should be accepted.¹

The new Russian proposals found the members of the Entente co-operating badly. M. Poincare, the French Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs, was annoyed at the Russians because the German and Austro-Hungarian Governments were advised of the new proposals two days before they were received by France. It was felt that negotiations of this nature should not have been undertaken without previous consultation and agreement with the French and British Governments, and that the action taken by Russia gave the appearance of dissidence between the members of the Entente on the particular point of issue. Poincare was also of the opinion that to approach Italy and not to make simultaneous enquiries at Constantinople would prejudice English and French interests in Turkey. He suggested that simultaneous enquiries be made at Rome and Constantinople so that the Powers when acquainted with the views of Italy and Turkey could judge as to the expediency of mediation at that moment. The British Government agreed with M. Poincare.²

The suggestion of France and England was received with dissatisfaction by M. Sazonov, who said that he was receiving better co-operation from Germany than from the members of the

(1) Buchanan to Grey, Feb. 21, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 367
(2) Bertie to Grey, Feb. 29, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 369

Triple Entente. Because of the attitude taken by the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and because Germany and Austria-Hungary expressed their willingness to associate themselves with the proposal, the French and British Governments reconsidered the question and, as a result, instructed their ambassadors at Rome to associate themselves with the representatives of the other Powers in the sense of the Russian proposal.¹ On March 9, 1912, the Ambassadors of the five Powers proceeded separately to the Italian Ministry for Foreign Affairs and asked on what conditions Italy would be disposed to accept the friendly mediation of the Powers with a view to ending the war. The Minister reserved his answer for a later date.²

It was not only in the mediation proposals that the Entente failed to work as a team. On February 28 the British Government, upon hearing that the Ottoman Government was about to close the Dardanelles because it feared an attack by Italy, sent a circular telegram to its Ambassadors to the Powers which read as follows:

"In view of the very serious injury which would be caused to commerce should the Turkish Government in self-defence proceed to close the Dardanelles by mines, I would like to know if the Government to which you are accredited would consider it desirable to approach Italy and ask her if she would be disposed to give an assurance that she would undertake no hostile operations in the Dardanelles and neighbouring waters."³

This telegram was hasty, as the British Government learnt from Lowther, after it had been sent, that the Ottoman Government had

(1) Grey to Buchanan, Mar. 4, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 371
(2) Roda to Grey, Mar. 10, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 376
(3) Grey to Bertie, Feb. 28, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 368

not yet taken a definite decision. Nevertheless, the request was refused by Sazonov who said that they would hardly be acting as neutrals if they presented such a request to Italy, and he was most anxious to avoid taking any step to which the Italian Government could possibly take exception.¹ The Governments of Austria-Hungary and Germany also refused the proposal, but it was favoured by the French.

The circular telegram despatched to the Powers by Grey, and which was met with rebuff by all with the exception of France, was an inexplicable reversal of British policy. When the Russians had earlier asked for support in getting guarantees that there would be no interruption of neutral traffic passing through the Straits, the British Government had taken the view that it was not necessary to take any action as both Italy and Turkey were probably bluffing. This time, the rumour that the Straits would be closed had resulted in Grey taking the initiative without even waiting for further details from Sir G. Lowther. The Russians on the other hand, who had before been so anxious to get guarantees in regard to the Straits, were this time unwilling to support the British Government. The Russian attitude is easily understood. Their own scheme for getting guarantees had been criticized in Italy. Although the Russians were not adverse to putting a little pressure on Turkey, they would do nothing which might offend Italy in the least. The Italians would be given no reason to doubt Russia's good-will.

(1) Buchanan to Grey, Mar. 5, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 373

Russian policy in regard to mediation and the Dardanelles seemed to be more in step with that of the Central Powers than with that of France and England.

On March 15, 1912, the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs called the Ambassadors of the five Powers to the Foreign Office and gave them the Italian reply to their communication of March 9.¹ Since the Italians, in their reply, maintained that the base for bringing hostilities to an end would have to be the complete sovereignty of Italy in Tripoli and Cyrenaica, the British Government was of the opinion that the Italian conditions would be rejected by the Turkish Government. For this reason Grey felt that if enquiries were made at Constantinople they should be made in the same way as they had already been made at Rome and both belligerents treated exactly alike.²

After receiving Italy's reply the Powers waited for Russia to make the next move. On April 11 Grey transmitted to Lowther the following formula proposed by Russia:

"Les Puissances ayant pu constater que sous certaines conditions l'Italie serait disposée à admettre une intervention amicale des Puissances en vue d'arriver à la cessation des hostilités, s'adressent dans le même esprit d'amitié à la Sublime Porte pour la prier de leur communiquer les conditions auxquelles elle accepterait leur médiation en vue d'arriver à la cessation des hostilités."³

(1) Rodd to Grey, Mar. 15, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 378

(2) Grey to Bertie, Mar. 21, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 383

(3) Grey to Lowther, April 11, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 384

Lowther was instructed to communicate in this sense to the Turkish Government as soon as the Ambassadors of the other Powers had received like instructions. This was done on April 16¹ and the Turkish reply, which was given on April 24, declared that although she would willingly accept the mediation of the Powers it would be impossible for her to enter into negotiations except on the basis of the recognition of the Sultan's sovereignty and of Italy's renouncing the annexation of the two provinces.² Before Turkey had made her reply, however, the efforts of Sazonov had completely failed.

On April 18 Italy bombarded the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles and the war entered upon a new phase.³

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- (1) Lowther to Grey, April 16, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 385
(2) Giolitti, *op. cit.*, p. 290
(3) Lowther to Grey, April 18, 1912, B.D. 1X (1) p. 386

CHAPTER VI

EXTENSION OF THE WAR TO THE AEGEAN

I

If Italy hoped that the extension of the war to the Aegean would so worry the Powers that they would interfere and force a settlement she was disappointed. The war in Africa had been practically at a standstill for several months, and the Russian proposals for restoring the peace, after dragging on for many weeks, were certain to end in failure. It was plain that the Powers would not put any pressure on the Turks. Under these circumstances the Italians supplemented their African campaign with an attack on the Dardanelles and the seizure of several Turkish islands in the Aegean. The Turks were to be shown that Italy, even though the campaign in Libya had not been a resounding success, could and would extend the war to areas closer to the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Italy probably hoped that the extension of the war would force an already apprehensive Europe to put pressure on Turkey to sue for peace. The seizure of the islands in the Aegean should give the Turks an excuse to surrender Tripoli, which was lost to them in any case.

The Turks seized upon the opportunity offered by the attack on the Dardanelles to close the Straits to international shipping. Both belligerents were thus making themselves a nuisance to neutral Powers, but no Power was willing to take any step at Rome or Constantinople to force a settlement; it was enough to get the Straits opened again. In June, France discussed several mediation

proposals with the other members of the Entente, but like all previous proposals, they came to nothing. When in July, the Italians and Turks began peace talks these were initiated without using the good-offices of any other Power.

The seizure of the Aegean Islands, although contemporaneous with the attack on the Dardanelles, did not have such an immediate affect upon British policy and will not, therefore, be treated in this chapter.

II

The Italian bombardment of the forts at the entrance to the Dardanelles gave the Turks an excuse to close the Straits. The Powers most directly concerned were Great Britain and Russia. The long feared closure of the Straits did not, however, find these two Powers co-operating effectively as to the means of getting them opened again. The British Government took the view that the Italians were to blame for the situation, and that if they would disavow any intention of attacking again in this region the Turks would no longer have an excuse for keeping the Straits closed. The Russians took the opposite view. They put the blame upon Turkey, and insisted at Constantinople that the Straits be re-opened without delay.

The day after the bombardment, the Marquis Manzoni, the Italian Charge d'Affaires in London, called on Nicolson and explained what had happened. According to the Italian account, an Italian squadron had been cruising off the entrance to the Dardanelles hoping that it could entice the Turkish fleet to emerge, when a Turkish shore

battery had opened fire. An exchange of fire had continued for two hours, and then the squadron had left for Italy. Nicolson told Manzoni that he was extremely sorry that the Italians had taken action which had compelled the Turks to take defensive measures. The Turks could not be blamed, he added. The closing of the Dardanelles was a most serious matter for England and would cause much discontent.¹ The next day Grey telegraphed to Lowther that, "I recognize the rights of the Turkish Government to adopt such legitimate means of defense as they may consider necessary."² On April 22, Nicolson informed the Italian Ambassador that the closure of the Straits, for which he could not blame the Turks, was causing grave injury to British commercial and shipping interests. When Imperiali suggested that if this were the case the British Government might protest to Constantinople, Nicolson replied that to do this would be going too far. All that had been done there, he added, had been to express the friendly hope that the Turkish Government would find it possible to open the passage for commerce through the Straits. When the Italian Ambassador said that he trusted the Italian Government would not be asked for assurances that they would abstain from hostilities near the Straits, Nicolson answered that he did not contemplate anything disagreeable. England, however, would give no pledges as to what she might be compelled to do in the interests of her trade.³

If the British Government placed the blame for the closure of

(1) Grey to Rodd, April 19, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 387
(2) Grey to Lowther, April 20, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 388
(3) Grey to Rodd, April 22, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 388

the Straits upon the Italians, the Russians placed the blame squarely on the Turks. Feeling that the Turks had no right to keep the Dardanelles closed to international traffic, they wanted to take strong measures at Constantinople. Count Benckendorff informed Nicolson on April 22, that the Russian Government had addressed a representation to the Turkish Government to the effect that:

The Russian Government were unaware how the Turkish Government could reconcile the free passage of the Straits accorded to merchant vessels by Treaty with the present measures of closing the Straits. They, therefore, expressed the 'firm hope' that, so soon as the imminent danger of hostile attack had passed by, the Turkish Government would open the Straits to foreign commerce. Otherwise the Russian Government would have to consider the question of indemnities for the losses incurred.

Nicolson felt that the threat of exacting indemnities from the Turks was a rather strong measure, but Benckendorff replied that the Russian Government was forced to take a stiff attitude because of the damage which was being suffered by Russian commercial interests.¹

British commercial interests were also suffering. Each day that the Straits continued closed cost British ship-owners at least nine thousand pounds. One hundred and fifty merchant ships, manned by about 4,000 British officers and men were detained. There was the danger that if these ships were delayed much longer the value of their cargoes of maize would deteriorate rapidly. The question was becoming pressing, and Lowther was instructed to urge the Turkish Government at least to open the Straits temporarily, so that those ships which were detained could pass in and out.² Rodd

(1) Grey to Buchanan, April 22, 1912; E.D. 1X (1) p. 389

(2) Grey to Lowther, April 30, 1912; B.L. 1X (1) p. 390

received instructions to say to the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs that:

"if Italian Government can facilitate the relief desired by enabling us to say to Turkish Government that there will be no attack upon the Straits for a reasonable period while the channel is opened for purpose described in my telegram to Sir G. Lowther, their action will be very much appreciated here."¹

Giuliano replied that Russia had renewed her protest to the Turks, and that to make any promise, such as the British Government had suggested, would be to weaken the Russian demands; and that Russia had shown so much good-will towards Italy, that it would be difficult for Italy to take any step until it was certain that those initiated by Russia would fail. Giuliano added, that Grey's reply to a question in the House of Commons on April 29, when he had said that the British Government was already consulting other Powers to find some temporary measure for getting ships through the Straits, had already weakened the Russian standpoint.² Russian demands at Constantinople made it easy for the Italians to place the blame upon the Turks.

The Russian protest had the desired effect. On May 1, Lowther reported that the Dardanelles would be opened as soon as the mines could be removed from the channel. The Ottoman Government maintained, however, its right to close the Dardanelles in case of necessity.³

On May 2, Buchanan, in a private letter to Nicolson, explained why the Russians had taken such energetic action at Constantinople, but would not join the British in a protest at Rome. When Buchanan had asked Sazonov to join the British Government in representations

(1) Grey to Rodd, April 30, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 390

(2) Rodd to Grey, May 1, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 391

(3) Lowther to Grey, May 1, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 391

at Rome he had absolutely refused. Buchanan went on to say, "I asked him what he hoped to gain by so assiduously courting Italy. He replied, 'I don't want Italy to send, as she had undertaken to do, Army Corps into Galicia, in the event of a Russo-German War.' After a moment's pause he added, 'She won't do this now'. I could not get him to say anything more - but those were his actual words and they are very significant." ¹

III

Count Benckendorff told Nicolson on April 29, that, in view of the Turkish attitude, the moment was unsuitable for the continuation of mediation proposals. ² The initiative in proposing new suggestions for bringing the war to an end now came from France.

M. Cambon, the French Ambassador, read to Nicolson on May 24, a telegram from M. Poincaré which suggested that a conference of the Powers might be called to settle the Italo-Turkish difficulty. Only the Tripolitanian question would be discussed. The opinion of the British Government towards this new move was that, if a conference of the Powers was called, the question of the islands seized by Italy, and the question of the Straits - - after the promise given to Iswolsky in 1908 - - could hardly be kept out. It was also felt that soundings should be taken before a conference was called since Italy and Turkey were still poles apart as to their terms, and no Power would risk offending either of the belligerents by making suggestions which would not be acceptable to both parties. ³

(1) Buchanan to Nicolson, May 2, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 394
(2) Editorial Note, B.D. 1X (1) p. 389
(3) Grey to Bertie, June 5, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 395

The French were informed by the Russian Ambassador on June 6, that the Tsar of Russia and the German Emperor, at the particular request of the latter, were to meet in Finnish waters on July 3. Although assured that the meeting had no political meaning, the French were afraid that the two Emperors might come to some sort of understanding which would weaken the Triple Entente. In anticipation of this, M. Poincare decided to make a counter-move which would preclude the Tsar from entering into a separate agreement with Germany. What he particularly feared was that Germany and Russia should find a formula for ending the war which would not include France and Great Britain. Poincare suggested that a declaration should be made by the Powers of the Triple Entente. The first draft of the proposed declaration which was submitted to the British Government on June 8, for their comments, was worded as follows:

"Les Gouvernements britannique, francais et russe constatent avec satisfaction la conformite de leurs vues sur les conditions dans lesquelles ils pourront, en temps opportun, cooperer le plus efficacement au retablissement de la paix entre l'Italia et la Turquie. Ils estiment qu'une intervention amicale des Puissances n'aurait chance de succes que si l'objet en etait strictement limite au terme precis du litige qui a motive le conflit. Elles devraient donc souscrire avant toute deliberation un pacte general de desinterressement. Les trois Gouvernements s'engagent des maintenant a combiner leurs efforts pour rallier a leurs vues les autres Puissances interessees dans les affaires orientales."

Grey immediately objected to this declaration on two counts. In the first place he felt that Russia would object to any agreement which declared that they were 'disinterested' as this might mean that the question of the Straits could not be discussed. In the second

(1) Bertie to Grey, June 8, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 397-8

place, if France, England and Russia made this declaration to each other, it would precipitate the formation of two groups when the object to keep in view was that the five Powers should act together in any action concerning the war.¹ The first of these objections was withdrawn when Grey was assured by the French Government that Iswolsky, the Russian Ambassador in Paris, did not object to the term 'désintéressement';² and the second when Poincare made changes in the proposed declaration, the most important of which was the last sentence which now read, "Les trois Gouvernements s'accordent a reconnaître que, pour arriver a leur fins pacifiques, il est essential que les cinq Puissances se concertent avant toute demarche."³

Grey told Cambon on June 17, that he would agree to this new proposal.⁴ Then it was discovered by the British Government that the views expressed by M. Iswolsky in Paris were most certainly not those of his Government. Grey heard from O'Beirne on June 20, that Sazonov objected to the formula of disinterestedness and had declared that for Russia to sign such a declaration would be interpreted as the abdication of her historic rule in the Balkans. Sazonov was also a little annoyed at the French search for a 'formula' which he correctly ascribed to their fears concerning the forthcoming meeting of the two Emperors, and to their lack of complete confidence in himself. It was Grey's opinion that the declaration should be dropped.⁵

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- (1) Grey to Bertie, June 19, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 398-9
(2) Grey to Bertie, June 18, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 403
(3) Cambon to Grey, June 18, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 404
(4) Grey to Bertie, June 17, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 402
(5) O'Beirne to Grey, June 20, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 404-5

The French Government, in spite of the objections which had been raised, continued to search for a declaration which would be agreeable to all. The French and Russian Governments by June 25, had more or less agreed to a form of words respecting mediation in which all mention of disinterestedness was dropped. Grey, after he had read the latest version telegraphed to O'Beirne that:

"In any case this ought not to be regarded as a formal exchange of notes between three Governments, or to be published which would be disastrous and defeat its own object, which is to avoid separate grouping in mediation and keep all 5 Powers together. You should explain what¹ has passed to Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs."

The French Proposal of May 24, for an international conference, was also dropped. Sazonov informed O'Beirne on June 17, that he objected to the proposal on the grounds that it would be impossible to exclude such questions as the commercial status of the Dardanelles, the future position of the Aegean Islands, Macedonia, Crete etc. The discussion of the three latter questions would result in the populations demanding a change of regime, and if the Powers refused to consider their claims it would probably lead to disturbances and uprisings. Nicolson and Grey agreed that Sazonov's views were very sound.²

In June, 1912, without making use of the good-offices of any of the five Powers, the Italian and Turkish Governments got in touch with each other, and unofficial conversations were initiated

(1) Grey to O'Beirne, June 25, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 410-11

(2) O'Beirne to Grey, June 23, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 409

with the object of finding grounds for settlement. These conversations led to official delegations from the Italian and Turkish Governments meeting in Lausanne, Switzerland, on July 12, to discuss possible peace terms.¹

The Powers began to suspect that peace was in the offing. The German Ambassador in London spoke to Grey on July 4, and observed that there was some idea in Constantinople that Germany and Great Britain might act together to secure settlement. He agreed with Grey, however, that the wisest course was for the five Powers to keep in touch.² Both Russia and France now suspected that Germany was intervening between Italy and Turkey, and M. Cambon on July 11, told Grey, "that such action was not consistent with the principle that the five Powers should act together."³ If Russia and France were correct in their suspicions of Germany, then the statements issued by the German Foreign Office were not to be relied upon, for Herr Zimmermann, the German Under-Secretary of State, had expressed his opinion to Lord Granville, the British Charge, on July 9, of the absolute necessity, "if any action was to be taken, of all five Powers acting together and of the avoidance of any division between the Triple Entente on the one side, and Austria and Germany on the other!"⁴

"While mutual fear and distrust kept the Powers from undertaking any common action for the restoration of peace, they were equally

(1) Giolitti, *op. cit.*, p. 517

(2) Grey to Goschen, July 4, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 416

(3) Grey to Bertie, July 11, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 418-19

(4) Granville to Grey, July 11, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 419

afraid that the Powers in the opposing group would succeed in settling affairs between Italy and Turkey and reap the credit." While each group regarded the other with suspicion and insisted upon concerted action, the Italian and Turkish delegation met quietly at Lausanne.

On July 15, Imperiali tried to get Grey to advise the Turkish Government to make peace. Imperiali said that the advice of Great Britain would carry more weight at Constantinople than that of any other nation, and that every other Power had already given this advice. If the advice were not given the Turks might think that England considered it unwise of them to make peace. Grey was not to be drawn into interference of any sort, and maintained his position of absolute neutrality. He replied that:

"if all the other Powers had given advice, some of them had been exceedingly quiet about it, and it must have been given very informally. There was no fear of our silence being misconstrued, and I would bear in mind what he had said, in case any opportunity should arise for promoting peace."¹

Left to themselves, without interference from the Powers, discussions between the Italian and Turkish Governments dragged on through the summer. A cartoon published by Punch at the beginning of the war which proved to be prophetic depicted Dame Europa saying, "I thoroughly disapprove of this, and as soon as ever it's over I shall interfere to put a stop to it."²

(1) Grey to Rodd, July 15, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 420
(2) Punch, October 11, 1911.

CHAPTER VII

To the relief of Europe, the war between Italy and Turkey was at last brought to an end by a Treaty of Peace which was signed at Lausanne, Switzerland, on October 18, 1912. Italy immediately went about the business of securing from the Powers the recognition of her new North African colony. The recognition of Libya presented the British Government with two problems; first, the safeguarding of British commercial interests in Libya, at least to the extent of a guarantee that they would not suffer from discrimination; and secondly, the question of whether or not it would be possible to get Italian support for abolishing the Capitulations¹ in Egypt in return for their recognition of Libya. The end of the war also left the British Government with the question of the balance of power in the Mediterranean. Italy was not only established on the North African coast, but, what was of much more importance, she failed to surrender the Aegean Islands in spite of many promises to do so. The question of the islands was important to Great Britain, particularly at this time, because the Mediterranean fleet had been greatly reduced. After the war, British policy attempted, on the one hand, to neutralize the Italian danger by means of a Mediterranean agreement between the Governments of Great Britain, France and Italy, and, on the other hand, to insist that the Aegean Islands occupied by Italy be returned to Turkey.

(1) In the Ottoman Empire, under the so-called Capitulations, jurisdiction over foreigners was exercised by the Consuls of the State to which they respectively belonged.

I

After many weeks of procrastination and success, the Turks at last consented to sign a peace treaty to bring the long drawn-out war to an end. The Turks, nevertheless, continued their dilatory tactics right to the finish. Three days before the war ended Grey was informed by the Italian Ambassador that the Turks had withdrawn from the peace negotiations, and, for a short time there was the possibility that Italy, in her exasperation, might again attack the Dardanelles, seize more of the Aegean Islands or even attack the Adriatic coast of Turkey.¹ However, the Turks renewed the negotiations at the last moment. An Italo-Turkish peace protocol was signed at Ouchy on October 15, 1912, and, three days later, the Treaty of Peace was signed at Lausanne.²

The Turks had several good reasons for ending the war. Tripoli and Cyrenaica had long been lost and there had never been any hope of recovering them. On the other hand, the war had been having a disintegrating effect upon other parts of the Ottoman Empire, trade was hampered and Turkey was denied access to the Paris money-market. To these was added an even more compelling reason. By the autumn of 1912 the threat of war in the Balkans had become very real, and Turkey wished to be in the position to give her undivided attention to the trouble threatening from this quarter.³

The Italian Ambassador announced the signing of the peace to Grey on October 16.⁴ Two days before, on the 14th, Imperiali had pressed

(1) Dering to Grey, Oct. 13, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 428

(2) Rodd to Grey, Dec. 2, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 438

(3) Lowther to Grey, Oct. 17, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 431-3

(4) Grey to Dering, Oct. 16, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 430

Grey to promise that the British Government would recognize Italian sovereignty in Libya. Grey replied that there would be no political objection to this recognition provided that Turkey, by the terms of the peace treaty, undertook to withdraw her troops from Libya. He went on to say, however, that:

I must reserve the right for His Majesty's Government to examine how British commercial interests would be affected, and to ask for some conditions respecting them as we₁ had with France in the case of Tunis and Morocco.

The Italian Government asked on the 18th, what the nature of these conditions to which Grey referred would be. Grey informed Imperiali four days later that, "if no other nation was making special stipulations for its commerce, we ourselves could not well demand it." The Ambassadors replied that all nations would be accorded equal treatment and, on October 25, the British Government recognized the sovereignty of Italy over her newly acquired territories without making any stipulations.²

Meanwhile, the Foreign Office had been discussing the question of whether the British Government should, as a condition of their recognition of Libya, ask Italy to promise her support to a scheme to change the status of Egypt, and in particular, the position with regard to the Capitulations. Neither Vansittart nor Nicolson thought that they should publicly attach any stipulation regarding the Capitulations in Egypt to the British recognition. In any case, it would have been difficult for Britain to insist upon such a stipulation because Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia, in

(1) Grey to Dering, Oct. 14, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 428
(2) Ed. note; B.D. 1X (1) p. 434

furtherance of their policies of winning Italian goodwill, and without waiting for notification of peace conditions, recognized Italian sovereignty over Libya with no reservations. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that no formal stipulations were attached to the recognition of Libya, the British Government did attempt to secure Italian support for the projected changes in Egypt. The Italian Ambassador told Grey on October 22, that, ". . . when other nations agreed to a modification or abolition of the Capitulations to Egypt the Italian Government would be quite ready to do so."¹ On November 15, the Italian Government was reminded that, although no conditions had been attached to the public recognition of their sovereignty in Libya, they would be expected to give their support in the British intention of modifying the Capitulatory regime in Egypt.² On December 10, Rodd presented to the Italian Government a Note which explained the nature of the proposed changes in Egypt and expressed the hope that:

The Royal Government will be so good as to take them into their favourable consideration and will agree to similar provisions, thereby affording the friendly concurrence and support which His Majesty's Government have every reason to anticipate that they will receive.³

France was the last country to give its recognition of Italian sovereignty. This prejudiced the French cause because the average Italian assumed that the French Government was reluctant to take a step which all the other Powers had already taken. Rodd reported

(1) Ibid

(2) Grey to Rodd, Nov. 15, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 437

(3) Rodd to San Giuliano, Dec. 10, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 443-44

on October 27, however, that the matter had been settled and that, "I infer that Signor Giolitti had given some engagement to France in regard to frontier questions which had been sufficient to satisfy Monsieur Poincare." ¹

The Italians had been confirmed in their possession of Tripoli, but the question of the changing balance of power in the Mediterranean remained.

(1) Rodd to Grey, Oct. 27, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 435

II

In the spring of 1912 the British Admiralty was forced to take a momentous decision. Because of the growing sea-power of Germany it was decided that the Home Fleet would have to be reinforced, and this resulted in the reduction of the Mediterranean Fleet. So many ships would have to be withdrawn that, in case of a war with Germany the Admiralty could no longer guarantee the safety of British Communications in the Mediterranean until a decision had been reached in the North Sea.

The evacuation of the Mediterranean by the British fleet, after more than a century of unchallenged supremacy, would probably effect the relationship of Great Britain with the Mediterranean Powers. The British fleet had always been a reminder of the might and power of Britain, and the attitude of these Powers might be very different after the fleet was withdrawn. Crowe was of the opinion that once the fear of the British fleet was removed, Italy might tighten her connections with Germany and Austria-Hungary, and abandon her policy of keeping on friendly terms with the Entente group even though remaining a member of the Triple Alliance. Italy's attitude, he thought, would probably change from one of friendship to one of hostility.¹

In spite of the danger involved in this proposed removal of ships from the Mediterranean, the Home Fleet had to be reinforced if it was to be certain of victory in any naval action which might

(1) Memorandum by Crowe, May 8, 1912; B.D. X (11), pp. 585-9

take place in the North Sea. Churchill told the French Naval Attache on May 14, that his Government was considering the whole question of fleet distribution, and that he would be able to discuss special arrangements with him after Whitsuntide.¹

On May 18, Cambon had brought up the question of the Mediterranean with Nicolson. In view of the impending conquest of Tripoli by Italy, he strongly suspected that when the Triple Alliance came to be renewed, certain of its provisions would be extended to the Mediterranean. This would put the Triple Alliance in a strong naval position in that region. Turkey and others would probably be attracted to such a strong combination. It was the opinion of the French Government that this danger might be greatly reduced if France, Italy and Great Britain were to enter into some engagement whereby each one would respect the possessions of the other. At that time, Grey thought that Italy might agree to something of this nature in return for their recognition of Tripoli, but nothing could be done until the war was over.²

During the latter part of May, 1912, the Committee of Imperial Defence met at Malta. After consultations on the Naval position in the Mediterranean, it was considered that some definite agreements should be made with France whereby the British fleet would take over the responsibility for the defence of the northern coast of France; and the French fleet, with the help of enough British

(1) Record of conversation between Churchill and Saint-Seine, May 14, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 591

(2) Grey to Bertie, May 24, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 593

ships to ensure victory over the combined fleets of Italy and Austria, would take over the responsibility for the Mediterranean.¹

Churchill renewed conversations with the French Naval Attache on July 17, to acquaint him with the arrangements which were proposed for the Mediterranean.² On the 23rd the text of a naval agreement which might apply in case Great Britain and France were allied in war was drawn up at the Admiralty with the French Attache. If this agreement came into force Britain would be responsible for the mutual interests of the two Powers east of Malta, and France would assume a like responsibility for the Western basin of the Mediterranean. Both Churchill and Grey made it clear to the French that conversations, or agreements between naval experts, were not binding upon their Governments in any way. The first article of the suggested draft, therefore, read:

1. The following agreement relates solely to a contingency in which Great Britain and France were to be allied in a war, and does not affect the political freedom of either Government as to embarking on such a war.³

Cambon, however, pointed out that an agreement of this nature would give France no assurance that her northern coast would be protected after her fleet had been moved to the Mediterranean because it was possible that she might find herself engaged in a war in which England would decline to take part. He suggested, therefore, that if the declaration was to remain in its present form, ". . . it would be essential that there should be some

(1) Kitchener to Grey, June 2, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 594

(2) Memorandum by Churchill, July 17, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 600

(3) Text of draft dated July 23, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 602

understanding between the two Governments that they would at least communicate with each other if there was menace, and concert beforehand." He suggested that private Notes should be exchanged between the two Governments to this effect. Grey, however, objected to the exchange of any Notes which would have to be secret in character,¹ and in Churchill's opinion Britain's refusal to commit herself was perfectly fair to France because neither country could make a better disposition of its fleet than that proposed. He considered that the French fleet was no match for that of Germany, and it might just as well concentrate in the Mediterranean where it could be effective.²

In September, France concentrated her naval forces in the Mediterranean, but insisted that this was only a temporary move connected with manoeuvres. Indeed, Cambon told Grey on September 19, that the move could not be permanent until France knew where she stood. He suggested a written understanding between the two Governments which would not commit the British Government to war on the side of France, but which might provide that in case of either being threatened by a third Power, the Governments of France and Great Britain would consult together. Grey said that he would discuss the matter with the Prime-Minister.³ Asquith saw no objection,⁴ and in order that the apprehensions of the French might be laid at rest, Grey consented to an exchange of

(1) Grey to Carnegie, July 26, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 604
(2) Note by Churchill, July 29, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 605
(3) Grey to Bertie, Sept. 19, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 611
(4) Asquith to Grey, Oct. 11, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 612

letters with Cambon. On November 22, 1912, Grey wrote to the French Ambassador that French and British naval and military experts had frequently consulted together, but that it had always been understood that their consultations did not affect the freedom of action of their respective Governments. He then went on:

. . . if either Government had grave reason to expect an unprovoked attack by a third Power, or something that threatened the general peace, it should immediately discuss with the other, whether both Governments should act together to prevent aggression and to preserve peace, and if so what measures they would be prepared to take in common. . .¹

Through this arrangement the French hoped they would have time in an emergency to bring their fleet into the Atlantic, if it should appear that the British would fail to carry out the protection of the northern coast of France. Cambon replied on the following day with a parallel declaration in a letter to Grey.²

In effect, after the autumn of 1912, therefore, British naval supremacy in the Mediterranean was dependent upon the support of the French fleet.

III

In spite of the declaration of the Italian Government that the occupation of the Aegean Islands was only a temporary measure which they had been forced to take, Grey on June 13, 1912, asked for the views of the Admiralty, "as to whether it is consistent with British strategic interests that Italy should be allowed to retain permanently any island or islands seized and occupied by

(1) Grey to Cambon, Nov. 22, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 614
(2) Cambon to Grey, Nov. 23, 1912; B.D. X (11) p. 615

her during the war." ¹ The Lord Commissioners of the Admiralty replied on June 29, enclosing a memorandum which described the general issues involved and recommended that the aim of British policy should be the restoration of the Status quo which had existed before the war. They advised that the retention of any of the islands by Italy should be resisted, because:

The geographical position of these islands enables the Sovereign Power, if enjoying the possession of a Navy, to exercise a control over the Levant and Black Sea trade and to threaten our position in Egypt in an unprecedented degree.

A permanent menace to Turkey by the Sovereign Power would also be established, or, alternatively, greater facility would be given to the transport of Turkish troops to Egypt in the event of Turkey joining our enemies.

Also the fact that the Italian Tripoli frontier now marches with that of Egypt must not be left out of consideration.

They added that because a naval Power which was established in one of those islands could control the exit from the Black Sea, the question was one of general European interest. Not only should Great Britain protest against the retention of the islands by Italy, but she should be able to join those Powers, who had signed treaties governing the navigation of the Dardanelles, in lodging a complaint. ²

On August 6, Grey raised the question of the Aegean Islands with the Italian Ambassador. Probably thinking of the impasse which had been created by Italy's decree of the annexation of

(1) Admiralty to Foreign Office, June 29, 1912; B.D. X (2) p. 413
(2) Ibid. pp. 413-6.

Libya, Grey expressed the hope that Italy would pass no decree nor commit herself about the islands. When the Ambassador admitted that France and Austria-Hungary were already concerned about this subject, Grey added that his Government was sensitive about the naval situation in the Mediterranean. Imperiali said that though he had no instructions from his Government on the subject it seemed to him that to hand the Christian populations back to the Turks would give rise to many difficulties. Grey agreed, but he repeated that he hoped the Italian Government would not commit themselves in respect to the islands in any way. Imperiali said that he would repeat this conversation to his Government.¹

In September, Grey discussed the question of the islands with France and Russia. Peace discussions were proceeding between Italy and Turkey, and there was the strong likelihood that the war would soon end. The question of the islands was pressing. M. Cambon informed the British Government on September 17, that France was willing to co-operate in sending a fresh warning to the Italian Government in regard to the possible annexation of any of the Aegean Islands. The private opinion of M. Cambon, however, was that joint steps at Rome would cause irritation. It would be preferable, he thought, to mention to the Italian Ambassadors that it was understood that informal peace negotiations were under way, and it was taken for granted that there would be no attempt on the part of the two belligerents

(1) Grey to Rodd, Aug. 6, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 420-1

finally to negotiate the status of the islands.¹ On September 25, Grey went over the question with Sazonov, who was visiting at Balmoral. The two agreed that the islands ought not be allowed to pass into the hands of a naval Power, but that there would have to be some sort of safeguard for the Christian populations when the islands were restored to Turkey. They concluded that the question was one to be decided by the six Powers when the war ended.²

On October 9, the British Government received a suggestion from M. Poincare that, as peace would probably be made shortly between Italy and Turkey, it might be opportune for the Powers to say in a friendly way at Rome:

Que l'Italie donnera par avance communication de tout accord qui pourrait intervenir entre le Gouvernement Italien et la Sublime Porte sur la restitution des Iles Egeennes et sur le statut politique et sur le regime administratif de l'Archipel Ottoman.

Poincare thought that if this step was taken it should be identical and simultaneous. All the Powers were being asked to join.³ Although Grey was concerned about the islands, he did not wish to take any step which Italy might find offensive. He said he would agree if the other Powers also agreed. The Russian Government also, not wishing to offend Italy, refused to join in this action.⁴ Bertie reported on October 10 that Austria-Hungary, and possibly Germany, would decline to join

(1) Grey to Bertie, Sept. 17, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 421-2
(2) Conversation between Grey and Sazonov, Sept. 25, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 758-9
(3) Grey to Bertie, Oct. 9, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 423
(4) Granville to Grey, Oct. 10, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 424

in any such communication.¹

Cambon advised Grey on October 11 of a new proposal from Poincare. This suggestion was that the French and British Governments should enquire at Rome, in a friendly manner, as to the Aegean Islands, with the view of impressing upon the Italian Government the fact that the question was one which concerned all the Powers. The French Government feared that when the peace treaty was agreed upon, Italy would include some sort of stipulation making her a protectoress of the Christian populations of the islands. Grey replied that for England and France to take such action at this time would probably annoy Italy and strengthen her connections with the other Powers. In any case, the peace negotiations would be concluded shortly, and if they succeeded it would be upon terms which had already been decided. All the Powers would probably recognize the annexation of Tripoli, he thought, and the question of the islands could be taken up later between them.²

Imperiali told Grey on October 14, the day before the peace treaty was signed, that, by terms of the peace treaty, Turkey would make certain guarantees for the protection of the islanders and the islands would thereupon be returned to Turkey.³ By the second Article of the peace treaty which was signed on the 18th, Italy pledged herself to return the islands to Turkey, "immédiatement apres que la Tripolitaine et la Cyrenaique auront

(1) Bertie to Grey, Oct. 10, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 424
(2) Grey to Bertie, Oct. 11, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 425
(3) Grey to Dering, Oct. 14, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 428

ete evacuees par les officiers, les troupes et les fonctionnaires civils ottomans." ¹

It seemed that the suspicions and fears concerning Italy's designs in the Aegean had been unwarranted. The question of the islands was dropped for a while and the British Government turned its attention to the possibility of a tripartite agreement in the Mediterranean.

It had been suggested by Rodd and by the French Government that, in view of their common interests in the Mediterranean, it might be possible and advisable to get Italy into some sort of an agreement with France and Great Britain. Grey dropped the suggestion to Imperiali on October 14, that once peace had been signed with the Turks, Italy might rid herself of any anxieties over her new colony by entering into an agreement with Great Britain. ² A few days later Giolitti let the French Ambassador know that he would be 'favourably disposed' to some engagement between Italy, France and Great Britain for the mutual safeguarding of their interests in North Africa. ³ Poincare was also in favour of some sort of mutual guarantee. ⁴

The prospect of a Mediterranean agreement being thus in view, Grey told the Italian Ambassador on October 30, that he would like to get suggestions from the Italian Government for a suitable formula. ⁵ The French were also moving in the matter and, by November 10, Rodd was able to report that the French Ambassador at Rome, M. Barrere, had received instructions to broach the

(1) Enclosure in Rodd to Grey, Dec. 2, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) p. 441
(2) Grey to Dering, Oct. 14, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 428-9
(3) Rodd to Grey, Oct. 27, 1912; B.D. 1X (1) pp. 435-6
(4) Grey to Bertie, Oct. 30, 1912; B.D. X(2) pp. 622-3
(5) Grey to Rodd, Oct. 30, 1912; B.D. X (2) p. 623

matter officially to the Italian Government.¹ Barrere found San Giuliano to be in favour of such an agreement in principle and he therefore drafted a suggested text and submitted it to Paris for approval; on learning of the steps which had already been taken by the French, Grey telegraphed to Rodd on November 21, that he should take an early opportunity to discuss the question of a Mediterranean agreement with the Italian Minister for Foreign Affairs.²

On November 23, Rodd reported that he had discussed the question of an agreement with San Giuliano. Rodd, however, after making the suggestion that Italy and Great Britain should agree not to disturb each other in either Tripoli or Egypt respectively, was led on to the further suggestion that in case of war between the two countries, Tripoli and Egypt should be excluded from the field of military operations.³

Rodd had gone further than the British Government had expected or intended him to go. Even if the observance of such an agreement as Rodd had suggested could be guaranteed, it would be of no advantage to Britain to renounce the right to attack Tripoli in case of a war with Italy. Britain and France had looked upon Italy's new province as a sort of hostage which made her dependent upon them. In such a treaty all the advantage would be upon the side of Italy. Sir Eyre Crowe, therefore, drew up a Draft Declaration which read:

(1) Rodd to Grey, Nov. 10, 1912; B.D. X (2) pp. 624-5
(2) Minutes; B.D. X (2) p. 626
(3) Rodd to Grey, Nov. 23, 1912; B.D. X (2) pp. 626-8

Recognizing that the preservation of peace and tranquillity in the North African territories washed by the Mediterranean, and the security of their borders from external attack, which are essential conditions for the welfare of the native populations and of the prosperity and progressive development of those territories, are bound up with the maintenance of the authority of the European Great Powers now severally exercising therein their rights of Sovereignty, protection or control:

The British and Italian Governments declare that they are firmly resolved, on their part, to maintain their respective rights in and over the aforesaid territories. Each Government will refrain from political and other action of a nature to embarrass the authority of the other in those regions.

The two Governments declare at the same time that they are not bound to any third Power by engagements conflicting with the foregoing undertaking, and that they will not enter into any such engagements in the future.

Before the Draft Declaration was sent to Rome, Rodd reported that he had again approached the Minister for Foreign Affairs with regard to an agreement on the lines suggested at the previous meeting. The Foreign Office was annoyed. Rodd was moving too quickly in this matter, and a telegram was sent to him with instructions to avoid all further discussion on the subject pending the arrival of instructions by bag.²

Grey sent the Draft Declaration to Rodd on December 20. The Ambassador was instructed that the British Government did not wish to make any agreements concerning the neutrality of Egypt or Tripoli, and that the Government particularly wished to avoid giving the impression in Germany and Austria-Hungary that they were attempting to detach Italy from the Triple Alliance. What they hoped to obtain from Italy was an assurance that they would not be

(1) Draft Declaration; B.D. X (2) pp. 633-4

(2) Rodd to Grey and minutes; Dec. 6, 1912; B.D. X (2) pp. 630-2

bound to support Germany in a possible anti-British policy in Egypt. This Draft, however, was only for Rodd's confidential information as it was not thought advisable to make a definite proposal to Italy at this time.¹

Rodd was again instructed on January 30 to do nothing further about the proposed agreement, but to find out, if he could, what the French were doing about it.² Rodd replied that the French had taken no further steps, but suggested that he should be given permission to bring the British Draft Declaration to the attention of the Minister for Foreign Affairs if the latter should ask concerning the subject.³ Grey saw no objection to Rodd's, ". . . putting forward tentatively the formula for a draft declaration," if San Giuliano should question him on the subject.⁴

On February 15, Rodd reported that the French Ambassador had received no further instructions from his Government on the question of an agreement, and as two months had passed since the question had been opened, Rodd and Barrere both felt that some word of explanation should be given the Italian Government. It was the opinion of the Foreign Office, however, that the initiative should come from the Italians as it would not do to appear over-anxious in such a delicate matter.⁵ It was also the opinion of the Foreign Office that if the matter were pressed, the

(1) Grey to Rodd, Dec. 20, 1912; B.D. X (2) pp. 632-3

(2) Grey to Rodd, Jan. 30, 1912; B.D. X (2) p. 636

(3) Rodd to Grey, Feb. 2, 1912; B.D. X (2) pp. 636-7

(4) Grey to Rodd, Feb. 13, 1912; B.D. X (2) p. 637

(5) Rodd to Grey and minutes; Feb. 15, 1912; B.D. X (2) pp. 637-8

Italian Government might try to mix the question of the Aegean Islands with it, which would not be desirable.¹

Both the French and the British Governments showed more hesitation about entering into negotiations for an agreement with Italy than did their respective Ambassadors in Rome. The matter fell into abeyance.

IV

As we have seen, by Article II of the peace treaty between Italy and Turkey, Italy promised to return the islands which she had 'temporarily occupied' during the war to Turkey. This was to be done as soon as all Turkish forces had been withdrawn from Tripoli and Cyrenaica. During the Balkan Wars, which followed closely on the heels of the Italo-Turkish War, Greece had seized several more of the Turkish islands. When peace was signed between Greece and Turkey the fate of the Aegean Islands was placed in the hands of the six Powers who held an Ambassadors Conference. The question of the division of the islands between Greece and Turkey was complicated. Italy was pledged to return the islands which she had seized to Turkey, but there was the question of whether or not some of these islands might not be awarded to Greece. Neither Italy nor Turkey wished to see this happen. The policy of Great Britain was clear, however. As we have seen, it was important for the British Admiralty that Italy should give up the islands; but Italy, in spite of her promises, found one excuse or another for remaining in possession.

(1) Grey to Bertie, Mar. 5, 1912; B.D. X (2) p. 639

Although Italy had given her pledge that the islands which she had seized would be returned, in the months that followed she made no attempt to do so. Grey told the Italian Ambassador on August 11, 1913, that if Italy remained in the islands a difficult situation would arise, and, he added, it might become necessary for the Powers to fix a date to decide their fate. Imperiali assured Grey that it was the intention of his Government to abandon the islands as soon as possible. The following day Imperiali declared that he had impressed Grey's views on his Government, but he urged Grey not to say too much on the subject in the House of Commons.¹ Grey replied that he would deal with the matter as he saw fit, and that afternoon in the House of Commons he said;

. . . the destiny of these Aegean Islands - - all of them including those in the temporary possession of Italy - - is a matter which concerns all the Great Powers, and must be settled eventually by them and no Great Power is to retain one of these islands for itself.²

Rodd reported on September 8, that San Giuliano and Giolitti had categorically stated that circumstances had caused, and might continue to cause, delay, but that Italy was bound by her treaty obligations to return the islands. San Giuliano hoped, however, that no statement would be made which might possibly be interpreted as bringing pressure to bear on Italy. Crowe felt that perhaps the question need not be pressed until it was certain that Italy meant to remain in possession of

(1) Grey to Rodd, Aug. 12, 1913; B.D. X (1) pp. 130-1

(2) Parl. Deb., (H. of C.), 5th Ser., Vol. 56, p. 2286

the islands, but he showed some concern over the fact that Italian private assurances did not agree with what was said in public.¹ In an official communique of September 8, 1913, Italy claimed to have retained her full liberty of action, ". . . in accordance with the decisions taken at the Conference in London."²

In spite of Italy's many and repeated promises, pledges and declarations, the French Government was convinced that the Italians would somehow evade withdrawing from the islands. Crowe and Nicolson held the same opinion, and felt that there was little that could be done about it unless the British Government was prepared to use strong measures.³ Nevertheless, Grey was determined that the question should not be dropped.⁴

The Foreign Office got a hint as to Italy's intentions on October 16. San Giuliano, speaking to Mr. Dering, Charge d'Affaires at Rome, spoke of Italy's legitimate desire and need for commercial expansion and referred to Italian projects at Adalia on the Asiatic coast of Turkey. He then suggested that the talks leading to a Mediterranean agreement could be renewed. It was becoming clear that Italy would want some compensation in return for quitting the islands. Grey was annoyed, and wrote in a minute, "As far as I recollect the idea of a Mediterranean agree-

(1) Rodd to Grey and minutes, Sept. 8, 1913; B.D. X (1) pp. 131-3

(2) Ibid., p. 133

(3) Bertie to Grey and minutes, Sept. 9, 1913; B.D. X (1) pp. 133-4

(4) Grey to Bertie, Sept. 13, 1913; B.D. X (1) p. 134

ment with Italy was on our part that we should promise not to disturb Italy in Tripoli." Grey added that it was not necessary to oppose Italian project in Asia Minor as long as these did not conflict with the rights of the Smyrna-Aidin Railway, a British company, but that Italy must be prevented from keeping any of the islands. There would be no advantage in reviving the question of a Mediterranean agreement if it was Italy's intention to make her possession of the islands one of the conditions.¹

On November 7, Imperiali again repeated to Grey the Italian pledges to vacate the islands, but claimed that these could not be fulfilled because the Turks were failing to carry out the terms of the peace treaty, in that there were still Turkish soldiers in Cyrenaica.² Grey heard on the 29th, however, that the only Turkish soldiers in Cyrenaica were prisoners of the Senoussi, and, as they could not leave, the Turkish Government had struck them off the strength of the army. Later Imperiali complained that more Turkish officers had entered the province, but this particular excuse was wearing thin.³

Instead of claiming that she could not return the islands because of Turkish failure to carry out the terms of the peace, Italy now expressed her willingness to leave but demanded compensation. Rodd reported on December 27, that San Giuliano had told the Turkish Ambassador they were ready to leave but that it

(1) Dering to Grey and minutes, Oct. 15, 1913; E.D. X (1) pp. 136-7
(2) Grey to Dering, Nov. 7, 1913; E.D. X (1) p. 144
(3) Dering to Grey and minutes, Nov. 23, 1913; E.D. X (1) pp. 147-9

would be difficult to explain to the Italian people unless Italy were to receive compensation. The occupation of the islands had put Italy to great expense and the evacuation would be facilitated if Italy had something to show on the credit side.¹

Imperiali and M. Martino, head of the Italian Foreign Office, called on Grey on January 7, and informed him that Italy would require compensation if she left the islands, in order that public opinion should not be disappointed and to indemnify them for their expenses. What Italy wished was a concession at the port of Adalia. Grey replied, ". . .while, however, the Italians were annexing Tripoli they had occupied the islands, and they had assured us at the time that the occupation would be only temporary. They had given us further assurances subsequently, and it did not seem reasonable to attach new conditions to their withdrawal from the occupation." However, Grey said that he would not oppose any Italian Negotiations at Constantinople if the Smyrna-Aidin Railway Company were satisfied that their commercial interests would not suffer by an Italian concession.²

San Giuliano told Rodd a few days later that Italy did not wish to retain "even a stone" in the Aegean Sea, but that the date for their departure must depend upon the Turks. The occupation had cost Italy about six million pounds, and his legal adviser had told him that Italy was entitled to compensation. Rodd wryly

(1) Rodd to Grey, Dec. 27, 1913; B.D. X (1), p. 167

(2) Grey to Rodd, Jan. 7, 1914; B.D. X (1) pp. 182-3

commented that this was a new principle in international law. Nicolson felt that even if Italy got her concession, some new pretext would be found for prolonging the occupation.¹

As the Turks showed little willingness to grant any concessions, the Italians continued to occupy the islands. Rodd reported in April, 1914, that he had heard on good authority that, because of the expense, the Italians intended to quit the islands during the coming summer when Parliament was in recess.² However, Imperiali told Grey on May 6, 1914, that Italy was anxious to return the islands, but that it was impossible to do so unless Turkey gave them a concession, as to do otherwise would bring about the downfall of the Government. Imperiali claimed, ". . . that the Turks, knowing that the Islands were safe from Greece in the hands of Italy, and could be claimed by Turkey at any time, were in no hurry to recover them."³

When the Great War broke out a couple of months later Italy was still in possession of the islands.

(1) Rodd to Grey and minute, Jan. 11, 1914; B.D. X (1), pp. 186-7
(2) Rodd to Grey, April 28, 1914; B.D. X (1), p. 251
(3) Grey to Rodd, May 6, 1914; B.D. X (1) p. 251

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSIONS

The chief problems raised by the Italo-Turkish War for the British Government were: (1) the policy to be followed in dealing with the two belligerents; (2) the extent to which that policy could be formed and executed in co-operation with the other two Powers of the Triple Entente; (3) the protection of such special British interests as were affected.

When it became clear in September, 1911, that Italy intended to settle the Tripoli question by force, the intelligence was neither expected by, nor welcome to, the British Government. By Lansdowne's declaration of 1904 Britain had recognized Italy's priority of interest in Tripoli, and she also realized that of late the Turks had been making things as difficult as possible for the Italians. It had been expected, however, that Italy would settle the points in dispute between herself and Turkey by means of the usual naval demonstration or something of that nature. The Italian declaration of war was frowned upon in London because it was not possible to tell where an adventure of this kind might lead; for Turkey was an Ark of the Government in which many countries had interests. A Turkish War begun over a relatively unimportant tract of sand in Africa might lead to trouble in the Balkans and to a serious clash between the

European Powers.

Public opinion in England, unprepared for the shock of war, was deeply affected by Italy's action. It was clear that the chief cause of the war was the covetousness of Italy, and the barefaced manner in which the Italians went about acquiring a province belonging to a weaker country, aroused much sympathy for the Turks. Among the large body of liberal and humanitarian opinion in England there was much criticism of Italy and her war of conquest. Anti-Italian articles in the press became especially strong after the news was received of the reprisals which had been taken by the Italians for the disaster which befell the Bersaglieri on October 23, 1911. Many of those who took exception to Italian acts, and with some justification, wished Great Britain to take steps to bring the war to an end.

On the other hand, there was a small body of opinion, of which Rodd is an example, which thought that the war was a golden opportunity. Those who held this view realized that the chief danger to Great Britain and to the peace of Europe was Germany. They wanted to make use of the war, therefore, to win Italian goodwill and by this means detach Italy from her allies, Germany and Austria-Hungary.

Between these two policies, the one idealistic and the other opportunist, the British Government followed a middle course. Immediately after war was declared the Government issued a Declaration of Neutrality; and this declaration was strictly adhered to during the war. Grey steadfastly refused to make

suggestions or join in any mediation proposals which he had reason to suspect would be unwelcome in either Rome or Constantinople. He remained on friendly terms with Turkey and did nothing which could offend Italy. If any steps were to be taken, he always insisted that they should be taken simultaneously by the five Powers working together so that if their efforts were rewarded by blame or praise, this would be shared by all equally. What he particularly feared, however, was to give offense to Italy and so cause her to strengthen her connections with Germany and Austria-Hungary.

It is interesting to compare British policy towards Italy in 1911 with that followed under similar circumstances during the Abyssinian campaign of 1935. At both times, it is clear, the real danger to European peace was the growing threat from Germany and not Italian campaigns in Africa. This was realized by Grey, and his Italian policy was really part of his plan to meet the increasing power and ambition of Germany. In 1911, although Britain did not approve of Italy's brazen aggression, she maintained strict neutrality and tried to weaken Italy's connections with the Central Powers. In 1935, on the other hand, Germany was forgotten in the hue and cry after Italy. British policy reflected the censure of public opinion at home for Italy's war of conquest. Italy was publicly chastized and threatened. The only result was that anti-British feeling rose among the Italians and their Government drew closer to Germany. One could speculate upon the extent to which these two policies influenced Italy and the role she played in both Great Wars.

Throughout the war, Great Britain co-operated with France

and Russia, the other two members of the Triple Entente; in particular, it was customary for the French and British Governments to consult with one another before taking any action. The most outstanding example of Franco-British co-operation was the Mediterranean agreement whereby naval responsibilities were shared between the two countries. However, Russia sometimes failed to work as closely with the other members of the Triple Entente as she might have done. For instance, when the Turks closed the Straits in the spring of 1912, both England and Russia took steps to have them reopened; but Russia showed far more animus against Turkey and a far greater readiness to exonerate Italy from any responsibility for the damage to international trade which the closing of the Straits had caused. Again, the French were annoyed when the Russians made a proposal for mediation to the Germans before informing them,¹ and they were uneasy when the Tsar and the Kaiser met in the summer of 1912.² On the whole, it may be said that while it was the policy of Great Britain and France to win Italian goodwill through their neutrality, Russia went further and, in order to achieve the same end, was willing to put pressure on Turkey. In spite of the fact that the Russians acted independently at times, however, the Entente Powers did act as a group. Opinions and suggestions were constantly exchanged between them, and certainly none of them entered into serious negotiations of any kind with the Central Powers.

During the Balkan Wars, which followed the Italo-Turkish

(1) See Supra, p. 63

(2) See Supra, p. 73

conflict, Germany and Great Britain co-operated closely and the division between the Powers was not so clear. The reason for the change is to be found in the nature of the wars themselves. When the Italians were fighting the Turks, although the situation was uncomfortable, there was no immediate danger that the war would involve the major Powers. On the other hand, when war broke out in the Balkans, the interests of both Austria-Hungary and Russia were involved, and the danger of a major war was very real. As neither Germany nor Great Britain wished this to happen, they both undertook to hold back their own side; Germany calmed the temper of Austria-Hungary and England dampened the chauvinism of the Russians.

Throughout the war and its aftermath the chief concern of the British Government was to watch over British interests. The Declaration of Neutrality was part of this as it was the means of keeping the friendship of Italy. The offer of a Turkish alliance was turned down for the same reason, as an alliance with the Turks would probably have cost Britain the friendship of Russia.

In the spring of 1912 British commercial interests were faced with serious losses because the Turks had found an excuse to close the Dardanelles. The British Government immediately asked Italy to make a promise not to attack again in the region of the Dardanelles so that the Turks would have no reason to keep the Straits closed. Although this step was unsuccessful, it did show that the British Government could move with alacrity when British interests were seriously threatened.

The conquest of Tripoli did not seem at the time to affect the

interests of Britain in any direct way. Few British commercial interests were involved and much could be lost by denying the Italians a free hand. In any case, when the peace treaty was signed Grey was assured that there would be no discrimination against British interests in Tripoli.

The British Government tried to make some capital out of their friendship with Italy. After the war had ended Grey tried to get the Italian Government to pledge its support of a British plan to change the Capitulatory regime in Egypt. In this he was not entirely successful, however, as the Italians would go no further than to say that when the question came up they could be depended upon to give it as much support as that given by the other Powers.

During the spring of 1912 the Governments of Britain and France had arranged to divide their naval responsibilities in the Mediterranean. When the war ended Grey made a demarche towards getting Italy into an agreement for the mutual protection of their common interests in the Mediterranean. Although such an agreement was looked upon with favour by the three nations concerned, there was not a great deal to be gained and it was not pushed. When Grey suspected that the Italians might try to bring the question of the Aegean Islands into such an agreement he decided that the matter had better be dropped.

The most serious problem for Grey was the question of the Aegean Islands. When these had been occupied by the Italians in the spring of 1912 the Admiralty had reported that the establishment of a naval Power there would be a threat to British interests

in the Eastern Mediterranean. The British Government made no protest when the Italians first occupied the islands as there was the possibility that the occupation would be only temporary and it would be wiser to wait until Italy's intentions were clear. The British Government, however, became concerned over the fate of the islands when the Italians continued to remain in possession several months after the war had ended. The Italians, therefore, were several times reminded that they had pledged themselves to return the islands to Turkey. The question was complicated, however, and the Italians constantly repeated their intentions to leave, but always had some excuse for delay. The Italians were able to postpone their leaving so long that when the Great War broke out they were still in possession, and they kept the islands until they lost them to Greece as a result of the Second Great War.

Great Britain's position in regard to Italy after the Italo-Turkish war was not materially different from what it had been before; Italy remained a country whose position was uncertain, a friend of the Entente and an unreliable ally of the Central Powers. A negative gain had been made, however, in that she had not been driven into closer alliance with Germany. Britain dared hope that the balance of power thus preserved would discourage any future aggression.

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