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THE UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

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BRITAIN'S EASTERN POLICY AND THE OTTOMAN CHRISTIANS, 1856-1877

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BRITAIN'S EASTERN POLICY AND THE OTTOMAN CHRISTIANS, 1856-1877

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PREFACE

Throughout the nineteenth century Great Britain had a vital interest in the eastern Mediterranean and consequently sought to prevent the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. The Balkan crises, the "Bulgarian Horrors," and Turkish reform have been covered in both general works and in monographs. But, the topic of Britain's responsibility for the Turkish Christians has not received sufficient attention from researchers. By the Peace of Paris in 1856 Britain assumed a joint responsibility for the welfare of the Christians in the Turkish empire. Despite this obligation, the British government refused to allow moral commitment to dictate policy. My study traces Britain's eastern policy from 1856-1877 and discusses specifically three crises--Syria in 1860, Crete 1866-1868, and the Balkans, 1875-1877--in which the British government resisted material intervention in Turkey even though moral commitment seemed to dictate some degree of interference on behalf of the Ottoman Christians.

I would like to thank Drs. Gilbert C. Fite, Rufus G. Hall, Leslie F. Smith, and William H. Maehl for their cooperation in the preparation of this study. Particularly do I want to acknowledge the patience, helpfulness, and encouragement of Dr. Brison D. Gooch, the director of the dissertation.

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BRITAIN'S EASTERN POLICY AND THE OTTOMAN CHRISTIANS, 1856-1877

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

By the mid-nineteenth century the balance of power so carefully constructed at Vienna in 1815 was deteriorating. One of the primary areas of concern was Turkey where perennial administrative corruption, coupled with a complex racial situation, succeeded in precipitating a number of crises threatening the disintegration of the Sultan's heterogeneous empire. Throughout the nineteenth century, therefore, the diplomatic problem most occupying the efforts of European statesmen was the "Eastern Question" because of the ambitions of some powers to gain control of all or part of Turkey, while other powers sought to preserve Turkish independence and integrity. If the Turkish empire was partitioned, the European balance of power would be altered. No issue in European diplomacy was more directly and more continuously the basis for the rivalries among the great powers during this century than the Near East.[1] That the diplomatic posts at Constantinople were usually

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[1]Frederick S. Rodkey, The Turco-Egyptian Question in the Relations of England, France, and Russia, 1832-1841 ("University of Illinois Studies in the Social Sciences," XI, Nos. 3 and 4; Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1923), 9.

staffed with the ablest men in the foreign services of the great powers is an evidence that Turkey and the Near East were a vital concern of European diplomacy in the nineteenth century.[2] Despite the conflicting Near Eastern interests of the powers during the nineteenth century, only once, in the Crimean war of 1854, did their rivalries precipitate open conflict.[3]

Only belatedly did Great Britain comprehend the significance of her interests in the East and prior to 1833 and the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi between Russia and Turkey had no specific eastern policy. This

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[2]Lynn M. Case, "A Duel of Giants in Old Stambul, Stratford versus Thouvenel," Journal of Modern History, XXXV (September, 1963), 262-73.

[3]Monographic material on the Crimean War is voluminous. Studies included here are meant to be representative rather than inclusive. For the origins of the war, particularly the Anglo-Russian understanding of 1844, see Vernon J. Puryear, "New Light on the Origins of the Crimean War," Journal of Modern History, III (June, 1931), 219-34. Also important for the war's economic causes is the same author's study, England, Russia, and the Straits Question in 1844-1856 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1931). For Stratford Canning's role in the war see Harold W. V. Temperley, "The Last Phase of Stratford de Redcliffe, 1855-58," English Historical Review, XLVII (April, 1932), 216-59; see also by the same author, "Stratford de Redcliffe and the Origins of the Crimean War," Part I, English Historical Review, XLVIII (October, 1933), 601-21; and Part II, English Historical Review, XLIX (April, 1934), 265-98. For further exoneration of Lord Stratford see by the same author, "The Alleged Violations of the Straits Convention by Stratford de Redcliffe between June and September, 1853," English Historical Review, XLIX (October, 1934), 657-72. For the diplomacy of the war see Bernadotte E. Schmitt, "Diplomatic Preliminaries of the Crimean War," American Historical Review, XXV (October, 1919), 36-67; and Gavin B. Henderson, "The Diplomatic Revolution of 1854," American Historical Review, XLIII (October, 1937), 22-50. For a revisionary article on British financial policy during the war see Olive Anderson, "Loans versus Taxes: British Financial Policy in the Crimean War," Economic History Review, XVI (December, 1963), 314-27. Brison D. Gooch has a comprehensive account of the material dealing with the origins of the war in "A Century of Historiography on the Origins of the Crimean War," American Historical Review, LXII (October, 1956), 33-58.

Russo-Turkish treaty implied Russian encroachment on Turkey, and on the apprehension that Russia might occupy Constantinople, Britain, particularly under Lord Palmerston, began to exhibit signs of Russophobia and developed an eastern policy. The government's objective was to free the Porte and the Sultan from an over-dependence on Russia. From 1833 to 1841 Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Secretary, pursued a policy of injecting new life into Turkey by promoting Turkish reform so that the Porte need not seek Russian support and assistance.

> Obviously, before the close of 1833 the moment of hesitation in British policy for the preservation of the Ottoman Empire had passed. Palmerston was resolved to revive and to extend the traditional policy of Great Britain in the Levant and was determined to defeat at all cost any attempt which Russia might make to intervene independently in the internal affairs of Turkey under the terms of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi.[4]

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[4]Frederick S. Rodkey, "Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-41," Journal of Modern History, I (December, 1929), 573. Palmerston's biographer says of him that he was "the first great British exponent" of the policy of "defending and reinvigorating Turkey." Herbert C. F. Bell, Lord Palmerston (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1936), I, 291. For the beginning of English anti-Russian sentiment see John H. Gleason, The Genesis of Russophobia in Great Britain (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1950); and for a contemporary view see Philip W. Wilson (ed.) The Greville Diary (2 vols.; Garden City, New York: Doubleday, Page, and Co., 1927), I, 553. For Palmerston's attitude towards the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi see R. L. Baker, "Palmerston on the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi," English Historical Review, XLIII (January, 1928), 83-89. Palmerston's attempts at reforming Turkey are covered in Rodkey, Journal of Modern History, I (December, 1929), 570-93; and Journal of Modern History, II (June, 1930), 193-225. A contemporary account can be found in John Earl Russell, Recollections and Suggestions, 1813-1873 (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1875), pp. 259-61. For a complete and detailed study of Palmerston's eastern policy from 1830-41 see Charles K. Webster, The Foreign Policy of Palmerston 1830-1841 (2 vols.; London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1951). Palmerston's relations with Metternich are detailed in Frederick S. Rodkey, "The Views of Palmerston and Metternich on the Eastern Question in 1834," English Historical Review, XLV (October, 1930), 627-40; and in G. H. Bolsover, "Palmerston and Metternich on the Eastern Question in 1834," English Historical Review, LI (April, 1936), 237-56. For Palmerston's views on the East preceding the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi see M. Verete', "Palmerston

Despite her territorial and economic interests in the Levant, before the Paris Congress in 1856 Britain's religious interests were not as extensive as those of Russia and France.[5] Britain was not a formal protector of any religious community in Turkey. She did, however, enjoy great prestige in the Ottoman empire following the

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and the Levant Crisis, 1832," Journal of Modern History, XXIV (June, 1952), 143-51. For a discussion of Lord Clarendon's differences with Palmerston regarding the eastern crisis of 1839-41 see Herbert Maxwell, The Life and Letters of George William Frederick Fourth Earl of Clarendon (2 vols.; London: Edward Arnold, 1913), II, 182-201. Palmerston was convinced that his policy was correct and successful. In September 1838 he wrote: "I much question that there is any process of decay going on in the Turkish Empire. . . . I should be disposed to think that, for some years past, the foundations, at least, of improvements have been laid." Quoted in Algernon Cecil, British Foreign Secretaries, 1807-1916 (London: G. Bell and Sons, Ltd., 1927), p. 148. For the personal element in Britain's eastern policy see G. H. Bolsover, "David Urquhart and the Eastern Question, 1833-37: A Study in Publicity and Diplomacy," Journal of Modern History, VIII (March-December, 1936), 444-467; and Charles K. Webster, "Urquhart, Ponsonby, and Palmerston," English Historical Review, LXII (July, 1947), 327-51. That British policy regarding Turkey after 1833 was largely economic is the thesis of Frank E. Bailey in "The Economics of British Foreign Policy, 1825-50," Journal of Modern History, XII (December, 1940), 449-84. A more comprehensive treatment of the same thesis is found in a work by the same author, British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement, A Study in Anglo-Turkish Relations, 1826-1853 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1942); see also Leland H. Jenks, The Migration of British Capital to 1875 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963), pp. 294-325. Puryear has found that Britain's interests in the Near East were largely economic and began after the Napoleonic wars when continental powers began a policy of protection, forcing Britain to seek markets elsewhere. For the first time in English history, the Near East became an important consideration in the British economic pattern. Vernon J. Puryear, International Economics and Diplomacy in the Near East. A Study of British Commercial Policy in the Levant 1834-1853 (Stanford University, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1935). For a brief account of early British economic interest in the Levant and the genesis of the economic aspects of the Eastern Question see Reader Bullard, Britain and the Middle East from the Earliest Times to 1950 (London: Hutchinson's University Library, 1951).

[5]Abdul L. Tibawi, British Interests in Palestine, 1800-1901 (Oxford: University Press, 1961), p. 44.

defeat of Napoleon at Acre in 1799, and from 1833-41 Palmerston was interested in the welfare of Turkish Christians insofar as their condition was a part of the general reform outlined in the Hatti-Sherif of 1839.[6]

Moreover, one of the objects of the Crimean War, expressed in the "fourth point" of Vienna in 1854, was the protection of Christians in the Ottoman empire. A stipulation for peace insisted that Russia renounce her claim to an exclusive protectorate over the Turkish Christians. That object was achieved. But the Cabinet of Lord Aberdeen, while defending the independence of Turkey, felt that the British government was obligated to secure some guarantee of security for the Ottoman Christians without however impairing the independence of Turkey.

Indicating the interests of the powers in the Christians of the Ottoman empire were the capitulations granted by Sultans previous to the nineteenth century. Prior to the sixteenth century, when the Sultan's authority was at its zenith, he had granted specific privileges and immunities to the few Europeans who lived in Constantinople and other towns of the empire. There was a precedent for these privileges in those already enjoyed by the Christian subjects of the Porte who ever since the conquest had in many respects remained virtually independent of the jurisdiction of Turkish tribunals.[7]

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[6]Tibawi, pp. 29, 31-35.

[7]The Times (London), September 26, 1857. Cited hereafter as Times.

For administrative purposes, non-Muslim subjects in Turkey were organized into autonomous religious communities with each community being free to manage its own religious affairs. The head of each community, patriarch or rabbi, was responsible to the Turkish authorities for the conduct of those of his faith and for the payment of taxes. This system, adopted from the Arabs, gradually became the pattern for Muslim rule over peoples of other revealed religions.[8]

As intercourse with Christian nations increased, the existing stipulations regarding religious communities formed the basis for regulating the position of the subjects of other powers. In order to facilitate and foster trade, the Turkish Sultans in the early sixteenth century granted certain privileges to Venice, later to France and Great Britain, and then to other powers. Within specified areas, these privileges included exemption from customs-duties and local taxes as well as judicial extra-territoriality by which the subjects of those states were placed under the jurisdiction of their consular courts.[9] As the authority of the Turkish Sultan declined, however, these immunities acquired a different meaning. They changed from privileges granted almost condescendingly to embarrassing and humiliating rights. A case in point was the French claim of protection for Latin Christian communities and the Russian insistence on protecting the Greek Orthodox communities, the latter secured in the Treaty of Kutchuk Kainarji in 1774. Although Protestant communities were formed through the efforts of missionaries, Great Britain never assumed the role of formal

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[8]Tibawi, pp. 29-30. [9]Ibid.

protector of any Christian group, although she did exercise a great influence over Turkish policy.[10]

Contrary to the provisions of the Hatti-Sherif of 1839 the Ottoman Christians were still treated as a despised and conquered people. So concerned were the powers with the Turkish Christians that their condition formed an integral part of the peace negotiations conducted during the Crimean war. For Britain, however, a correlative desire was to prevent any power from intervening in Turkey for the purpose of protecting Christians because intervention might result in a partial dismemberment of the Ottoman empire and an alteration of the balance of power.

To a large extent, the firman of 1839 had remained a dead letter. The Christians continued to have grievances. They were denied equality before the law; their word was not accepted in the courts; they were exposed to the extortion of Moslem officials; and in many ways their lives, honor, and property were at the mercy of the Mohammedans.

That the Porte was cognizant of the religious issue was evident in the memorial sent on May 13, 1855 to the British Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Clarendon, by Musurus Pasha, the Turkish Minister in England. The memorial noted that of all the questions affecting the future interests of the Ottoman empire, the question of religious protection of Christian subjects and the demand for guarantees for the maintenance and observance of religious privileges was the most significant. Russia had used this problem and exaggerated it in order to alienate the allies of Turkey. If the problem were not solved it might produce results in

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[10] Ibid.

the East which would be detrimental to the object for which the nations were striving in the war.[11]

The intent of the memorial was to forestall the guarantees that the powers were seeking, for the danger of demanding guarantees was pointed out. There was also the argument that such protection was unnecessary. The Turkish government feared that if the protection of Christian privileges was given to one or several nations, it would weaken the sovereign rights and legitimate authority of the Sultan. Such a guarantee would also undermine the Porte's administrative authority by convincing the subjects of the empire that the future maintenance and observance of Christian privileges would depend on foreign intervention as well as on the actions of the Turkish government.

The memorial also pointed out that Islam contained an injunction to respect the religion of the conquered, and Mussulman rule had never assumed the form of persecution. The various subjected populations of the Ottoman empire had been allowed to preserve their nationalities, laws, and religion. Mussulman law, despite accusations of intolerance, continued to preserve these principles.[12]

As proof of his benevolent attitude towards all his subjects, regardless of religion, the Sultan on May 9, 1855 proclaimed the abolition of the odious haratch on the Christian subjects of the Porte, a tax paid in lieu of military service. By this act the Sultan hoped to

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[11] British House of Commons Sessional Papers, 1856, LXI, 361-67. Cited hereafter as SP.

[12] Ibid.

gain the affection of his people and also the sympathies of Europe. These moral advantages were expected to compensate for the loss of revenue incident to the abolition of the tax. The measure was also designed to open a new source of recruitment for the Sultan's army. In the future all non-Mussulman classes were to furnish military contingents, although the bulk of the army would continue to be Mussulman. This measure was only part of a projected system of reform and was a new proof of the generosity and solicitude that the Sultan lavished on all his subjects.[13]

Although the British government was pleased with the Sultan's proclamation abolishing the haratch and admitting Christians into the Turkish army, there remained other significant and galling grievances, such as the use of offensive terms when referring to Christians. On July 7, 1855 consul Wood from Damascus drew the attention of the British government to the official use of such expressions. When mention was made of the disposition of estates belonging to Mussulmans, for example, the word tewafe or mat was used, while the term halik was used when referring to the administration of Christian estates. In literal Arabic the word halik meant ruin, loss, or inclination downward. But in the vernacular, as it was used in this instance, it meant those whose souls were lost or damned. Wood had verified this meaning and believed it unfortunate that when the non-Mussulman population in Turkey had been led to expect some immunity from public degradation the government had shattered these hopes by reintroducing offensive and humiliating expressions. The law courts were actually using these terms and thus

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[13] Ibid., 357-60.

the old prejudices were still being maintained despite the promise of the Porte to the contrary.[14] On the basis of Wood's report, Stratford de Redoliffe, British ambassador to Constantinople, immediately protested to the Porte, and the Ottoman government issued orders prohibiting the use of offensive words when referring to Christians in public documents.[15]

Another grievance of the Christians, but more particularly perhaps of foreign missionary societies and of the British government, was the execution of Christians who were apostates from Islam. That this was a long-felt grievance is indicated by a British protest in early 1844 when the Earl of Aberdeen declared that the British government had a special right to protest to Turkey for her conduct regarding Christian privileges because Britain treated the numerous Mohammedans subject to British rule in India with justice, favor, and respect. The British government demanded that such a revolting practice be abandoned immediately if the Porte desired the continued friendship, protection, and assistance of Great Britain.[16]

In reply to the protest of the British government of January 1844, Sir Stratford informed Aberdeen that apparently the problem of religious executions was settled. The Sultan had given his official word on March 21, 1844 that in the future Christianity would not be insulted nor would any Christian be persecuted for his religion. The Porte also promised to prevent future executions of Christians who were apostates from the Islamic faith.[17]

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[14] Ibid., 369.

[15] Ibid., 374.

[16] Ibid., 371.

[17] Ibid., 370-71.

An indication that the Sultan's word was a dead letter, or at least disregarded, was that in 1855 protests were again registered that Christians were being executed after being converted from Islam. The Turkish Missions Aid Society memorialized Clarendon on July 27 asking him to use his office and influence with the Porte to secure a guarantee that all classes in Turkey would have the liberty of adopting another faith without fear of losing their lives. The Society charged that despite the many concessions made by the Sultan in the past, the guarantees were incomplete so long as the principle remained that a person born a Mussulman could be put to death if he professed any religion other than Islam.[18]

There were wider interests than those of missionary societies involved in this matter. Two well-known executions had taken place shortly before the outbreak of the Crimean war, one at Aleppo in early 1852 and another at Adrianople in the latter part of 1853. This was the very time that the fleets of Britain and France were in the Bosphorus, having been sent to preserve the Turkish government from destruction. The situation was regarded as critical.[19]

In reply to the Foreign Office's instructions of August 9, 1855 that he investigate and report on the executions, Stratford replied from Constantinople that he had been informed by the Porte that the executions had been for blasphemy and not for apostacy. Stratford admitted that the charge of blasphemy might be only a mask for the application of the unrepealed law against apostacy, but proof would be difficult to obtain. The British minister also suggested that the

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[18] Ibid., 370.

[19] Ibid., 372-73.

Sultan's advisers had used an equivocal form of words when the original assurances were given in 1844. A fine distinction had been drawn between a person born a Mussulman and then becoming Christian and a Christian who had apostatized from Islam after converting to it. It appeared that whatever the professed desire of the Sultan, his ministers sought to reserve the right of dealing with Mussulman converts to Christianity according to their law, not that of the Koran.[20]

Further evidence obtained by the Turkish Missions Aid Society supported Stratford's observation. Although the Society was convinced that the recent executions had been for apostacy, it agreed with the British minister that the charge of blasphemy might be merely a pretext to mask the application of the old, unrepealed law. Because of this equivocal use of words, the Society urged that the Sultan be induced to make the wording of his assurances so comprehensive that all those charged with religious offenses would be spared the punishment of death.[21]

The issue was of sufficient magnitude by September 17 that Stratford was instructed by both Lord Hammond of the Foreign Office and Clarendon to make full inquiry into the matter of executions and to demand an explanation from the Porte as to the interpretation put on the law in such cases.[22] Clarendon declared that the subject had aroused a good deal of public opinion. It would therefore be necessary to reach an understanding with the Porte respecting the extent to which the law inflicting capital punishment on apostates from Islam was really

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[20] Ibid., 374-75. [21] Ibid., 378-79. [22] Ibid., 379-80.

repealed. The British government had cause to doubt the assurances given by the Sultan in 1844.[23]

The subject was of immediate concern because the Turkish government could hardly expect the Christian powers of Europe, which were making great sacrifices on behalf of Turkey, to permit the continuance of a law that was not only a standing insult to them, but a source of cruel persecution towards their co-religionists. The powers could not be expected to perpetuate these atrocities by the successes of their fleets and armies in preserving intact the Turkish government and empire. Clarendon asserted that the British government had the right to demand that no punishment whatever should accrue to the Mohammedan who became Christian, whether originally a Mohammedan or originally a Christian. Human conscience in all such cases must be left free. The secular government must not interfere in a spiritual decision. Nor would the British government allow the Porte to insist that any change in the law would violate the Koran. The Turkish government in the past had molded the law of the Koran whenever it was convenient to do so, for example, in the matter of borrowing money on interest which the Koran expressly forbade.[24]

Stratford later asked Fuad Pasha, Turkish Secretary of State, and the Grand Vizier, what the present state of the Turkish law was concerning apostacy and at the same time indicated the importance the British government attached to the matter. Fuad assured Stratford that the Turkish government was opposed to such acts and that he and his

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[23] Ibid. [24] Ibid.

fellow ministers did all in their power to save apostates whether originally Mussulmans or not. Moreover, the Porte fully acknowledged the claims of Great Britain and her allies in the interest of Christians and was taking steps to accord non-Mussulman subjects equity and also to invest them with a share in administrative power.

The Grand Vizier admitted to Stratford that the penal laws in question were still unaltered, but that in practice the government took care to prevent their application in cases of apostacy on the part of Christians. The law itself was stubborn, if not unalterable. The Grand Vizier also pointed out, with some justice, that if complete liberty of conscience were to be generally established, there were many countries in Christendom where improvement was more required than in Turkey. At the close of his interview the British minister reported that his proposals had been received with less irritation and repugnance than he had expected. He felt that in the end, firmness and perseverance would prevail, if not to secure repeal of the law, at least to attain practical cessation of punishment.[25]

In acknowledging Stratford's report on October 30, Clarendon approved of his action and cautioned him that he should not allow the subject to drop. The matter involved the interests of the Porte as well as those of Christian powers and they had every right to expect its resolution. Stratford was therefore to bring the matter to the Sultan's attention as often as he thought it expedient.[26]

By November 5 Lord Cowley, British ambassador in Paris, could inform Clarendon that there were no essential differences between the

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[25] Ibid., 382-84. [26] Ibid., 384.

French and British views regarding the matter of punishment for apostacy and also that M. de Thouvenal, the French ambassador at the Porte, had been instructed to bring the matter to the attention of the Turkish government. Moreover, the Austrian government was willing to join the western powers in this endeavor. Both the British and French governments felt that before the renewal of peace negotiations the problems surrounding the treatment of Turkish Christians should be settled. The Austrian government proposed that the best means of obtaining redress and assurances would be to suggest general rules for the future protection of Christians rather than trying to obtain the repeal of the law which provided death for apostacy.[27]

On January 30, 1856 Stratford and the French and Austrian ambassadors met with the Turkish ministers at the British embassy. The Turkish ministers alleged that the Porte was resolved that there be no more religious persecution in Turkey, but that it was impossible for the Sultan either to abrogate the Mussulman law on apostacy or to make any equivalent public declaration. Although the ministers were willing to comply with the demands of the powers, they begged forbearance, asserting that reforms of this nature took time.

Stratford faced a choice. He either had to modify his demand or delay indefinitely the completion of the fourth point. Preferring the former course, he accepted the Porte's version of the clause relating to religious liberty, slightly amended, with the reservation of obtaining a separate answer to his official note on the subject that

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[27] Ibid., 385.

would incorporate the version previously adopted and amended by the three ambassadors.

The Porte's wording of the clause declared that "no subject of His Majesty the Sultan, to whatever faith he may belong, shall be insulted or molested, much less persecuted or punished, on account of his religious opinions." This version was somewhat different from the one suggested by the ambassadors that stated that "as all forms of religion are and shall be freely exercised in the Ottoman dominions, no subject of His Majesty shall be hindered in the exercise of the religion he professes, nor shall be in any way disquieted on this account. No one shall be compelled to change their religion."[28]

On February 12 Stratford informed Clarendon that he had received a note from Fuad Pasha in reply to his inquiries regarding religious opinions and apostacy. The Porte acknowledged and confirmed its former declaration and extended it to all subjects. Since the content of the note was sanctioned by the Sultan, was given in connection with the articles recommended by the three ambassadors, adopted by the Porte, and inserted in the Sultan's firman on religious liberties, it was expected to satisfy all of Britain's demands concerning religious persecutions. If no one was to be molested on account of his religion and no one was to be punished as an apostate whatever the faith he denied, Stratford believed there would be no further cause for persecutions within the Ottoman empire, at least not officially.

The decree did not abolish the law of the Koran respecting apostates since such an abolition was not within even the power of

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[28]Ibid., 414-15.

the Sultan. But, the practical application of the law was renounced, and the British government would be justified at any time in complaining of a breach of agreement if the Porte authorized or permitted any exception to this official declaration.[29] The British government was satisfied with the Porte's reply and considered that the declarations contained in Fuad Pasha's note could be effectually appealed to in the future if any molestation of converts from Islam to Christianity occurred.[30]

The matter of Christian grievances in general, and apostacy in particular, was only a part of the larger issue of the fourth point that concerned securing privileges in Turkey for Christians. The fourth point expressly declared that these privileges were to be secured without impairing the independence of Turkey. It was therefore agreed that to insert a guarantee of Christian privileges in a formal treaty would be an infringement of Turkish independence and was to be avoided. The British government believed that the problem could best be resolved if the Sultan granted privileges to the Christians on his own initiative. By doing so he would be giving a moral guarantee that would not derogate from his independent authority. And, if this course were followed, the non-Mussulman classes would owe their privileges and advantages to their own sovereign and to the good offices of Britain and France and not to Russia or some other country.

On June 13, 1855 Stratford was instructed to make the following recommendations to the Porte regarding its Christian subjects. Provision had already been made for the abolition of the haratch and for the

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[29] Ibid., 422. [30] Ibid., 437.

admission of Christians into the army by voluntary enlistment. Other points were, however, to be considered:

1. Non-Mussulman subjects were to be eligible to rise to any rank in the army.

2. Non-Mussulman evidence was to be admitted in civil as well as in criminal cases.

3. Mixed courts were to be established for all cases involving Mussulmans and non-Mussulmans.

4. A Christian official must be appointed as assistant to every Mussulman governor of a province, and the assistant was to have liberty to appeal to Constantinople against any act of the governor that was unjust, oppressive, or corrupt.

5. Christians were to be eligible to all administrative posts in Constantinople or in the provinces, and some Christians were to be immediately appointed to civil and military positions of high rank.

6. The system of buying and selling government offices was to be abolished immediately.

7. There was to be the abolition of all punishment for converts from Islam to any other non-Mussulman religion and there was to be complete toleration of non-Mussulman religions.

The British government suggested that if the Porte gave these recommendations its highest consideration, European public opinion would turn in favor of Turkey.[31]

When the new year opened, serious discussion was being devoted to the matter of religious privileges in Turkey. On January 9

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[31] Ibid., 367-69.

Stratford, the French and Austrian ambassadors, Fuad Pasha, and the Grand Vizier met to discuss the fourth point. Preparatory discussion indicated that a satisfactory solution could possibly be reached. It was concluded that the Turkish government would realize an advantage, both internally and externally, in acting no longer on the principle of religious exclusiveness or predominance of race.

The dignitaries were agreed that Turkish ascendancy could not be dispensed with in the government. All generally agreed too that there was less need for extending Christian privileges than for guaranteeing that those already given would be observed. A more practical remedy for the problems would be found in a good system of administration rather than by granting fresh immunities to any separate class. It was also agreed that any future improvements would be most beneficial if adopted on the Sultan's initiative and promulgated in firmans. Moreover, if negotiations were conducted with the exclusion of Russia, the Sultan would raise himself in the estimate of the great powers and in the eyes of his own subjects.

On the matter of reform, Stratford admitted that improvements could not be accomplished in a short time. But, he also declared that reform could not be effected so long as religious intolerance was allowed and so long as incidents occurred that were unacceptable to Turkey's allies. The meeting closed with the Turkish ministers agreeing to publish a statement of existing privileges--spiritual, civil, ancient, and modern. The statement was also to be left open for additional suggestions and amendments, presumably by such individuals as the

British ambassador. Further meetings were to be held in the future.[32]

In anticipation of a subsequent meeting on the fourth point, Stratford prepared and sent to Clarendon a memorandum containing his observations. He pointed out that the tide of the war indicated that a pacification favorable to Turkey would result. But, every attempt should be made to establish principles and measures to secure every object for which the western powers had gone to war. He felt it would be senseless to guarantee Turkey against the dangers of partition or invasion and then abandon her to internal vices that would destroy her.

The allies appreciated the significance of granting toleration to other forms of worship and of various immunities and wanted these privileges perpetuated. Stratford believed that if the Porte were to adopt, promulgate, and carry out specific reform measures the critics of the Turkish government would be silenced. The question of Christian privileges was so bound up with reform in general that both should be placed in the same category. If the differences between Mussulmans and Christians were abolished, it would be a great step in the rejuvenation of the empire.[33]

After the third conference on the fourth point, Lord Stratford, who had taken the lead in the entire matter, drew up a note embodying the general ideas and principles that the representatives of Britain, France, and Austria wished to propose to the Turkish government. The note was accepted by Stratford's colleagues and in this form it was transmitted to the Porte on January 22. The document contained only the

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[32] Ibid., 388-89. [33] Ibid., 390-97.

general principles that the ambassadors thought ought to be followed in ameliorating the condition of Christians in Turkey.

Among the prominent points of the note was an observation that the time had come for Turkey, in consideration of the service rendered by her allies, as well as in her own interest, to make those changes in her internal institutions that would satisfy the wishes of Europe for improving the condition of the Porte's non-Mussulman subjects. Also included was the general principle of equality between Mussulman and non-Mussulman subjects, the security of person and property, the administration of justice, and the right of indiscriminate military enlistment. A final point stressed the removal of the prohibition on non-Mussulmans for filling civil and military offices.

The propositions on the fourth point had grown into a project of a complete social, judicial, political, and military reform. It could be no other way because the principle of complete equality of all subjects altered entirely the bases of all institutions in Turkey. It was doubtful that all the reforms suggested could be put into effect at once. Even the ambsssadors did not expect complete success, but perhaps followed the diplomatic maxim of demanding a great deal in order to get a little.[34]

Stratford anticipated some resistance to the proposals of the ambassadors, and the Turkish ministers were visibly shocked at some of them. They foresaw popular discontent among the Mussulmans if these reforms were allowed. The British ambassador noted, however, that he did not think popular discontent would arise. Nevertheless, if

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[34] *Times*, February 8, 1856.

dissatisfaction did occur, it would only be in isolated areas in the provinces where it could easily be suppressed without having serious consequences. Stratford also indicated to the Turkish ministers that the time for argument had passed, the representatives of Britain, France, and Austria were in agreement on the proposals. He later learned that the joint propositions had been taken under consideration at a meeting of the Turkish Council on January 27 and had been generally sanctioned by the Assembly with some exceptions.[35]

Despite the generally favorable reception with which the ambassadors' proposals had been met, there was no official acceptance of them by early February. In addition to the minor exceptions regarding police and other matters, the Porte's answer to Stratford's official note regarding the free exercise of religion according to conscience had not been satisfactory.[36] Official acceptance of the propositions regarding the fourth point was delayed for yet another reason. The difficulty lay not so much in the recognition of the general principles laid down in the propositions as in the manner of how these propositions should be proclaimed. The ambassadors wished that the reform proposals would receive official diplomatic acceptance before being embodied in a firman that would be promulgated throughout the entire empire so that the concessions would become known to all those affected by them. It was not altogether surprising that it was more the form than the substance that was at issue. Most of the reforms contained in the proposals already existed in principle. Where grievances remained, it

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[35] SP, 1856, LXI, 388, 409-10. [36] Ibid., 416.

was not the principle that was at fault, but the defective administration of every branch of the Turkish government.[37]

By February 11 the conferences on the fourth point had terminated, the ambassadors had received copies of the firman containing the concessions they had recommended, but official acceptance had still not taken place. The delay was occasioned by the Turkish political system. Despite the power and position of the Sultan, all important matters had to be submitted to a general council. One or more of these assemblies could not lawfully be dispensed with in an issue as significant as the enunciation of perfect equality among all subjects. The Cabinet had tried to get the firman signed by the Sultan without any preliminary public council. All the conferences held on the fourth point had been attended only by members named by the government and in consequence much ill-feeling existed among the Mohammedans in Constantinople. The Ministry was pledged to the representatives of the allied powers to have the measure carried and feared they might fail. They were afraid for their official positions if they brought a public discussion to bear on the point. This was the reason for the delay. Should the Sultan sign the firman without its being submitted to a general council? Should the Ministry, unable to realize its promises, resign? Or, should the proceedings take place lawfully?[38]

In time the difficulties regarding the firman were resolved and on February 18, 1856 the firman of religious privileges, signed by the Sultan, was read at the Porte. The firman was a masterpiece of

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[37] Times, February 20, 1856. [38] Times, February 22, 1856.

cleverness. The generally satisfactory clauses were brought out in strong relief, while those that might be offensive to either party were glossed over. Many concessions were only implied in order not to arouse undue animosity. The firman was to be translated into the various languages of the empire, thousands of copies were to be printed, and then the firman would be sent into the provinces to be read and promulgated. In order to give the official reading of the firman the character as much as possible of an internal affair, emanating from the free will of the Sultan, none of the foreign ambassadors attended the reading, although all the ministers, high functionaries, patriarchs and members of the higher clergy of the various religions were present.[39]

The Hatti-Humayun of 1856, on paper, granted everything that could be desired. It guaranteed to every subject of the Porte--without distinction of creed or class--complete personal liberty, equality before the law, complete religious freedom, eligibility for civil and military office, equality of taxation, equal representation in the communal and provincial councils and in the Supreme Council of Justice, and complete security of person and property.[40]

Clarendon commended Lord Stratford for his work regarding the Hatti-Humayun. He also cautioned that the most possible publicity should be given to the firman and that much would depend on the zeal and good faith with which these measures were carried out by the agents of the Porte and the watchfulness of the government in stimulating and

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[39] Times, March 3, 1856.

[40] SP, 1856, LXI, 423-30; Times, March 3, 1856.

directing its agents. In the best interests of all the Porte should spare no effort in carrying the measures into effect.[41] The British government was afraid, however, that the reforms would not be carried out in the more remote districts and hence wanted to impress on the Turkish government the need of utmost vigilance. The attention of Europe was riveted on this matter and it would have been difficult to exaggerate its importance. Clarendon suggested that a trustworthy commission be established to tour the provinces and report on whether or not the reforms were being carried out. Stringent measures should be taken against those who failed to abide by the decrees.[42]

When the European plenipotentiaries signed the Treaty of Paris ending the Crimean war on March 30, 1856, cognizance was taken of the fourth point and the religious issue in Turkey and of the Hatti-Humayun promulgated a short time before. In Article VII of the treaty, the major powers admitted Turkey to participation in the European system and agreed to respect the independence and territorial integrity of the Ottoman empire. The powers also agreed to consider any act violating this independence or integrity as a question of general interest.[43]

Article IX directed itself more specifically to the Hatti-Humayun by officially recognizing it, although the firman was not made a part of the treaty itself. The powers also mutually declared that the firman could not in any case give them the right to interfere, either collectively or separately, in the relations of the Sultan with

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[41] SP, 1877, XCII, 783. [42] Ibid., 784.

[43] SP, 1856, LXI, 22.

his subjects, nor in the internal administration of the Ottoman empire.[44]

By the terms of the Treaty of Paris and through the provisions of the Hatti-Humayun the Turks were given, in theory at least, an opportunity to reform their empire without interference. But it was a fiction, as events proved, to declare that the paper reforms of 1856 could check the deterioration of the Turkish empire and that Turkey could take her place among the ranking powers of Europe. Contrary to the spirit and assumption of the Treaty of Paris Turkey continued to decay. Contrary to the guarantees embodied in the firman of 1856 the Christians continued to be oppressed, and European sympathizers continued to agitate in their favor.

One of the results of the Crimean war was that Britain now clearly had more of a stake in the Ottoman empire. She had, for example, a cooperative interest in the welfare of the Turkish Christians. In the years following the conclusion of peace there were many occasions when foreign powers, notably France or Russia, advocated active intervention in Turkey on behalf of oppressed Christians. Britain, however, was reluctant. She stubbornly resisted any action that would endanger the independence or territorial integrity of Turkey for fear it would re-open the entire Eastern Question and destroy the shaky balance of power.

When Britain's interests in the eastern Mediterranean increased, as they did with the opening of the Suez Canal and with the British government's purchase of shares in that canal, Britain became even more

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[44] Ibid.

opposed to interference in Turkey, even if undertaken for the alleged purpose of protecting Turkish Christians. At times the government's obstinacy placed the country in an embarrassing position. Britain only reluctantly agreed to a French occupation of Syria in 1860. She stubbornly refused to sanction European interference in the Cretan insurrection from 1866-1868 even though Christians were being oppressed. Britain's most embarrassing moments came, however, with the outbreak of the Balkan crisis in 1875 and the Bulgarian atrocities in 1876. Prime Minister Disraeli refused to take action on behalf of those being massacred. As in the time of the Crimean war, Britain became the defender of the Ottoman empire and the supporter of the status quo. For slightly more than twenty years, from 1856-1877, Britain was successful in her efforts at preventing any significant, active interference in Turkey on behalf of the Christians despite the mandate she had received in 1856.

The policy followed by the British government during this period was not unlike that enunciated on an earlier date. In 1824 Sir Stratford Canning was appointed ambassador to Constantinople. On his way to his new post he was to discuss the Greek Question in Vienna and St. Petersburg. In his instructions British policy was outlined as follows:

> To preserve the peace of the world is the leading policy of England. For this purpose it is necessary in the first place to prevent the breaking out of new quarrels: in the second, to compose, where it can be done by friendly mediation, existing differences; third, where that is hopeless, to narrow as much as possible their range: and fourthly to maintain for ourselves an imperturbable neutrality in all

> cases where nothing occurs to affect injuriously our interests or our honour.[45]

From 1856-1877 the British government did not depart appreciably from this policy maxim laid down in 1824.

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[45]Cited by Robert W. Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe, 1789-1914 (Cambridge: University Press, 1938), p. 102.

CHAPTER II

CRITICISMS AND DEFENSE OF THE HATTI-HUMAYUN AND THE TREATY OF PARIS

Great Britain's eastern policy for some time before 1854 had been directed towards preserving the integrity of the Ottoman empire and the independence of the Sultan in the face of foreign, particularly Russian, ambitions and towards encouraging Turkish reforms.[1] The Treaty of Paris severely curbed Russian ambitions, and the movement for internal reform was encouraged by the proclamation of the Hatti-Humayun. The signatories of the treaty agreed to terminate specific protectorates over Ottoman Christians and henceforth their protector was to be their legal lord--the Sultan. Behind the scenes, however, it was to be British prestige and diplomacy that made all this possible. Britain enjoyed great, although fluctuating, influence on Turkish policy, both internal and external, as seen in many instances between 1856-1877. So great was British influence that the impression gained ground among the

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[1]See Webster for Palmerston's foreign policy from 1830-41; also see Rodkey, Journal of Modern History, I (December, 1929), 570-93; and Journal of Modern History, II (June, 1930), 193-225; and George P. Gooch and J. H. B. Masterman, A Century of British Foreign Policy (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1917), pp. 1-3.

entire population--Muslims, Christians, Jews, and others--that the British could do anything.[2]

All this of course was not evident in 1856, and the Treaty of Paris and the Hatti-Humayun of which it took note were hotly debated in the British Parliament. One group, while not necessarily opposed to the treaty and the firman of reforms, dismissed any possibility of Turkey's reforming herself. Others believed that it was a mistake not to include the firman in the treaty itself; some defended the way the firman was promulgated. In effect, the debate that raged in Britain, both in and out of Parliament, centered around whether or not the ends of the war had been gained by the treaty, whether or not the Sultan's firman would perform all the miracles expected of it, and whether or not the firman should have been made an integral part of the treaty. The government itself believed that the objects of the war had been gained and that the condition of the Christians in Turkey was far better in 1856 than it had been prior to the war.

Lord Aberdeen, former Prime Minister, seriously doubted the efficacy of the Hatti-Humayun. Although the firman read well, contained provisions of high principle, and really left nothing to be desired, it was likely to remain a dead letter. He believed it a mistake that at the peace conference the powers had renounced any right to interfere, either collectively or individually, in the relations between the Sultan and his subjects or in the internal government of Turkey. Aberdeen believed himself sufficiently acquainted with Turkey to assert that

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[2]Tibawi, pp. 180-82; see also Temperley, English Historical Review, XLVII (April, 1932), 216-59.

without the constant supervision of the powers to secure the execution of the reforms, the firman was worthless. And if the powers were prohibited by treaty from interfering, the Christians would be worse off than before.[3]

Earl Grey shared Aberdeen's lack of enthusiasm for the provisions of the treaty and saw little chance of the Hatti-Humayun's being successful. If the enforcement of the firman were left to Turkey it would remain a dead letter. Its provisions were diametrically opposed to the religion of the Koran. In such cities as Bagdad or Damascus, where there was a large and bigoted Mussulman population, it was impossible for Christians to be placed on an equal footing with Mohammedans. The Pasha of Bagdad, for example, at news of the firman, despaired of ever being able to carry out a law he had no means of enforcing. The Christians themselves were alarmed. Because the government was so weak, especially in the distant provinces, if any attempt was made to enforce the laws concerned, the Mussulmans would become so agitated against the Christians that the condition of the latter would be worse than it had been under the operation of the old Turkish law.

Grey was convinced further that the firman could not be enforced because it was impossible to make people such as the Christian and

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[3]Great Britain, 3 Hansard's Parliamentary Debates, CXLI (1856), 2021-22. Cited hereafter as Hansard. All references are to the third series. Other contemporaries shared Aberdeen's apprehensions, see Stuart J. Reid, Lord John Russell (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1895), p. 269; and R. A. J. Walling, (ed.) The Diaries of John Bright (New York: William Morrow and Co., 1931), p. 178. Stratford did not hold out much hope for the success of the Hatti-Humayun unless some kind of supervision was retained over Turkey. Some external surveillance was necessary, and Stratford believed that it could best be provided by Britain. Stanley Lane-Poole, The Life of Stratford Canning (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1888), II, 437-42.

Mussulman subjects of Turkey live together amicably by decree. Foreign powers insisted that the Porte admit Christians to equal civil and religious equality. But, could any government be expected to rule with mildness and equality subjects who regarded the government with hostility and who waited for the day when they could contribute to its overthrow? After four hundred years of galling tyranny it was impossible to expect that Christians could have any but hostile feelings for their Turkish oppressors. To ask the Porte to give Christians equality of rights and privileges with Mussulmans was to make a demand the government did not have the power to concede. The system imagined and desired by Britain could never be made to work. This had been one of Grey's objections to the war that had been undertaken ostensibly to uphold the independence and integrity of the Turkish empire. But, the conclusion of the war had only accelerated the inevitable dismemberment of Turkey as a Moslem state. And unfortunately the treaty bound Britain, without any limitation as to time or circumstance, to prop up a crumbling and doomed empire.[4]

Mr. Robert J. Phillimore, M. P. from Tavistock, was also anxious about the condition of Turkish Christians. He thought it unwise that the firman had not been included in the treaty because the Christians, therefore, had not had their religious freedom secured. He was certain that if in the future any dispute arose as to the interpretation of the treaty, Britain had expressly debarred herself from insisting that the Sultan put the conditions of the firman into force. Inserting the

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[4]Hansard, CXLI (1856), 2023-27.

firman in the treaty would have been the only sure means of enforcing it.[5]

The much-praised firman was also severely criticized by the Constantinople correspondent for the Times. In the first place, the Turkish Ministry had succeeded in getting the Sultan's sanction for the firman without any consultation with the general council. It was doubtful whether a measure of this importance, decided upon in such a clandestine manner, would ever lead to any really practical results. A more severe limitation on the expected success of the firman was that the rights of the Christians had been placed under the safeguard of all the contracting parties. Among five or six of the powers, there would always be two or three that would take an opposite view of any complaint that might be brought forward of some non-observance of the conditions laid down in the firman. The Sultan had consequently gained much by the treaty. Turkey being the ward of all Europe would make it possible for him to play one group of powers against another.

The Times' informer thought it strange that the European governments had not considered this possibility when the Turkish government acquiesced so readily in all the extravagant demands made upon it. He believed that if the allies really desired the welfare and improvement of the Turkish Christians and the consolidation of the Turkish empire, they had taken the wrong approach.[6]

One of the chief objects of the allies was to obtain, by the concessions in the firman, the right of equality for the Christians so as to consolidate the Turkish empire by removing the differences between

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[5]Hansard, CXLII (1856), 21. [6]Times, February 26, 1856.

the two classes in society. This correspondent, however, asserted that the firman would do just the opposite. It would make the breach between the classes wider than ever and dissatisfy both the Christians and the Mohammedans. The Christians, for example, would be dissatisfied with the indiscriminate enlistment that was a greater horror to them than anything. The Mohammedans would be dissatisfied because the firman would touch all their prejudices so roughly and all at once. The firman would become the seed of discord that would paralyze the action of any Ministry formed. Instead of producing unity, the firman would precipitate a serious crisis in the interior. In conclusion, this contributor to the Times declared that European statesmen should have shed their illusions that differences between Christians and Mohammedans could be overcome with the promulgation of a firman promising religious equality.[7]

Other critics of the Hatti-Humayun also observed the dualism of its principles. On the one hand it expressed the principle of perfect equality for all subjects of the Sultan in allowing indiscriminate enlistment and admission of everyone to civil and military employment regardless of religion. On the other hand there was provision for maintaining the differences between the various religious communities and the Mohammedans by acknowledging the Christians as distinct bodies and thereby allowed to enjoy additional privileges. Delegates from the non-Mussulman communities, for example, were to be admitted to the Council of State. There either had to be perfect equality for all persons regarding political and civil rights, or else a strict class

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[7] Ibid.

legislation. If the indiscriminate employment of every able man, whatever his religion, was to be implemented, the privilege of the non-Mohammedan communities being represented as distinct bodies should not have been allowed. A decision would have to be made one way or the other, for the future of Turkey depended on whether it was intended to perpetuate, or discontinue, the division between Mohammedans and non-Mohammedans.[8]

The firman was not only criticized in general, but also in its component parts. One of the points at issue was the enlistment of Christians in the Turkish army. The non-Mussulman subjects, especially the lower classes, had followed with intense interest the discussions regarding their performing military service. They contemplated with horror their chances of being enlisted in the army because they had no means of buying their discharge. They knew too that if, as it was probable, the management of the enlistment was left to the chiefs of the religious communities, the lot would most likely fall on the poor because the rich usually had enough interest and influence to obtain exemption. The poorer class of Christians in Turkey did not bless those who had made them defenders of their country.[9]

A further difficulty would be the distribution of the Christian recruits. They could not be put into separate regiments since there

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[8]Times, May 29, 1856. For the favored position of the Greek Orthodox Church in the Ottoman empire and its resistance to reform see G. Georgiades Arnakis, "The Greek Church of Constantinople and the Ottoman Empire," Journal of Modern History, XXIV (September, 1952), 235-50.

[9]Times, July 10, 1856.

were no Christians competent to be officers. There would also be difficulties if Christians and Mussulmans were placed in the same regiments. If the Christians had accepted the law of enlistment that had been proposed to them during the war and before the Hatti-Humayun was ever conceived, feelings of animosity could have been more easily overcome. Christians and Mohammedans would have been fighting for a common cause; they would have been comrades in arms. Prejudices would have been broken down on both sides, but it would now be more difficult because it would be barrack life and not front-line duty.[10]

Another point to be considered was the economic ramifications of enlisting Christians in the army. In its eagerness to abolish the haratch as quickly as possible the Porte had given no thought to the financial implications of the new law. The haratch yielded annually a considerable percentage of the total revenue and this had now been abolished by the stroke of a pen. Nothing had been substituted for it. And, until a law was passed regulating the enlistment of Christians, the latter had to give neither soldiers nor their equivalent in money.[11]

Lending support to the critics of the Hatti-Humayun were the reports of violence in various parts of Turkey, allegedly as a result of the promulgation of the firman. One such outbreak was reported at the Syrian town of Nablous on April 4, 1856. A fanatical mob had broken into the houses of the French and British agents, the Greek Church had been plundered, houses in the Christian quarter were damaged, and a number of persons were reputedly killed. So great was the fear of the

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[10] Ibid. [11] Ibid.

Christians, as the result of such reports, that many pilgrims visiting Palestine at Easter dared not leave the well-frequented road between Jerusalem and Jaffa.[12]

Observers on the spot reported that violence was almost to be expected. The animosity smoldering between the Christians and the Mohammedans had been revived by the sweeping measures contained in the Hatti-Humayun. The gradual changes and reforms that had begun to obliterate many of the old distinctions had been superceded by the firman. In order to satisfy the wishes of the western powers, who were not acquainted with the circumstances, the Sultan had granted concessions that aggravated the division between the two creeds. Religion had once again been made the standard around which two opposing camps could rally. While many of the accounts were not true, the papers were full of stories of rape, murder, and pillage--all given a religious twist.[13]

As Easter approached, dread and apprehension arose. Easter was annually a delicate season and consuls submitted reports replete with dreadful and imagined dangers. The Easter season of 1856 would be especially hazardous because of the recent publication of the Hatti-Humayun. Many persons feared that some incident would result during the first public celebration of a Christian religious festival since the announcement of the decree. The representations from Salonica seemed to have been the strongest in this respect because the British ship Curacoa was sent there in mid-April for the stabilizing influence its presence would afford.[14]

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[12] Times, May 1, 1856.

[13] Times, May 15, 1856.

[14] Times, May 10, 1856.

A general feeling of uneasiness prevailed all over the country. People looked with anxiety for the crises that were certain to come. But, a careful investigation of the reports of violence suggested that the outbreaks that had occurred were not directly occasioned by the Hatti-Humayun.[15] There were unmistakable signs that sinister influences were at work to make the most of the revived religious animosity. Efforts were being made to represent the situation as critical in order to further particular political objects or economic ends. The Times' correspondent in Constantinople reported that there was no cause for alarm. The accounts of violence were for the most part unfounded. And when outbreaks had occurred, they had not been caused by religion. Although involving persons of different creeds, the altercations were perhaps caused by rivalry for an official post, dislike of repaying a legitimate debt, or whatever. Persons with ulterior motives attempted to distort these occurrences and make of them religious quarrels, incited or heightened because of the recent publication of the Hatti-Humayun.[16]

In general, the critics of the peace treaty and the firman seemed to feel that the Christians were in a worse position after the treaty than before. Such was the opinion expressed by Mr. Seymour Fitzgerald, M. P. from Horsham. At the beginning of the war one Christian power had the right to interfere on behalf of the Christians. Now that right had been taken from Russia, and it had been expressly stipulated in the Treaty of Paris that no Christian power had the

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[15] Times, June 25, 1856. [16] Times, May 15, 1856.

right of interference on behalf of the Christians. True, there was a firman granting certain privileges to the Christians. But, it was a revocable instrument and its value was not enough to balance the denunciation of interference that was contained in the peace treaty.[17]

William Ewart Gladstone, who had resigned as Chancellor of the Exchequer in 1855, also believed that it might have been wiser to have included in the treaty some provisions for interfering on behalf of the Christians in Turkey. As it was, each power was left to do what it thought best on the basis of former policy and practice. Therefore, if Russia felt herself bound by policy or duty to interfere, her interference would not be regulated by the provisions of the treaty. Gladstone did not believe that the arrangements that had been provided were entirely free from the danger of future complications.[18]

Mr. Milner Gibson, M. P. from Manchester, was particularly outspoken on what he considered to be the failures of the treaty.[19] He believed it wrong for Britain to disavow interference in Turkey. She had undertaken to guarantee Turkish integrity, yet could not interfere. He asked whether it was right to allow the Sultan to consider himself free from the obligations that ought to govern the conduct of the rulers of all states. The protection accorded Turkey was apt to make her indifferent to her duties as a state. Gibson feared that the Turks would feel they were a political necessity to Europe and that Turkey

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[17] Hansard, CXLII (1856), 79. [18] Ibid., 98.

[19] Another scathing criticism of the treaty is found in John Morley, Life of William Ewart Gladstone (3 vols.; New York: Macmillan Co., 1903), I, 550-51.

would have to be maintained or else the power balance would be destroyed. However bad her rule, Turkey would feel secure in this knowledge. It would be possible for Turkey to drag Britain into a war whenever she wanted to, and this war was now dependent on Turkey's decision. It was wrong for Britain to entangle herself in an agreement to defend the independence and integrity of the Turkish empire. She could have interfered to defend Turkey anytime she chose, without the treaty stipulation.

It was curious, Gibson believed, that Britain had gone to war to preserve the integrity of Turkey and yet gave up all rights of interference in her internal affairs. After the expenditure of some 100,000 pounds in money and the services of some 50,000 men, it would have been expected that Britain would gain some right of interference, and yet she had renounced it. Gibson questioned the wisdom of Britain's guaranteeing Turkey if she were unwilling to interfere if necessary in her internal affairs.

Gibson further believed that abandoning the Christians to the Mussulmans was a sure way of driving the Christians into the arms of Russia. In this way Russia would be able to exercise a moral influence over European Turkey and eventually acquire territory in the Balkans. By pledging to uphold the supremacy of the Turks over the Christians, Britain had paved the way for the inevitable downfall of the Ottoman empire in Europe and its absorption by Russia.[20]

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[20]Hansard, CXLII (1856), 84-87. For a discussion of the peace treaty and its criticisms see Werner E. Mosse, The Rise and Fall of the Crimean System 1855-71 (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1963), pp. 1-33.

Although there was some vicious criticism of the peace and the firman, official Britain regarded both instruments as having accomplished the purposes for which they were intended. In the Lords, Clarendon vigorously defended the treaty by contrasting the conditions that existed in 1854 with those obtaining in 1856. In 1854 Russia claimed a protectorate over the civil and religious immunities and privileges of many Turkish subjects and over the principalities. Sebastopol was a menace to Turkey because it shielded a Russian fleet, and Russia had the potential of obstructing free navigation of the Danube. The treaty had appreciably altered this situation. All the treaties between Russia and Turkey had been annulled. The Sultan had granted reforms, privileges, and immunities to his Christian subjects, independent of Russian influence. Sebastopol and the Russian fleet were no longer a threat to Turkey or to Danube shipping. The principalities were now under the guarantee of Europe. Considering the situation existing in 1854 and again two years later, it was obvious that the objects of the war had been attained.[21]

A good deal of the debate, both before and after the peace treaty was concluded, concerned whether or not the firman of reforms should be made an integral part of the treaty. The argument against inserting the Hatti-Humayun in the treaty was a point well-taken. To have included the firman would have been to admit an interference in the internal affairs of Turkey. In addition, the implication would have been that the reforms were only exacted by the powers after the application of force to which Turkey had to yield. The Hatti-Humayun

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[21]Hansard, CXLI (1856), 2000-2001.

could not have been expected to yield beneficial results if it appeared to have been wrung from the Sultan against his will.[22]

Moreover, the war with Russia had been waged chiefly to prevent her from interfering in the internal affairs of Turkey. Making the firman a part of the treaty would have annulled one of the objects of the war. Every state party to the treaty would have gained the right to interfere in Turkey, and Russia would have exercised the right the most.[23] Turkey was rather to be treated as an independent nation. There would now, therefore, be less opportunity afforded to any power at any future time to interfere in Ottoman affairs.[24] Lord Russell believed that any danger incurred was offset by referring to the firman in the treaty. Moreover, the firman had been declared a law of the Turkish empire, and Britain must expect that the Sultan could and would carry it into effect.[25]

In the defense of the treaty the issues of interference and the improvement in the condition of the Christians were stressed time and again. Prime Minister Palmerston declared that one of Britain's objects in the war had been to defend the integrity of Turkey and sustain the European balance of power.[26] More than this had been accomplished because Turkey had been admitted into the political system of Europe. As a member of European political society, Turkey had acquired a position she had not enjoyed before. This was a striking contrast to her status in 1853 when she was a power in whose preservation

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[22]Times, March 13, 1856. [23]Hansard, CXLI (1856), 2073-74.

[24]Ibid., 2110. [25]Ibid., 2090. [26]Times, May 5, 1856.

all Europe was interested, but when she was excluded from the family of nations and apparently abandoned by general consent to Russia. The allies had thus restored, not destroyed, the balance of power. Turkey had been saved from dismemberment and Europe from conflagration.[27]

So interested were the western powers in maintaining the integrity of Turkey that Britain, France, and Austria signed a treaty subsequent to that of Paris, directed toward this specific purpose. On April 15, 1856 the three powers signed a treaty guaranteeing the integrity and independence of Turkey and agreeing that any violation of her independence and integrity would be a casus belli.[28] The reason for the treaty was that during the Vienna conference Russia stubbornly refused to give a positive guarantee for the territorial integrity of Turkey. Britain, France, and Austria resolved, therefore, to guarantee the future independence and territorial integrity of the Sultan's empire.[29]

Also stressed in the debates was the condition of the Christians in Turkey. Had their condition been appreciably improved? The answer of the British government was an almost unqualified affirmative. One of the objects sought in recourse to war had been to secure better government and security for the inhabitants of the Turkish empire and particularly for the Christians.[30] This object had been gained. The Hatti-Humayun alone would have justified Britain's entry into the war.[31]

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[27] Ibid.

[28] Mosse, pp. 34-52.

[29] Times, May 24, 1856; Mosse, p. 34.

[30] Hansard, CXLI (1856), 2091.

[31] Times, May 6, 1856.

Clarendon eloquently declared that the Hatti-Humayun was the Magna Charta of the privileges of the Christian subjects of the Sultan. The firman had established equal justice in the place of religious domination. As far as any decree could, it would unite all ranks and classes of the empire and achieve one of the objects of the war, that of bringing Turkey into closer association with the Christian powers of Europe.[32] The Hatti-Humayun had given a sort of sacredness to the conditions of the peace treaty. For the first time in Turkish history the Sultan had recognized the rights of conscience and the rights of man.[33] The position of the Christians had been vastly improved as a result of the war and the promulgation of the firman respecting their privileges.[34]

Unwittingly, the debates on the treaty provisions anticipated future difficulties. Articles of the treaty could be, and were, interpreted differently by different persons and powers in 1856 and later. Article IX of the treaty, for example, was variously interpreted. Critics charged that the article prevented the powers from interfering on behalf of the Christians. Therefore, the condition of the Christians was worse after the peace than it had been before. Gladstone, for one, however, disagreed. The powers had agreed in the article that the Hatti-Humayun did not give the powers the right to interfere, either collectively or separately, in the relations of the Sultan with his subjects nor in the internal administration of the Ottoman empire. But, said Gladstone, this article in no way affected or prohibited the prior

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[32] Ibid. [33] Ibid. [34] Hansard, CXLI (1856), 2076.

British right or duty that had allowed interference in the past. He believed that when the treaty spoke of a collective or single intervention, what was really meant was that no right of interference had been specifically granted by the communication of the firman to the powers. But, nothing had been said of the policy and practice of interference that from time to time had been pursued by the government. Nor had anything been said to prevent the British government from performing the almost sacred duty of protecting fellow Christians.[35]

Somewhat similar was the interpretation given by Lords Cowley and Palmerston. Cowley asserted that it had not been the intention of the peace-makers to limit diplomatic interference.[36] Palmerston likewise said that the reason for the Hatti-Humayun's not being included in the treaty was so that no power could say that it had treaty rights allowing active interference on behalf of any particular individual whose privileges had been impinged upon. The Sultan, however, was willing to give the allies the right of diplomatic interference. It might develop that in some cases the firman was not scrupulously honored in all parts of the Ottoman empire. In such an eventuality, the powers would have the right of diplomatic interference and of remonstrance with the Sultan. This provision was expected to be sufficient protection for Ottoman Christians.[37]

In the situations that developed after 1856 the powers, and various British governments, interpreted the treaty as they chose.

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[35] Hansard, CXLII (1856), 94-96. [36] Hansard, CXLI (1856), 2022-23.

[37] Hansard, CXLII (1856), 124-27.

The question apparently was not whether governments and powers could or could not interfere, but whether they would or would not interfere. The decision of France and Russia on occasion was for active interference, as in the outbreak of violence in Syria in 1860, the Cretan insurrection from 1866-1868, and the Balkan crisis beginning in 1875. The policy of the British government, however, was to refrain from intervention, or at least not go beyond the point of diplomatic interference and remonstrance. When she chose to do so, Britain declared that limitations in the treaty of 1856 prevented her interposition.

Since intervention on behalf of the Christians could have been taken as a precedent by other states to interfere for ulterior reasons, the British government chose not to interfere actively in Turkey. Although Britain had gained a moral right and duty to defend the Christians, she repeatedly refused to interpose on their behalf and on occasion even discounted their grievances. Interference would only weaken Turkey, hasten the day of her partition, and speed the day when the Eastern Question would once again be opened. Britain chose to delay that day.

CHAPTER III

TESTING THE HATTI-HUMAYUN

Although the Hatti-Humayun and treaty of 1856 appeared to promise a great deal, in reality the results were somewhat less extensive. Any attempt to introduce reform in Turkey met with resistance. The Ottoman empire was a theocracy that was impossible to secularize. Not even the much-touted firman of 1856 could change law that rested on unchangeable religious sanction. The problem of reform was the more formidable because of the ignorance, apathy, and perennial corruption of the Ottoman officials and because of the system under which they worked.[1]

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[1]Davison has a detailed discussion of the Hatti-Humayun and its reception in Turkey. He also rehabilitates the leading Turkish statesmen by pointing out the almost insuperable obstacles that had to be overcome before reform could be implemented. Davison refutes the judgment often made that promises of reform and equality were merely hypocrisy to blind the West and ward off foreign intervention in favor of the subject peoples of Turkey. Roderic H. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856-76 (Princeton: University Press, 1963), pp. 52-80; see by the same author "Turkish Attitudes Concerning Christian-Muslim Equality in the Nineteenth Century," American Historical Review, LIX (July, 1954), 844-64. For Turkish distrust of Christian reform efforts see Charles Eliot, Turkey in Europe (New ed., London: Longmans, Green, and Co., Inc., 1908), pp. 693-4. Western European economic penetration in the Levant also hampered execution of the Hatti-Humayun. Frederick S. Rodkey, "Ottoman Concern About Western Economic Penetration in the Levant, 1849-56," Journal of Modern History, XXX (December, 1958), 348-53. For the impact of western ideas on Turkish reform prior to 1853 see Bailey, British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement, pp. 179-205.

Reform in the Ottoman empire involved more than merely redressing the grievances of the Christians because oppression in Turkey was no respecter of persons. Mussulmans were mistreated as well as Christians. Another point necessary to consider in understanding the Turkish situation was that the Christians were mistreated fully as much by their co-religionists as by the Mussulmans. Foreign travellers and consular officials reported that the Christians complained as much against the mistreatment by their own ecclesiastical and civil leaders as against the misgovernment and exactions of the Turks.[2]

In the months immediately following 1856 there was some progress in reform and enforcing existing laws, but nothing commensurate with the hopes generated by the Hatti-Humayun. By mid-1858 Christian delegates, for example, were appointed to the Grand Council that considered matters of general interest. This advance was largely nullified, however, because the Christians so chosen had interests closely linked with those of the official Mussulmans.

Another example will indicate that the hopes of the statesmen in 1856 were doomed to failure. The Sultan had been pressured into including in the Hatti-Humayun a provision that Christians might enter the Turkish army. Reformers believed and expected that military service would be an advantage for the Christians. They would achieve this degree of equality; barriers between the races would be broken down in the comradeship that hopefully was to be generated. The hopes of the reformers were dashed, however. Recognizing the advantages, Christians generally preferred paying a tax exempting them from military service,

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[2]Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, pp. 61-65.

Because of violent opposition the matter of Christian recruits was allowed to drop.[3]

More might be said for the success of the peace treaty itself. If the object of the treaty was to prevent Russian encroachment in Turkey, the treaty was successful until 1877, although Russia tried repeatedly to gain revision of its most galling provisions. A case in point was her action in 1870 regarding the Black Sea provisions of the treaty. If Russia had any designs on Constantinople and the Straits she was checked by those powers that saw it a cardinal feature of their eastern policies to keep the Ottoman empire intact.[4]

Whether or not Russia really had any designs on any part of Turkey is academic. Britain thought she did and in the years between 1856-1877 shaped her eastern policy accordingly and Britain consistently refused to allow any material intervention in Turkey on behalf of the Christians. When she did so in Syria in 1860 it was only grudgingly and with misgivings because of the dangerous precedents that might be set by such interference.[5]

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[3]Temperley, English Historical Review, XLVII (April, 1932), 234-36; see also Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, pp. 94-95.

[4]Temperley concludes that because of such difficulties as frontier lines in the Black Sea area and in the principalities, the enhanced prestige of France, and the implementation of the Hatti-Humayun, there was more danger of war among the great powers after the treaty of 1856 was signed than before. Harold W. V. Temperley, "The Treaty of Paris of 1856 and its Execution," Part I, Journal of Modern History, IV (September, 1932), 387-414; and Part II, Journal of Modern History, IV (December, 1932), 523-43.

[5]Gleason, pp. 1-8; see also Charles K. Webster, "The Study of British Foreign Policy (Nineteenth Century)," American Historical Review, XXX (July, 1925), 728-37.

After the Hatti-Humayun had been promulgated, the powers closely observed events in Turkey to ascertain the extent to which the reforms were implemented. The British government repeatedly admonished the Porte on the necessity of carrying out explicitly the measures of the firman. Aali Pasha, one of Turkey's few reform statesmen, assured Clarendon that the Hatti-Humayun was no ordinary document. Its provisions would be vigilantly observed and diligently executed. The Porte was anxious lest cause be given to foreign powers to interfere because the assurances found in the firman had not been realized.[6]

Before the summer of 1856 had ended, however, accounts of grievances on the part of the Christians were being brought to the attention of European consuls. There were reports from Crete that many Mussulmans wanted publicly to profess Christianity but were compelled to refrain from doing so because of the open hostility of the Mohammedans.[7] It was reported from Samsun on the southern coast of the Black Sea that Mussulmans were overtly hostile to Christians. From Syria came word via the British consul-general that the Greek Orthodox community was being subjected to persecution. On each of these occasions, when word reached the British ambassador in Constantinople, remonstrances were sent to the Porte declaring that the powers expected the maintenance of order and the protection of Christians against fanatical actions by Mussulmans.[8]

One grievance in particular was frequently expressed, that regarding military service. British consular agents--such as consul

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[6]SP, 1877, XCII, 841-42. [7]Ibid.

[8]Ibid., 844.

Holmes from Diarbekir on the Tigris, consul-general Moore in Syria, and acting-consul Misk at Damascus--reported that the provision of the Hatti-Humayun allowing Christians to enter the Turkish army was not being honored. The Porte had begun imposing on the Christians a money payment in lieu of military service. In the pashalics of Syria and Damascus, for example, this payment amounted to 5000 piastres. When the Christians protested and declared their willingness to serve in the army, the Pasha insisted on levying the tax anyway.

Clarendon immediately brought this matter to the attention of Musurus Pasha, Turkish ambassador at London, warning him that this virtual re-establishment of the haratch would generate public excitement in Britain. The Porte's behavior would be taken as a sign that improvements were impossible in Turkey despite the promises of the Turkish government. Public opinion would demand to know how such action was justified by the Porte since it appeared that it made the condition of the Christians worse than it had been under the abolished haratch.[9]

Perhaps the observations of the Times' Constantinople correspondent were correct. He thought that the Europeans, in contrast to the Orientals, often moved only for the sake of moving. In trying to arrive at a settlement of the war and of the Eastern Question, the powers had moved too rapidly and thus had not arrived at a satisfactory solution. Now everywhere one looked new difficulties and complications were arising. An uneasiness prevailed in Turkey. A treaty had been signed that was

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[9]Ibid., 844-46. Davison suggests there was a general antipathy to this attempt at equality; the Christians would rather make a money payment than serve in the army. Christians, as well as Mussulmans, wanted the old inequalities to continue. Davison, American Historical Review, LIX (July, 1954), 859.

supposed to have settled everything, but it was not being carried out. The Hatti-Humayun that was supposed to allay all the grievances of the Christians and remove all pretext for interference in the internal affairs of Turkey was a dead letter and likely to remain so. Being in a hurry, Europe had tried to decide these vital points in a half-dozen conferences and seemed only to think of what was desirable, not what was practicable.[10]

Whatever the improvements in Turkey after 1856, and there were some, they were not the sweeping, general ones that the powers, perhaps unjustifiably, expected. Real or imagined grievances were constantly being brought to the attention of British consular officials who duly reported them to Constantinople, and the ambassador then referred them to London. From the many accounts, such as the following, it appears that consular agents had little time for anything besides listening to religious grievances. Syrian Protestants were not receiving complete justice, toleration, and security. A young Christian at Damascus had sought refuge in the British consulate to avoid military conscription and forceful conversion to Islam. Christians in Herzegovina were as much oppressed and their condition as bad as before the Hatti-Humayun. In each instance, Lord Stratford was instructed to protest to the Porte and insist that the irregularities and illegalities be stopped. The British ambassador advised that if the wrongdoers were summarily punished, and if the Turkish authorities were told that complaints against their misconduct would be carefully investigated, the condition of the Christians would be vastly improved.[11]

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[10] Times, November 12, 1856. [11] SP, 1877, XCII, 852-54.

Whatever the gains in the area of reform, on March 1, 1858, barely two years after the promulgation of the firman on reforms, the Times' correspondent in Constantinople suggested that the firman was a failure. Turkish officials were good actors. They could play the part of honest, liberal-minded men when the occasion demanded it. Their whole foreign policy was a drama for the benefit of ambassadors. The various firmans on reforms were patently intended for Britain and France more than for Turkey. The proof was that the firmans had never been implemented in the provincial pashalics and in many of them had never even been promulgated. An ambassador in Constantinople could obtain an imperial decree promising reform, but it was of little use beyond making an impression on the British public. The Hatti-Humayun given at the end of the Crimean war had been hailed by sanguine politicians as the Magna Charta of Turkey, but their hopes had not been justified.[12]

Perhaps the Hatti-Humayun had done more harm than good. It had frightened the ignorant and had given opportunity to those who wanted to carry out mischief. Moreover, the application of the firman was made the more difficult because of its inherent dualism. The equality of all Turkish subjects was declared and yet provision was made to maintain the privileges of the non-Mussulman communities. Everyone was declared fit to hold public office, yet a special section of non-Mussulman members was created in the Council of State for all affairs regarding

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[12]Times, March 25, 1858. Davison makes the point that the periods of reform in the Ottoman empire were those times when the empire was threatened and when a promise of reform might help to secure needed European support. Davison, American Historical Review, LIX (July, 1954), 848-59.

non-Mussulman communities. The non-Mussulmans wanted to be equal, yet keep their capitulations and exclusiveness. Ambassadors might think the Christians wanted equality, but what they really wanted was to have all the advantages of the Mussulman without giving up those they already possessed. It was the non-Mussulmans who were placing the greatest obstacles in the way of implementing the Hatti-Humayun.

A good example of Christian obstructionism concerned the inclusion of Christians in the army. The reform had been discussed, but was dropped because of the opposition raised by the heads of the different religious communities. They would furnish soldiers only if Christians were formed into separate regiments. In vain the Turkish government pointed out that this was impossible, that the Christians had few military leaders, and that mixed crews in the navy worked well. Supported by deluded ambassadors, the Christians resisted and the plan had to be given up. Another section of the firman called for a revision and reform of the immunities and constitution of the different religious communities. The very suggestion that something was to be done, for example the substitution of a fixed salary for the clergy instead of their arbitrary taxation of the people, produced such an outcry that the plan had to be dropped. Yet, it was the government that was blamed in every instance.[13]

Little more than two years after the promulgation of the firman, opinion was divided on whether its principles were being honored. The majority apparently concluded, however, that conditions at least were

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[13]Times, May 1, 1858; see also Davison, American Historical Review, LIX (July, 1954), 148-59; and Arnakis, Journal of Modern History, XXIV (September, 1952), 235-50.

not what they should be, and Turkey was aware that she was on trial. When a conference was to be convened in Paris on May 10, 1858 to discuss the report of the Commission on the Principalities, an unfinished aspect of the Peace of Paris, Turkey was apprehensive lest the conference take up the matter of Ottoman reform. She feared that she might be asked to give an account of the two years that had passed since the Treaty of Paris. There was the very real possibility that the powers would construe the treaty as meaning that they had a right to investigate to determine whether reforms were being carried out. Turkey was prepared to resist such pretensions. The Porte was willing to avail itself of advice to correct whatever shortcomings existed in Turkey, but it was not inclined to allow any interference simply because some member of the conference doubted the progress of Turkish reform.[14]

Whatever the opinion regarding reform in Turkey, Europeans in the summer of 1858 were jolted into an awareness that conditions might be less than exemplary. On June 15 in Jeddah, on the Red Sea, the Mohammedans precipitated a massacre of Christians and killed the British and French consuls.[15] The carnage at Jeddah alarmed the Christians in Turkey and aroused the indignation of the European powers. Confusion, anxiety, and near revolts were rife all over the Ottoman empire. Christians were confused and alarmed. Mussulmans were dissatisfied. The Christians believed the Porte had not done enough to guarantee their privileges; the Mussulmans were convinced that the Porte had gone too far.[16]

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[14] *Times*, May 1, 1858. [15] *SP*, 1877, XCII, 855-56.

[16] *SP*, 1861, LXVII, 640-42.

For some time there had been a growing animosity between the Arab, European, and Christian merchants at Jeddah. The latter, because of their superior skill and management, had gained almost the entire trade, especially the lucrative transport of the pilgrims arriving from Egypt. Circumstances of time also played a role. Hundreds of thousands of pilgrims were assembled in Mecca and even the most quiet of them was certain to be animated by an intense religious enthusiasm. Particularly the Mohammedans coming from India to Mecca did much to increase the feeling of animosity between the Arabs and the Christians. Sepoys from the recent outbreak in India were heard reporting on the war in India and the defeat of the Christians there.

Although a potentially explosive situation existed, there had been no apprehension of an outbreak. Namik Pasha, the governor, had joined the pilgrims going to Mecca for the Kurban Bairam, taking with him most of the men comprising the three battalions garrisoning the town. During his absence a dispute took place concerning the changing of a flag on a merchant vessel. The ship had been under British colors, but had been purchased by a native who wanted to hoist the Turkish colors at once without waiting for the necessary formalities. When objections were voiced, the native Arabs decided to raise the flag by force. This slight incident became the pretext for the massacre of Europeans and Christians.[17]

There was great danger of further disaster following the events at Jeddah unless summary action was taken. In a short time Mohammedans would be boasting all over the eastern Mediterranean that they had been

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[17] Times, July 27, 1858.

party to the Jeddah massacre and that Britain, with all her vaunted power, had been forced to stand helplessly by, watch her citizens murdered, and her flag dishonored. To prevent Britain's humiliation and to vindicate British honor, immediate and signal satisfaction must be exacted as an object lesson. No sluggish forms of Turkish procedure must be allowed to obstruct prompt justice. The matter involved more than vengeance. The stability of the entire British Asiatic empire was at stake.[18]

The British Foreign Secretary, the Earl of Malmsbury, advised the new British ambassador at Constantinople, Sir Henry Bulwer, that Britain could not be trifled with in the case of Jeddah. Even the political objects involved in the British alliance with the Porte must yield to the paramount principle of supporting Christian and British prestige in the East. Three British ships were dispatched to Jeddah with marines to seize the place and demand satisfaction if justice were not speedily forthcoming from Turkey herself.[19] Bulwer was also to demand an indemnity for the families involved, the dismissal of the Kaimakam, public punishment of the ringleaders, an explanation of the conduct of Namik Pasha, an inquiry into the conduct of the local authorities, and the imposition of a fine on the inhabitants of Jeddah.[20]

The position of the Porte was delicate. Turkish power over Arabia was more nominal than real and rested more on the title of the Sultan as Ruler of the Believers than on actual possession.[21]

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[18] *Times*, July 15, 1858.

[19] *SP*, 1877, XCII, 856.

[20] *Ibid*.

[21] *Times*, July 27, 1858.

Nevertheless, steps were taken to punish the guilty. A Pasha was sent with a large force to put down any fanatical insurrection and was given power to punish those he believed guilty. The British government had indicated that it would not use force or interfere with the Turkish government in any way. After all, the object of Britain was to maintain the integrity of the Turkish empire. Still, the British government acted precipitately. Without waiting for the measures that might have been taken by the Porte, the British government ordered Captain Pullen, commander of the Cyclops, to demand satisfaction on the spot or take it, and Jeddah was bombarded. The Derby administration would live long in the memory of the Turks. The Times' correspondent in Constantinople believed that a blunder had been committed. Only in the most extreme cases, when no redress could be obtained in any other way, should the aggrieved party have an excuse to take matters into its own hands.

The British action, it was warned, might well be taken as a precedent and now any government that thought it had cause could act in the same manner. Advantage might also be taken of this incident to throw suspicion on Britain's sincerity. It might be charged that this was but another step in the British policy of making the Red Sea a British lake and that Britain wanted to take satisfaction for the massacre herself in order to impress the natives with British supremacy. Britain might hope that the Turks would judge her policy on the experience of years and not one incident, but it had been an ill-advised action.[22]

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[22]Times, September 7, 1858.

In the final analysis, the events surrounding the Jeddah massacre seemed to indicate that feelings of religious fanaticism still ran high in Turkey and that the Turkish government was not altogether disposed or able to deal with them. The Hatti-Humayun had not, in its yet-short life, made Turkey an entirely safe place for Christians to reside.

Shortly after the Jeddah incident, there was a change of British ambassadors at Constantinople. Lord Stratford had resigned and had been succeeded by Sir Henry Bulwer, long recognized as an ardent friend and supporter of Turkey, who had arrived on July 6, 1858.[23] Stratford had served many years as ambassador in Turkey. He had pointed out the necessity of maintaining the Ottoman empire for the sake of European equilibrium. He had also been instrumental in forging the Hatti-Humayun of 1856. In view of his long service, Stratford was therefore instructed by Malmesbury to proceed to Constantinople and take personal leave of the Sultan. Malmesbury believed that since Stratford had acquired so much influence during the period he had been in Turkey, it would be to the benefit of the Christians and also to the general welfare of the Ottoman empire if the former ambassador would once more impress on the Sultan the great importance that the British government attached to the immediate implementation of the principles enunciated in the Hatti-Humayun.[24]

On October 6, 1858 Stratford met informally with the Sultan. He pointed out the danger in allowing too great a time to lapse between

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[23] Times, July 17, 1858.

[24] SP, 1877, XCII, 856-57; see also Temperley, English Historical Review, XLVII (April, 1932), 216-59; and by the same author, English Historical Review, XLVIII (October, 1933), 601-21; and English Historical Review, XLIX (April, 1934), 265-98.

the public announcement of reform in the Hatti-Humayun and the adoption of measures to carry the reforms into effect. The slowness of reform was a cause for the weakness of the empire and a discredit and danger to the Sultan. Because so little had been done in the way of reform, a feeling of disappointment and despair was spreading through Europe. Proofs of this attitude were seen in the remarks of private individuals and in the French and British press. The British and French were highly desirous that the reforms be carried out.[25]

A number of days after his interview with the Sultan, on October 22, Stratford drew up a number of suggestions on Turkish reforms and commented on the progress of reform in general since 1856. He suggested that Britain remind the Porte that the tardiness with which the principles of the Hatti-Humayun had been carried out had caused much anxiety to powers friendly to Turkey. Since the Sultan's allies had expended so much during the war, they were entitled to expect improvement, or else they would be reluctant to make any further sacrifices in support of Turkey. Turkey had received a guarantee of her independence and integrity, but this did not absolve her from her obligation to carry out those reforms that the Sultan had announced in the firman of 1856.

Lord Stratford observed that abuses continued in every department of the government. Prohibition of bribery and corruption was merely on paper. No public example had yet been made of any official accused of malfeasance of office. Judicial procedure was still defective, and the new codes of law were not yet in practice. Non-Mussulmans were still not admitted to councils. Measures for the

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[25]SP, 1861, LXVII, 617-18.

reform of the Greek Church were still under discussion. The abolition of the haratch had been followed by the imposition of a war tax said to be more onerous than the former. Christians, however admissible in theory to the Turkish army, were excluded from it in fact. The picture was discouraging.[26]

Stratford was right. Abuses were continuing. Throughout the remainder of 1858 and into 1859 Bulwer received frequent accounts of injustices perpetrated against Christians and instructions from Malmesbury to protest such treatment to the Porte. At Trebizond, on the Black Sea, the Christians had been forced to ask Russian protection. The British consul at Jerusalem reported that Christians there were being ill-treated. Reports affirmed that Protestants in Syria were being persecuted.[27]

Consequently, Lord Russell on June 28, 1859 instructed Bulwer to report on how the reforms had been introduced and whether or not they had been executed.[28] Bulwer was profuse in his excuses for the shortcomings of the Turkish government, but admitted that the situation was unsatisfactory. Although Christians had attained more equality with Mussulmans in Constantinople and its immediate vicinity, away from the capital the distinction between the creeds was still great.[29]

On August 9, 1859 Russell instructed Bulwer on the procedure to be followed regarding the reforms. It was unwise for each foreign consul to press his view on the Pasha of his district. If he succeeded,

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[26] Ibid., 620-23.

[27] SP, 1877, XCII, 858-59.

[28] Ibid., 790.

[29] SP, 1861, LXVII, 624-26.

he raised his country's reputation and perhaps his own. But, he weakened the authority of the Porte and excited jealousy among the other consuls. A better procedure would be for each consul to inform his ambassador of abuses and grievances. The ambassadors could then compare reports on an ill-governed district or on the failure of a reform before making representations to the Porte. A remonstrance by all the ambassadors would have more influence than if each consul protested to the Porte individually. Bulwer was to make it clear to the Porte that the reforms were not designed to increase foreign influence, but to make Turkey a fit member of the European system, increase her prosperity, and provide more security and contentment for the different sects in Turkey.[30]

Subsequently on October 3, the ambassadors of the major European powers presented to the Grand Vizier a memorandum calling the attention of the Porte to the political and financial condition of the country. It was regrettable that the Porte had not done more to demonstrate that reform was being initiated. The different populations of Turkey were uneasy about the future and their uneasiness could only be set at ease when the government had demonstrated its capabilities. The provision of general conditions for the prosperity of Turkey was independent of the differences in religion and race. The question was the establishment of a government under which all subjects, Christian and Mussulman alike, would be benefitted.[31]

Apparently some benefit was realized from the joint representation of the ambassadors. Vizierial letters pertaining to specific

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[30] SP, 1877, XCII, 790-91. [31] SP, 1861, LXVII, 631.

grievances were sent to different parts of the empire.[32] But, despite the promises given repeatedly by the Porte and the orders sent to the provincial governors, conditions remained generally unfavorable for Turkish Christians. Russian journals were filled with letters from various parts of Turkey recounting acts of oppression, violence, and persecution directed against the Christians. The Russian public was becoming excited. The clergy in the principalities had invoked the czar's protection in favor of the Christians. The Russian government declared that there were incontestable proofs that the Porte had not fulfilled its promises to the Christians.[33]

In May 1860 the Russian Foreign Minister declared that his government desired an inquiry into the condition of Christians in the Turkish empire.[34] Prince Alexander Gorchakov asserted that the powers had the right to insist on the fulfillment of the promises made by the Porte to its Christian subjects. He believed that a commission of inquiry should be formed, consisting of Turks and Christians, and sent to the European provinces of Turkey to ascertain the true condition of the Christians. When the commission had submitted its report, the European powers should take the necessary steps to secure redress for all the well-founded grievances of the Christians.[35]

The British government was not altogether cool to the Russian proposal, although it would modify the inquiry's procedure. Britain would be willing, for example, to recommend that an inquiry be made by

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[32] SP, 1877, XCII, 860.

[33] Times, May 24, 1860.

[34] Times, May 19, 1860.

[35] Times, May 23, 1860.

a Turkish commissioner with the cooperation of the consuls of the five great powers.[36] However, the inquiry should not be made on the basis of reports submitted exclusively by Russia, but upon those from the ambassadors and consuls of all the powers in the East.[37]

The Porte naturally questioned the competency of the powers to institute an inquiry into the internal affairs of Turkey and invoked Article IX of the Treaty of Paris in objection.[38] When Gorchakov subsequently withdrew his demand for an investigation, the project of a joint commission of inquiry was dropped.[39] Russell, however, instructed Bulwer to ask the British consuls in European Turkey whether they could confirm the Russian complaints.[40] The powers needed to do nothing more at present because the Sultan had appointed commissioners to ascertain the conditions in the European principalities. Under the direction of the Grand Vizier an inquiry was to be made, guilty persons punished for oppressing Christians, and abuses in justice and taxation were to be ended. It was hoped that the Porte might thereby gain a breathing spell for further reforms.[41]

Although the friendly powers might have been disposed to allow time for gradual improvement in Turkish rule, there was the danger of some power becoming impatient and intervening materially in Turkey. The Sultan had now taken some positive steps. If he punished the offenders and instituted reforms, he might preserve his government free from foreign interference.

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[36] SP, 1877, XCII, 861-62.

[37] Times, May 21, 1860

[38] Times, May 23, 1860

[39] Times, May 31, 1860.

[40] SP, 1877, XCII, 862.

[41] Ibid., 862-63.

Britain made her position clear. She asserted that no separate right of war on the part of any of the powers could be deduced from Turkish abuses. If Russia considered war a means to defend Turkish Christians, she had to request the other powers to consider the situation. Article VII of the Treaty of Paris guaranteed the independence and integrity of Turkey. Article VIII bound every signatory to submit the cause of any quarrel to the rest of the allies before using force on behalf of any group in Turkey. Article IX, which had taken cognisance of the firman on reforms, did not give the powers the right to interfere in the relations of the Sultan with his subjects nor in the internal administration of the Ottoman empire. But, the firman did pledge the Sultan to grant and secure to his subjects the benefits of the Hatti-Humayun. The British government, therefore, suggested that the powers had the right and duty to ascertain whether the provisions of the firman had been observed and whether the condition of the Christians had become better or worse since its enactment.

If such an inquiry were made and it was determined that abuses still existed, the powers should make recommendations to the Sultan designed to allay the grievances of his subjects and increase the stability of the Turkish government. It was not expected that the Sultan would reject or disregard the counsel of the powers in such an instance.[42]

At the beginning of June 1860 the Grand Vizier was sent on a tour of inquiry into the principalities, and a native commission of inquiry was sent to Syria. The object of the missions was to correct

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[42] Ibid., 862-64.

administrative abuses and to devise a scheme for future improvement in the areas visited.[43] The Porte had taken the initiative in the inquiry, and the powers had agreed to await the results before entering into negotiations on the Russian proposal that had been modified to state that Russia had only proposed a conference in case an inquiry should confirm the complaints leveled against the Porte.[44]

The reports by the commissioners on the conditions they found supported the accounts given by the European consular agents. In some respects the reforms had been carried out, in others much remained to be done. But, the inquiry at least indicated that no sweeping conclusion could be made as to the condition of the Christians in the empire. They were not universally oppressed. Conditions varied by area. By October 21 the Grand Vizier had been forced to suspend his inquiry because of the lateness of the season and the outbreak of disorders in Lebanon. He had, however, accomplished a good deal of his work. The Porte promised to inform the powers of the results of the mission, and Britain was assured that the Turkish government was even then occupied with reform measures to ameliorate the condition of the Christians.[45]

Shortly after the initiation of the Turkish inquiry, the British government had acted on its earlier proposal and had instructed Bulwer to ask each British consul in the Levant to report on the condition of the Christians in his area. Strictly speaking this inquiry

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[43] Times, June 9, 1860. [44] Times, June 2, 1860.

[45] Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, pp. 104-108.

was an imposition into the internal administration of Turkey, a charge that later plagued Britain.[46]

The results of the consular inquiries were interesting in themselves for the conditions they reported. But, the accounts were the more interesting and significant because of the nature of the individuals making the inquiry. There were decided weaknesses in the British Levantine consular system.

The British government did not consistently use good judgment in appointing its Levantine vice-consuls and consular agents. Many belonged to the mongrel class of Levantines who had no tie to the country they nominally served nor to the country of their birth. Other countries made the consular service a profession with strictly defined organization and a class of specially trained employees. Britain had allowed her consular system to develop according to the exigencies of the moment. It was outdated, unable to cope with circumstances, and hampered by inefficiency. Until the service was reformed, British interests could not be properly represented in the eastern Mediterranean.

Although the British government used various types of persons in its consular service, from the English gentleman who knew nothing of the country, to the basest ruffian in some distant outpost, by far the most frequent and most obnoxious method was to recruit from the half-English, half-Levantine families who had acquired a kind of hereditary right to consulships. They were supposed to be British, at least in interest, although they had perhaps never been in England.

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[46]SP, 1861, LXVII, 509-11; see also R. T. Shannon, Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876 (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, Ltd., 1963), pp. 18-19.

They were supposed to know the conditions, geography, problems, and administration of all Turkey, but they had perhaps never been out of the area in which they were born.

The great evil in appointments from this class was that the persons were connected by interests, and almost always by family ties, with the area where they were supposed to represent British interests alone. While the consular official might well be an able and respectable person, he had too many local interests not to be biased in favor of them. The official remained for a number of years in the same place and became identified with it. As a result, he lost his character as an Englishman. Representing Britain, he was more Turkish than English.[47]

Attempts had been made to correct the shortcomings of the British consular service, for example a commission had been established in Britain to strengthen the system, but the British consular arrangement retained its faults. Because Britain's eastern policy was shaped in part on the information and advice gained from her consuls, their shortcomings occasionally proved embarrassing to the government.[48]

The point to be made is that despite the pro-Ottoman interests of many of the consular officials, they almost universally admitted that although privileges had been extended to the Christians in the past, conditions were either altogether unsatisfactory or not as good as they could and should be. The provisions of the Hatti-Humayun were not

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[47] Times, May 22, 1858.

[48] For service rendered by British Levantine consuls to the British government see Bailey, Journal of Modern History, XII (December, 1940), 475-76; see also Rodkey, Journal of Modern History, II (June, 1930), 202-203.

being carried out in every instance. The innate hatred of Mussulmans for Christians was overtly and covertly manifested in acts of violence and oppression by officials and non-officials alike. The Christians continued to complain vigorously of forced conversions to Islam, for example, and of the seduction and violence used to get young girls away from their families and into Moslem homes.

The universal opinion expressed in these consular reports was that no new reforms were needed, but that it was necessary to implement those already promulgated. Problems and complaints became worse, it appeared, in direct proportion to the distance of the province from the capital. Also advanced was the observation that Christian complaints could not be resolved by reforms implemented generally throughout the empire. Problems peculiar to certain provinces required special treatment.[49]

On the basis of the consular reports submitted to him, Russell made a number of observations and suggestions to Bulwer. The administration of Turkey had improved, but much remained to be done. The most dangerous period for a government was not one in which people were kept in abject subjection. The danger point was reached when subjects began to criticize the defects of the government after they had acquired wealth, knowledge, and the amelioration of some of their grievances. The Turkish government was in this situation. The Turkish mode of administration had not improved in the same proportion that the

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[49]Detailed reports of the consular officers are found in SP, 1861, LXVII, 509-605.

Christians had increased in numbers, wealth, knowledge, and ability. They therefore felt the more keenly that the spirit of the Hatti-Humayun was being evaded. Christian evidence was not admitted by the superior courts. In some provinces the firman of reforms had not even been published and in many, perhaps in most, its provisions were disregarded.[50]

Bulwer was therefore instructed to propose to the ambassadors of the great powers in Constantinople that they meet and compare the reports of their consuls with the view of giving collective advice to the Porte regarding the condition of Christians in the empire.[51] No power must be allowed to act independently in Turkey in favor of its own interests and to the detriment of the other powers. The treaty of 1856 substituted collective action of the five powers on behalf of the Christians for the exclusive protectorate of one power alone.[52]

By November 1860 the various ambassadors were meeting in Constantinople and discussing the results of their inquiries. But, on November 22 the Turkish ambassador to Britain asked Russell if the meetings could not be postponed. The Grand Vizier had outlined a number of reforms that, if carried out, would make the work of the ambassadors unnecessary.[53] Musurus was told, however, that the time had passed when vague promises would satisfy the European powers. Britain, for example, wanted to see practical reforms, not theories.[54]

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[50] SP, 1861, LXVII, 663-64.

[51] SP, 1877, XCII, 871.

[52] Ibid., 868-69.

[53] Ibid., 797.

[54] Ibid., 800.

The Porte was advised that British public opinion would not support Turkey any longer unless reforms were undertaken and carried into effect in practice as well as in name.[55]

To Bulwer Russell sent these instructions on December 1, 1860. It was imperative that Britain try to work with the other powers. If such countries as France, Russia, and Prussia became convinced that the Ottoman empire was on the brink of disaster, they would be reluctant to endorse any measures designed to ensure her continuation as an empire. Britain must endeavor to obtain their agreement to some rational proposals for reform on principles to which the Sultan was pledged in the Hatti-Humayun. Many of the reports of the consuls contained excellent suggestions. Bulwer was to propose the most obvious and unobjectionable of these and try to secure the ambassadors' concurrence. The combined opinions would then be submitted to the Grand Vizier.[56]

But, by December the discussions of the ambassadors on the condition of the Christians had become academic. The situation had passed beyond the discussion stage. It was out of the hands of the ambassadors meeting at Constantinople. In May the entire Lebanon had erupted in violence. The Druses had turned out en masse and a fierce civil war was raging between them and the Maronite Christians. Neither the Turkish governor nor the Pasha in command of the troops seemed able to check the slaughter.[57] Trifling with popular passions had produced catastrophe. In civilized states prejudices of race and religion were kept in check by other forces and interests. But, in a

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[55] SP, 1860, LXVII, 692-93. [56] SP, 1877, XCII, 798.

[57] Times, June 25, 1860.

primitive state of society, such as existed in Turkey, the whole existence of a person was closely bound up with these passions, and passions once aroused soon went to their fiercest extremes.

The outbreak of disturbances in Lebanon came at a most inopportune time. The European balance was being tested. War between Austria on one hand and France and Piedmont on the other had broken out in May 1859 and in March 1860 Napoleon III had annexed Nice and Savoy. Before the Syrian question was fully resolved, the American Civil War began, on April 12, 1861, and by the end of 1861 British, French, and Spanish troops were in Mexico.[58] The situation in Lebanon was going to force the hands of the powers further and threatened to raise the entire Eastern Question at a time when Britain would have preferred that it remain quiescent.

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[58]For further problems occupying the attention of the British Foreign Office see Reid, pp. 299-300.

CHAPTER IV

THE SYRIAN CRISIS AND ITS BACKGROUND

The Sultan's pledge given in 1856 to guarantee Christian privileges in his empire caused a great deal of resentment among the Mohammedan majorities. Occasionally this animosity was manifested in hostile acts perpetrated by the members of one creed on those of another. In May 1860 a significant disturbance took place in Lebanon when Moslem Druses and Christian Maronites, traditional enemies, massacred one another. Because of the effective work of the foreign consuls at such points as Beirut and Damascus, the disorder was put down and what appeared to be a settlement was worked out. It soon became apparent, however, that more was involved than merely an age-old hatred among different religious sects. Turkey's dereliction was shown by reports from the area. If she had not encouraged the disturbances, she had at least made little attempt to check their beginning. The powers were also aroused as protectors of the various churches and as rivals for the trade of the Levant. Eventually, France sent in troops. The powers were then confronted with the necessity of deciding on a settlement that would prevent future disorders, and Britain was obsessed with

the need of getting the French troops to vacate Syria.[1]

Syria was an important part of the Turkish empire historically and politically. The mountainous part of the country was inhabited by warlike, half-barbarous mountaineers, and the plains were peopled by wild Arab plainsmen who had defied subjection. Also on the plains lived a thrifty and industrious peasantry, for ages oppressed and subdued. It would be a difficult task to make a homogeneous people from these cultivators, shopkeepers, artisans, merchants, and nomads and have them recognize equality before the law. One of the principal tribes was made up of the strange and warlike Druses, of pagan origin, who generally professed the Mohammedan faith. There were also the Maronites who were Christians, although this was a nominal classification since they often had little regard for humanitarian or Christian principles in their dealings with their neighbors. The Maronites were descended from a Christian community founded by a monk in the fifth century and linked with the Latin Church since the time of the fourth Crusade.[2] The tribal animosity was complicated by the differences between Christian and Moslem and by the diversity among the various Christian groups.

Because of their religion the Druses were often on the more intimate terms with the Turkish government.[3] The Maronites--because they were Christian--sought support, protection, and encouragement

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[1]James M. Thompson, Louis Napoleon and the Second Empire (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1954), pp. 213-14; Annual Register, 1860 (London: Printed for F. and J. Rivington, 1861), p. 251.

[2]Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe, p. 419.

[3]For the British interest in the Druses see Rodkey, Journal of Modern History, II (June, 1930), 211-12.

from the Christian powers, especially France. A charter of St. Louis in the thirteenth century had made the Maronites part of the French nation, so from an early period, France by common tradition, faith, and policy had been considered the most significant protector of the Maronites. The majority of the Maronites were Catholics and anything done against the Catholics offended French dignity and was accordingly resented. The leader of the Greek and Catholic Christians was the Christian Kaimakam, a Catholic, who was also the French consul-general.[4]

During the first part of the nineteenth century Syria had been governed by Mehemet Ali, Pasha of Egypt. In April 1839, however, Sultan Mahmud of Turkey broke his peace with Mehemet and precipitated a crisis lasting until 1841 and involving the major European powers. On the success of Egyptian arms, Mehemet Ali demanded recognition as hereditary ruler of Egypt and Syria. At this juncture the powers intervened under the aggressive leadership of Lord Palmerston, British Foreign Secretary, who insisted that Mehemet be forced to surrender all his territory except Egypt. Basically, this was the settlement finally concluded. British ships landed Turkish, Austrian, and British troops and marines, and British warships bombarded coastal towns. Arms were also supplied to the Syrian rebels.

In the end Mehemet Ali was forced to accept terms. He agreed to abandon his claims to Syria in return for recognition as hereditary ruler of Egypt. The conclusion of the crisis was a triumph for Britain. It was largely due to her that, for political reasons, Syria

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[4] Hansard, CLIX, (1860), 1647-49; SP, 1861, LXVII, 642-43; Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe, p. 419.

was restored to Turkey. Britain had reached a high point in her prestige and had assured herself that the routes to India would remain open and accessible.[5]

After the crisis events of 1839-1841 it became necessary for the European powers to consider with the Porte some means of reaching a settlement with the people of Syria. For Lebanon, in 1842 and particularly in 1845, agreements were drawn up whereby the two populations, Druse and Maronite, would be governed by separate Kaimakams who were not to be Turkish officials except insofar as they represented the Turkish government. Over both the Druse and Maronite chiefs there was placed a Turkish Pasha who was the Pasha of Damascus. The Druses and Maronites accepted this agreement drawn up by the representatives of the European governments and the Porte.[6]

As it developed, unfortunately, Syria had been better governed by Mehemet than by the Turks. Turkish authority in Lebanon, for example, was only nominal, limited by the privileges given to the Mountain tribes.[7] There were those who charged that Britain must bear a good deal of the responsibility for what transpired in Syria after the settlement of the 1840's. While the area was under Mehemet Ali it

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[5]Webster has a comprehensive account of Palmerston's attitude toward the Turko-Egyptian crisis; see also Rodkey, Journal of Modern History, I (December, 1929), 570-93; and Journal of Modern History, II (June, 1930), 193-225. Also see Verete', Journal of Modern History, XXIV (June, 1952), 143-51. For Clarendon's differences with Palmerston regarding Mehemet Ali see Maxwell, II, 182-201.

[6]Hansard, CLX (1860), 616.

[7]The term Mountain is used to designate the mountainous interior of Lebanon as distinct from the maritime plain.

had been peaceful. As soon as the British left Syria, however, the Turkish government began fomenting quarrels between the Maronites and Druses. The allied powers had promised the Christians of Syria a better government, but they had not fulfilled their pledge. Admiral Sir Charles Napier, who had taken part in the Syrian expedition of 1840, had never believed that the plan of having a chief for the Druses and one for the Maronites, both under a Turk, was the way to pacify Syria. In 1844 Lord Aberdeen, then Foreign Secretary, distinctly recognized the position of responsibility in which Britain had placed herself. In 1845 and again in 1847 small scale disorders erupted in which the Turkish Pasha was an accomplice.[8] Then in 1860 a major disturbance broke out in Lebanon between the Druses and Maronites and again Turkish officials were implicated.

Once the outbreak had occurred, the immediate reaction was to assess the responsibility for it. Both Christians and Mohammedans were blamed. Discussing the events in Commons, Palmerston sagely observed that he did not think it much use to ask who had struck the first blow. For several months preceding the disturbance, however, there were rumors among all the Christian communities in Turkey that such an outbreak would occur in Syria in the spring.

According to Mr. Niven Moore, British consul in Beirut, the war had begun with an attack by the Maronites on a number of villages containing a mixed population--Druse and Maronite. The belief was also current that there was a Maronite committee sitting at Beirut, of which a Bishop Tobia was the directing agent. The object of this committee

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[8]Hansard, CLX (1860), 1479-82.

was to excite the Maronites into expelling all the Druses from at least the mixed districts. There had been border raids by both sides for some time, and it was thus easy, by citing single cases of outrage, to make the other party appear the aggressor. Although the war may have been started by the Maronites, once begun, it made little difference who had actually precipitated it.[9]

The Druses also had their censors who believed them responsible. On the basis of reports by missionaries, pilgrims, government officials, and others, it seemed that the Druses had struck the first blow. Throughout the winter of 1859-1860 the Turkish authorities had allowed the Druses to make preparations for war while the Christians were more closely restricted in such activities.[10] In early May 1860 a monk had been found murdered in a convent half-way between Beirut and Deir-el-Kamar. The murderer had to be a Druse for no Christian would dare harm such a personage. The Christians retaliated by killing the first Druse they found. According to the law of blood-feud among the people, the Druses then killed two Christians. Relatives of the slaughtered Christians in turn killed two Druses. The disturbance thus mushroomed into a war engulfing the entire Lebanon.[11]

Sir Henry Bulwer, British ambassador at the Porte, did not excuse the Druses for their part in the atrocities. He did believe, however, that they had received a good deal of provocation from the Maronites.[12] The principal cause for the fanatical behavior and the brutalities committed by the Druses was the almost general conviction

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[9] Ibid., 1588-89.

[10] Ibid., 1583-85.

[11] SP, 1860, LXIX, 654-55.

[12] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 34.

among them that the Christians had a plan designed to subdue or exterminate the Druses.[13] Bulwer believed that the Maronites were excited and filled with ideas of conquest and of French protection and thus provoked the distrubances that then turned to their disadvantage.[14]

From letters and pamphlets intercepted, it also seemed that for some time there had been a scheme of arousing the Mussulmans against the Christians who also believed that they were to be exterminated.[15] There were, therefore, two separate influences at work in bringing on the massacres, the conspiracy of the Christians and that of the Moslems. While each was distinct, they were parallel and synchronous.[16]

At this juncture the responsibility of the Turkish government becomes significant. Either Druses or Christians had begun the war, but Bulwer believed that the Ottoman government was really to blame for the strife in Syria.[17] The Turks had been encouraging disturbances in Lebanon for some years and particularly since 1858. The object of these machinations was that Turkey wanted a Turkish governor in the area and sought to abrogate the governmental system provided in 1845 whereby the Druses and Maronites had been placed under a chief for each class.[18]

Bulwer had been bringing the condition of Syria to the attention of the Porte every week for the preceding year, and on May 18, 1860 Moore reported that an outbreak was imminent. During the preceding two weeks there had been a marked increase in agitation and insecurity in

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[13] Ibid., 95. [14] Ibid., 97-98. [15] Ibid.

[16] Times, September 17, 1860. [17] SP, 1860, LXIX, 572.

[18] Annual Register, 1860, p. 251.

the Druse district of Lebanon. Assassinations and reprisals were of almost daily occurrence between the Druses and the Christians. The Christians, seeing their danger, sent addresses to Khorsheed Pasha, the governor-general of Lebanon, complaining of their plight. The consular body at Beirut, at the plea of the merchants there, also requested Khorsheed to take steps to avert the impending disaster. The Turkish officials gave assurances that all parties would be protected and that all violence would be suppressed. But, even while the assurances were being given the outbreak was in progress. Consul Moore cited several examples of where the Pasha had promised protection, but had withheld it, leaving the Christians to the mercy of the Druses. In many instances the Turkish garrisons had joined the Druses in attacking the Christians and in burning and pillaging, for example in the massacre of Deir-el-Kamar, a name soon to become synonymous with treachery, massacre, and horror.[19]

The explanation for the behavior of the Turk officials was that they promoted dissensions between the Druses and Maronites in order the more easily to govern them. The object of Turkey in Lebanon was to use the Druses to crush the Christians and their efforts for independence. Once the Christians were beaten, a great show of zeal and justice could be made in deference to European opinion. The Druses would be severely and summarily punished. In the end the direct domination of the Porte would be established in Syria on a stronger footing than ever. Whatever independence had been granted to the

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[19]Hansard, CLX (1860), 632-35.

mountain tribes by the treaties of 1842 and 1845 would be abolished.[20]

Moore believed that if the people in Lebanon were left to themselves the disturbances would die down. But, this was not what the Turk officials desired. If they could not foment and maintain a state of disorder until the people asked for direct Turkish rule, they at least wanted to make it impossible for the people to prosper under the native administration granted to them.[21] The intention was to continue an unsettled state of affairs and attribute the unsatisfactory situation to the inefficiency of the established system of government.[22]

In May Moore reminded Khorsheed that he had repeatedly drawn the latter's attention to the situation in Lebanon. Renewed efforts had to be made to end the disorders because the crops were maturing. Should disorders prevent the harvest, the misery of the people would be incalculable. Khorsheed expressed his sympathies, but protested that he did not have sufficient military force to undertake an expedition into the Mountain to restore order. Moore asserted, however, that if Khorsheed were really sincere he could put down the disorders with little difficulty. That a mob of peasants could resist the authority of the Pasha was inconceivable.[23]

Such was the situation on the eve of the outbreak. If the Turkish authorities had not actively precipitated the disturbance, they had taken few steps to avert it. Khorsheed Pasha was particularly culpable. British consular officials admitted that Khorsheed's

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[20]Annual Register, 1860, pp. 251-52.

[21]SP, 1860, LXIX, 524-26. [22]Ibid., 534.

[23]Ibid., 547-48.

military force was small, but had he used it, the outbreak could have been prevented or speedily checked.[24]

Once the outbreak began, the conduct of the Turkish regular and irregular troops was reprehensible. Moore reported that in Lebanon they were permitted to molest, plunder, and ill-treat the Christians almost at will.[25] The events taking place at the town of Deir-el-Kamar were particularly shocking. After being warned by the Pasha commanding the town, Osman Bey, that he feared an attack by the Druses, the Christians of the neighborhood came into the village and surrendered their arms. The Bey then confined the Christians in a building in the center of the town for many days, supplying them with barely enough food to keep them alive and not enough to keep them from physical debility.

Captain J. A. Paynter, commanding the Exmouth at Beirut, reported that on the morning of June 19 the Druses entered Deir-el-Kamar and commenced their burning and pillaging. The Turk garrison made no effort to stop them. Osman Bey then crowded the Christians into the court of the Serai and opened the gates, allowing the Druses to rush in and slaughter the defenseless men, women, and children. A few were able to escape death and live to tell of the atrocities by crawling under the bodies of the dead and fleeing under cover of darkness. In the evening Khorsheed arrived with additional troops, but passed through the town without aiding the Christians.[26] A Mussulman agent from the Prussian consulate at Beirut later investigated what had occurred at Deir-el-Kamar. He estimated the dead at 2000 and reported that most of the bodies lay in front of the barracks of the Turkish troops and

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[24] Ibid., 660-61. [25] Ibid., 617. [26] Ibid., 596-601.

before the house where the commander of the troops and governor of the town lived.[27]

The massacre of Deir-el-Kamar was repeated at other points, for example, in the Kesrouan district of the Mountain.[28] Many European consular officials suggested that Turkish troops had participated in the massacres and looting because their pay was as much as thirty months in arrears. The time had come when they might pay themselves through plunder.[29] But, there was a deeper reason. Mr. Cyril Graham,[30] a missionary, later reported that many influential Druse leaders, who for a long time had been a great annoyance to the Pashas of Syria, had also been killed. These were men of high rank and great authority. Graham charged that even if there were no other evidence available, the deaths of these men would be enough to prove the guilt of the Turk officials.[31]

The disaster in Syria was not allowed to remain an issue between only Druses and Maronites. Nor was it allowed to remain merely a matter involving the relationship of the Sultan with his subjects. The political implications of the massacres were staggering. The powers, because of interests, designs, treaties, and guarantees were immediately involved. The activities of Russia on the behalf of

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[27]Ibid., 638-39. [28]Ibid., 658-59. [29]Times, July 21, 1860.

[30]An eye-witness account of many of the horrors in Syria was given by Mr. Cyril Graham in whose judgment and accuracy Lord Dufferin had absolute confidence. Annual Register, 1860, pp. 252-54.

[31]SP, 1860, LXIX, 656.

Christians in another part of the Turkish empire further enhanced the importance of the Syrian question. Rumors were also legion that an understanding existed between France and Russia, and that both desired to take a part in the affairs of Turkey.[32]

Within official Turkish circles there was the suspicion that France desired Ottoman territory, that France did not want Turkey to remain intact. The Sultan's ministers had noted that a number of semi-official French papers had been directing attention to Turkish misrule. The same papers had pointed to Austrian misrule in Italy before war had broken out between France, Piedmont, and Austria.[33] As early as 1859 a notion prevailed that as soon as Napoleon III had completed a settlement of the Italian question he would seek territory in Turkey.[34]

Although the suspicions of French and Russian designs were not justified, they were held. Correspondence between Gorchakov and Czar Alexander belies any Russian intention to seize Constantinople. If the French Emperor had any designs on expansion in Syria, he did not press them.[35] But many in the British Foreign Office, and Prime Minister Palmerston, believed that such projects were contemplated and that Constantinople, Syria, and even Egypt, were keys to the gateway to India and must therefore remain in Turkish hands. The tenacious maintenance of these ideas colored British eastern policy during the Syrian crisis.

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[32] Hansard, CLIX (1860), 1650. [33] Times, December 10, 1859.

[34] Times, August 20, 1859. [35] Thompson, pp. 213-14.

Whatever its motives, the French government immediately attempted to check the Syrian disturbances. In early July 1860, M. de Thouvenel, French ambassador at the Porte, declared that when the news of the massacres became generally known all France would be aroused. He asserted that the arrangement of 1845 authorised direct European interference and suggested that ships of war be sent to defend the consuls and foreign subjects living on the coast. But, that was not enough. A commission should be immediately dispatched to ascertain whether or not the Sultan could keep order.[36] If the Turkish authorities could not quell the outbreak, France was prepared to act herself and obtain justice for the Christians.[37] On July 9 two French ships, the Donawerth and Eylau under Admiral Jehenne, were sent to the waters of Beirut to protect the Christians.[38]

Lord Stratford suggested the attitude that the British government should adopt toward the crisis. The true aspects of the situation had to be ascertained as well as whether the Turk authorities were responsible. Immediate circumstances dictated, however, that the Christians and British political interests be protected. Britain should press on the Turkish government the duty it bore to its Christian subjects and toward the European powers. The security provided for Turkey in 1856 was not to be used as a screen for negligence. Although the powers had given assurance that they would not interfere in Turkish affairs, this did not mean that maladministration and atrocities could

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[36] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 33-34. [37] Hansard, CLIX (1860), 1649-50.

[38] Times, July 10, 1860.

be perpetrated with impunity.[39]

When ambassador Bulwer pressed on the Porte the seriousness of the outbreaks, he was surprised to learn that the latest information at Constantinople on Syria was some three weeks old. Once informed of the extent of the atrocities, the Porte professed concern and dispatched ships and troops to restore order.[40] Fuad Pasha was sent as imperial commissioner to Syria with 16,000 troops and full powers to pacify that troubled area.[41] His task was to end the confusion and civil war and determine who or what had been responsible. Together with the task of meting summary punishment to the guilty, Fuad was to supervise the distribution of relief supplies to those whose homes had been destroyed.[42] Immediately after his arrival in Syria in July the commissioner commanded the parties to end their fighting and declared that his troops would attack any party violating this order. A commission would later be empowered to hear all grievances leading to and arising since the outbreak.[43]

In consequence of Fuad Pasha's mission to Syria, the British and French governments agreed that for the present there would be no direct interference. If the Porte was unable to end the conflict between the Druses and Maronites, however, British and French admirals

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[39]Hansard, CLIX (1860), 1650-51. For Stratford's attitude regarding intervention in Turkey see Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, pp. 413-14.

[40]SP, 1860, LXIX, 570. [41]Times, July 10, 1860.

[42]SP, 1861, LXVIII, 64-65. [43]Ibid., 76.

commanding vessels in Turkish waters would be authorized to disembark marines at Beirut.[44]

At the outset of the disturbance various British consuls had requested that ships be sent to patrol the coast to ensure their safety and that of the Christians. Additional vessels were sent after Britain agreed with France on the policy to be followed in Syria. By July 18 a good share of the British Mediterranean squadron under Vice-Admiral Martin had been dispatched to Syrian waters, ranging in size from the 131-gun Marlborough to the 4-gun Mohawk. There was no disputing the service that these ships performed. They evacuated Christian refugees and served particularly as agents to restore order.[45] As many instances proved, the Druses would not attack any town defended by a British ship in the harbor, no matter how small the ship was. The Druses had a high regard for Englishmen and wanted no blood feud with them.[46]

Britain also proffered material aid to the Syrian Christians who in most instances were in misery and want. As their homes and possessions in the Mountain were destroyed, the unfortunates streamed into the coastal cities seeking protection and relief. Consular officials received these hapless refugees into their homes and gave them money with which to purchase food and clothing. Moore in Beirut, for example, gave money in the name of the British government.[47] The commanders of the British ships in Syrian waters also placed food and supplies at the disposal of the committee for the relief of the

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[44] Times, July 14, 1860. [45] SP, 1860, LXIX, 648.

[46] Ibid., 586-88. [47] Ibid., 617.

distressed Christian fugitives.[48] Unofficial aid was extended too as many individuals used personal funds to help feed and clothe those in need.

Beyond steps to deal with the suffering entailed by the Druse-Maronite feud, the disorder itself had to be checked. Replying to an inquiry from Gorchakov regarding the pacification of Syria, Russell asserted that measures for the general and permanent pacification of Syria had to be settled at Constantinople by the representatives of the great powers.[49]

Prior to this, on June 27, the consuls-general of the five great powers had demanded that the Porte put an immediate end to the disasters. The Porte was urged to consider the consequences of non-compliance with this demand since the European governments could not look with indifference on the continuation of a state of disorder.[50] Subsequently, the consuls-general, on Moore's suggestion that direct negotiations be opened with the Druse chiefs in the Mountain, drafted a collective official letter admonishing them to desist from further violence. Moore's further suggestion, also accepted, was that Mr. Cyril Graham, English missionary from Damascus and distinguished Oriental traveler, be entrusted with carrying the letter to the Druse chiefs. Graham was personally acquainted with many of the native leaders, spoke their language, and knew their character. On June 28 he set out bearing similar letters to the Druse and Maronite Kaimakams

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[48] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 100. [49] Ibid., 35.

[50] SP, 1860, LXIX, 635.

and the Maronite patriarch, urging that the violence be stopped. Moore warned Graham against giving any pledges or guarantees which the powers could not fulfill.[51]

By July 4 Moore could report at least moderate success for Graham's mission of pacification. The chiefs had drawn up a collective letter of reply, the violence had abated, and Moore believed that the object sought by the consuls-general had been attained.[52] Bulwer in Constantinople also had hopes that the conflict was subsiding, and therefore felt that the Porte should not find it hard to resolve the fighting. The difficult part would come later in devising a means to assure permanent tranquillity. Bulwer further believed that a strong military force was a requisite for permanent peace.[53] Captain Paynter from the Exmouth also admitted that the sea-coast towns were somewhat quieter although neither confidence nor trade had recovered.[54]

Despite slight improvement, conditions by early July were admittedly unsettled. Great fear continued among the Christians. The massacres of Hasbeya, Rasheya, Deir-el-Kamar and other towns had sent thousands of Christians to the coastal areas. With every wave of refugees, and its accompanying report of atrocities, the fear and uncertainty mounted. The situation was the more inflammable because on June 28 the Bairam had begun, and this great festival of the Mohammedans was always characterized by high religious fervor.[55]

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[51] Ibid., 634. [52] Ibid., 639. [53] Ibid., 617.
[54] Ibid., 642. [55] Ibid., 633.

Amid these uncertain conditions, on July 5, peace negotiations, conducted through the Turkish authorities, began between the deputies of the Druses and Maronites. Some conditions were to be imposed on the Christians--"oblivion of the past," "non-surrender of plunder," and "no indemnification for property destroyed."[56] The Christians protested the provision against no indemnity, but peace was concluded on July 10 on the terms first considered.[57] After the treaty was signed no one could make a claim on either side for indemnity or retribution. If anyone did so and disorder ensued, he would be punished by the authorities.

It was Moore's belief that the cessation of hostilities was mainly due to the collective letter sent by the consuls-general to the Druse chiefs. They no longer had any illusions of being able to act with impunity despite what the Turks might have told them about their not being punished for their misdeeds.[58] But, Moore did not think that the peace was equitable, and Graham shared this opinion. The terms had been forced upon the Christians. After the suffering and loss they had endured, the Christians would not have accepted voluntarily a treaty providing for no indemnity. Only the Christian Kaimakam and some petty functionaries had signed the peace.[59] The Pasha had made a great show of summoning an equal number of representatives from both sides. But, the Christians who came were traitors who had been bribed. Even had they been honest men they would not have dared to oppose the Pasha.[60]

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[56] Ibid., 633-34. [57] Times, July 25, 1860.

[58] SP, 1860, LXIX, 649. [59] Ibid., 673.

[60] Ibid., 659.

Soon after the conclusion of peace, however inadequate its provisions, Britain and France announced "perfect understanding" regarding the affairs of Syria, although this agreement would soon dissipate. In order not to obstruct the free action of the Turkish government, the French Cabinet had decided that the commanders of the French ships in Syrian waters would abstain from all intervention. Their activities would be confined to protecting the French consuls and offering refuge only to those Christians asking for it.[61]

Events soon proved, however, that the conclusion of peace did not restore order and confidence. Moore reported that the Christians near Beirut refused to return to their homes for fear of being harmed by the Druses. No Christian could show himself without being assailed with vile language and personal insult.[62] Christians also continued to leave the interior and emigrate to the coast in order to secure the protection of European ships of war.[63]

That the conclusion of peace was only a fiction was evident with the massacre at Damascus. On June 28 British consul James Brant reported that the feast of the Bairam had begun and that the Christians were fearful for the Moslem fanaticism always generated during this festivity.[64] On July 9 rioting broke out in Damascus, resulting in hundreds of Christians killed; churches, schools, and convents burned; and all the foreign consulates except those of Britain and France destroyed.[65]

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[61] *Times*, July 12, 1860. [62] *SP*, 1861, LXVIII, 74-75.

[63] *Times*, July 20, 1860. [64] *SP*, 1860, LXIX, 621.

[65] *Times*, July 18, 1860. A grisly, first-hand account of the Damascus massacres can be found in *Annual Register*, 1860, pp. 254-55.

The entire episode seemed to indicate that the massacre had been planned. A number of days prior to the outbreak, some of the baser citizens of the city were made officers and policemen and detailed to guard the Christian quarter. On the afternoon of July 9 a number of Moslem boys began hurling insults at Christian passersby in the streets. For punishment the boys were put in chains and ordered to sweep the market and the streets. A crowd of Moslems soon gathered and released the boys. Within fifteen minutes the shops of the market were closed and shots were being exchanged. Short minutes later the houses of the Christian quarter were being plundered and burned. Giving further cause for speculation was that within five or ten minutes of the beginning of the outbreak white and green banners appeared at the windows of the Moslem houses, perhaps indicating which homes were to be spared.[66]

The city guards and irregular troops, who were supposedly to protect the Christians, were the first to begin plundering, killing, and burning. The attitude of the Turkish authorities was indecisive. None of the leading officials of the city made any move to arrest the riot.[67] The Reverend Smylie Robson charged that the impunity with which the members of the mob indulged their zeal for rapine and bloodshed could only have been prompted by the knowledge that their activities would not be punished by the authorities. He believed that fifty men under strong and effective leadership could have quelled the riot at its beginning.[68]

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[66] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 101-103. [67] Ibid.

[68] SP, 1860, LXIX, 651.

While many of the townspeople were compromised in the massacres, many Moslems of the upper and priestly classes, one Abd-el-Kader in particular, had admirably attempted to save the lives of Christians and check the disorder. It thus appeared that only a small mob had been guilty of excesses. The situation had been worsened with the arrival of Arabs and Druses who, attracted by the fires, entered the city and participated in the general plunder and massacre.[69] By August 1 Fuad Pasha had arrived in Damascus and an uneasy order had been restored, but many people wanted to leave Damascus for the coast and would do so as soon as transportation was found.

In the British parliament Lord Wodehouse, Undersecretary for Foreign Affairs, lamented that what had begun as a Druse-Maronite feud in the Mountain had expanded to become a general outbreak between Christians and Mohammedans. The latter aspect was unquestionably fraught with more peril for the Turkish empire than any danger arising solely from hostilities between the Druses and Maronites.[70]

Reports such as that from the British consul at the seaport of Saida that the Christians on the coast would be safe only as long as British ships remained vindicated Wodehouse's apprehensions.[71] Consul Brant warned Bulwer that the Druses and Arabs were ready to take advantage of the first sign of government weakness. Order could only be maintained in Syria by an energetic, impartial government supported by a sufficient, well-organized, and regularly-paid military force.[72]

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[69] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 86-87. [70] Hansard, CLX (1860), 616-17.

[71] SP, 1860, LXIX, 631-32. [72] Ibid., 625.

The governments of the powers were thus led to conclude that more forceful and direct measures were required to restore order in Syria and Lebanon. If, as many persons asserted, the Turkish authorities were themselves implicated or responsible, they could not be expected to take effective measures to restore peace. The powers themselves had to act.

CHAPTER V

THE QUESTION OF DISPATCHING FOREIGN TROOPS TO SYRIA

From consular and other reports British and French officials concluded that Turkish authorities were implicated in the Syrian disturbance. If officials such as Khorsheed Pasha had not actively instigated the disorders, they had at least failed to take the energetic action necessary to keep them from assuming catastrophic proportions. Significantly, the only points sustaining serious massacres were those having Turkish garrisons, such as Hasbeya, Rasheya, Deir-el-Kamar, Sidon, and Damascus.[1]

Because it was obviously the primary requisite, Bulwer told Russell in mid-July that order would have to be restored and those guilty brought to justice. The ambassador did not immediately offer any suggestions, however, observing merely that sending Fuad Pasha as Turkish commissioner was a wise move on the part of the Porte.[2]

Thouvenel, now French Foreign Minister, admitted a traditional French interest in Lebanon and suggested a course of action to Russell. The agents of the European governments had done all in their power to protect the Christians and with their aid the troops under Fuad Pasha would be better able to check the disturbance. But more was needed.

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[1] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 107. [2] Ibid., 55.

Once order had been restored, some provision would be necessary to prevent the recurrence of atrocities. The agreement that had been drawn up by the powers in 1845 had been shattered; something new had to be devised to take its place. He suggested that an investigation first be made. For this purpose a commission might be appointed to determine the circumstances that had provoked the crisis and to assess the share of responsibility to be borne by each party involved. The commission would determine the compensation due the victims and also study arrangements designed to prevent further misfortunes. Similar suggestions were sent to the foreign offices of Russia, Austria, and Prussia.[3]

Bulwer also eventually suggested to Russell that a commission, possibly including Europeans, be appointed to investigate the situation in Lebanon. On the basis of the inquiries, recommendations would be made to the Porte on reforms such as those regarding tribunals, police, justice, and distribution of taxes. He also believed that the system of independent governments for the Mountain was incompatible with the preservation of order. Only one government should be established for all of Syria.[4]

The British government acceded to the suggestion of Thouvenel, and Lord Dufferin was chosen to go to Constantinople to represent Britain on the commission about to inquire into the events in Syria. His primary object was to seek security for the future tranquillity of the area. Peace obviously could not be obtained without speedy and impartial administration of justice. Those who had suffered had to be compensated or they would continue taking the law into their own hands,

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[3] Ibid., 37-38.

[4] Ibid., 56.

substituting revenge for legal retribution. Above all, Dufferin was to bear in mind that his country desired no territorial acquisition and no exclusive influence or commercial advantage. Nor should any object of this kind be acquired by any other power.[5]

The tardiness with which undesirable conditions in Syria were being rectified prompted Thouvenel to suggest further that a more material intervention by the powers was necessary. European public opinion would not brook the continued policy of non-interference of the powers, especially in the face of the continuing disasters. The Porte obviously had no authority left in Syria. The province was in a state of anarchy. Realizing that no plan could be broached that would not meet with some objection, Thouvenel on July 17 nevertheless suggested that foreign troops be sent to various points along the coast of the disturbed districts. The presence of these troops would deter the aggressors and restore confidence to the Christians.[6] When French consuls continued to speculate that the Porte would never be able to repress the disorders, Napoleon III on July 21 resolved to send an armed expedition to Syria. He then invited the powers signing the treaty of 1856 to give their concurrence in a scheme designed to provide protection for the Syrian Christians.[7]

The suggestion of using foreign troops in Turkey immediately brought the provisions of the 1856 settlement into question. Such an issue had been raised on the eve of the Syrian outbreaks when Russia had been instrumental in suggesting an inquiry into the condition of the Christians in the European provinces of Turkey. Lord

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[5]Ibid., 58. [6]Ibid., 38-39. [7]Times, July 23, 1860.

Russell, British Foreign Secretary, had then cautioned against an active interference in Turkey that would violate the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris. He had concluded in an address to the Lords on June 1 that the treaty was positive on the matter of non-intervention in Turkey. Nothing but "extreme urgency," an insurrection or an attempt of another power to take the part of the insurgents and make war on the Sultan would justify the powers of Europe in interfering in the internal government of Turkey.[8] Earlier he had warned that the powers must take extreme care in any course regarding Turkey so they did not encroach on the sovereignty of the Sultan. To detract from the Sultan's independence, while endeavoring to improve the condition of his empire, might well add to its weakness.[9]

Although many members of the British government expressed their concern on sending foreign troops to Syria, it was decided that Britain would not object to France or Austria sending soldiers to Syria if a convention were first agreed upon between the Porte and the powers. Britain, however, would limit her direct participation to stationing ships of the line on the Syrian coast. Commanders would be authorized to land marines in Syria if circumstances required, but these troops would not move inland.[10] But, when the British government learned that peace had been concluded between the Maronites and Druses on July 10, its first impression was that the project of military intervention should be abandoned or at least deferred.[11]

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[8] Hansard, CLVIII (1860), 1903-1906. [9] Ibid., 1072.

[10] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 42-43. [11] Ibid., 43.

On Russell's suggestion that French troops not be sent, Thouvenel on July 22 declared that he had no proof that the disturbance had been resolved. Moreover, even if peace had been declared, he would still send troops. The peace at its best could not amount to more than a suspension of hostilities and the submission of the Maronites to the Druses in order to save themselves from further massacre. There would still be the question of reparation for losses. According to reports received in Paris, more than 10,000 Christians had lost their lives. Something had to be done to prevent the recurrence of such atrocities. A Turkish force might succeed in getting the hostilities suspended, but only the presence of a foreign army would ensure justice being done to the victims of the massacre.[12]

When Aali Pasha, Turkey's leading reform statesman, learned that the powers were considering means for the pacification of Syria that included the use of foreign troops, he expressed his alarm and protestations. He was convinced that disembarking foreign troops in Syria would only be the signal for greater catastrophes.[13] His fears may have been well-founded. When the Druses had been warned during their excesses that foreign powers might intervene, they had declared that if foreign troops were landed in Syria every Christian in the province would be put to death.

Thouvenel, however, would not admit that fear of a general massacre was sufficient cause for not sending troops. If such reasoning were admitted, Turkey would use it every time an attempt was made to correct an abuse. Nevertheless, Lord Cowley, the British ambassador

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[12] Ibid., 45. [13] Ibid.

in Paris, advised Thouvenel to exercise caution. Cowley suggested that although the atrocities in Syria were shocking, they were nothing compared to what might happen to the Turkish Christians if a general fanatical insurrection broke out. He suggested that it might be better to delay, or even abandon, an armed intervention. Thouvenel disagreed. The troops had to be sent.[14] Already, by July 20, the French government had dispatched a staff officer to Syria. Having gained much experience in mountain warfare during fifteen years' service in Algeria, he would be able to advise the government on what sort of armed intervention was needed.[15]

On the afternoon of July 23 Cowley again spoke with Thouvenel. He indicated that Britain was disinclined to agree any longer on the need for sending an expedition to Syria and on signing a convention by the powers and the Porte in furtherance of the expedition. Thouvenel once more pointed out that the conclusion of peace did not guarantee the safety of the Christians. Moreover, France would be entirely justified in demanding reparation for the destruction of the French consul's house at Damascus and on behalf of the Latin convents in Lebanon that from the time of St. Louis had been under French protection. That France had no desire to act single-handedly, however, had been shown with the suggestion of the convention. Thouvenel then inquired what Britain proposed to do. Surely she could not continue to advocate a policy of abstention in the face of repeated massacres.[16] Moreover,

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[14] Ibid., 46.

[15] Times, July 21, 1860.

[16] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 49-50.

Austria had already indicated that while she would not furnish troops, she had no objections to a European armed intervention in Syria.[17]

On July 23 Russell consulted with the Cabinet and that evening informed the French ambassador in Britain, Count Persigny, that Britain would accede to a French military expedition to Syria. By this date Austria, Russia, and Prussia had agreed to the measure. Britain had been alone in deferring acceptance. Russell declared that under the circumstances it was no longer possible for his government to maintain its objections.[18]

The British government had apparently been influenced in its decision by the latest reports from Syria. The numbers of Christians killed and wandering homeless, widowed, and orphaned were mounting daily. Britain had been horror-stricken on the news of the massacres at Damascus. It was not particularly that barbarous Druses had indiscriminately murdered other tribesmen. It was not the utter inhumanity that characterized the atrocities. What alarmed and infuriated Englishmen was that Turkish Pashas and Beys, chosen by the Sultan to govern and protect his subjects, had abetted and favored the massacres. An outbreak of Moslem fanaticism could have been understood, but the treachery, brutality, and cruelty on the part of persons in official positions showed either some deep and sinister design to exterminate the Christians or an unheard-of-degree of weakness and apathy at Constantinople. Britain had expended many lives and much money maintaining the independence of the Sultan. He had to be advised that

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[17] Ibid., 46.

[18] Hansard, CLX (1860), 13-17.

either his whole system of government had to be reformed or his cause would be abandoned by his best allies.[19]

Russell admitted that exceptional circumstances seemed to necessitate the expedition. But, if the news of the next ten days or fortnight justified the hope that the massacres had stopped and would not be renewed, he suggested that recourse not be made to "the very hazardous attempt" of trying to end the disorders by the use of foreign troops. The French soldiers in such a case should not embark or should at once return. He also thought that six months should be the maximum period allowed for French troops to remain in Syria. If order had not been restored by that time, it would be clear that no period would suffice to bring peace.[20]

Only reluctantly did the British government acquiesce in the use of foreign troops in the interior of Syria. The expedition might provoke fiercer fanaticism among the Mussulmans, might retard rather than hasten the pacification of Syria, and might lead to international difficulties. The intervention, therefore, was to be undertaken only when its necessity had been clearly proved, and it should end as soon as the need no longer existed. Russell was also anxious about the payment for this military force. To require Turkey to meet its expenses would be to throw an added burden on her already-overtaxed finances. Russell's anxieties were not heeded. The Porte later had to assume the expenses for the expedition.[21]

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[19] SP, 1861, LXVII, 658-59; SP, 1861, LXVIII, 47-48.

[20] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 47-48. [21] Ibid.

Once the powers had agreed on the need for sending troops, they decided that a convention would have to be signed specifying the character and object of the intervention. Meanwhile France continued preparations for the expedition. An advance guard of some 5,000 men under Brigadier-General de Beaufort d'Hautpoul would be sent. Having gained much experience from long service in Algeria, he was considered a wise choice as commander. The general also knew the country well since he had been attached to the headquarters of Ibrahim Pasha when the latter occupied Syria. Beaufort's object would be to occupy Beirut, protect the town, and make it an asylum for those Christians who wanted to take refuge there. Ships of war would then guarantee the safety of the town while the troops moved on to such points as Damascus to punish those guilty of massacres.[22]

The day following the agreement on sending troops, Russell requested that their embarkation be delayed. They might not be needed. Word had been received from Syria that the hostilities between the Druses and Maronites had ceased. The Sultan would now be able to consult with the powers on the best means of completing the pacification of Syria and guarding against future massacres.[23] Thouvenel's answer was that news received from Syria via French sources indicated a renewed danger to the Christians in such places as Damascus. He hoped, therefore, that Britain would no longer ask for any more delay in sending troops to troubled Syria.[24]

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[22] *Times*, July 24, 1860. [23] *SP*, 1861, LXVIII, 50-51.

[24] *Ibid.*, 52.

The question now in the minds of many, given expression by the Paris correspondent for the Times, was whether Britain and France were really agreed on the need and method for intervention in Syria. Since Turkey was still not partitioned and continued to pass as an independent power, her assent to measures deeply concerning her might be considered by Britain as a necessary preliminary. Would Britain join with France if that assent were not obtained?[25]

A counterorder restraining the departure of the French troops was still in effect on July 26, the reason being that Britain insisted on Turkish consent to the expedition. The Turks in turn opposed an exclusively French intervention and suggested one by all the powers. The Turkish government was also anxious lest the arrival of French troops in Syria be the signal for a general massacre of the Christians.[26] Bulwer declared that the Porte's apprehensions were genuine. Aali Pasha, for example, was deeply concerned over the effect the arrival of foreign troops would have on the Mussulman mind.[27]

Considering the question from every point of view, however, Bulwer concluded that the sending of a commission of inquiry and European troops to Syria was necessary, even if unfortunate consequences resulted.[28] Lord Stratford concurred. One of the reasons Turkey acted as she did was because of the strong impression prevailing at Constantinople that the powers would never unite against Turkish maladministration. If the Turkish ministers saw Britain and

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[25]Times, July 25, 1860.

[26]Times, July 27, 1860.

[27]SP, 1861, LXVIII, 65.

[28]Ibid., 66.

France cooperating, their attitude to the laxness and excesses would change.[29]

While Britain had suggested delaying the departure of troops and had insisted on the free accession of the Sultan to their use, she had no intention of abandoning the unfortunate Christians in Syria. Those guilty in the massacres had to be punished and provision had to be made to prevent future atrocities.[30] Cowley had approached Thouvenel on July 25 with the suggestion that the powers sign a protocol similar in intent to that of September 17, 1840.[31] This protocol, signed by the governments of Britain, Austria, Prussia, and Russia, had declared that the powers would not seek territory, influence, or commercial advantage as a result of intervening in the Syrian question.[32] Thouvenel approved and accepted Cowley's suggestion.

On the same day Cowley had been authorized by his government to attend the meeting of the representatives of the five powers and the Porte at Paris to discuss the occupation of Syria by a European force. When the first meeting was held on July 26, the Turkish ambassador would not participate in the discussions. He had no instructions from his government, and he did not believe foreign troops necessary when the Sultan's army was capable of restoring and maintaining order in Syria.[33] Still protesting the need for foreign intervention, Aali Pasha on July 27 reluctantly instructed Ahmed Vefyk Effendi, the Porte's representative, to discuss and sign a convention

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[29]Hansard, CLX (1860), 1239. [30]Times, July 28, 1860.

[31]SP, 1861, LXVIII, 54. [32]Ibid., 48-49.

[33]Ibid., 53.

with the plenipotentiaries of the great powers on the sending of troops. If the governments of Europe continued to feel that a European military force was necessary in Syria, Turkey would agree, but on the following conditions. Decisions on the movement of the troops had to be made in concert with the authorities of the Porte, the size of the force had to be proportionate to the need, foreign troops could not outnumber Turkish troops in Syria, and the date for terminating the occupation had to be specified.[34]

Even while the Porte was indicating its reservations on the use of foreign troops, Russell was instructing Cowley on the conditions Britain would require. In the convention, or in a separate protocol, it had to be stipulated that the troops could not remain in Syria more than six months. The Porte had to give its explicit consent to the intervention, and on the same day that the powers signed the convention they must sign a protocol renouncing any attempt to gain separate advantage in territory, commerce, or influence.[35]

The preparatory meeting of the powers' representatives was held on July 30. Here the Turkish ambassador expressed the essential reservations of the Porte and its understanding of the use of troops. Turkey first wanted it understood that possible untoward consequences could result from such intervention. The Druses might be excited to further excesses. The Mussulmans might mistake the intentions of the powers and become annoyed at being treated with so much distrust simply because the Druses and a few unsavory characters, Mussulman in name only, had committed acts that even the government deprecated. The Mussulmans

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[34] Ibid., 89. [35] Ibid., 56.

might react by committing excesses themselves, and the result would be a worse situation than presently existed.

On the other hand the Christians could consider the action of the powers a point in their favor against the Mussulmans and, relying on the support of the powers, commit atrocities themselves. Moreover, once the notion had spread that the Porte was unable to cope with the situation without foreign support, the sovereign authority of the Sultan would have been weakened. Finally, the Porte believed itself capable, as was being demonstrated, of repressing disorder and punishing the guilty.[36]

The powers were also cautioned that Turkey was giving its assent to the intervention only to demonstrate her sincere desire to curb disorders. In the convention regarding the sending of troops it had to be noted, therefore, that Turkey's compliance emanated from the spontaneous desire of the Sultan to check the massacres in Syria and that he had accepted the cooperation of his allies to that end. Thouvenel assented to this reservation, and it was included in the convention.[37]

At this point the Russian representative, General Kisseleff, interjected another proposal to be included in the convention. Seeing that his government would not gain any advantage from the magnanimous act the other powers were contemplating, the czar suggested that Russia might intervene in Serbia, Bosnia, or Montenegro while France occupied Beirut.[38] An article could be added to the convention

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[36]Ibid., 60. [37]Times, August 2, 1860. [38]Ibid., p. 9.

applying its stipulations to other parts of the Ottoman empire where the Christians might require similar protection. Should such a suggestion meet with insuperable objections, the representatives were invited to sign a protocol containing Kisseleff's proposal, the expedition could be sent to Syria, and the powers could consider the Russian proposition at a later time.

The Turkish representative immediately protested this suggestion and asserted that if it were persisted in he would not sign the convention. Thouvenel agreed. Cowley offered the same objections.[39] In the face of such opposition, the Russian proposal was postponed.[40]

At the July 31 meeting of the representatives a convention was drafted containing six articles and adopting the modifications desired by the Porte. Russell admitted the possible consequences that might result from sending troops, but authorized Cowley to sign the convention.[41] The behavior of the Turk Pashas and troops in Syria had induced Britain to consent to the French proposal of a military intervention. The massacres of Lebanon might have been left to the justice of Fuad Pasha had not the news from Damascus shown that even in one of the principal cities the Turkish authorities were incapable of protecting the lives of Christians.[42]

The convention provided that France would send 6,000 troops to Syria. Should it prove necessary to augment this number, other powers would consider sending their own contingents. Thouvenel did not want the expedition viewed as exclusively French and insisted that the

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[39] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 62-63. [40] Times, August 6, 1860.

[41] Times, August 1, 1860. [42] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 63.

French government was acting in the name of all the interested powers. He also thought that an occupation of six months would be sufficient to restore order. But, circumstances over which the French had no control might necessitate keeping troops there longer. Disease, inclement weather, or a renewal of hostilities might postpone withdrawal. Cowley observed that in the first two cases no one could be expected to do the impossible and in the event of the third, there was always the possibility of summoning another conference.[43]

In addition to the convention, the members of the conference, in deference to the Turkish ambassador, drafted a protocol precisely defining the object of the intervention. It was noted that the cooperation of the powers was at the request of the Sultan and in concert with the Porte and that the foreign troops were at all times to act together with the Turkish forces. The protocol also stipulated that the powers did not seek vengeance. They merely wanted to ascertain guilt. No rigorous punishments would be meted out until after an inquiry had been made by the commissioners of the powers and the Porte.[44]

News reaching Paris from Syria on August 1 was alarming. Disorder continued to prevail. Fuad Pasha had asked for reinforcements and additional funds. Thouvenel therefore was vexed at the delay in sending the French troops. It was clear that if their departure depended on the signature of the convention, precious time would lapse before they could leave. None of the representatives taking part in the drafting of the convention had full power, except by telegraph, to sign it. Thouvenel suggested that an expedient might be found in

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[43] Ibid., 61-62.

[44] Times, August 3, 1860.

signing a protocol containing the articles outlined in the convention. The desired object would be obtained, that of allowing the troops to depart, without setting the dangerous precedent of plenipotentiaries signing a convention before being formally empowered.[45]

Accordingly, on August 3 a protocol was signed to be effective immediately. It had not been deemed advisable to allow a fine point of diplomatic etiquette to delay the departure of the troops. The articles would later be put into a convention and signed when the representatives had the requisite powers. In accord with the Porte's wishes, the protocol began with the assertion that the intervention was being undertaken on the wish of the Sultan to check the disorders in Syria and that the powers had therefore agreed to the following articles:

1. A body of European troops, which could be increased to 12,000 men, would be sent to Syria to restore order.

2. France agreed to furnish half the troops immediately, and should more be necessary, the powers would come to an understanding with the Porte on which country was to provide them.

3. The commander of the occupation forces was to work with the commissioner of the Porte to fulfill the object of the expedition.

4. The powers promised to station sufficient naval forces on the Syrian coast to maintain order.

5. The contracting parties set at six months the duration of the occupation. The troops were then to be removed.

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[45] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 64.

6. The Porte, so far as possible, was to furnish supplies and provisions for the expeditionary troops.[46]

On the same day that the latter protocol was signed the representatives of the powers signed another containing the earlier suggestions of Russell and establishing the true character of the assistance and expressing the disinterestedness of the powers. This protocol declared that:

> the feelings which have dictated the clauses of this Act and their disinterestedness, declare in the most formal manner that the Contracting Powers do not intend to seek for and will not seek for, in the execution of their engagements, any territorial advantages, any exclusive influence, or any concession with regard to the commerce of their subjects, such as could not be granted to the subjects of all other nations.[47]

The protocol also recalled the promises of the Sultan in 1856 that administrative measures would be undertaken to ameliorate the condition of the Christians in the Ottoman empire. The powers wanted the Sultan's assurances honored.[48]

The Paris correspondent for the Times reported on August 5 that French troops had already left or would sail that day. The last battalion would leave some days later. General Beaufort was confident that he would be able to maintain order in Syria with the 6,000 troops at his command.[49] Before the troops departed, Napoleon III addressed them and invoked the traditions of the First Empire when he declared that the sole aim of their expedition was to secure the rights of justice and humanity. The troops went not to make war on a foreign

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[46] SP, 1860, LXIX, 607-609. [47] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 70-71.

[48] Hansard, CLX (1860), 617-18. [49] Times, August 6, 1860.

power, but to assist the Sultan in bringing his subjects back into obedience. The soldiers were embarking on a great cause. They were going in the spirit of the first Crusaders.[50]

The Porte sought to allay some of the popular fear that had been aroused when the coming of foreign troops was announced. The Turkish people were asked to receive the French as allies and as guests. The Porte further declared that the foreign troops were not to make the least movement within the Turkish empire without the concurrence of the Porte's functionaries.[51]

The satisfaction expressed in the French press at the departure of the troops was by no means shared by everyone and by every European government. From many quarters came dire predictions of what may transpire. A religious war might sweep the entire Ottoman empire. Self-seeking powers could provoke a general European crisis by demanding resolution of the Eastern Question. Disembarking troops in Syria could very well have the double effect of inspiring the Christians with hope and desire for revenge and exciting the anger and prejudices of the Mussulmans. Order would likely be maintained in Syria by the Turkish troops already on the scene, by those under General Beaufort, and by the presence of foreign ships of war in Syrian waters. But, how was tranquillity to be preserved in the other provinces of the empire. Many fearmongers expressed alarm that within a short while all Turkey would be in an uproar, and the events of Syria would appear trifling by comparison. Should a general conflagration occur, Russia and Austria might demand the right of interference in the provinces

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[50] Times, August 9, 1860. [51] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 101.

nearest them. In this eventuality, Britain could not remain a spectator, and the much-dreaded crisis involving the Eastern Question would have arrived.

The Paris correspondent for the Times reported much feeling in France that sending troops to Syria was only the beginning of a larger project, perhaps on the scale of the Crimean campaign. The occupation was limited to six months, but it could be extended. France had sent a division to Rome in 1849 for what appeared then to be a short duration. Eleven years had passed, and no one cared to speculate on when the occupation might terminate. More than this, the troops not only protected the temporal power of the papacy, they spread French ideas. The Syrian intervention could be a similar mission. The Siècle had made itself the exponent of this idea that was growing in the minds of many Frenchmen. The Times' contributor suggested that much of such talk was idle, but it was a point worthy of note.[52]

Sources of higher repute were also anxious about the French intervention in Syria.[53] That inveterate British humanitarian, the Earl of Shaftesbury, had a deep distrust towards the French Emperor and feared that Napoleon's altruism was only a shield for dishonorable intentions. Shaftesbury based his anxieties on the knowledge that for many years French agents had been active in Syria, as reported by missionaries and others. French agents had promised Mussulmans and

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[52]Times, August 8, 1860.

[53]For Queen Victoria's concern with the French occupation see Charles C. F. Greville, A Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria from 1852 to 1860 (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1887), II, 300-306.

Greeks that by becoming members of the Latin Church they would receive protection of person and property from France. Many had professed their adherence to the Roman Catholic faith allegedly for that reason.

Even if such accounts were exaggerated and of no consequence, said Shaftesbury, there were other ramifications. If French troops were to be the sole European instrument for preserving peace and order in Syria, French influence in the East would be maintained and increased. The Christians would be convinced that their protector was really the Emperor of the French. Shaftesbury declined to say that the intervention was wrong. To allow the disorders to continue unabated would be contrary to every law of humanity. He only hoped that adequate precautions had been taken to guard against the consequences of a preponderant French influence.[54]

In a similar vein, Mr. Seymour Fitzgerald, M. P. from Horsham, reminded the Commons that the Crimean war had been fought in part because of the jealousy between France and Russia, each claiming to protect Latin and Greek Christians. If France now interfered in Syria on behalf of the Latin Christians, it would be almost impossible for the Russian government to refrain from interfering in favor of Greek Christians in other parts of the empire. He feared that the future peace of Europe was endangered.[55]

The Earl of Granville for his part questioned the compliance of Britain in the intervention. He did not think that the British

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[54]Hansard, CLX (1860), 689-92; see also Edwin Hodder, The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury (3 vols.; London: Cassell and Co., Ltd., 1887), III, 100. For general British distrust of Napoleon III see Gooch and Masterman, pp. 18-20.

[55]Hansard, CLX (1860), 641-42.

government should allow its feeling of horror and revulsion over the disorders in Syria to influence a change of policy regarding the need for maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman empire. Britain had not fought the Crimean war out of love for either the Turks or for their religion. The principle had been to maintain the Ottoman empire intact, and Britain's recent decision endangered the break-up of the Turkish empire. The problem in Syria was delicate, but the policy of Britain should not be determined by sentiment. Britain should continue to adhere to a policy that would contribute to the peace of Europe and to the balance of power in the world.[56]

Similar fears were expressed by Stratford. He declared that above all the importance of Syria must not be forgotten. It was the key to Egypt. Syria was so strategically important that if any extension of interference occurred, the maritime powers of Europe might find it difficult to int rvene without precipitating a long and hazardous war.[57]

At the same time, Stratford recognized that prior promises had to be honored and that the atrocities that had so recently occurred in Lebanon must not be repeated. And, apparently, the Turkish authorities were not able to end the disorders satisfactorily. The Sultan had been warned for years of the consequences of allowing the old system to continue. From his own experience, Stratford could say that no attention had been paid to the advice. If the Sultan had carried out the reforms proclaimed to his people after the Crimean war, the

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[56] Ibid., 623-24. [57] Ibid., 606.

disasters of Syria could have been prevented and the condition of the empire would have been much different.[58]

It was impossible to escape the conclusion that the disturbance in Syria and the entire Eastern Question were linked. What had occurred in Syria had merely brought the point home to the British government. Stratford warned that it would do no good to undertake makeshift measures to end the disorders in Syria and punish those guilty. He was convinced that unless a way could be found to force the Porte to redeem the pledges made in 1856 the difficulty would only be temporarily resolved and seeds of future difficulties would have been sown. The Syrian outbreak was not the first, nor would it be the last. The Syrian question was only part and parcel of the weakness of the entire empire. Unless complete reform were inaugurated, the Eastern Question could be opened at any time, and the powers would be involved in that very problem they had tried to avoid or at least keep in abeyance. The period for palliatives was passing away.[59]

A special correspondent to the Times from Beirut expressed much the same sentiment. He suggested that before Britain further pledged herself to maintaining the Turkish empire or became involved in measures for its defense, she secure satisfactory evidence that the sovereignty of the Porte could be upheld for any reasonable length of time and that the process was practical and worth the cost. If the answer was in the negative, would it not be cheaper and wiser, he asked, to solve the eastern problem at once. To postpone it was cruel to all alike and an act of moral cowardice. And, the settlement of the Eastern Question

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[58] Ibid., 605-608. [59] Ibid., 608-609.

would one day have to be made anyway.[60]

But, instead of a complete renovation for Turkey, the British government decided to plaster the cracks. Lord Wodehouse, Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, declared that the Turkish empire could only be prevented from falling apart by the use of palliatives such as had been applied by the British government for many years. Immediate, effective, and vigorous measures had to be taken to end the disturbance in Syria. If the disorders continued, it was impossible to predict how far they might spread. In dealing with the problem the powers of Europe had considered every implication. Anyone acquainted with eastern affairs admitted that the Syrian crisis was one of the most critical that had arisen regarding the stability of the Turkish empire. Even more serious were the possible effects on the peace of Europe. A close relationship existed between the Eastern Question and the general policies of the powers, so close that it was impossible for any catastrophe to occur in Turkey without endangering a European war. The powers had deemed it advisable, therefore, to postpone a forcible solution to the Eastern Question. For the moment, less extensive expedients seemed the wiser course.[61]

Russell admitted that the intervention was fraught with danger. It could be taken as a precedent, but no provision for the future had been made in either the protocol or the convention. The British government had not thought it prudent to make any provision for subsequent interference in the Ottoman empire. Given the difficult and perilous conditions in Syria, however, the British government had

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[60] *Times*, August 17, 1860. [61] *Hansard*, CLX (1860), 619-21.

considered it necessary that the powers intervene in Turkey. Russell believed it the opinion of all the European powers that the only safe mode of conduct was in combination with no state seeking separate advantages.[62] For reasons of efficiency one power had been allowed to take charge of the movement of troops and, if it became necessary, additional forces could be sent by the other powers.[63]

The powers would also offer advice to the Porte on necessary reforms and how they should be implemented. But, while advice would be given and reforms suggested, their ultimate execution would be left in the hands of officers appointed by the Porte. The powers recognised that any attempt to interfere directly in the administration of Turkey would diminish the authority of the Sultan and excite the fanatical passions of the Mussulmans.[64]

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[62] Ibid., 643-46. [63] Ibid., 1131-32. [64] Ibid., 643-46.

CHAPTER VI

THE SYRIAN CRISIS RESOLVED

The dispatch of troops to Syria indicated that the powers were going to intervene materially in the disturbances in that part of the Ottoman empire. The areas of concern were many. Order had first to be secured and those guilty of excesses had to be punished. Provision also had to be made for the future government of Syria and precautions taken to prevent subsequent outbreaks of violence. The projects were also related. The troops were expected to contribute to securing and guaranteeing order and could not be withdrawn until a new form of government had been devised for Syria and Lebanon.

Britain exhibited a marked concern as the French occupation was prolonged, first to the six-month limit imposed by the convention signed September 5 and then beyond, as provided by a new convention negotiated by the powers. France protested that the presence of her troops was of less danger to Syria than their precipitant withdrawal would be. But, Turkophile Britain had nagging suspicions of French designs and insisted on evacuation. Napoleon III reluctantly complied.

By the time French troops left Syria, the American Civil War had broken out and news of this internecine conflict swept the events of Turkey and Syria from the pages of the Times. It was almost as

though the powers were relieved that some other international crisis had diverted attention from Turkey. The Eastern Question could be allowed to remain dormant and hopefully be forgotten while the powers busied themselves in a crisis less dangerous because it lay in a different part of the world than the insoluble Eastern Question.

The behavior of Britain during the Syrian crisis was a good example of the attitude she had assumed towards Turkey and would continue to maintain until 1877. In the peace of 1856 Britain for the first time had entered into a positive guarantee of the independence and integrity of the Turkish empire. She dared not risk resolving the Eastern Question because of the implications this settlement would have on the European balance of power. The situation in the East had to remain static, the integrity and independence of the Sultan maintained.[1] Britain's policy during the years immediately after 1856 asserted that the "sick man" of Europe was fast recovering his strength. To express doubt was to be "un-English." To point out the hollowness of the pretences at reform was to manifest Russian proclivities.[2]

So clearly was it British policy to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman empire that whenever its affairs were discussed in Parliament there was a general agreement on the main object to be attained. The sick man had to be kept on his legs, although there was a variety of opinion on how this should be done. With the departure of Lord Stratford from Turkey, shortly before the Syrian crisis broke out, a new system was introduced--one of laisser-aller. British

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[1] Hansard, CLXI (1861), 871. [2] Times, March 5, 1861.

consuls were instructed to abstain from interference in the future, and the British ambassador tended to discourage their complaints of maladministration and abuses perpetrated by the provincial governors.

During the time this new policy was pursued, Turkey continued to decay. Disturbances of one sort or another were common, culminating in the disastrous Syrian massacres. By 1861, after five years during which she was supposed to be reforming her weaknesses, Turkey seemed closer to dissolution than ever. Obviously, some degree of intervention was necessary. When occasion required it, there had to be strong remonstrance as well as friendly advice.[3] Britain opposed intervention and only agreed to the dispatch of French troops in 1860 because some action was clearly necessary. If the massacres that had broken out in Damascus spread to the coastal towns, Russia and France could be expected to intervene. Under the circumstances, it was better to have an intervention in the name of Europe, hence limited, rather than by two states.

Just as French troops were arriving in Syria, Palmerston advised the Commons that partition of the Turkish empire would not be in the general interests of Europe. He admitted that there were valid complaints against Turkish rule. He also admitted that it was not from any predilection for the Turkish race that he thought it desirable to maintain their empire. But, any knowledgeable person would grant that the Turkish empire could not be partitioned without involving a general European conflict. At the least, partition would alter military and

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[3] Times, March 27, 1861; see also Shannon, pp. 18-19.

naval positions to the serious detriment of British interests in the East.[4] The entire Syrian crisis would be colored with this sentiment, seen in the British attitude towards the punishment of the guilty, the form of government suggested for Syria, and in the incessant British demand that the French troops be recalled.

At the outbreak of violence in Syria, the powers had agreed that a commission of inquiry be sent to ascertain the guilt of those involved and to draw up a plan for the pacification and future government of Syria.[5] Lord Dufferin, future British ambassador to St. Petersburg, had been chosen as the British commissioner, a highly desirable choice. He had returned from a prolonged tour of Syria and Egypt the preceding autumn and knew the country and the people. It was due largely to his efforts that the British behavior in the Syrian crisis was redeemed to any degree.[6] Dufferin was told to go immediately to Constantinople, receive his instructions from the British ambassador, and then go directly to Syria.

When Thouvenel learned of Dufferin's orders, he immediately protested. He declared that the commission was to act in concert. Therefore, in order to avoid discordant opinions, the powers had to agree on the general nature of the instructions to be given to the members of the commission.[7] Moreover, the instructions for the commission must not be dictated by the representatives of the powers

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[4] Hansard, CLX (1860), 1587. [5] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 71.

[6] Times, July 31, 1860. [7] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 66.

at Constantinople, but emanate directly from the Cabinets of the respective governments. Only when the commissioners had completed their inquiry and had drawn up their report should the ambassadors at the Porte take action to obtain the reforms considered necessary.[8] A difference of opinion between Britain and France was becoming discernible.

Russell protested that in Paris it would be very difficult to frame instructions for the commissioners to which all the governments would agree. Also, the Cabinets were not familiar enough with the circumstances to issue definite instructions.[9] Thouvenel countered with the argument that if the commissioners were going to have sufficient authority to carry out their mission, they would have to hold their instructions and authority from their respective governments. Nor was it necessary to stress details in giving the instructions. It would be enough to outline general principles upon which the governments could later come to an understanding. The essential program to be carried out was simple. The commission would determine the cause of the disturbance, work with the extraordinary commissioner of the Porte in punishing the guilty and compensating those wronged, and in a collective report suggest an administrative reorganization for the Mountain that would preclude future outbreaks.[10] Russell eventually acceded to the wish of Thouvenel and Dufferin was ordered to cooperate with the commission in the program suggested by the French Foreign Minister.[11]

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[8] Ibid., 67.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Ibid., 78-79.

[11] Ibid., 73-74.

By September 13 all the members of the European commission had been appointed and were arriving in Constantinople. They were M. Beclard for France, M. Novikow for Russia, M. Weckbecker for Austria, M. de Rehfues for Prussia, and Lord Dufferin for Britain.[12] They were accordingly instructed to work with Fuad Pasha who had been sent by the Porte as extraordinary commissioner to deal with the disturbance in Syria.

Fuad had arrived in Syria in July and immediately began the task of pacification. He surrounded Lebanon with troops and called on the Druses to surrender on pain of death. Additional troops had been sent to Beirut and Damascus, relief supplies were being distributed to the needy, and on August 2 Fuad began making arrests in Beirut. Within a week the arrests mounted into the hundreds, most of them from among the rabble. Few members from the higher classes were arrested at first.[13] As Fuad's program continued it became evident that he intended to shield the officials implicated in the disturbances and to satisfy the desire of the Christians for vengeance and the desire of the powers to see justice done by sacrificing the leaders of the Druses.

Ahmet Pasha, governor of Damascus, and Khorsheed Pasha, governor of Beirut and commander-in-chief of the army of Arabistan, had been arrested and sent to Constantinople. The Times' correspondent observed that the men went reasonably assured in their minds that they would suffer only in their pocketbooks. As soon as the furor concerning the events died down, they would secure sinecures elsewhere to replenish their cashboxes.[14]

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[12] Ibid., 168. [13] Ibid., 109. [14] Times, August 17, 1860.

The ambassadors at Constantinople demanded that the two men be returned to Beirut to stand trial before the tribunal established for the purpose. Their accusers and the evidence against them were at Beirut, not at Constantinople.[15] Fuad seemed disposed to deal particularly leniently with Khorsheed Pasha, and it was only with difficulty that admiral Martin and consul Moore secured his arrest at all. Fuad merely wanted to remove him from office.[16]

By August 10 Moore could make a progress report to Russell. The number of arrests had risen to nearly 800, much of the property that had been stolen and hidden had been found, and calm prevailed in Beirut where the authority of the Sultan had been re-established.[17] Consul James Brant at Damascus reported to Russell a day later that the situation was improving there as well. Fuad had made a number of arrests, order had been restored, and a fine was to be imposed on the guilty to indemnify the Christians for their losses. Fuad had demonstrated that he could restore order. Brant hoped, therefore, that foreign troops would not be needed.[18] Russell concluded that the situation in Syria was indeed much improved and that the presence of foreign troops might not be necessary.[19] It was decided, however, that for the present the French troops would be landed although their number would not be augmented beyond the 6,000 provided for in the convention.[20]

When the French troops began arriving at Beirut on August 16, it was evident that the occupation was viewed with disfavor by the

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[15] Times, August 16, 1860.

[16] Times, August 18, 1860.

[17] Times, August 11, 1860.

[18] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 115.

[19] Hansard, CLX (1860), 1131-32.

[20] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 89-90.

Mohammedans. Their general demeanor was one of irritation and sullenness. Christians were insulted and abused on the slightest pretext or provocation. The native and European Christians, however, were overjoyed at the arrival of the French military contingents. Nothing but a European occupation could have afforded such a sense of relief and security. Moore reported to Russell that the Mohammedans were keenly disappointed that no British troops had arrived. The presence of a British military force would have done much to reassure the Mohammedans just as the presence of French troops had reassured the Christians.[21]

The cause for Moore's belief was not long in making itself apparent. One of the greatest difficulties faced by the Turkish authorities and the commission was the belief among the native Christians that the coming of French troops afforded them protection and allowed them to retaliate against the Mohammedans for years of grievances.[22] For this reason the Porte declared that the foreign troops must not be allowed to enter the interior where their presence would encourage the Maronites to seek vengeance on the Druses.[23]

By the first of September Thouvenel declared that he was not satisfied with the reported condition of Syria. Although large-scale massacres had ceased, assassinations and violence were daily occurrences. He asserted that had not French troops been sent, Fuad Pasha would have been helpless. Thouvenel also protested that the extensive executions Fuad was performing suggested vengeance rather than punishment, and

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[21] Ibid., 114.

[22] Times, September 17, 1860.

[23] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 126-27.

although those guilty of participating in the massacres were being punished, the organisers and promoters were not. Thouvenel feared that Fuad would have neither the nerve nor the inclination to execute one or two of the most guilty of the high officials, thus instilling fear in those seeking to perpetuate violence in Syria.[24]

There was cause for complaint. After the first spate of executions there had been a tapering off. Fuad declared that he was working as rapidly as possible, but that it was difficult to obtain evidence, particularly against the notables. He was apprehensive that this difficulty would not be appreciated in Europe and that he would not be able to satisfy European demands in this respect.[25] He had also sought to secure evidence on whether the disturbance in Damascus had been the result of a plot, but again it was hard to find facts.[26]

When Fuad departed Damascus for Beirut, he left Ibrahim Bey Karami to look after the affairs of the Christians. Ibrahim's conduct was notorious. Those most guilty of excesses were imprisoned, but were allowed to live lives of ease and to continue their machinations. Bribes were freely taken and prisoners liberated promiscuously.[27] Moore reported that many of those who had been conscripted for the army as punishment were allowed to buy themselves out. The Christians complained that the latter could well afford to purchase their freedom with the plunder they had taken during the massacres.[28]

Dufferin reported on September 8 that there had been no new executions at Damascus for the preceding three weeks. Declining to

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[24] Ibid., 114-15. [25] Ibid., 150. [26] Ibid., 128.

[27] Ibid., 216. [28] Ibid., 216, 153.

make a blanket indictment against Fuad Pasha, he observed that of the entire population of Damascus, only fifty-six men had been actually executed on the charge of murder. At the lowest count the number of victims in Damascus was placed at 5,000. It would have been virtually impossible for fifty-six men to commit that many murders. Moreover, the butchery had not been carried out by bands of men moving through the city, but had taken place simultaneously in every part of the Christian quarter. Dufferin believed that fifty-six executions bore but an inadequate relation to the number of guilty persons and the enormity of their crimes.[29]

Of particular significance was the treatment accorded Ahmet Pasha, believed by many to be implicated in the massacres. He had been arrested, but Fuad could not decide whether to execute him and in mentioning his name was always careful to speak in an almost laudatory manner of the arrangements he had made for the maintenance of order previous to the outbreak.[30] It was not until September 8 that Fuad reluctantly ordered Ahmet's execution, and consul Brant suggested that had it not been for the arrival of Dufferin the punishment would have been postponed further. Fuad did not seem at all disposed to execute this man who, had he done his duty, could have prevented the Damascus massacres.[31] Even then the execution was not public and hence much of its effect on the people was lost.

From the reports of consuls Brant and Moore and those of Cyril Graham, it was apparent that neither had much faith in the measures being taken in Syria. It was therefore necessary to determine whether

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[29] Ibid., 155. [30] Ibid., 154. [31] Ibid., 172.

the French troops would be allowed to remain for the full six months and whether the additional 6,000 troops provided by the convention would be sent.[32] The decision could not be delayed. The season was fast approaching when the coast of Syria would become dangerous for ships and when troop disembarkation could only be accomplished with great difficulty. Thouvenel did not care to commit himself, but seemed to feel that the troops already in Syria were capable of keeping the country quiet. By the end of September Russell concluded that it was too late for the safe landing of troops so the government could only hope that they would not be needed.[33]

With order nominally restored in Damascus, Beirut, and on the coast, attention was directed to the conditions in Lebanon. In early September General Beaufort intimated that his forces were ready for duty and that he was anxious to move out of Beirut. The city was an unhealthy spot for his troops, and he also feared a clash between the soldiers and the Moslems. A double purpose would be served by moving the troops into Lebanon and taking the Christian refugees with them and resettling them in their villages.

Fuad said he had no objection to the French moving, but they must not enter Lebanon nor areas occupied by the Druses. It would also be better if the Christians were not returned to their villages until it had been determined whether military operations would be conducted against the Druses. If the Christians returned and the Druses moved against them, all the troops at Beaufort's disposal would not be

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[32] Ibid., 146.

[33] Ibid., 161-62.

sufficient to protect the Christians. Moreover, the French troops must not act independently of the Turkish.[34]

By mid-September Fuad had decided on the policy he would follow in dealing with the Druses. On the thirteenth he issued a proclamation inviting all the Druse chieftains to surrender within five days. He offered complete security to those able to clear themselves of all participation in the atrocities. Those who did not submit would be considered guilty by default and their property would be sequestered.[35]

On the next day Fuad reached an agreement with General Beaufort on the movement of troops. Five thousand troops of the Turkish army would move into the interior under General Kmety and occupy Deir-el-Kamar and other positions in the mixed districts. French troops could follow shortly and assist in patrolling the Mountain. When he heard this news, Dufferin observed to Bulwer that it would be impossible to speculate on the consequences of allowing the French to escort the Christian refugees into the Mountain and to assist in bringing the Druses to justice.[36]

As Dufferin had anticipated, the movement of 4,000 French troops into the Mountain on September 25 was immediately followed by reports of atrocities committed by the Christians on the Druses along the way. The Christians believed that the time had come to take vengeance for long standing grievances. Dufferin indicated his regret to Fuad that justice should be begun in such a manner. The intervention of the Porte and Europe should not have been taken as a signal for the renewal of blood-letting. The Christians were harming their

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[34] Ibid., 149. [35] Ibid., 168. [36] Ibid.

own cause by forfeiting the sympathy that had been generated for them by the Druse atrocities.[37]

Fuad also led troops across Lebanon and the Plain of Bekaa as he tried to surround and capture refugee Druses, but many of them escaped into the area of Hauran. The French general complained that the Druses were able to slip through the Turkish lines like water through a sieve and that the Turkish authorities seemed to favor rather than hinder the escape of the Druses. Fuad defended himself by asserting that the topography of the area was tortuous and that the Druses knew the terrain and he did not. At any rate, when the Turks objected to the presence of French troops, General Beaufort insisted that his advance was made the more necessary because the Druses had passed so easily through the Turkish lines. He also declared that if he were not allowed to take the initiative in future operations in Lebanon the honor of the French flag would be risked and the lives of many French soldiers unnecessarily jeopardized.[38]

On September 22 twelve of the Druse chiefs from the Mountain surrendered to Fuad Pasha, and their subsequent treatment immediately evoked differences of opinion. There was perhaps no better example of how Fuad sought to satisfy the Christians' desire for vengeance and the commission's desire for justice than in his attempt to punish the Druse chiefs and shield the Turkish officials. Those chiefs who had not surrendered were declared guilty by default, and their honors, titles, offices, and property were forfeited. Dufferin believed,

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[37] Ibid., 190-92.

[38] Ibid., 198-99, 380; Times, October 20, 1860.

however, that only those least responsible for the massacres had surrendered, in the hope of vindicating their relative lack of guilt.[39]

Dufferin further believed that under the circumstances it was impossible for a Druse chieftain to obtain a fair trial. He was convinced that while the verdict handed down might be just, its relation to the crime was almost accidental. The Turkish authorities were aware that Europe demanded satisfaction for what had occurred and a certain amount of punishment must be meted out. Dufferin feared, however, that the Porte was cleansing its guilt and restoring its reputation in the blood of the Druses. The extraordinary tribunal acted under pressure, and the defendant considered himself a victim of political exigency. Such blundering jurisdiction was revolting.[40]

A case in point was that of Said Bey Jumblat. He had not been actually involved in the Mountain massacres, but Moore had urged him, before the fall of Zahleh, to interfere on behalf of the Christians. Had Said done so, the massacres might have been prevented. As it was, the Bey was brought to trial as one of the most compromised of the Druse chieftains. His trial was so blatantly unjust, however, that it became a national issue in England. The Turkish tribunal seemed anxious to convict him, not for his implication in the crimes particularly, but because he was very wealthy and his confiscated property would add much to the military treasury. Also, if given the chance, Said could doubtless have given information on the evils of the Turkish system and on the venality of the Turkish authorities.[41] There was also the

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[39]SP, 1861, LXVIII, 180-82. [40]Ibid., 181. [41]Ibid., 222-23.

belief that Said was the representative of British influence in Lebanon.[42] It would be best if he were silenced. Due largely to Dufferin's intercession, Said's execution was stayed and he was allowed to die a natural death of advanced tuberculosis, although his condition might well have been aggrevated and his death hastened because of his incarceration.[43]

Somebody had to be responsible for the atrocities committed in the Mountain and for precipitating the massacres. In Lebanon 5,000 people had been killed and some 200 villages burned. Justice had to be done.[44] But, to determine guilt was difficult. The natives in the Mountain had little concept of justice and that which existed was far from the type familiar to Europeans. A complicating factor involved in the trials was that the Christians would not bring specific charges against any one man. They insisted on indicting the entire Druse nation, represented at the trials by its chieftains. Something like 2,000 lives were demanded as retribution for the sufferings of the Maronites.[45] Dufferin maintained that the refusal of the Christians to testify and their insistence on blanket indictments altered the situation. The leaders of the Maronites clearly wanted to embarrass the government and wreak vengeance on the Druses. Bulwer accordingly discussed the situation with the Porte and suggested that there not be an unjust and indiscriminate persecution of the whole Druse population.

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[42] Times, May 31, 1861.

[43] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 654-55; Hansard, CLXIII (1861), 233-41.

[44] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 258-59. [45] Ibid., 410-11.

Justice would be done if only one or two of the ringleaders were executed as examples.[46]

Complicating the trials further were the interests of European states. The Turks had been trying for some time to bring Lebanon under their direct control. Therefore, when France suggested that the Druses be punished, the Turks were eager to comply. When Britain declared that the Maronites were also culpable and should be punished, the Turks agreed with them too.[47]

In late January 1861 the extraordinary tribunal completed its proceedings, and the executions and punishments began. Dufferin and the other European commissioners had succeeded in securing from Fuad an agreement that none of the convicted men would be executed, however, until the commission had had the opportunity of examining the minutes of the trials and the evidence used. If the commissioners felt that the evidence was insufficient or the trial unjust in any way, they could remonstrate with Fuad against the sentences being carried out.[48] This precaution was considered necessary because of the circumstances, especially the difficulty in securing evidence. That the absolute guilt, innocence, or degree of culpability of each individual had to be determined was crucial since the Christians would accuse both Druses and Turks, the Druses would accuse the Christians, and the Turks would accuse both Druses and Christians. The commission's work was to disentangle truth from recrimination.[49]

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[46] Ibid., 414-415. [47] Hansard, CLXI (1861), 1121-22.

[48] Ibid., 196-98. [49] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 474-75.

In the trials of the Druse chieftains and Turk officials, the Druses were condemned to death while the Turks were given life sentences, or less. The judgments were so contrary to public expectation and the requirements of justice that the commission insisted on examining the trial proceedings and the evidence.[50] Upon investigation, the commissioners found nothing to indicate that the Turk functionaries were any less responsible than the Druse chiefs for the events that had engulfed the Mountain. The differences in their sentences were unjustified. A formal protest was lodged, and Fuad was instructed to examine the sentences imposed by the tribunal at Beirut.[51]

On February 23 when the commission had drawn up its protest, a vote was taken on the guilt of each Druse and Turk involved. The results were instructive. Opinions of the other commissioners varied, but M. Beclard for France pronounced death for all Turks and Druses, but would commute the sentence for one aged Druse to life imprisonment. Dufferin declared that the three Turk officials must be executed and of the eleven Druse chieftains, only two need suffer the death penalty. Consciously or otherwise, the commissioners had allowed their votes to be influenced, apparently, by their predilections for certain groups in the Mountain.[52]

When reporting the proceedings to Bulwer the day following, Dufferin admitted that when he first arrived in Syria he was indignant at the atrocities perpetrated by the Druses on the Christians. He had been led to change his opinion, however, after making an investigation into the guilt of the Druses and Turks and learning that there were two

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[50] Ibid., 331-32. [51] Ibid., 482. [52] Ibid., 472-73.

sides to the question. He believed he could say without fear of contradiction that despite the excesses "into which the Druses were subsequently betrayed," it was the Christians who had been responsible for the terrible events in Lebanon. Under the circumstances he could not condone the sentence of death for all eleven Druse chieftains. This was the same fate reserved for the murderers who had attempted to flee justice.[53] Dufferin acquitted Fuad of any foul play, however, and asserted that the Turk commissioner had received instructions from the Porte to acquit the Turk officials at the expense of the lives of the Druse chiefs.[54]

Fuad defended the differences in the sentences decreed by the tribunal. Turkish law provided the death penalty for murderers, but not for those who were only implicated and had not actually committed the act. Moreover, the penal code decreed capital punishment for anyone rising in insurrection against his countrymen. The tribunal had had no choice other than to impose the death penalty on the Druse chieftains.[55] But, because the commission differed so widely on the culpability of the Turks and the degree of guilt of the Druses, Fuad determined to stay the tribunal's sentences temporarily and refer the whole matter to Constantinople.

Dufferin thought Fuad's decision expedient. The problem would be removed from Beirut where so much passion had been aroused, and the matter would be placed where Bulwer could bring his influence to bear in getting the reversal of some of the tribunal's more absurd decrees. The commission was also prevented from proceeding with the work of

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[53] Ibid., 471-72. [54] Ibid., 395. [55] Ibid., 492-93.

devising a future government for Syria so long as agreement could not be reached on the guilt of those involved in the massacres.[56]

Eventually, on March 16, 245 Druses were sent to Tripoli to serve their sentences of temporary or permanent exile. When Dufferin learned that the only Druse chief acquitted by the Beirut tribunal was also to be exiled, he protested to Fuad. The only evidence against the man was a letter, so vague that it could not possibly implicate him in any crimes. Fuad finally countermanded the decree against this one chieftain.[57]

During the controversy involving the findings of the extra-ordinary tribunal, the work of the commissioners proceeded. Their initial meeting had been held on September 26, 1860. The first task to which the commission turned was an inquiry into the conditions of the Christians in the areas where the massacres had been the fiercest. Each member requested the consul of his nation to report on the health, sanitation, and general condition of the area.[58]

Suggestions were subsequently made to Fuad Pasha that he extend relief to those unprepared for the rigors of the coming winter. Fuad accepted the proposals, but confessed that he had no money with which to carry them out.[59] At the tenth and subsequent meetings of the commission a plan was devised to determine the compensation due each Christian for the damages sustained in the massacres of Damascus, and it was decided that a penal tax would be levied on the Moslems of that city to indemnify the Christians for their losses. It was thought that

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[56] Ibid., 518-19.

[57] Ibid., 564.

[58] Ibid., 188-89.

[59] Ibid., 249.

a heavy fine would produce a more marked and lasting effect on the Damascenes than any capital punishment that had previously been inflicted.[60]

On May 31, 1861 the plan for assessment and collection of the indemnity was published. The fine was to be levied on landed and house property in proportion to their rentals and would be received from all non-Christian residents in the city. Damascus was divided into eight quarters and a special council appointed to assess the criminal tax and assure that every house contributed its equitable share.[61] After dealing with the question of indemnity due the Christians in Damascus, the commission moved on to Beirut and Deir-el-Kamar in September where the same procedure was carried out.[62]

Having finished with the work of investigating the proceedings of the trials and the indemnification of the Christians, the commission submitted its report. Thouvenel thought that the commissioners should then be recalled to Constantinople where they would work with the ambassadors in drafting the terms for the future government of Lebanon and be available to answer any questions the report might raise. Russell protested. He thought that the members of the commission should remain in Syria to aid the Turkish authorities, but he later acquiesced, and the commission members returned to Constantinople.[63] With the submitting of its report and two plans for the reorganization of Syria and Lebanon, the commission had completed its work. Now those in higher positions, with more experience and competence, would have

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[60] Ibid., 268, 292-93.

[61] Ibid., 689-90.

[62] Times, September 23, 1861.

[63] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 486.

to make their decisions on the basis of what the commissioners had accomplished.[64]

There were two issues now before the ambassadors at Constantinople, a plan of government for Syria and the removal of French troops. The latter could not be accomplished until the former had been resolved. These questions would again afford opportunity for the powers to display their different attitudes towards Turkey and her subjects in Syria.

That a new system of government was required for Syria had been made clear by the disturbance. Britain maintained, however, that the settlements of the 1840's were not themselves directly responsible for the outbreak. The fault lay rather in the imperfect development of those arrangements and the consequent expansion of the evils that they were intended to control.[65]

To say the least, it would be difficult to devise a new plan of government for either Syria or Lebanon. There was first the lack of competent Turkish officials. Consul Brant at Damascus said that in all his years in Syria he had met only one Turk official possessing both integrity and energy and that was Fuad Pasha.[66] A new administration would also be hampered because of the animosity among the races. Bishop Tobia, for example, the nefarious leader of the Maronites in Lebanon claimed that the first step in the reorganization of Syria was to expel every Turk. Others suggested that the provinces of Damascus, Aleppo, and Sidon be made independent of the Sultan. Britain would hardly agree to this suggestion because it would be the first step in the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. Moreover, what form of

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[64] Ibid., 631-32. [65] Ibid., 616. [66] Ibid., 165.

government would be devised for the provinces? The Moslems were clearly in the majority and should therefore be the ruling party. But, no Christian--Greek or Maronite--would submit to being governed by a native Mohammedan. Nor would the Druses and Jews, formidable minorities, be disposed to live under such an arrangement. Nor would it be possible to establish a government by the Christians. They were a minority, barely one-fifth of the total population, and inferior in other respects as well. They were generally recognized as being more untruthful, more dishonest, more fanatical, and more intolerant than the Moslems.

Also militating against a Christian government was the factor of foreign interest and rivalry. France and Russia were the champions of the Roman and Greek Churches respectively. To keep the Christians in control would require foreign intervention and occupation for several years. A French occupation of Syria for a period sufficient to establish a government on this basis would not be acceptable to Europe. And investors would not want to loan money, which was sorely needed, to a minority likely to be expelled with the withdrawal of foreign troops.[67]

Dufferin, particularly, was fertile with suggestions for the formation of a new governmental system for Syria and Lebanon. His scheme for Syria was that it be made a single pashalic with an independent administration--financial and military--perhaps under European auspices. Such an expedient might seem to be a dismemberment of the Ottoman empire, but he believed it necessary. Perhaps in time the Pasha could be relieved of his extraordinary powers and the Sultan

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[67] Times, November 17, 1860.

resume control. Syria was extremely rich if she were properly administered and freed from the debilitating influence of the Porte.[68]

As for Lebanon, it was obvious that the unrest was the result of the Porte's dissatisfaction with the partial autonomy Lebanon enjoyed. So long as the system of 1845 obtained, unrest would be endemic. The Turkish authorities stimulated the chronic animosity existing between the Druses and Maronites. Moreover, recent events had proved that Christians must not be subject to Druses nor Druses to Christians. The solution seemed to be a government by a third power and this could only be the Turk. Admittedly this would present problems. The Christians would seize on every defect of the government as a pretext for asking for foreign intervention and redress. It would be impossible to preclude unrest and intrigue. But, Europe accepted the principle of Turks governing Christians in the rest of the Ottoman empire and this must be the solution for Lebanon as well.[69]

Dufferin opposed any suggestion that a religious division be established in the Mountain. Believing that religion should never be made a geographical expression, he insisted on a mixed district for Lebanon. He maintained that it would be impossible to separate the tribes except by force and this would only lead to complications. Any form of government for the Mountain had to be predicated on the following principles. First, the reluctance of the Christians and Druses to assimilate was not as great as that of the Christians and

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[68] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 240-44.

[69] Ibid. Davison asserts that despite his shortcomings, the Turk was best fitted to rule in the heterogeneous Ottoman empire. Davison, Reform in the Ottoman Empire, pp. 60-62.

Moslems because the social interests of Druses and Maronites were similar. Second, the feuds between the Christians and Druses were not religious, but tribal in nature.[70] The newly-appointed Christian Kaimakam in Lebanon, Yusef Keram, agreed with Dufferin and declared that he foresaw no difficulty whatever in inducing the Christians and Druses to live together in harmony so long as no ulterior influence was allowed to engender discord among them.[71]

Dufferin believed further that if the only consideration was to restore order in Lebanon, the people should be deprived of their autonomous privileges. The bloodshed of the previous twenty-five years could have been avoided had the Turks had unlimited jurisdiction over the Mountain. The people were incapable of governing themselves. The Maronites were in a state of chronic rebellion against the Christian Kaimakam, and the Greeks were ready at any pretext to fly at the Latins or the Druses. Maronites could not and must not govern Greeks or Druses and would not consent to being governed by the latter.

While he believed it best for the sake of expediency to abolish altogether the privileges enjoyed by the Christians, Dufferin recognized that European opinion would never allow this. He also thought that since the population of Lebanon was composed of Oriental Christians holding antagonistic creeds, a Turk would be the better choice for governor. But, again in deference to European opinion, he would consider the appointment of a Christian governor so long as he was not one of the fanatical and ignorant natives of the Mountain.

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[70] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 261-62. [71] Ibid., 285.

Dufferin submitted the following plan for the consideration of Russell and the other members of the commission. Lebanon should be established as a separate pashalic, independent from the control of any other Pasha in Syria, rather than being under the Pasha of Damascus as the 1845 settlement provided. A non-native Christian governor should be appointed by the governor-general of Syria. Since the governor of Lebanon would be appointed by the governor-general and would hold office only on his good favor, there would be little chance of his becoming an impediment to good administration. The Syrian governor-general would always be able to exercise effective control over the Mountain.

While in general the privileges of the Christians would be retained under Dufferin's plan, the exclusive privileges of the Maronites would be abolished. Municipal councils would be established to give each race and creed a due share in the administration of local affairs. The Druses would thus be allowed to retain their ancient privileges, and the Greeks would receive appropriate equality in the civil administration.

Dufferin saw in his suggestion the only possibility for a new system of government. By making the Mountain a separate pashalic, the feudal system, which had been a curse to the country, would be destroyed. The condition of Christian and Druse serfs under the Druse chieftains had been pitiable. Orderly government could only come by converting the irresponsible chiefs to subordinated officials. It was reasonable, Dufferin thought, to expect that all parties would be satisfied with his arrangement. The Maronite ascendancy would be

broken without making France dissatisfied. The civil independence of the Druses would have been preserved, and the control of the central government would have been assured without giving Turkey the unconditional rule that would have been protested by such states as Russia, France, and Austria.[72]

Russell informed Dufferin that the British government approved of his schemes, but complications had arisen. The Porte refused the plan regarding Syria because it infringed on the sovereignty of the Sultan by suggesting a system analogous to that prevailing in Egypt and the Danubian provinces.[73] The Porte not only refused its assent to Dufferin's plan for Syria, but also denied the competency of the European commission to judge in the matter. The Porte had always maintained that the commission could only intervene in the organization of Lebanon and that solely within the limits of the 1845 arrangement. The Porte had its own plans for the military and administrative system to be established in Syria and believed that Britain would find them satisfactory. The Turkish scheme allowed sufficient guarantees to Christians without the dangers embodied in the plan of Dufferin. The commission was accordingly instructed to restrict its discussion to Lebanon.[74]

The members of the commission and the ambassadors were convinced, however, that the Porte's plan for the future government of Syria was inadequate. Due to the location and composition of Syria, the only way to create a strong government there would be to centralize the administration by putting responsibility in the hands of a single

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[72]Ibid., 351-52. [73]Ibid., 396. [74]Ibid., 353.

governor. The Porte's scheme was diametrically opposed to this. Beirut and Damascus were retained as separate headquarters, and each was dependent on Constantinople while the military commander was independent of neither. It was to this very system that the late disorders could be traced. The animosity of the governors for each other and for the military commander had impeded the control of the government and perhaps contributed to the massacres.

The plan now proposed by the Porte was different only in that a representative Grand Mixed Council would be established in the two provinces with members belonging to the different communities. There would also be an occasional visit from an inspector general sent by the Porte. The new institutions clearly did not provide a sufficient guarantee for security.[75] Despite the weaknesses of the Porte's proposal for the future government of Syria, France and Britain, for different reasons, elected to refrain from imposing any other settlement. Russell, for Britain's part, agreed that to detach Syria from Turkey would lead to the separation of any and every province in which disturbances arose and would in time lead to the dismemberment of the entire Ottoman empire.[76]

Dufferin's suggestions on the future government of Lebanon also met with complications. Thouvenel was anxious to preserve the partial autonomy of the Christian Kaimakam as provided for in 1842 and 1845 and asserted that this arrangement had to be an indispensable condition of the new organization.[77] Dufferin was somewhat taken aback at this because Beclard had worked with him in drawing up the proposals and

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[75] Ibid., 465-66. [76] Ibid., 566-67. [77] Ibid., 396.

the articles had been agreed on by the members of the commission. Beclard now declared that he wanted to render as fully as possible the ascendancy of the Christian element in the Mountain.[78]

Thouvenel insisted that the majority opinion of the commissioners could not govern in all cases. Moreover, the Beirut commission was not authorized to draw up the future government of Lebanon; it could only suggest and make a report to Constantinople, and this report did not need unanimous approval of all the commissioners. Beclard would offer some opinions on Dufferin's scheme and it could still be submitted.[79]

In the face of the opposition to the original plan for the administration of Lebanon, further discussion was necessary. Fuad instructed the commission to consider other alternatives and to submit recommendations. At the March 14 meeting of the commissioners, Dufferin proposed five possible plans for the Mountain. One proved acceptable to all the commissioners but Beclard, and he agreed at least to discuss it. The principles on which this scheme were based were the physical separation of Druses and Christians and the division of Lebanon into three Kaimakamships--Maronite, Greek, and Druse. Each area would retain as much independence as circumstances permitted, and the Druses would retain their administrative autonomy.

While this plan afforded perhaps the best solution, it was also fraught with many problems. To carry out the scheme would necessitate transplanting much of the population and exchanging much property, an undertaking requiring months of painstaking work and great attention to detail. Still, if a separation was to take place, and it had often

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[78] Ibid., 367-68. [79] Ibid., 453.

been considered, perhaps the time was now most propitious. As a result of the disturbances, many people were already displaced. With the combined encouragement of the powers, the Druses could be induced to move, and the move might be accomplished to mutual advantage since it could be expected to secure peace. The Greek Christians might elect to remain where they were since they had always gotten on well with the Druses and might prefer a Druse to a Maronite Kaimakam.[80]

All the commissioners but Beclard agreed with Dufferin's second scheme. France wanted to put the government of the Mountain in the hands of a Maronite chieftain. Russell indicated that his country preferred a single Christian governor for Lebanon, but under no circumstances would Britain admit to the imposition of a Maronite governor as France suggested. If this proposal proved insuperable, Dufferin was to modify his first plan to render it acceptable to the Porte. Dufferin's own conclusions were that he would never agree to putting Greek, Mussulman, and Druse under the tyranny of a half-barbarous Maronite who would only be a tool in the hands of a fanatical priesthood. Such an arrangement could only lead to the extermination of the Druses and Mohammedans and possibly even the Christians of other creeds.[81]

The arrangements proposed for Lebanon in 1861 actually differed little from those of 1842 and 1845. Where there were changes, they were added features to aid in carrying out the earlier scheme and to provide security against further massacres. All feudal privileges were to be abolished so the machinery of government would not become clogged with abuses as it did after 1842. The Druse chiefs were to lose their

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[80] Ibid., 557-58. [81] Ibid., 590, 610-11.

hereditary and independent power and be reduced to civic functionaries removable at the pleasure of the Kaimakam. Their income was to be a definite percentage of the taxes and levied by officers of the Sultan rather than taken as feudal tribute as in the past.[82]

Dufferin continued to doubt the wisdom of continuing the anomalous autonomy of Lebanon because the people had no qualifications for self-government. He also realized that it was insufficient to provide for the administration of Lebanon alone since the situation in Lebanon could not be separated from the larger issue of Syria. He had fulfilled his instructions, however, and on May 15, having left Beirut when the commission was transferred to Constantinople, he submitted his plans to the conference of ambassadors. The work of the commission was finished.[83]

When the matter of government for Lebanon was taken up at Constantinople, differences of opinion were immediately apparent. France opposed the system of transferring peoples within the Mountain and this portion of the plan was dropped as being impractical.[84] France continued to insist, moreover, that a single governor--a native and a Maronite--be appointed to hold office for life, removable only on the concurrence of the powers. Bulwer had instructions that he was not to agree to a single Maronite governor and if a single Christian governor were to be appointed, he must not be native and must not be appointed for life. With such a large number of Christians in the empire, it was believed that surely one of integrity and not a native could be found to govern in Lebanon. Britain refused to be bound by the opinion of

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[82] Ibid., 618-21. [83] Ibid., 668. [84] Hansard, CLXII (1861), 1882.

the majority on such a vital issue and if the French proposal was adopted by a majority, Bulwer was instructed to suggest Dufferin's earlier plan.[85]

The issue of whether the governor was to be native or non-native, Christian or non-Christian, was not without significance. Either one would have inherent faults. If a native Christian governor could make himself powerful, he would oppress every sect not his own. If he were unable to become powerful, he would have no authority and would be in constant conflict with his rivals. On the other hand, a non-native Christian governor living in the Mountain would probably lack both friends and influence. He would be forced to rely on Ottoman forces outside Lebanon that would not be under his control. In this instance the governor would be inclined to ask for the foreign protection that already was the bane of Turkey.[86]

The plan of government finally provided in the protocol signed by the powers and the Porte on June 9, 1861 and modified in 1864 was in many respects a compromise. A Christian governor was to be named by the Sultan for a three-year term. He was to be entirely independent from neighboring Pashas and removable by the Porte for cause. The new plan of government did not state whether the governor was to be a native, but it was understood that he would not be. Nor was there a rule that he be a Catholic, although it was likely that he would be. The Mountain would be divided into six districts, each containing a mixed tribunal and a district council in which each sect would be proportionately represented. The rule of proportional equality would

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[85] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 664-67. [86] Ibid., 668-70.

also be observed in the provincial council in the interest of protecting the minorities.[87]

On June 18 Daoud Pasha was named governor of Lebanon with the rank and title of Mushir. By birth he was Armenian; by persuasion he was Roman Catholic. He had formerly been in the diplomatic service of Turkey and at one time had held the office of Ottoman member of the European Commission for the Navigation of the Danube. His last appointment had been Director-General of the Telegraphic System. He displayed a capacity for business and was determined to overcome the difficulties that were impeding progress in Lebanon. Bulwer observed that it would have been difficult to make a better choice from among the available candidates.[88] Conditions augured well for the future and not without reason. Lebanon recovered from the horrors of 1860 and until World War I remained an island in a vast sea of Turkish waste and misrule.

With the acceptance of a new plan of government for Lebanon, more serious attention was turned to the matter of the French troops. Those supporting the extension of the occupation maintained that the troops had to remain until a new government was established for the Mountain and perhaps until it was actually functioning. Britain had consistently objected, however, to the continued presence of foreign troops in Syria. They had been sent to restore order and punish the principal malefactors. If the troops were to remain until every guilty person was ferreted out of the hills, the occupation would never be terminated. The longer the troops remained the more it appeared that the government of Syria was being taken over by the powers. Moreover,

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[87] Ibid., 681-82. [88] Ibid., 694.

the French occupation was a constant precedent for occupation in other parts of Turkey. The troops could not possibly stay until complete order prevailed. So long as Christians and Druses lived in close proximity, strife would be endemic.[89]

The British Cabinet had reluctantly agreed to the active French intervention as the lesser of two evils. If troops had not been sent, the massacres might have spread to Bagdad and Jerusalem. When news of this further outbreak became known, the fanatical Moslem population all over Turkey would have risen against the Christians. Christians would have had no security anywhere in the empire. Under the circumstances, European powers would inevitably have intervened. The course adopted by Britain was to restrict the extent of disaster as much as possible and to allow a French occupation, but to limit its duration.[90]

As the occupation continued, it steadily lost its character of being an aid to Turkey and became ever more of a hindrance and embarrassment. The Turks insisted, with some justification, that the occupation was an obstacle to the pacification of the Mountain and the re-establishment of order.[91] Although the French government steadfastly denied it, Russell suggested that the conduct of the French troops had justly earned them criticism. He admitted, however, that the troops were placed in the predicament that characterized any occupation. If the troops witnessed atrocities and did not interfere, they were accused of sanctioning massacres. On the other hand if the troops interfered, they would be criticized for taking upon themselves the

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[89] Ibid., 218. [90] Hansard, CLXI (1861), 1118-19.

[91] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 281-82.

administration that by right belonged to the Porte. This was simply the dilemma of occupation and was a good reason for ending it.[92]

Other considerations also seemed to indicate that the occupation could be terminated. Dufferin's opinion on December 4, 1860 was that Fuad's work had progressed well and that so long as he remained in the province, supported as he was by a sufficient number of Turkish troops, the massacres would not be repeated. Damascus and Lebanon had been made secure. The Druses were surrendering; charges against them were being compiled. Dufferin thought that the foreign occupation at best was accompanied by many evils and should be ended as quickly as possible. He concluded that the presence of a European force in Syria was even less necessary to the tranquillity of the Mountain than it was for the security of Damascus. While the Christians and others might lament the possibility of the troops being withdrawn, he could put little credence in their fears.[93]

When the commissioners met informally on December 21, it was readily apparent that they did not agree on the need for maintaining the occupation. Dufferin declared that the purpose of the intervention had been accomplished and that it had now become an embarrassment and impediment to the Porte. Troops could be withdrawn immediately without risk. Fuad and his troops were capable of maintaining order. Besides, the police work with which the French troops were occupying themselves in Lebanon was not a part of the original plan. Beclard, however, insisted that the troops produced a moral effect all over Syria and

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[92]Hansard, CLXI (1861), 1120.

[93]SP, 1861, LXVIII, 303-307.

asked if it would not be wise to consider prolonging the occupation beyond the term specified by the convention.[94]

Each time Britain suggested withdrawing troops, France quickly responded with dire warnings. No decision on removal could possibly be entertained until the future government of Lebanon had been determined and until order had been restored. Another warning repeatedly used by France was the responsibility that would devolve on European states if the massacres began again after the troops were evacuated. France was not prepared to accept such responsibility. If Britain continued to insist on terminating the occupation, she should be aware that she made herself solely responsible if massacres against the Christians began anew.[95]

As the occupation continued into 1861 Russell indicated that the British government was prepared to accept a share of this responsibility. The ministers of the Porte must also be made aware of their obligations. They must be willing to endorse every measure by which the lives and property of Syrian people could be protected. They must not show indifference to bloodshed, especially when it involved only Christian loss of life. It was clear that the French forces aggravated unrest. But, if their departure occasioned fresh massacres, and should European occupation be renewed on an even larger scale, the Sultan must never again expect Britain to respect his word and impartiality. The continued friendship and support of Britain depended on the honesty and energy to be demonstrated by the Porte in the present situation.[96] Aali

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[94] Ibid., 321-22. [95] Ibid., 233-34, 280. [96] Ibid., 315-16.

Pasha assured Russell that measures were being taken to guarantee against further disorders.[97]

For all of her insistence that the troops be removed, Britain stood generally alone in this regard in early January 1861. A report of a meeting of the commissioners on December 17 indicated that the consensus of the commissioners other than Dufferin was that the troops ought to remain at least until the Sultan's authority had been restored.[98] Thouvenel conveyed this information to Cowley and suggested that the troops might remain for two months beyond the specified time limit without necessitating another convention. Cowley disagreed vigorously. Should it be necessary to extend the occupation by so much as a single day, he said, it would be necessary to arrive at a new agreement concerning the extension.[99]

In a dispatch on January 9 Russell instructed Cowley to press for evacuation. The Turkish ambassador in England had repeatedly complained to Russell that the foreign troops were an obstacle to the pacification of Syria because their presence encouraged the insolence and violence of the Maronites against the Druses and kept alive the Christian's desire for revenge.[100] Moreover, the condition of the peasants had improved, according to Dufferin, to the point where the Anglo-American Relief Commission was debating whether to instruct agencies in England to stop sending further money and supplies to Syria.[101] Further, the commissioners appeared to be in general agreement on the arrangements for the future government of Syria.

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[97] Ibid., 358. [98] Ibid., 327-28. [99] Ibid.

[100] Ibid., 328-29. [101] Ibid., 468.

Britain had only consented to the sending of French troops on the condition that they cooperate with those of the Porte and limit their stay to no more than six months.[102] Moreover, although Russell did not specifically admit its significance and implications, France had recently annexed Nice and Savoy.[103] For all these reasons, Russell concluded that there was no reason whatsoever for extending the occupation beyond the time limit set by the convention.[104]

In a dispatch to the embassies in Berlin and Vienna on January 19 Russell declared that the occupation of Syria had become a matter of principle.[105] The Paris correspondent for the Times suggested, however, that the Syrian question was merely a matter of rivalry between Britain and France.[106] At any rate, Russell was insistent. The time limit set by the convention expired in February. To extend the occupation beyond this date without the consent of the Porte would be a breach of treaty obligations and an unmitigated act of war. The most that could be said for continuing the occupation was that it would alleviate the alleged danger to the Christians that would be incurred with evacuation. Russell insisted, however, that if the troops

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[102] Ibid., 328-29. [103] Hansard, CLXI (1861), 1098.

[104] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 328-29. Both Palmerston and Russell were suspicious of Napoleon III's motives in Syria. Palmerston believed that Napoleon III was modeling his foreign policy on that of the first Napoleon. Algernon Cecil, pp. 211-12. On March 15, 1860 Palmerston had written to Russell: "There seems good reason for thinking that Napoleon has great schemes in his head for which he is trying to get the concurrence and co-operation of Russia and that the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire is the object he will next aim at, . . ." Bell, II, 250.

[105] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 353-55. [106] Times, March 23, 1861.

remained, the apprehensions of the Christians would as great in 1871 as they were in 1861 unless in the meantime they had succeeded in exterminating all the Druses and this under the protection of the Christian powers.[107]

Thouvenel had repeatedly declared that France was only maintaining troops in Syria in the name of all Europe. The question of evacuation was, therefore, a matter for Europe to decide, and France was willing to abide by general European opinion. He also said that he would defer to the wishes of the Porte if the latter wanted the troops removed.[108]

Bulwer was later instructed to inform the Porte that Britain agreed with Turkey that the troops should be removed at the end of the stipulated period. This knowledge might support the Turk government in resisting any attempts made to induce it to consent to an extension of the occupation. Bulwer was to be cautious, however, not to press the Porte for evacuation against its own inclination. The Porte must be convinced that it could maintain order without the troops. Should future massacres break out, Britain did not want the Porte absolving itself of responsibility by alleging that she had acted in deference to the wishes of the British government.[109] Also to be considered was the dire warning of Baron Schleinitz, Prussian Foreign Minister, that if massacres recurred after the evacuation of troops, the powers might be prompted to administer the coup de grace to the Turkish government.[110]

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[107] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 353-55. [108] Ibid., 327-28.

[109] Ibid., 356. [110] Ibid., 360.

On January 18 Thouvenel observed that the time limit for the occupation was fast approaching. A decision had to be made on evacuation. He then reviewed the situation in Syria. Pacification was progressing only slowly, no agreement had yet been reached on the future administration of Lebanon, the task of indemnifying the Christians for their losses was by no means completed, and the commissioners needed more time to complete their work. He concluded that evacuation at this point would be presumptuous. The French government did not want the responsibility of making the decision, however, nor the onus of not fulfilling the stipulations of the convention. Under the circumstances it was decided that the powers must meet in conference to discuss the extension of the occupation. Invitations were accordingly sent to the capitals.[111]

In a strongly worded dispatch to Cowley that he was to read to Thouvenel, Russell reiterated that the decision to send troops was made in an emergency, at a time when Europe was incensed at the massacres in Syria. The professed object of the occupation was to prevent further disorders and to show the fanatical tribes of Syria that they could not act with impunity. A commission had also been appointed to advise on the pacification and future administration of Syria and Lebanon. But, the establishment of the commission was entirely apart from the decision to send troops. The question of foreign occupation was not to be confused with devising plans for the future government of Lebanon.

Moreover, Russell pointed out, the Sultan, not the powers, was sovereign in Syria. The question was whether the Sultan could keep

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[111] Ibid., 362-63.

order without foreign troops. If he could, there was no further need for them. Unless the Porte specifically asked for an extension of the occupation, it would definitely end at the stipulated time. Britain was not prepared to allow European troops in Syria until means were provided to preclude future disorders when such disturbances had been endemic for generations. Nor would Britain agree to the administration of a Turkish province through the use of foreign troops. The desire for prolonging the occupation was apparently predicated on the assumption that the Turks were unfit to govern Syria. But, what guarantee was there that they would be any less unfit in two or six months?[112]

Thouvenel replied that there was so much connection between the institution of a regular government and the establishment of order, the latter the purpose of the troops, that the two could not be separated. Still, France had no desire to prolong the occupation unduly. She was admittedly concerned, however, with the condition of the Maronites and was obligated to protect them. If the troops were removed and the massacres began anew, France would be blamed. Thouvenel acknowledged too that France placed a certain value in the preservation of her influence over the Maronites. For that reason, a form of government had to be provided that maintained the liberties granted in 1842 and 1845. Until this had been done, he believed evacuation would be unwise. But, should the Porte insist that the occupation be terminated, France would comply.[113]

Thouvenel might well have been sincere with this statement, but the Paris Times' correspondent noted that the Turkish ambassador,

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[112] Ibid., 363-64. [113] Ibid., 383-84.

Ahmed Vefyk Effendi, had been replaced. He was strongly opposed to the French occupation and had therefore earned the enmity of the French government.[114]

The decision on calling another conference rested with the Porte. In response to a plea for advice, Russell told Musurus Pasha, Turkish ambassador at London, that Britain could not advise Turkey in the matter. If Turkey wanted the occupation terminated, she had only to inform the powers and declare that the Sultan had means to prevent the renewal of disorders. If the Sultan considered himself unable to maintain order and felt occupation should continue, Britain would have her representative at the conference.[115] The decision had to be the Porte's. But, should Turkey decide that the troops were no longer necessary, Britain would support her. And, until other provisions were devised, the 1845 agreement regarding the Mountain would remain in force.[116]

The powers were generally agreed that no new conference could be convened unless the Porte consented to attend. Turkey continued her resistance until the first of February when she agreed to the assembling of a conference and indicated she would be represented. It was subsequently rumored that Britain had used her influence to induce Turkey to insist on immediate withdrawal of troops. The rumors became so annoying that Cowley took pains to point out to Thouvenel that while Britain had decided opinions on the occupation, she had not advised Turkey on her decision.[117]

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[114] *Times*, January 30, 1861. [115] *SP*, 1861, LXVIII, 382.

[116] *Ibid.*, 413-14. [117] *Ibid.*, 417.

Russell anticipated that when the conference assembled on February 18, the Turkish representative would agree to an extension of the occupation to the end of April. Britain would acquiesce because current climatic conditions militated against embarkation from an exposed coast. But, the troops must be withdrawn from the interior and placed in readiness on the coast. In an effort to preclude recurrence of atrocities, Britain was prepared to station a squadron in Syrian waters from May 1 to the end of the summer. The discretionary power of the admirals would also be renewed so they could land marines in case of danger to British subjects or Christians.[118]

At the opening of the conference in Paris, it seemed that Thouvenel had marshaled his strength well. Syria appeared to be peaceful, he admitted, but it was only a surface tranquillity. Bitter passions were seething below the surface. He had information that some 7,000 Druses were rearming in Hauran. Not one of the Druse chiefs found guilty had yet been punished. The Christians had not been indemnified for their losses. There was as yet no government in Lebanon and no agreement on a future administration. Article five of the autumn convention provided that should Syria not be pacified within six months, the occupation might be prolonged. He also had information from one of the French consuls that the commander-in-chief of the Turkish forces in Syria had admitted that he did not have sufficient troops to keep order. Thouvenel could only conclude that evacuation must be prolonged at least until May 1.[119]

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[118] Ibid., 418, 426.

[119] Ibid., 440-42.

The other powers, including Britain and Turkey, agreed. Dufferin had said on February 10 that the work of the commission on Lebanon would be completed within a fortnight. A prolongation of the occupation until May 1, therefore, would be amply sufficient to allow the organization of the Mountain on which Thouvenel so ardently insisted. Dufferin warned, however, that if organization was to be delayed until the Maronites had complete supremacy in the Mountain, it might be ten years before it was accomplished. Accordingly, Russell instructed Cowley not to agree to extending the occupation beyond May 1. Anything more might lead to a foreign occupation as long as that in the Roman states.[120]

Thouvenel now began the evasions that were to characterize his behavior throughout the discussions. He took every concession offered as a springboard from which to leap for something more. When the other powers agreed to a May 1 extension, Thouvenel refused to accept the date as binding. He suggested a convention prolonging the occupation to May 1, but then another meeting should be held in April to decide on the time of evacuation. In the meantime the commissioners should hurry the work of reorganizing Lebanon.[121]

Merely extending the occupation was not enough, said Thouvenel. The organization of Lebanon alone would furnish to Europe the moral guarantee that disorders would not break out in the future. If troops were not to remain until this order had been restored, they might as well be withdrawn immediately. France wanted no special gains in Syria. She wanted merely to restore order and protect the Christians and would recall her troops if it were the wish of Europe.[122]

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[120] Ibid., 441-43. [121] Ibid. [122] Ibid., 449-52.

The Times' correspondent in Constantinople thought that Napoleon III demonstrated well how prepared he was to defer to the opinions and wishes of the other powers. Even before any expression of European opinion could be given, vessels had arrived in Beirut with provisions for the French troops in quantities to last until the end of June.[123]

The discussions continued throughout the month of February without resolution. Britain insisted on evacuation, France on extension. On March 2 Russell instructed the British ambassador that since Thouvenel had consistently rejected the May 1 extension, Cowley should oppose any prolongation beyond the original convention and insist on immediate withdrawal, with the understanding that a period of a month or six weeks would be required to complete the evacuation.[124]

The powers were generally agreed that whatever settlement was reached, the provisions of the September 5 convention could not be executed until April or May anyway. On March 7 Veli Pasha, the new Turkish ambassador to Paris, suggested that since the issues of occupation and the work of the commission were separated, no agreement need be reached on extending the occupation. The troops would begin embarking and the process could not be completed until some time in May. If it was necessary to agree on a specific date to avoid ruptures, however, an extension might be granted until June 1.[125]

Russell agreed to a June 1 extension, as did the governments of Austria and Prussia, so long as this date was fixed and definite.

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[123] Times, March 12, 1861. [124] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 454.

[125] Ibid., 457.

Thouvenel believed that this date was far enough in the future to guarantee reasonably that the work of pacification would be complete. He would have no objection to writing into the convention that the evacuation should begin in May and be completed by June 5.

On March 7 Thouvenel informed Cowley that he had taken the liberty of drawing up a new convention stating that the occupation should be prolonged three months, to June 5, but he would not commit himself to accepting June 5 as the date by which the troops would be out of Syria. When pressed by Cowley for a definite date for the completion of evacuation, Thouvenel hedged. France wanted a settled government in Lebanon before withdrawing the troops. In three months this should have been completed, but it might be a few days sooner or a few days later. If French transports were off the Syrian coast by June 5 and France had indicated that she was withdrawing, what more did the British government require? France did not want to be committed to a day, nor would she bind herself not to call another conference.[126]

What more did Britain want? She wanted a clear and positive designation of June 5 as the day by which French troops would have evacuated Syria.[127] But, France would not be bound. Should circumstances such as disease, weather, or fresh outbreaks of violence prevent evacuation, she wanted to remain flexible. Thouvenel's proposed convention implied that evacuation would only begin at the end of three months. The French War Minister had speculated that ten days would be required to put the men on board ships. Evacuation would therefore presumably be completed no later than June 15. Thouvenel asked Cowley

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[126] Ibid., 456-58. [127] Ibid., 459.

if Britain would be satisfied with such an arrangement provided it was so stated in the convention.[128]

At this point Russell became exasperated and sent the stiffest of notes reviewing the entire matter of occupation and outlining Britain's protest to its extension. Britain had acted on good faith throughout; France had not. On July 19, 1860 Russell learned of the French proposal to send troops, and the British government had given its assent the same day. A protocol to this effect had been signed on August 3. Because of the urgency of the moment, it was agreed that troops would be sent immediately. The main body of troops had landed in Syria by August 28, a week before the convention was even signed and almost two months before the convention was ratified. Such was the confidence shown by Britain in the good faith of France.

The British government was of the decided opinion that the presence of troops in Syria was detrimental, but had magnanimously agreed to prolong the occupation. At the insistence of the French, occupation had been prolonged repeatedly, to March 5, then to mid-April or May 1, then to the last of May. Finally, due to the urging of the French minister at the Porte, Turkey had agreed to a prolongation until June 5. Occupation had to end sometime. Britain would not agree to an extension beyond June 5 and evacuation had to be completed at that date. Cowley was to endeavor to get a convention drawn up stipulating that evacuation would be complete by June 5 or Britain would insist that France fulfill the conditions of the September 5 convention and withdraw her troops immediately.[129]

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[128] Ibid., 460-61.

[129] Ibid., 461-62.

On March 11 Cowley presented to Thouvenel his draft of a convention that would extend the occupation to June 5. At the end of that time evacuation had to be completed. Thouvenel accepted the draft in principle, but continued to insist that France could not be bound by a definite date. Evacuation was intended by June 5, but the Foreign Minister did not want to abandon the Christians in Lebanon to any fate that might befall them. Should a massacre be imminent on June 5, for example, he wanted assurance that evacuation would not be demanded just because the convention stated it had to be. Cowley said that in such a case circumstances would dictate. Britain in the meantime wanted a pledge, guaranteed by a convention, that if tranquillity prevailed on June 5 there would be no further question of prolonging the occupation.[130]

After Thouvenel had finally agreed to June 5 as the time when evacuation was to be completed, he attempted to induce the Turkish ambassador to propose another prolongation, but the latter refused. The Turk government continued to insist that it was capable of maintaining order. Cowley's proposals were thus embodied in a convention that was signed on March 19.[131]

France had reluctantly agreed to terminate the occupation. But, she was not prepared to surrender her interest in the Christians of Syria, and ancient traditions dictated that France render every support to the Christians of Lebanon. France would hold the Porte accountable if fresh persecutions occurred. Thouvenel also asked Cowley if there would be any possibility of a combined Anglo-French naval squadron on the coast of Syria. Russell had earlier indicated that besides the

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[130] Ibid., 487-88. [131] Ibid., 488-89.

British ships already in Syrian waters, an additional squadron would be stationed there from May 1 and throughout the summer.[132] In the eventuality of violence breaking out on the withdrawal of the occupation troops, British commanders would land marines if necessary to protect British subjects and Christians on the coast. Under no conditions, however, were the commanders to move into the interior.[133] Cowley therefore thought the two governments might well cooperate in this endeavor.

Thouvenel remained apprehensive as the time for evacuation approached. To him, reports from Syria were foreboding. Throughout the month of May accounts of murders, prevailing insecurity, and violence were brought to his attention, and he lamented the fate of the Christians once the troops were withdrawn. Cowley confessed that he saw no end to the occupation if reasons were continually sought for its prolongation. No administration in Lebanon would end the feuds that had grown up between the Druses and the Maronites. The question was whether the Porte could maintain order and this would not be known until the troops were withdrawn. The authority of the Sultan had to be tested sooner or later unless it was intended that the European intervention be permanent. Foreign troops would not pacify the country and every time it was suggested that they be withdrawn the same apprehensions would be voiced.[134]

Dufferin discounted the remonstrances of the Syrian Christians against the evacuation. He reported that on May 11 when it became definitely known that the French were to leave, the news was received

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[132] Ibid., 491. [133] Ibid., 588-89. [134] Ibid., 597-98.

with more indifference than might have been expected.[135] Major A. J. Fraser, an Englishman who had been sent to work with Dufferin and Fuad, also suggested that apprehensions among the Christians were more feigned than real. Uneasiness naturally prevailed among the Christians insofar as many of them had availed themselves of the opportunity afforded by foreign protection to molest their Druse and Mohammedan neighbors. Their fears were that their victims might seek revenge once the troops and foreign protection were removed. There were also financial reasons for seeking the prolongation of the occupation. Six thousand men spent a great deal of money. Fraser was convinced, however, that no violence would accompany the evacuation since the Ottoman authorities controlled the situation.[136]

On May 20 the French Mediterranean squadron, accompanied by several transports, left Toulon for Beirut, and evacuation began on May 28. Major Fraser doubted that any delay would hamper getting the troops out by June 5. He had also taken a tour of the Mountain to see if there was any reason to anticipate disturbances on the removal of the troops and had found the people peacefully occupied in the silk harvest. He therefore had no reason to anticipate any violence.[137] Moore reported from Beirut that there was some apprehension among the Christians, but it had been greatly allayed with the news that the British and French fleets would remain.[138] Fuad Pasha had also issued a proclamation that any outbreak of violence on the departure of the troops would be severely punished.[139]

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[135] Ibid., 654. [136] Ibid., 672. [137] Ibid., 667, 671.
[138] Ibid., 675. [139] Ibid., 677.

Four thousand men had been embarked by the controversial date of June 5, and Fraser reported later that the evacuation was officially completed on June 10. The embarkation had been accomplished in perfect order and without accident or incident. As for public excitement, Fraser remarked that "the population manifested the utmost indifference."[140] General Beaufort and the few men attached to the Commissariat departed on June 17 thus removing the last of the French forces.[141]

The state of Syria on the evacuation of the troops was not serene, to say the least. Occasional acts of violence occurred as they had for time immemorial. But, the events of a year before had not been repeated. Fears were beginning to subside. The inhabitants of Deir-el-Kamar and other places had returned to their homes.[142] Fraser reported to Bulwer on June 16 that tranquillity prevailed in Lebanon. Peasants were moving about unarmed, a sight rarely witnessed in recent years. Fuad returned to Beirut on June 15 and reported that he had found all quiet in Lebanon.[143]

A significant event occurred on June 25 when Sultan Abdul Medjid died, having allegedly drunk himself to death after despairing of ever being able to end the disorder in his empire. He was succeeded by his brother Abdul Aziz, a half-insane spendthrift who was, if anything, less capable than his predecessor. The new Sultan gave assurances, however, that an imperial Hatti-Sherif would shortly be issued regarding internal reforms for Turkey.[144] Lord Wodehouse,

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[140] Ibid., 687, 690. [141] Ibid., 694.

[142] Times, June 25, 1861. [143] SP, 1861, LXVIII, 694.

[144] Hansard, CLXIV (1861), 6-7.

Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, optimistically believed that if the new Sultan followed the advice disinterestedly given by his allies it was not yet too late for the Turkish empire to attain prosperity and stability.[145]

By the end of the summer the situation in Syria was progressing nicely. Elections had been held on August 29, and Daoud Pasha was selecting the chiefs of districts in Lebanon. The French squadron continued to visit different points on the coast, and the admiral in command had paid several visits to the Mountain to judge for himself the real state of affairs. He had found the situation satisfactory. Those Druse chiefs who had been condemned for their share in the uprisings of the previous summer had been sent to serve their punishments. The others had been allowed to return to their homes.[146]

News from Beirut on September 8 indicated that tranquillity continued to prevail in Syria and that the new administration was working well.[147] The French squadron was expected to leave Syrian waters about October 20 and return to Toulon, leaving only a few small vessels as a token protection for the inhabitants of Syria.[148]

The cracks had been plastered.

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[145] Ibid.

[146] Times, September 9, 1861.

[147] Times, September 18, 1861.

[148] Times, October 15, 1861.

CHAPTER VII

THE CRETAN CRISIS AND ITS BACKGROUND

Even before the Syrian crisis had been fully resolved, events were portending a serious crisis in yet another part of the Ottoman empire. The new trouble spot was Crete, an area of perennial disturbance. Throughout the entire nineteenth century there were recurrent revolts designed to result in enosis or union with Greece. The trouble had begun at the time of the Greek war for independence when, for strategic reasons, Britain had refused to allow Crete to become a part of Greece, and the conflict continued until 1913 when the union was finally consummated.[1]

Crete was the last of the territories acquired by the Ottoman empire in Europe, having been surrendered by the Republic of Venice in 1669. In 1830 Crete had been given to Mehemet Ali in return for his services in the Greek war. For the next ten years Crete remained a part of the pashalik of Egypt, until 1840 when the Treaty of London restored the island to the Porte. Under Mehemet Ali the Cretans had enjoyed a degree of autonomy, but this had been superseded by the control of the Sultan. No doubt the Cretans had legitimate grievances

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[1]L. S. Stavrianos, The Balkans Since 1453 (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p. 469.

against the Porte, as did most inhabitants of the Ottoman empire. But, the condition of the Cretans was no worse than that of other Turkish subjects and was not the reason for their revolts. The object sought was union with Greece.[2]

Making the problem interminable and virtually impossible of solution was the composition of the Cretan population. Of the some 300,000 inhabitants, fifteen percent at most enjoyed the privileged position of being landlords. This highly favored and contestable position had been acquired by Greeks who had apostatized to Islam.[3] By being converted the renegades had gained control of the fertile lands on the plain. The Cretan uprising for union with Greece was thus complicated by the antagonism of the Christian majority against the Moslem minority and by the enmity of those forced onto the poorer land in the hills against those holding the better land on the plains. The conflict broke into open revolt lasting from 1866-1868 and was only partially resolved by the Organic Statute of the latter year that mitigated the worst of the grievances.[4]

The American Civil War and the Polish insurrection had diverted the attention of the European powers from the East. On April 6, 1863, however, an article appeared in the London Times

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[2]J. A. R. Marriott, The Eastern Question, An Historical Study in European Diplomacy (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1917), p. 331. For Palmerston's interest in reforms for Crete see Rodkey, Journal of Modern History, II (June, 1930), 212-14.

[3]Ferdinand Schevill, The History of the Balkan Peninsula From the Earliest Times to the Present Day (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1922), pp. 383-84.

[4]Stavrianos, p. 470.

suggesting that the eastern calm was not going to continue. The Eastern Question had not been settled in 1856 nor in 1861, and it was once again becoming threatening. The question always demanded a solution that, the Times writer predicted, it would never have.[5]

In February Foreign Secretary Russell had reviewed for Bulwer, who was British ambassador to the Porte until his retirement in 1865, the disposition of the powers regarding Turkey. Russia might not attempt aggression against Turkey for some years, he thought, but she would continue her plan of disorganization, encouraging rebellions, and protecting every disaffected subject of the Porte. France had demonstrated by her attitude towards Serbia and the principalities that she was no longer a friend of Turkey. Prussia usually followed Russia's lead, and Italy leaned towards the policy of either Russia or France. Only Austria and Britain remained friends and supporters of the Porte.[6] The Cretan crisis of 1866-1868 was to bear out much of Russell's 1863 observation. Only Britain in this crisis sought to maintain unimpaired the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Turkey.

France initially took a stand against intervention, but little by little her policy became similar to that of Russia. Both countries eventually suggested separation of Crete from Turkey and cession to Greece. On Britain's refusal, these countries pressed for a European commission to inquire into the grievances of the Cretans. Again Britain refused to lend her support. When France and Russia suggested removing refugees from Crete to Greece, Britain again withheld her approval, even after the two other powers undertook actual removal. On

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[5]Times, April 6, 1863. [6]SP, 1877, XCII, 812.

numerous occasions both France and Russia, and often Austria, acknowledged that their schemes had little chance of success unless Britain agreed to them. Britain's steadfast refusal exemplified her desire to keep the Eastern Question as subdued as possible and to forestall its ultimate resolution as long as possible. In the end, the Cretan affair was allowed to burn itself out, and the attention of the powers was diverted to issues within Europe itself.

Since before the end of the Crimean war, Britain's interests had required that she support Turkey. If the Turkish empire were allowed to continue its unremitting decay, the European balance would be endangered. Britain sought to prevent this disaster, and hopeful signs indicated that the British policy was producing satisfactory results. Conditions in Turkey were allegedly improving.[7]

European diplomats and consuls had become the advocates and defenders of the Christians in Turkey. Consequently, the worst side of any grievance of the Christians was heard first. Very few cases of oppression were overlooked, and all were immediately brought to the attention of the Porte. Many of the grievances were justified, but often the grounds for complaint were slight. Despite the complaints against Turkish administration, the British government was of the decided opinion that conditions in Turkey had appreciably improved since 1856. Henry Bulwer at Constantinople had reported in 1863 that the changes were a "miracle," and that no other country could show so much improvement in such a short time.[8]

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[7]Hansard, CLXIV (1861), 779-85.

[8]Hansard, CLXXI (1863), 96-98.

In the Cretan crisis, unfortunately, the British government was hampered by the defects in the British Levantine consular administration. Consular reports were replete with examples indicating that long residence in the East and long association with the Turks had affected and influenced the thinking of British consular agents. Mr. C. H. Dickson was the British consul at Canea, capital of Crete, during the 1866-1868 insurrection, and suffered from this debility. With the exception of one period of aberration when he ordered a British commander to take off some suffering refugees, Dickson was consistent in his support of the Turks. The British ambassadors in both Turkey and Greece complained that Dickson's reports were identical to those of the Turks and both were "grossly and willfully falsified."[9]

Like its agents in the East, the British government was also pro-Turkish in its attitude. From 1856 to the opening of the crisis in 1866, and later, Britain remained one of the consistent apologists for Turkey, explaining away her shortcomings, pointing up her difficulties, and rationalizing her weaknesses. Britain explained that the Porte did not instigate and support the oppression of Christians and what Turkish religious fanaticism existed was only the instinct of self-preservation. The Mussulmans were convinced that the Christian powers were going to deliver them to their Christian enemies.

Many British officials stressed that the Turkish government was tolerant. In Turkish cities the mosque and Christian church were seen side by side. More importantly, whatever their shortcomings, only the Turks could keep order among the many different sects and races making

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[9]SP, 1867, LXXIV, 239.

up the Ottoman empire. British policy would be to support Turkey so that she might carry out the reforms necessary to resolve the conflicts among the heterogeneous parts of her population.[10] The independence of Turkey had to be maintained intact.

Although his attitude towards Turkey had changed by 1875, in May 1863 William Ewart Gladstone, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, was a supporter of Turkey. In a speech in the Commons he denied that the government was indifferent to the grievances of the Christians in the Ottoman empire. Britain, however, was not prepared to depart from a policy that had served her so well. It was a matter of British concern that Turkey not be made the object of foreign aggression. It was a matter of vital importance to Britain, and to Europe, that the destruction of the Ottoman empire not be made the means of introducing more serious evils and dangers than those constituted by its continued existence. And in contrast to what he would be saying within a dozen years, Gladstone maintained that it did no good to criticize the government and policy of Turkey regarding her Christian subjects. Such charges only produced injury in Turkey.[11]

Events in Crete assumed a menacing air in the spring of 1866. On April 28 consul Dickson reported from Canea that signs of discontent were becoming evident in many parts of the island. An assembly of elders from some of the western districts, including the mountainous Sfakia, wanted to submit their complaints in a general petition to the Sultan. As reported by Dickson, the most vexatious grievances were the following:

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[10] Hansard, CLXXI (1863), 98-105. [11] Ibid., 146-47.

1) the system of farming the tithe of ten percent and the oppressive method of collecting it;

2) the interference of the governor-general, Ismail Pasha, in the popular elections;

3) the seizure of a relative of a criminal if he himself could not be apprehended;

4) the delays in the adjudication of civil and criminal cases made necessary by the over-centralization of the system whereby instructions had to be received from Constantinople on even trifling matters.

Ismail Pasha was meanwhile trying to appease the discontented and attempting to prevent the memorial from being drawn up and a meeting from being held.[12]

The governor-general was not successful in his deterrent action since Dickson reported on May 5 that about 1,000 Cretans, including some 150 chiefs of districts, had congregated at Perivolia, a small village three miles outside Canea. Despite Ismail's assurances that their grievances would be considered, the chiefs insisted on sending a memorial to the Sultan. The Cretans had come to the meeting unarmed, they professed their loyalty and submission to the Ottoman government, and so far the meeting had been conducted in perfect order. The governor-general was apprehensive, however, because such a gathering of Greeks could lead to acts of violence and an outburst of fanaticism, especially since the chiefs had expressed their intention

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[12] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 129.

not to disperse until a satisfactory reply had been received from Constantinople.[13]

By May 14 the number of assembled Cretans had swelled to about 4,000, and the Turks were becoming alarmed at rumors that the real purpose of the meeting was a plot and rebellion against the Mohammedans. Consequently, many Turks were leaving their homes and flocking into Canea to seek the protection of the troops and the sympathy of their co-religionists. Dickscn warned that the situation was becoming dangerous. The slightest occurrence, quickly fanned by religious fanaticism, could produce a disastrous situation. Ismail Pasha had ordered the assembly to disperse because it was not following legal procedure. He also ordered the Turk corvette stationed at Canea to cruise around the island to intercept the contraband traffic, reportedly pursued by mainland Greeks in support of the assembly.[14]

A petition from what was now the Cretan Greek Assembly was addressed to Sultan Abdul Aziz on May 26. On the same day Dickson received a letter from the Assembly requesting the aid of Britain, France, and Russia, powers that had previously indicated their support of Christians in the East.[15] No answer was received to the Assembly's petition by early June, and although peace still prevailed in the island, Dickson reported that the situation was ominous. Large shipments of Turkish troops and supplies had been arriving, and the Assembly still had not dispersed.[16]

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[13] Ibid., 130.

[14] Ibid., 131.

[15] Ibid., 134-36.

[16] Ibid., 132-33.

Lord Lyons, who had become the British ambassador at the Porte in the autumn of 1865, had frequently spoken to Aali Pasha, Grand Vizier, on the need for appeasing the discontent in Crete and considering complaints. Aali maintained that the real object of the promoters of the movement was not to obtain redress of grievances, but to alter the political condition of the island. The object sought was either quasi-independence, as was enjoyed by Egypt, or complete separation from Turkey and union with Greece. Because of the Cretans' designs, and because the disaffection of the Christians was being promoted in Greece, the Porte had considered it necessary to send a large naval and military force to Crete.[17]

Still pressing his point, Lyons asserted that the presence of a Turkish military force made the moment opportune for redressing grievances and making reasonable reforms. The presence of military strength would make it apparent that the concessions had not been extorted by the Cretans by intimidation, but granted in a spirit of justice. Any attempt to remove complaints could only have a lasting and beneficial effect, while putting down the remonstrance by force could only increase the disaffection and turn the people against the government.[18] Lyons would go no further, however, than offering advice to the Porte, as indicated by his refusal to have anything to do with a petition addressed to the British government by the inhabitants of certain parts of Crete. The memorial asked the British government to obtain redress of Cretan grievances and the reform of the political organization.[19] Lyons and his government believed that reform was

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[17] Ibid., 136-37. [18] Ibid. [19] Ibid., 137-40.

needed in Crete. But, Britain did not think Crete should be annexed to Greece. Conditions in that troubled kingdom did not give any cause for believing that the situation of Crete could be appreciably improved through such a union.[20]

Brushing aside the advice of Lyons, the Porte published a manifesto in Crete on July 23 in answer to the petition of the Cretans. The grievances of the Christians were denounced. The manifesto declared that few places in the empire enjoyed such light taxation, trade had been increasing, and there were other positive factors. Not only had the people no complaint, they had proceeded in an illegal manner. The only reason they had not been punished was due to the forbearance of the Porte. But, if the Cretan Committee, a constant source of uneasiness and possible sedition, was not dissolved, the government would use force to disperse it and secure compliance to the law. No promise was given that grievances would be redressed.[21] To support its authority, the Porte had been steadily increasing its military strength in Crete. Dickson reported on July 27 that the army at the disposal of the governor-general numbered roughly 22,000, including some 6,000 Egyptian infantry.[22]

In early August, after three threatening months, the situation was desperate. The Porte had refused to acquiesce in the claims of the Christians, and the Committee had refused to disperse. When the Porte announced that it would use stringent measures, the Committee decided to meet force with force. The Christians took up arms for self-defense. More than 25,000 armed men, not counting women and children, left their

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[20]Ibid., 141. [21]Ibid., 148-49. [22]Ibid., 143.

homes for the mountains. There the benighted unfortunates awaited a favorable British intervention that never materialized. There was no longer any hope for reconciliation with the Turkish government. The Cretans were determined to ask for annexation to Greece and suffer anything in order to obtain it.[23]

When the crisis in Crete flared into open conflict, Lyons moved to protect British interests. The Arethusa from the Mediterranean fleet was ordered to Canea for the protection of British officials, subjects, and property. Dickson was specifically instructed to refrain from all unnecessary interference in the dispute. He was to exert as much influence as he properly could to avert bloodshed and to promote a restoration of tranquillity, but he was not to compromise the British government.[24]

Once the resistance became open rebellion, the Porte defended its position before the British government. The Turkish ambassador at London called on Lord Stanley, Foreign Secretary, and denied that the Cretans had any legitimate grievances. Their discontent was the result of foreign intrigue. Notwithstanding this profession of innocence, Stanley instructed Lyons that he was to press strongly on the Porte the advice of Britain that any grievances be redressed and that the Cretans be treated with forbearance. Because of the current situation in Europe [the Schleswig-Holstein question and the Austro-Prussian war], it would be disastrous if any situation were allowed to develop in the East that would excite the sympathies of powers in favor of the Christian subjects of Turkey.[25]

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[23]Ibid., 148-49. [24]Ibid., 153. [25]Ibid., 144-45.

Thus far the British and French governments were in concert regarding the Cretan uprising. On August 22, 1866 the Greek minister, M. Delyanni, met with M. de Moustier at Constantinople. The latter, the French ambassador, had been urged to take steps favorable to the Christians in Crete. Moustier's answer was that the movement in Crete had assumed the nature of a rebellion and there was too much reason to believe that it had been patronized by foreign interests. Neither Britain nor France had been appealed to nor had they been consulted, and they were the guaranteeing powers. The action of the Cretans was apparently directed at the disintegration of the Ottoman empire and was therefore in opposition to the policy of France. France could not make any interference in favor of the Cretans. Lyons later indicated that had the request been made to him, his answer would have been the same.[26]

The crisis assumed new proportions on September 2 when the General Assembly of the Cretans declared the abolition of Ottoman dominion in Crete and its dependencies. Crete was declared united to Greece under King George I of the Hellenes. It was hoped that all Cretans and Philhellenes would support the declaration and that the great powers would offer their assistance.[27]

The Porte believed, as Musurus Pasha, the Turkish ambassador to London, related to Stanley, that the insurgents were hopelessly outnumbered and could not hope to achieve success in their uprising. Their only desire was to stir up so much agitation that there would be diplomatic interference on their behalf. Only by this means could they expect to gain an advantage. The Cretans had no just complaints.

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[26] Ibid., 163. [27] Ibid., 181.

Those that existed were exaggerated, and with repetition the exaggerations had assumed an importance they ought not to have had in the first place. Stanley admitted that the grievances were doubtless magnified, but they had to have some validity. Such a serious situation could hardly have developed without provocation. It was the desire, however, of the British government that the authority of the Porte be maintained, so Stanley would only urge that order be restored without resort to harsh measures and that the reasonable demands of the people be met.[28]

Whether or not in deference to British advice, Aali Pasha told Lyons on September 5 that within a few days Mustapha Pasha would be sent to Crete as a special commissioner with discretionary powers. He was an able man, had been governor of Crete for several years, and at one time had been Grand Vizier at Constantinople. His task would be to hear the complaints of the Cretans and consider redress of grievances. He would make every effort to satisfy the people and avoid the unwholesome use of force. If the munificent attitude of the Porte was reciprocated by the Cretans, everything could be satisfactorily settled. If foreign instigation continued, however, and if the Cretans persisted in open rebellion, the Porte would have no recourse but to use force to defend its rights. But, Turkey would have exhausted every means at her disposal to bring about conciliation before using coercion.[29]

As was to be expected, Russia professed an immediate interest in the Cretan affair. Her attitude was outlined through diplomatic channels to Stanley. The Russian government wanted to avoid joint intervention of the powers in the internal affairs of Turkey, but the

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[28] Ibid., 165 [29] Ibid., 175.

gravity of the situation and the possibility of an extension of the disorders did not allow the powers to assume a passive role. The collective action of the powers should be used to save Europe from imminent danger. In early September Czar Alexander proposed that Britain, Russia, and France unite their efforts to restore peace. Their representatives at Constantinople should be authorized to seek with the Turkish government the means of arriving at a peaceful settlement.[30]

Stanley agreed on the principle of joint action by the powers if necessary. He thought, however, that the apprehensions of the Russians were exaggerated. It would be infinitely better if the Porte took whatever action was required. Foreign intervention would weaken, not strengthen, the Porte's authority. Only if circumstances appeared imperative, would Britain consider intervention. Apparently the need did not arise. At almost the same time that he answered the Russian proposal, Stanley instructed Lyons to assure the Porte of the sincere desire of the British government to preserve unimpaired the authority of Turkey in Crete.[31]

Before answering the Russian proposal, Stanley obtained the views of the French government, and it was decided that since the Porte had sent a commissioner, the powers should take no action. Baron Baude, the French ambassador at London, agreed with Stanley that in the event Mustapha Pasha's mission failed and great power interference was required, it should be taken by the powers acting together and not by any one or two of them.[32] The French government had ordered a frigate to Crete to protect French subjects if necessary, but not to interfere

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[30] Ibid., 166-67. [31] Ibid., 167. [32] Ibid., 174.

in the internal affairs of the island. The French admiral had intimated his intention of going in person, but had been subsequently ordered to remain at Beirut lest his presence in Crete be misinterpreted.[33]

When he learned Stanley's answer to his government's proposal, the Russian ambassador at London, Baron Brunnow, expressed his concern that if hostilities continued, European indignation would be aroused. Stanley admitted the possibility, but added that it was impossible to refuse to the Porte the right that every government had of putting down an insurrection. So long as the recognized rules of warfare were observed, the powers had little right to interfere. Moreover, intervention could only mean the separation of Crete from Turkey and annexation to Greece. If such a movement was successful in Crete, there would be no stopping its spread to every other European province where the Christian population outnumbered the Mussulman. The nations had to act with extreme caution lest the whole Eastern Question be opened.[34]

Mustapha Pasha arrived in Crete on September 12 and two days later issued a proclamation urging the Cretans to end their rebellion. The Cretans were given five days in which to consider the offer and if at the end of that time they had not surrendered, Mustapha would be obliged to use every means at his disposal to restore order and protect the peaceful inhabitants on the island.[35] The force at his disposal was considered superior to that of the Cretans. On September 18 it was reported that Turkish and Egyptian forces amounted to 30,000 men while the insurgents numbered 40,000, but were poorly armed and led.[36]

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[33] Ibid., 176.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 185-86.

[36] Ibid., 176.

Notwithstanding their deficiencies, the insurgents gave little indication of submitting. On September 14 the representatives of the Cretan people addressed a petition to the king of Greece asking that he intercede with the powers and induce them to send ships to convey the families of the insurgents to places of safety in Greece.[37] During the five-day interim several serious clashes between Cretans and Turks took place, belying submission.[38] The insurrection was also spreading to districts hitherto free from rebellion. Leaving their fortified positions, the insurgents began a large-scale advance on Canea in the east.[39] On September 22 Stanley was informed that since all attempts at reconciliation had failed, the Porte had finally resolved on the use of force to reduce the Cretans to obedience.[40]

The insurrection immediately assumed alarming aspects. On September 25 Mustapha Pasha declared the blockade of the entire coast of Crete, with the exception of the ports of Canea, Retimo, Candia, Suda, and Spinalonga. Having recently had some experience with blockades, the British government cautioned the Porte on the importance of providing against any irregularity regarding the use of this extreme measure. Its announcement and enforcement must be strictly in accordance with international law.[41] The warnings of the British government were of little avail, however, for the Porte did not possess the means, nor perhaps the will, to make the blockade effective.

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[37] Ibid., 205.

[38] Times, September 19, 1866.

[39] Times, October 1, 1866.

[40] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 183.

[41] Ibid., 212. At the Paris Congress in 1856 four rules of international law had been adopted, one stipulating that blockades, to be binding, had to be effective.

The declaration of a blockade was not without significance. Instead of quelling the disturbance within two weeks as he had planned, Mustapha had been forced to recognize the insurgent Cretans as belligerents. This step gave the Cretan war an enhanced importance. The proclamation of a blockade implied that 30,000 Turk troops were unable to end the rebellion and that the insurgents were in possession of many of the ports and bays as well as in command of the long mountain chain running more than 100 miles east-to-west through the island.[42]

The outbreak of civil war necessitated a new attitude on the part of the British government. Dickson had been instructed to do all he properly could in promoting restoration of peace and averting bloodshed. Conditions having changed, the earlier instructions had to be modified. Dickson was now ordered to observe a scrupulously careful neutrality while the hostilities continued. He was also to keep his government informed on the progress of the insurrection.[43]

The insurgents believed they could easily last for four months against the Turkish forces that were constantly being augmented. During this time a favorable change of opinion in Europe was not unlikely, and the insurgents would receive the aid they desired.[44] Meanwhile the Cretan National Assembly appealed to Greece to take part in the insurrection. The governments of both Britain and France, however, warned Greece of the likely consequences if she did not observe the strictest neutrality during the uprising in Crete.[45]

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[42] Times, October 20, 1866. [43] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 206.

[44] Ibid., 186. [45] Times, October 5, 1866.

The Porte, meantime, had been displaying great energy and was confident that pacification of Crete would be complete by October 18 at the latest.[46] The insurgents had been driven into the mountains where they were partially surrounded by sea and land, and some had already submitted to Kiritli Pasha who was in command of the headquarters of the Turkish army.[47] Dickson, however, reported that the animosities on both sides were becoming more bitter by the day. The insurrection was rapidly becoming a war of mutual extermination and wholesale destruction of property.[48] There was also the apprehension that if the Cretan affair was allowed to continue for any length of time, an uprising would occur in Epirus and Thessaly.[49] In anticipation of such an occurrence, 30,000 Turkish troops were there already and further reinforcements were to be sent.[50] As yet, fortunately, tranquillity prevailed in other parts of the Ottoman empire.

Not only had all negotiations been utterly fruitless, a new dimension was added to the insurrection when sympathizers on the Greek mainland began openly supplying the insurgents with volunteers and supplies. On October 11 the Greek steamer Panhellenion left Syra on the first of its many trips through the Turkish blockade with volunteers, food, and munitions.[51] Some days later the Greek Colonel Coroneos, with forty other officers, left the Greek service and arrived in Crete.[52]

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[46] Times, October 9, 1866. [47] Times, October 12, 1866.

[48] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 202. [49] Times, October 8, 1866.

[50] Times, October 13, 1866. [51] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 202.

[52] Times, October 18, 1866.

A number of points were becoming obvious. The Turks could not suppress the insurrection nor maintain an effective blockade, and they were exaggerating their successes. They daily reported victories, but had as yet been unable to put down poorly armed and badly led insurgents whom they now outnumbered.[53] In Crete the offices of governor-general and commander-in-chief of the military had been combined in one person, a tactic often resorted to in times of crisis. Mustapha Pasha had thus succeeded Ismail Pasha, but his efforts at quelling the insurrection were little more successful than those of his predecessor. The type of warfare being carried on in Crete could be maintained for months with no decisive conclusion and was likely to result in the desolation of Crete before it achieved her submission.[54]

On October 26 the British government received the first of many petitions from the Cretan General Assembly asking that British ships be allowed to remove any Christian women and children desiring to leave Crete. Stanley's answer was that no action could be taken by Britain without violating her neutrality. Such a step would be at least a declaration of sympathy with the insurgents if not an open encouragement of the insurrection itself. Nor were Lyons or Dickson to use their own discretion if approached with similar requests. Even in extreme cases, their only answer was to be a blunt refusal.[55]

When a renewed appeal was made by the Cretan General Assembly to all the consuls on November 1 for the removal of noncombatants, it was again rejected by Britain.[56] The British rejections appeared to

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[53] Times, October 25, 1866. [54] Times, November 3, 1866.

[55] Hansard, CLXXXV (1867), 1517-18. [56] Times, November 3, 1866.

be vindicated, however, because of the reports that the insurrection was over. The Times of November 8 carried an official telegram from Constantinople declaring that the insurrection was at an end. The insurgents were making their submission to the imperial authorities, and most of the Greek subjects who had taken part in the insurrection were returning to Greece.[57] The imperial commissioner had granted a conditional general pardon to all who had taken part in the insurrection, and after giving up his arms each native might return to his home. The ringleaders had to agree further that they would never again rebel. All foreign insurgents were given permission to leave the island.[58]

It was soon apparent, however, that the insurrection had not been suppressed. Mustapha had demanded conditions that were certain to be refused. The Sfakiote population, among others, had resolved to reject his proposals.[59] Were it only the native Cretans involved in the insurrection, the island could have been pacified quickly. The revolutionary committees abroad, however, and the constant influx of foreign volunteers encouraged the Cretans and deluded them into thinking that intervention of the powers on behalf of their cause was forthcoming. The inefficiency of the Turkish blockade appeared to be one of the main causes for the extension of hostilities. Men and supplies were landed from Greece with little difficulty. The Panhellenion commander reported time and again that a Turk ship had not even been sighted, let alone given chase.[60]

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[57] Times, November 8, 1866. [58] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 229.

[59] Times, November 10, 1866. [60] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 235, 238.

Reliable intelligence regarding the insurrection was difficult to obtain because of the exaggerations by both sides. But, the reports of some alleged neutrals were sometimes no more objective. Both Lyons in Constantinople and Lord Erskine, British ambassador in Greece, complained that the accounts of Dickson could not be relied on. Dickson insisted that the situation in Crete was improving, that the Turks were winning, and that the Cretans were being driven into submission. His accounts were almost duplicates of the official Turk reports. He neglected to mention Turkish defeats and insurgent victories.[61]

Dickson further compromised himself during the first part of November. Feeling that the insurrection might be considered over, he asked the acting governor-general in Crete, Aali Bey, whether the British ship Assurance might be of service in transporting some of the distressed Christian families to Greece. He admitted that he was acting solely on his own authority, but in the interests of humanity. Perhaps he was giving a liberal interpretation to Lyons' instructions of November 7 that he take every feasible and proper measure to save the destitute and suffering Cretan women and children. Nothing came of Dickson's premature offer of aid because Aali Bey first had to consult with Mustapha Pasha. Moreover, no Christian families had as yet indicated any desire to leave the island so Dickson decided not to move any further in the matter for the time being.[62]

As the autumn wore on and the insurrection was not suppressed, it became more complicated. The American consul in Crete, Mr. W. J. Stillman, reported that there was little prospect of quelling the

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[61] Ibid., 232, 236. [62] Ibid., 237-38.

insurrection before the end of the winter. Both sides were seeking means to continue the war.[63] Perhaps economics were taking precedence over principle, but even Britain and France no longer maintained a strictly neutral attitude. The Greeks were purchasing guns from France, and a Greek committee was negotiating for the purchase of a blockade runner from Britain, one of the many built for the American Civil War and now offered for sale.[64]

Yet another issue arose to plague those desiring to keep the Eastern Question from breaking into the open. On December 10 the Turkish ambassador complained to Stanley of repeated Greek violations of neutrality. Not only were volunteers and supplies allowed to leave the mainland for Crete, apparently sanctioned by the Greek government, but of late Greece had also adopted a scheme of using armed ships to protect the landing of arms and volunteers on Crete. If such gross infractions of neutrality were continued, they would precipitate a war between Turkey and Greece.

Acting on this information, Stanley sent instructions to Erskine on December 11. The ambassador was to warn the Greek government against breaches of neutrality. If by such acts Greece became involved in a war with Turkey, she must not rely on the protection of treaties to shield her from the consequences of a foreign war that she would have brought on herself. Erskine also observed that without the aid and encouragement of the Greek government, the insurrection would long ago have been put down. If the Greeks were seeking to improve the condition of the Cretan Christians, aiding an insurrection was not the way to do it.

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[63] Ibid., 239-40. [64] Ibid., 236, 239.

However faulty the administration of Crete, it was hardly an improvement to have Christian lives lost, property destroyed, and land devastated.[65]

But, the Greeks were adamant. The Athens correspondent to the Times on December 13 reported that it was no longer possible to reason with the Greeks. They saw the danger of revolution in the East, but were daily more determined to open the Eastern Question. They considered the present state of things intolerable and, taking heart from the European situation, believed that now was the time to act. The pacification in Crete was only a temporary lull. The peasants had returned to their homes to attend to the olive harvest and assure themselves of warm homes for the winter. When spring came the revolt would be reopened and might well spread to Epirus and Thessaly.[66]

The longer the war continued the greater was the danger that some untoward act by someone or some power would lead to regrettable consequences. A Times' article on November 22 pointed out the probability that the affairs of Crete would lead to intervention. It was a delicate situation. The three protecting powers were agreed that a change in the relations of Crete to the Turk government was necessary, but they could not agree on what the change ought to be. The circumstances making interference unavoidable were clear enough, but they unfortunately led inevitably to the opening of the Eastern Question, the crossroad of European diplomacy. From the outbreak of the insurrection, for example, Britain had been pressured to offer relief to the families of the Cretan insurgents. But, the article went on,

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[65] Ibid., 242-43. [66] Times, December 24, 1866.

past experience had made it abundantly clear that if Britain took the initiative for humanitarian reasons, the other powers would immediately interfere to gain ulterior political ends.[67]

It was on the grounds of humanity that Britain was placed in an embarrassing situation in early December 1866, through the indiscretion of one of her consular officials. On December 8, in express violation of instructions, Dickson ordered Commander Pym of the Assurance to proceed to the western shore of Crete and take off any refugees who desired removal. Dickson was acting on his own experience and initiative. He had received information that the imperial commissioner, with an expeditionary force, was proceeding to the districts of Kissamos and Selinos in western Crete. Many insurgents, foreign and native, were in this area, and Dickson from his experience with Turkish troops believed that the insurgents could hope for no quarter. He considered it his duty to instruct Pym to take off any Christians in distress and convey them to Greece.[68]

On word from his government that he was to continue to observe a careful neutrality, Dickson rescinded his order to Pym and requested on December 13 that the commander return to Suda Bay. But, Pym did not get the new orders until he had landed more than 300 refugees at Piraeus in Greece.[69] Pym justified his actions on the grounds that he had acted on orders. More importantly, he had acted on grounds of humanity. He had saved the lives of harmless and helpless people. Once

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[67] Times, November 22, 1866. [68] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 253-54.

[69] Ibid., 261.

on the spot he considered that no British officer could refuse aid to innocent victims of civil war.[70]

While Pym's actions could not be condoned by his government, he was absolved of culpability. Vice-Admiral Lord Clarence Paget wrote from Malta giving the Admiralty full information on Pym's action, trusting that it would be excused because of the extenuating circumstances. Although the commander of the Assurance had been under strict orders not to interfere in the insurrection, he had disobeyed only because of the urgent request of Dickson. Moreover, he had only responded to the promptings of humanity in removing women and children. The men he had removed were sick and wounded and could not be considered combatants.[71]

While Pym's behavior was excused by the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty, Dickson's actions were of more consequence and not so easily explained. The implications were staggering. Britain had been the foremost nation in refusing aid to the insurgents and now a group of refugees had received succor through English agencies. There was first the vigorous protest and demand for an explanation by Aali Bey in Crete. The Assurance had violated the blockade. Aali could not believe that Pym's conduct was in conformity with the intentions of the British government, but an explanation was necessary and a protest in order.[72]

There was also the annoying matter of precedent. Consul St. Vincent Lloyd at Syra reported to Stanley that the news of a British ship landing refugees spread in Greece like wildfire. People

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[70] Ibid., 255. [71] Ibid., 259-60. [72] Ibid., 273-74.

had flocked to Lloyd's house singing and playing "God Save the Queen." A deputation expressed its thanks to him, as a representative of the Queen's government, for what had been done by the Assurance. The act was considered a pledge of further assistance and intervention in favor of the Greek Christians in Crete. It did no good for Lloyd to correct the people and assure them that it was simply a spontaneous humanitarian act by a British commander and not an expression of the policy of the British government, that this action was not to be taken as a pledge for further intervention. The people were too hysterical with expectation to be convinced by Lloyd's words.[73]

The refugee incident also had unfortunate consequences in Crete. The news that the Assurance had conveyed some people to Greece brought hundreds more down from the hills to the shore where they had little protection and less food, and where they waited in anticipation that help would be forthcoming.[74]

There was some question whether Dickson, as he insisted, had acted with the permission of the imperial commissioner. Perhaps he had allowed his mistaken impression that the insurrection was over to influence him unduly. Whatever other motivations were suggested, Dickson justified his actions on humanitarian grounds. He had seen what took place when Bashi-Bazouks, irregular troops, fell on Christians. When he learned that an expeditionary force was moving to western Crete he had acted on humanitarian impulse and had given his instructions to Pym. In the future he would comply with orders,

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[73] Ibid., 254. [74] Hansard, CLXXXV (1867), 1519-24.

but he could not be conscience-stricken for what he had done.[75]

No matter how deeply the British government sympathized with the victims of the uprising, it was the declared duty and intention of the government to observe a careful neutrality. Therefore, the action of Pym and Dickson could not be sanctioned. If the government had been consulted beforehand, it would have declined to take a step that would be at least a declaration of sympathy for the insurgents, if not an open encouragement of the insurrection itself.[76] Admiral Paget expressed his belief that it was not fair to the Porte that a British ship could follow the movements of Turkish troops and take away persons who were aiding and abetting an insurrection.[77]

Stanley was willing to make every allowance for the motives prompting Dickson to act as he had. Given the circumstances of the case and the difficulty of the consul's position, Dickson's behavior could not easily be censured. But, the action was not consistent with the neutral course that the government was following. In the future Dickson was to avoid being led into any course of action incompatible with the neutrality that he was bound to uphold.[78]

The affair involving Dickson's behavior was not fully resolved before an attempt was made to solicit British support in another way. By one means or another many Cretan refugees had gotten to Greece, and the country was experiencing much difficulty in caring for them. Even the amount of money required to provide a bare subsistence was staggering, and the finances of Greece had been strained before the

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[75] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 272.

[76] Ibid., 266.

[77] Ibid., 260.

[78] Ibid., 278.

insurrection began. Should the civil war be prolonged, the number of people needing relief would increase. Erskine was pro-Greek and asked if the British government could not make some pecuniary grant towards maintaining the refugees. The relief committee in Greece was making a valiant effort, but needed money.[79]

Another matter involved the Anglo-Greek Philhellenic Society under the sponsorship of the Bishop of London. This organization had established a fund for the relief of Cretan refugees in Greece, but needed a committee on the spot to administer it. Consequently, four Greek and four English members were to be appointed to the committee. On December 10 vice-consul C. L. W. Merlin at Athens asked Erskine whether he and Mr. Consul Neale at Piraeus could serve on this committee as requested by the Society. Erskine subsequently relayed this request to Stanley.[80]

Stanley's answer was that no British agent was to aid in relief work for the refugees. Such participation would inevitably be misinterpreted. Nor would the British government give any monetary aid. The government had no fund from which such assistance could be drawn since the refugees were not British subjects. Moreover, pecuniary assistance, whether given directly to the refugees or to assist the Greek government in caring for them, would be misrepresented in Greece as indicating sympathy with the insurgent cause. Such relief would also be taken by the insurgents as an encouragement for them to continue their resistance to the Porte. British aid would also imply approval of the efforts made by the Greek government and people to keep

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[79] Ibid., 256.

[80] Ibid., 250.

the insurrection alive in violation of all the rules of international law. It was plainly evident that every attempt was being made to create the impression that the British legation in Athens condoned and sympathized with the disturbance in Crete. Therefore, nothing was to be said or done by any British agent that could be taken as an encouragement to that impression.[81]

The British government was chided for its refusal to allow British vessels to remove refugees from Crete and to participate in their relief once they arrived in Greece. Lord John Hay for the Candian Refugees Relief Fund in London strongly urged Stanley in late December and early January to relent and allow relief to be given. The refugees brought off by Commander Pym said that there were at least 1,000 persons waiting for transport to Greece. If the Ottoman troops broke through the insurgent lines, the lives of these refugees would be needlessly sacrificed. Could not British ships be employed in this humanitarian act?[82]

When it had been learned in London that thousands of refugees had fled for their lives from Crete, a few benevolent persons had begun the Candian Refugees Relief Fund and Committee. Wanting to avoid any political implications, they had decided that the committee had to be composed of gentlemen with no political ties. Subsequently, a committee had been organized in Athens, including the principal English residents, but again there was the avoidance of political implications. Merlin, the British consul at Athens, was asked to serve on the committee. His position as manager of the Ionian Bank would

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[81] Ibid., 256-58, 264. [82] Ibid., 262.

be helpful and since he was only the commercial agent of the British government, not the political, his presence on the committee would not compromise the British government.

Stanley was also reminded that during the Syrian massacres, the British Syrian Relief Fund had been established. Palmerston had not only empowered the British authorities to act on the Fund's committee in Syria, Stanley had been one of its members and had contributed to the fund. Hay hoped that Stanley would not allow a question of international etiquette to prevent the British government from trying to save the lives of thousands of women and children.[83]

Stanley's answer to Hay's request outlined the attitude of the government towards the insurrection and the question of refugee relief. Dispatches from Greece clearly showed that the action of Pym had been regarded in Greece not as an act of humanity, but as an indication by the British government that it sympathized with the insurgents' cause. Stanley believed that the same interpretation would be given to any future removals or relief given to the refugees, especially if done on the express orders of the government.

The British government deplored the ruin and misery caused by the war. It was the duty of the government, however, to observe a strict neutrality and not expose itself to charges of complicity. Even an appearance of intervention would have the effect of holding out false hopes of assistance to the insurgents and may in the end produce more suffering, by prolonging the war, than could be momentarily averted by aiding the refugees. The government regretted, therefore,

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[83]Ibid., 268-69.

that it could not sanction the use of British naval forces for refugee removal. Nor could British agents participate in relief work. However, the British ambassador at Constantinople had been instructed to urge the Porte to deal leniently with the insurgents and to provide food, clothing, and shelter for those who were in need. This was as far as the government would go in interfering in the relief of refugees. Because of the political implications nothing more could or would be done.[84]

As yet, France was in general accord with Britain in the policy to be pursued towards the insurrection. On December 31, 1866 Stanley learned from Mr. Julian Fane at the Paris embassy the attitude of Moustier, French Foreign Minister, regarding the removal of refugees and their relief in Greece. Moustier said that it would be impossible to remove more refugees or give them pecuniary assistance without the acts being viewed as material assistance. It was already apparent how much political capital had been made out of Pym's action. If the Turk authorities were first asked, their objection would not be to the performance of a humane deed, but to the interpretation of the act by those in Athens. It would be taken as a sign of support and sympathy. At any rate, if refugees were removed from the island they ought not to be landed in Greece, but in some other part of the Ottoman empire.[85]

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[84] Ibid., 268-69, 272. At the same time that Stanley refused to allow any aid given by the government to the insurgents' cause, consul Lloyd reported, on January 9, 1867, that a fast blockade runner had recently been purchased by Greece in England, to be named the Arkadi. This ship would figure heavily in aiding the insurgents in Crete by running the blockade carrying volunteers and supplies. Ibid., 288.

[85] Ibid., 266-67.

Anglo-French cooperation was also evident in another sphere. On December 26 Dickson suggested that collective consular cooperation be offered to the imperial commissioner in the interests of peace. The National Assembly in Crete persisted in rejecting every reasonable proposal made by Mustapha Pasha, but the Cretans might possibly listen to the same advice if given by the consuls working in concert. The advice would have greater weight and, by working in a body, no consul would be able to exert an undue influence.[86]

Lyons would not encourage nor sanction such a questionable scheme unless the Porte and the French ambassador consented to it. The Porte believed the insurrection was over. Turkey was not disposed, therefore, to make terms with the insurgents, especially through the intervention of a consular body several of whose members were regarded as ardent partisans in the insurrection. On January 3, 1867 the French ambassador at the Porte also rejected Dickson's proposal. He would not instruct his consul to concur in arrangements made on the spot that would later prove embarrassing to the higher levels of government in Turkey or in Paris.

Lyons subsequently told Dickson that by taking part in concluding terms, he would be pledging Britain to an observance of them. This would impose on Britain a responsibility she had no authority to undertake. Moreover, the insurgents would not be able to make the distinction between official and unofficial intervention by Dickson. The British consul should do all he could to prevent bloodshed and suffering without compromising a strict neutrality. Above all he was

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[86] Ibid., 276.

not to take any step that could be construed as committing the British government on the general question of the settlement of Cretan affairs.[87]

Moustier further outlined France's position in the January 6 edition of the Moniteur. The Foreign Minister acknowledged that France had a warm sentiment towards the Cretan Christians, but the insurgent movement was not designed to redress the grievances of the Christians. France agreed with Britain that in the interests of preserving European peace, Turkish domination must be maintained in Crete.[88]

One of the issues making action of some kind necessary, however, was the strained relationship developing between Greece and Turkey. The Porte repeatedly urged the three powers protecting Greece to restrain her from aiding and encouraging the insurrection. The Porte asserted that the uprising could have been suppressed in a short while, and perhaps with much less bloodshed, had it not been for Greek interference. If Greece persisted in aiding the insurrection even after the remonstrances of the powers, Turkey would be compelled to take such action as her interests and self-preservation demanded.[89]

Stanley endorsed the Porte's view regarding Greek activity. The Greek provocations, if persisted in, would inevitably lead to war. Such a war would prove disastrous to Greece, and she must not expect that she would be relieved of the consequences by the intervention of the guaranteeing powers.[90]

When Erskine conveyed this warning to M. Tricoupi, the Greek Minister for Foreign Affairs, the latter defended the Greek position.

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[87] Ibid., 290-91.

[88] Times, January 8, 1867.

[89] Times, January 21, 1867.

[90] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 258.

He said that it was not within the power of the Greek government, or any other government, to check the sympathy felt by the Greeks for the insurgents. Any attempt to check this spontaneous display of sympathy would result in the overthrow of the government and possibly the deposition of the king. Not even in the interests of peace could the Greek government refrain from aiding the refugees. Moreover, Greece had no law preventing volunteers from going to Crete, and no law could be passed until the circumstances making the law necessary had been resolved.[91]

The British government, however, would not accept the excuses offered by the Greeks. Greece was warned that she would be held accountable for her behavior and must not look to Britain for aid in any consequences in which she might become involved by violating her international responsibilities.[92]

Not wanting to intervene directly in the Cretan affair, Britain still sought to bring her counsel to bear. Stanley told Lyons on December 27 that it was imperative for the Porte to understand the need for ending the war and relieving the hardship of the Cretans. The Cretans needed to be assured that they would receive subsistence and immunity from Mohammedan persecution. Many refugees had gone to Greece and the number would continue to swell if the war continued. Eventually, the presence of these refugees in Greece and their condition would arouse public sympathy in Europe. If this sympathy were not dampened it would exert such an influence on the European governments that they

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[91] Ibid., 282.

[92] Ibid., 284.

would involve themselves in the relations between the Porte and its Christian subjects.

It was not in the best interests of the Porte, nor those of European peace, that popular feelings be aroused in favor of the refugees. Britain recommended to the Porte, therefore, that it encourage the refugees to return home, assure them against future violence and persecution, and take steps to supply their immediate physical needs. It would not be wise for the Porte to continue insisting on the sovereign right of using force to quell a rebellion. Such insistence would risk prolonging the struggle and might produce a situation that would be disastrous for the Ottoman empire.[93]

Stanley's apprehensions were not unfounded. He had learned from Fane at Paris that the Russian government was about to propose to the other powers that some positive action be taken in the Cretan affair. The proposal dealt with making Crete into a princedom similar to Serbia. Moustier said that while such a project had not yet been fully considered by the French government, it appeared worthy of consideration and might advantageously be suggested to the Porte.[94] It was also known that Russian vessels had been active in removing refugees from Crete to Greece.[95]

Despite the ominous signs appearing by early January 1867, the British government had been relatively successful in resisting any large-scale aid to the insurrection. With the exception of one period of lapse by her consul and a misguided naval commander, she had

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[93] Ibid., 258-59. [94] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 89.

[95] SP, 1867, LXXIV, 277.

observed neutrality herself. Although there were many indications to the contrary, for example, the blockade runners were making runs with the regularity of packet steamers and several sources warned that hostilities would be renewed with the spring, the British government appeared anxious to accept the official Turkish reports that the insurrection was being put down. Britain had refused to remove refugees, but Stanley's conscience was salved with the news that orders had been sent from Washington instructing the American squadron in the Mediterranean to go to Crete and take off any refugees wanting to leave.[96]

On January 19, Stanley was asked by the Russian Baron Brunnow if the British government had come to any decision on the advice to be given the Porte regarding Crete. Stanley replied that Britain was willing to support a proposal made by the Russian and French governments that Crete be given local autonomy. But, Britain would never allow separation of Crete from the Ottoman empire. Britain respected Turkey's independence and would consider that once she had tendered advice, her responsibility would be ended. The Queen's government would not use pressure on the Porte to force acceptance of any counsel. It was also reported that the Porte was devising a scheme to reorganize the government and administration in Crete and to give guarantees to the Christians. Already plans had been made to send a special commissioner to Crete to make a complete report on the island and make conciliatory proposals to the Christians. Cretans, Christian and Mohammedan alike, would be invited to send delegates to Constantinople to present their grievances to the Sultan and confer with the Sultan's

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[96]Ibid., 295, 303.

ministers on the future administration of the island. Relief and aid would also be given to the suffering Cretans. If such plans were being prepared, and Stanley had reason to believe they were, and if the object desired were secured, Britain cared little what formal arrangements were made for Crete. It was the understanding of the British government, however, that no plans entailed the separation of Crete from Turkey.[97]

To Lyons on January 17 Stanley outlined the situation as it was viewed by the British government. It was imperative that the Sultan remove as quickly as possible the impression currently gaining ground in Europe that Turkish rule was incompatible with the well-being of Christians in the empire. As the question applied to Crete, it involved reconciling the happiness and submission of a large Christian community with the co-existence of a Mussulman population in the same area. Perhaps a system similar to the one established in Lebanon by the protocol of 1861 could advantageously be applied in Crete.

The essential need was to remove the objections against subjecting the Christians, who far outnumbered the Mussulmans, to an exclusive Mussulman administration. So long as any Christian power could truthfully say that the Christians in Crete were being oppressed by Mussulman rulers, there would be an attempt to rectify the situation. The Greek government's claim to annexation of Crete on the grounds that the Cretans would thus be benefited was a weak assertion. But, so long as the Greek government could truthfully say that Cretan Christians were being oppressed by Mussulmans, their pretensions to annexation would find favor in some quarter or another.

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[97] Ibid., 288, 304.

Stanley believed that the Porte could best circumvent attempts at intervention by taking the initiative and removing the grievances of the Cretan Christians. The Porte would thereby refute the idea, vigorously being circulated, that Christians and Mussulmans could not live together in the same province and that the Mussulmans would have to be removed from Crete. Stanley realized that his government's suggestion would be unpalatable to the Porte, but it was offered in a spirit of sincere friendship and with the conviction that the advice was sound. The decision for or against the British recommendations lay with the Porte, however, for Britain would not coerce Turkey into compliance.[98]

On February 15 the policy of the British government was defended by the Cabinet and its supporters in Parliament. Stanley admitted that grievances had played a role in the Cretan insurrection, but there was a better explanation for its origin. At least after the insurrection assumed serious proportions, it became a religious and national movement in favor of complete separation from the Turkish empire. It was natural, perhaps, that the Hellenes had acted as they had. They had observed the great success enjoyed by other national movements in Europe. Italy had been made a nation, and Germany to a large extent had been unified. The Greeks naturally believed that their time had also come.[99] And, as Mr. Austen H. Layard, M. P. from Southwark, pointed out, the war in Europe the previous year was considered an opportunity to raise the Eastern Question. Crete happened to be handier at the moment than Serbia.[100]

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[98] Ibid., 285-86. [99] Hansard, CLXXXV (1867), 446.

[100] Ibid., 430.

Unfortunately, Stanley said, there had been excesses in the war, but outrages would always accompany war in a country where there were semibarbarous people enthused with hatred and bigotry. It appeared, however, that Christians and Mussulmans had to share equally the blame for the atrocities, although it was difficult to determine the extent to which they had occurred. One could not trust the reports coming from the island's interior. Many of the brutalities had been witnessed only by the Cretans, and they could hardly be relied on to give an impartial view. Whatever the violence, and some had been committed by Turkish irregular troops, there was no evidence that the Turk government had sanctioned or tolerated excesses. The refugees removed by the Assurance, for example, could give no evidence of mistreatment by the Turks. Prisoners of war also attested to being well-treated by the Turkish authorities.[101]

Moreover, as Layard pointed out, Britain was in a delicate situation regarding the East. Like the Turks, the English governed races from which they differed in religion. Britain held millions of Mohammedans in India under her control, and they might well say that if Mohammedans had no right to govern Christians, Christians had no right to govern Mohammedans. If Indiam Moslems saw Britain condoning the murder of Mussulmans in Crete by Christians, it would be impossible to guarantee the security of affairs in India. It was important that Britain keep a just position between Christians and Mohammedans.[102]

Stanley concluded his defense of government policy by saying that it had been a painful decision not to allow ships of war to take

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[101] Ibid., 447.

[102] Ibid., 433.

off refugees from Crete. He had done so, however, on the conviction that the policy was right and that Britain was taking the only rational course under the circumstances. The insurgents watched eagerly for the slightest suggestion of intervention on the part of the western powers. Stanley was convinced that if Britain had given the assistance desired of her it would have been considered by the insurgents, and others, as an interference on behalf of the insurrection. Aid could only have prolonged the struggle and in the end the suffering of the Cretans would have been increased many times.

Moreover, there were duties of neutrality. While no one wanted to strain them in matters where interests of humanity were concerned, still they constituted an obligation. Britain would not have been allowed to take away insurgents or aid refugees in a war between two major powers and there could not be two rules, one for strong powers and one for weak.

Nor could Britain have recommended the cession of Crete to Greece. The Porte would not have agreed to giving up a part of the empire and would have done so only under coercion. Although the Porte might be better off without Crete, establishing a precedent that would ultimately have been fatal to the empire would have been unwise. If it was once understood that any province that raised a rebellion could count on a recommendation by the European powers that it should be separated from Turkey, a premium would be placed on disaffection and in time the empire would be dismembered.

Stanley also referred to the rights possessed by the Christians under the treaty of 1856. A separate administration for Crete was far

from what could legitimately be claimed under the terms of that treaty. The treaty referred only to the toleration of Christians in matters of religion and their right to give evidence on equal terms with Mussulmans in courts of justice. Britain could demand this much for them. Anything further could only be the subject of request and counsel.

Britain had done all she could. She had given only such advice as seemed beneficial to the common interests of all concerned. No doubt her advice would not be good in perhaps five years, especially if the Ottoman empire was in a period of transition. But, Stanley hoped that the members of the Parliament would not believe that the sympathy of the government for the Turkish Christians was any less real or sincere because the government had refrained from encouraging what it believed to be a hopeless insurrection. The government had not wanted to compromise itself by precipitate or premature action.[103]

Or, as the Times so succinctly put it, Turkey should be maintained intact:

> . . . The real danger of the sick man . . . lies in the multitude of his doctors; and there is absolutely nothing to be gained by hurrying on his end. It is not so much for the sake of the Turk himself as for that of his Christian subjects and for that of European peace that the Ottoman Empire should be permitted to die a natural death.[104]

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[103] Ibid., 447-50. [104] Times, February 18, 1867.

CHAPTER VIII

THE CRETAN CRISIS RESOLVED

The end of January 1867 brought new and dangerous dimensions to the Cretan affair. Before the end of the crisis Britain's efforts to prevent interference by the powers would be taxed to the utmost, and once again she would be criticized for her callous unconcern for the plight of the Christians in the Ottoman empire.

Server Effendi had been sent by the Porte on a special mission to Crete, to report on the state of affairs and to conciliate the Christians. They were invited to send delegates to Constantinople to express their grievances and confer on the future administration of the island. As outlined in a firman sent by Server to Mustapha Pasha on January 30, 1867, the Sultan wanted a number of noted Mussulmans and non-Mussulmans elected from each district in Crete who would then form a commission in the capital to devise the administration to be introduced as soon as the insurrection had been suppressed.[1]

Server's proposal was denounced by the General, or National, Assembly of Crete. Anyone going as a delegate would be considered a traitor. Whoever signed anything would be punished. The Assembly charged that the Porte had now recognized that its cause was hopeless

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[1]SP, 1867, LXXIV, 15.

and that the Sultan was not acting out of kindness, but because he saw that Crete would soon be free.[2] Whether for this or other reasons, the initial election of delegates was not successful. Erskine reported to Stanley that Server Effendi's mission had apparently failed. Even the two Christian delegates who had been elected at Canea declined to accept the functions assigned to them. Elsewhere delegates were refusing to go to Constantinople.[3]

Another facet of the critical situation concerned the foreign volunteers. Many of them in Crete were in dire straits, suffering from privation and asking to return to Greece. Mustapha Pasha gave permission and allowed foreign ships to transport them. On January 20 several ships brought loads of volunteers to Piraeus, and a crisis developed when Greece declared that she did not want them. Tricoupi denied that the Greek government was under any obligation to receive the volunteers whom he described as the refuse of Smyrna, Salonica, and other parts of Turkey. The Greek government would not protest their being landed, but would not care for them. Unfortunately, the volunteers were given no protection by the Greek authorities, and when some 150 of them came ashore, they were set upon by the people and several were killed. The result was a further straining of the relations between Greece and Turkey.[4]

Another problem was the formation in February of a provisional government in Crete in the name of George I, King of the Hellenes. The move had been prompted by the experience of ten months of insurrection

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[2]SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 100. [3]Ibid., 113.

[4]SP, 1867, LXXIV, 304-306.

and a concern for the interests of Crete. The provisional government would work with the General Assembly from which it would receive supplies, and its task would be to keep alive and further organize the insurrection until union with Greece was consummated and Cretan fortresses were occupied by Hellenic troops.[5]

A further complication was that on February 23 the long-expected blockade runner Dream arrived at Syra under a British flag. She was quickly recommissioned the Arkadi and transferred to the Greek service. The vessel had been sold in Liverpool by Messrs. Pappayani to the Greek Steam Navigation Company in Syra. The Arkadi was larger than the Panhellenion so could carry a much larger cargo, and since she was as fast or faster than any Turk ship, she would have little difficulty landing supplies anyplace in Crete and bringing back refugees. The Arkadi made the first of her many runs to Crete on March 1 and fulfilled admirably the expectations of her new owners.[6]

Refugee removal also became an issue once more. On February 13 Stanley reported to Lyons that the Russian and Prussian governments were anxious that the Porte be induced to agree to foreign ships taking off those Christians wanting to leave Crete. Stanley said that his government was not fully cognizant of the circumstances, but if the insurrection was truly over, volunteers would more than likely want to leave. Britain's information, however, indicated that the Porte would allow only volunteers to be removed. Britain was not unalterably opposed to an act of humanity, if that were the sole object of the

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[5]SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 140. [6]Ibid., 112-13, 118, 126.

Russian-Prussian concern, but as matters stood, no opinion could be rendered on the matter.[7]

By far the most portentous event in the new year was the changing attitude of France towards the Cretan affair. On January 24 Stanley learned that the French government had come to the conclusion that Crete should be annexed to Greece. The French ambassador later indicated the reasons prompting this change of opinion. Crete was a cancer and should be cut off before the disease spread to the rest of the empire. No permanent solution would be gained by merely granting concessions to the Cretans. Nor would a system of local autonomy be entirely satisfactory. It would be difficult to find a Christian governor acceptable to the Porte and satisfactory to the people. The results achieved by a plan of autonomy would not be worth the difficulties involved in getting the Porte to accept it. And, even if the plan worked, the Greek nation, being in a state of high excitement, would not be satisfied.

Each day confirmed the impression that administrative improvements alone would not pacify Crete, quiet Greece, and prevent future disturbances. Nor was it likely that the Porte would be able to carry out reforms if they were ever introduced. Separation of Crete from Turkey was inevitable, and the Porte should consult with the inhabitants of the island to determine whether they wanted annexation to Greece or some other solution. The Porte would preserve a great deal of dignity by taking the initiative rather than having such a solution forced on it later.[8]

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[7] Ibid., 94-95. [8] Ibid., 90-91, 107, 125-26.

The British government raised a number of objections to the French proposal and change of attitude. If every dissatisfied part of the Ottoman empire was to be detached, the empire would soon be entirely dismembered, and Turkey could not long exist without her provinces. Moreover, it was highly improbable that the Porte would listen to any proposal involving the cession of Crete. There was little point in tendering advice that was almost certain to be rejected.

Stanley was particularly critical of the French government objecting to the stand it had assumed, with Britain, only a few weeks before that Ottoman domination in Crete had to be maintained. Stanley asked for the reasons compelling the change. In the intervening weeks no significant event had occurred. The situation in Crete was the same. The prospects of the insurgents were no more promising than a month before, if as good. The arguments now advanced by Moustier were also valid a month before. Advice given the Porte only a month previously should not be recalled before it was known how that advice was accepted. Not unless the state of affairs in Crete became worse, would it be necessary to resort to new measures.[9]

In contrast to the French proposal, Aali Pasha informed Lyons on February 6 that the Porte would never agree to a change of government in Crete. That Christians were in the majority would never be admitted as sufficient reason for establishing a Christian governor there. Adoption of this principle would overthrow the authority of the Sultan throughout the empire. Aali asked only that his government be given an opportunity to try its own plan for making Crete tranquil

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[9]Ibid.

and prosperous. The Porte had resolved to build roads, harbors, schools, and to give Crete such a local administration that the islanders would have no cause to desire annexation to Greece. But, the Porte could not and would not establish a political system different from that in other parts of the Ottoman empire.[10]

The Porte would also refuse foreign vessels permission to remove refugees from Crete. The political implications of such action, amply demonstrated in Greece, would only prolong the insurrection. If the Sfakiotes and other Cretans were relieved of the fear that their families would suffer, they might be induced once again to join the war. Moreover, removal of the Sultan's subjects by foreign vessels was an admission that foreigners were more able and willing to care for the refugees than their own government. This impression had to be avoided.[11]

Thus the matter stood. The Turks and the majority of the powers, Britain excepted, were poles apart on their attitudes regarding the stalemated insurrection. The Turks could not prevent the Greeks from landing men and supplies, and the Cretans even with Greek aid could not drive the Turks off the island. The uprising had also become vitally important to the Greeks in warding off an internal crisis, and they would keep up the insurrection unless the powers prevented them. The Greeks felt safe in keeping the insurrection alive, believing that the powers would not allow Turkey to destroy her because of the guarantees given thirty years before. Even if the Cretans were willing, the Greeks would not allow them to submit to the Porte. Unless Turkey could be

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[10] Ibid., 96.

[11] Ibid., 111-12.

persuaded or forced to make concessions, or Greece be prevented from interfering, there was little hope that the deadlock would be broken.[12]

Mr. Stillman, the American consul in Crete, informed Erskine on March 13 that there was less prospect than ever of the insurrection being suppressed. He based his conclusion on the knowledge that refugees were thronging the shores, wanting to escape from the ill-treatment they would suffer if they fell into the hands of the Turk troops.[13] The Italian consul three days later agreed with his American colleague and reported that Mustapha Pasha appeared to be very dejected by the turn of events. The re-establishment of Turk authority was more remote than ever.[14] More troops were being sent to Crete and at the end of the month, on the twenty-ninth, Mustapha was replaced by Hussein Pasha. The Sultan had become highly displeased with the results of the former's mission and had ordered his dismissal.[15]

The Porte was also experiencing difficulty with its proposal to bring a delegation to the capital to consider the future administration of Crete. Where elections had taken place at all, intimidation, threats, coercion, and bribery had accompanied them. Large sums of money were being offered for a delegate from Sfakia, the stronghold of Cretan resistance. In no instance had a delegate, elected by the people, gone to Constantinople of his own free will. Those elected were going under protest, and those who were not protesting were tools of the government and had not really been elected at all.[16]

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[12] Ibid., 97-98. [13] Ibid., 130. [14] Ibid., 143.
[15] Ibid., 168-74. [16] Ibid., 131, 140-43.

Lyons reported that the delegates had arrived from Crete on March 15. It was evident from the accounts they gave of the conditions in Crete that no election of delegates fully and fairly representing the Christian population and willing to place themselves in the hands of the Turks and come to Constantinople was possible. Nor did Lyons think the Porte ever intended to allow formal debates or a vote on the form of government to be introduced into Crete.[17]

The Porte denied reports that the plight of the refugees in Crete was worsening and that they desired removal. Order had been so much restored that there were actually few native Christians who wanted to leave or who would gain anything by doing so.[18] Fuad Pasha, Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs, assured Lyons that steps were being taken to relieve whatever suffering existed in Crete. Dr. Savas Effendi, physician, and Mr. Costaki Effendi, foreign department employee--both Christians--would shortly be sent to ascertain the needs of the Cretans and to work with Server Effendi in affording them relief.[19]

On March 12 Stanley told Lyons that the British government was pleased that the Porte was undertaking relief work in Crete. Such a step would put an end to the requests directed to foreign powers to send ships of war to Crete to take off the families of the insurgents.[20] The British Prime Minister, the Earl of Derby, also expressed his approval that the Turk government was preparing reforms to be introduced as soon as conditions in Crete permitted. A Christian had already been

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[17] Ibid., 145.

[18] Ibid., 128.

[19] Ibid., 127-28.

[20] Ibid., 125.

appointed Assistant Finance Minister and Governor of the Bank, the beginning of a plan to select Christians for higher administrative posts. Other improvements included the representation of Christians in the administration of the districts in Crete. Apparently the Porte was not indisposed to act on friendly advice from Britain.[21]

For the present, Britain would not go beyond tendering advice to Turkey. Britain had suggested autonomy for Crete, as existed in Albania, but she had offered the advice as a friend and did not feel justified in passing judgment on Turkey's internal regulations and government. Turkey had indicated that reform measures would be introduced as soon as the insurrection had been suppressed. Britain wanted, therefore, to end the disturbance as quickly as possible so the reforms could be inaugurated.[22]

If any attempt was made to encourage and support the separation of Crete from Turkey, Derby said, the result would be a war more bloody and bitter than any the Christian world had yet seen. Thousands of Christians might be slaughtered in the Ottoman empire. The Turks were proud of their superiority; they were united, armed, and war-like. Even if all Europe were against them, the Turks would not submit to being expelled from Crete and subjected to Christian and Greek domination.[23]

Derby admitted that it was impossible for a Christian nation not to feel some sympathy for the Christians in the Turkish empire. But, the British government's course would not be decided merely by

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[21] Hansard, CLXXXV (1867), 1888-89. [22] Ibid., 1531-35.

[23] Ibid., 1535-36.

considerations of sympathy, but by considerations of policy. The British government refused to weigh the sufferings of a small number of people against the consequences resulting from intervention in Crete. Derby also admitted the possibility that the Turkish empire was disintegrating anyway. But, said Derby:

> It is no part of our duty, and shall be no part of our policy, so long as I have a voice in the direction of it, by means of exciting speeches, or by strong expression of sympathy, or by coloured representations of the wrongs of the Christian populations in all the provinces of Turkey . . . to encourage exaggerated hopes and expectations; and thereby to accelerate that which it may not be possible finally to avert-namely, the ruin of the Turkish Empire; for, if that is to happen, it is our duty to see that it takes place as gradually and as safely as possible.[24]

For all her dire warnings of the anticipated consequences of cession, Britain stood alone. Pressure was mounting for the transfer of Crete to Greece or at least separation from Turkey.[25] On March 28 the semiofficial North German Gazette and the New Prussian Gazette confirmed the announcement that Prussia had advised cession.[26] France had not as yet advised the transfer of Crete to Greece, but her ambassador at the Porte, M. Bourree, had urged that the people of Crete be allowed to decide their future political ties for themselves, in a full and free vote. As a preliminary to taking this vote the Porte should consent to an armistice.[27]

Prince Gorchakov, the Russian Foreign Minister, believed it would be advantageous for Turkey to surrender Crete to Greece. Even if the insurrection was suppressed it would break out again at the first

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[24] Ibid., 1539-40. [25] Ibid., 284.

[26] Times, March 29, 1867. [27] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 167.

favorable opportunity and would only entail further suffering and expense. Moreover, the state of war to which the island had been subjected for so long would make it an unprofitable possession for years. The Porte could escape all further expense and embarrassment and meet the wishes of the European powers by allowing the annexation of Crete to Greece.[28]

Fuad Pasha, speaking unofficially, emphatically rejected such proposals. The Sultan had no intention of submitting his sovereignty in Crete to a popular vote. And, since the war was now one between Turkey and foreign volunteers, the Porte would not consent to any armistice. If the European states wanted to take Crete away from Turkey, they would have to use force.[29]

On March 29 Stanley was informed that Moustier had recommended that the powers signing the Treaty of Paris concur in advising the Porte to cede Crete to Greece. The governments of Austria, Russia, and Prussia had already expressed their agreement and their representatives at Constantinople had been instructed to cooperate with the French ambassador. Since the value of a collective representation would be impaired if Britain declined to join it, the recommendation to the Porte was to be made by each representative separately. Moustier instructed Bourree to frame his note in such a way that the Porte need not reject positively the advice it contained. For example, he was to leave open the alternative of consulting the Cretan people.[30] On March 30 the representatives of Austria, Italy, Prussia, France, and Russia met separately with Fuad Pasha, urging the Porte to grant an

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[28]Ibid., 293. [29]Ibid., 167. [30]Ibid., 149-50.

armistice and ask the Cretan Christians whether they preferred autonomy or annexation to Greece.[31]

Britain refused to join the other powers in tendering this advice. She would go no further than advising that local autonomy be given to Crete. Nor would Britain alter her position until it had been clearly demonstrated that the Porte's cause in Crete was hopeless and that the reconquest of the island was impossible.[32]

The British Cabinet was of the opinion that the Porte prima facie had the same right to put down an insurrection in Crete that Britain had in India, France in Algiers, or the United States in the South. Britain would advise that bloodshed be stopped, but no more. Advice to cede Crete would almost certainly be rejected so there was little need to offer it unless the powers were resolved on the use of force to make Turkey comply. Britain had always refrained from following any policy or advising any action that was inconsistent with the independent jurisdiction of Turkey over her provinces.[33] Only if the Porte spontaneously decided to give up Crete, an unlikely eventuality, would Britain agree to the separation of the island from the Ottoman empire.[34]

The Porte's official and final answer to the powers' advice was in the negative. Bourree had suggested that the Sultan consult the wishes of the Cretan people regarding the cession of Crete to Greece. This advice was not considered by Europe as being without precedent. Such an alternative had already been used in the unification of Italy.

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[31] Ibid., 167. [32] Hansard, CXCI (1867-1868), 1235.

[33] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 144. [34] Ibid., 150.

Moreover, it was becoming more and more difficult to oppose popular feelings. The French government believed that if Turkey ceded Crete, she would be able to consolidate her strength and govern more effectively in the rest of her empire.

Fuad Pasha disagreed. The Porte knew and appreciated better its own interests and problems than the other powers. Perhaps universal suffrage had proved helpful in Europe in acquainting governments with the peoples' wishes. The sovereignty of the Ottoman empire, however, was based on different principles. A popular referendum for Crete, therefore, was impossible. Also, if allowed there, it would soon be demanded in the rest of the empire, and the government could never begin to grant all that the various peoples of the empire would ask. Fuad also confessed that he could not understand how the powers could profess a desire to maintain the Ottoman empire and yet advocate a course that would be nothing but its gradual annihilation.

Because of the situation in Crete it would also be impossible to establish a Christian administration there. More than half the land belonged to the Mussulmans. To be sure the Christians were in the majority, but admitting them to the administration did not mean that the Mussulmans would be entirely eliminated. If the Christians were given complete control of the government, the Mussulmans--and the Turkish empire--would be in grave danger.

As for the cession of Crete to Greece, Turkey would not agree unless forced. Turkey could not resist successfully the combined strength of the European powers, but if ever such a coalition was formed, it would have to destroy the entire Turkish fleet and army and

expel bodily the 120,000 Mussulmans in Crete. Nor would the consequences end there. Driven to desperation, the Mussulmans throughout the empire might turn on the Christians in a slaughter that would surpass anything the civilized world had yet seen. The powers should consider the consequences of forcing Turkey to cede Crete. Turkey would never voluntarily give up an inch of the territory guaranteed her by the Peace of Paris in 1856.[35]

Britain's refusal to agree to the advice tendered by the other powers apparently had much significance. To the British ambassador at St. Petersburg, Andrew Buchanan, Gorchakov indicated his regret that the British government had not joined with the other powers. Their advice had thus lost much of its impact. Gorchakov also alleged that Britain's refusal would encourage the Sultan to continue resisting such advice in the future and encourage the Porte in thinking that it might be able to re-establish Turkish authority in Crete.[36]

Moustier also regretted that Britain had not cooperated with the powers in seeking the will of the Cretans. The efforts of the other powers were paralyzed because the Porte suspected their intentions as long as Britain remained aloof.[37]

Turkey had been influenced by the British government's refusal to cooperate with the other powers. On April 4 Musurus Pasha at London conveyed the Porte's gratitude to the British government. Turkey took Britain's stand as a new proof of her sincere and loyal friendship. The critical position in which Turkey found herself further increased the value of British support. Turkey hoped that Britain would continue

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[35]Ibid., 173. [36]Ibid., 152-53. [37]Ibid., 178.

her friendly policy because it would thus be easier for the Porte to avoid all the complications that might arise from the demands of the other powers.[38]

On April 6, after the Porte had rejected the powers' recommendation to abandon Crete, Russia invited the same powers to advise the Porte to suspend all military operations in Crete and allow a commission to ascertain the condition and wishes of the people. The commission would be composed of members of the various legations at Constantinople.[39] When Moustier asked if Britain would cooperate in this less-extensive proposal, he received a negative reply. The British government's opinion was that since the hostilities were being carried on largely by foreigners, the Porte could hardly be expected to conclude a truce with invaders of its territory. Moreover, the joint commission proposed by Russia and France would be a direct interference in the sovereignty of the Sultan.[40]

On April 25, however, Lyons was instructed that if he thought it would do any good, he might send one of his secretaries to Crete to learn the state of affairs. This person must not, however, associate himself with the delegation from the other powers and must not go without the Porte's permission. The instructions were rescinded the next day. Out of deference to the wishes of the Porte, the plan of sending even a secretary of the legation had been postponed.[41]

On April 27 Aali Pasha formally rejected the Russian proposal of sending a European commission to Crete. The Porte would never

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[38] Ibid., 169.

[39] Ibid., 163.

[40] Ibid., 178.

[41] Ibid., 163, 185.

consent to submitting the Sultan's rights to a popular vote.[42]

For the next three months, until July when the insurrection moved into its second year, Russia and France continued to press on the Porte the urgent need for sending a commission to investigate conditions in Crete. France addressed a stern note to the Porte on May 13 protesting its refusal to suspend hostilities and allow the commission to enter the island. The powers had arrived at the conclusion that something needed to be done. They now urged collectively, not separately as before, that the wishes of the Cretans be consulted and the true state of affairs in Crete be ascertained. The Porte had not been able to acquire this information with its scheme of bringing delegates from Crete to Constantinople. Many of the delegates had refused to come; those who came had done so under duress, and many of them had since left Constantinople in disgust.[43]

Turkey, of course, adamantly refused its consent to a commission of inquiry. Britain, however, did not object to the principle of a commission and separately recommended that the Porte accept the proposal. But, Britain attached significant reservations to the sort of inquiry she would endorse. As outlined by Stanley on June 3, the commission had to be formed on the Sultan's invitation. Moreover, no consideration whatsoever was to be given to the cession of Crete to Greece. The commission's only object would be to ascertain the desires of the Cretans regarding administrative reforms. Further, no demand for a suspension of hostilities could be introduced if it was hostile to the Porte's interests. Britain also reserved the right of declaring

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[42] Ibid., 201.

[43] Ibid., 197-200.

that the inquiry was unnecessary should the Porte spontaneously introduce local reforms for Crete that Britain considered sufficient to establish autonomy and allow the Christians a share in the local government.[44]

The refusal of the British government to cooperate wholeheartedly in an inquiry was important. Baron Beust, Austrian Foreign Minister, was concerned over the British decision. He believed that no step taken at Constantinople could be successful unless Britain fully concurred in it. To him the opportunity seemed favorable for Britain to use some form of mediation to reconcile the demands of Russia and France and the resistance being offered by Turkey.[45] Turkey, meanwhile, was elated with Britain's position. Fuad Pasha on May 29 expressed the hope that the British government would continue to act as it had since apparently neither Austria nor France would take any further step without Britain's cooperation.[46]

The British government, however, was not refraining from giving advice. Acting on instructions from his government, on June 3 Lyons warned the Porte that Turkey must be prepared for a proposal from the powers that a commission of inquiry be sent to Crete. The powers this time would not easily be dissuaded from intervening to end the disturbance.

The British government believed the Porte would be wise to forestall the action of the other powers with a prompt and spontaneous declaration that the Sultan had granted autonomy and a system of local reforms to the Cretans. By acting on its own initiative, the Porte

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[44] Ibid., 222-23. [45] Ibid., 214. [46] Ibid., 218.

would be spared the humiliation of having to yield to foreign interference, and the Sultan might also secure the gratitude of the Cretan Christians.[47] The Porte had admitted the need for an inquiry by summoning delegates from Crete to Constantinople. Some of the delegates had since left the capital, indicating that a different form of inquiry was needed. Unquestionably, if present conditions continued, the Porte would find it increasingly difficult to refuse an inquiry of the sort suggested by the powers.[48] Lyons was to be very careful, however, that he not give the impression that the Porte would be unconditionally supported by the British government. Nor was he to imply that Britain might abandon the neutral position she had adopted and intended to maintain.[49]

Fuad Pasha was of the same conviction as Britain, that reforms should be instituted immediately. Moreover, the scheme of government recommended by Britain was similar to that being drawn up by the Porte. Unfortunately, the difficulty of settling the Cretan problem did not lie in any unwillingness on the part of Turkey to establish liberal institutions, but in the attempts to annex Crete to Greece. Russia and France had openly suggested the cession of Crete to Greece. Only a positive declaration by the guaranteeing powers that Crete would not be transferred to Greece and that the Sultan's sovereignty would be maintained would check Greek attempts to support the insurrection.

Until the interference of the Greeks had ceased, it would be useless to announce concessions to the Cretans because the Hellenic volunteers would influence their rejection. If the powers wanted to

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[47] Ibid., 223. [48] Ibid., 234-35. [49] Ibid., 224.

end the insurrection, the task was simple. All they need do was announce that they continued to adhere to the Treaty of Paris and to the principle of maintaining the integrity of the Ottoman empire. Until the Hellenes had given up the idea that Crete was to go to Greece, no reforms, concessions, or suspension of hostilities would do any good.[50]

Britain received with apprehension the news of the Porte's attitude. Stanley declared on June 12 that the Porte's delay in granting concessions to the Cretans could only result in unfavorable developments. If the powers now proposed an inquiry, the Porte would lose the impression that it had acted of its own free will. And if the Porte rejected the proposal for an inquiry, it would be followed by one even stronger and more unacceptable to the Porte. The British government would not dictate the course the Porte should take. Nor would Britain assume any responsibility for the consequences of the policy the Porte elected to follow. The Sultan's ministers should decide themselves how best to deal with the question. Because of her friendship for Turkey, however, Britain had recommended what she considered the best means of averting the danger threatening the Porte.[51]

Britain's apprehensions were realized on June 15 when a collective note was addressed by France, Russia, Prussia, and Italy to the Porte advising a commission of inquiry for Crete. Austria joined a short time later.[52] As usual, Britain would not participate in a joint representation. She wanted to end the war in Crete, but because of her relations with Turkey, Britain could not join with the other

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[50] Ibid., 235. [51] Ibid., 231. [52] Ibid., 254.

powers.[53] Still, in compliance with the instructions he had received on June 3, Lyons was to offer his individual recommendation that the Porte appoint a commission of inquiry. This recommendation was now possible because the Porte had refused to accept Britain's advice of anticipating the commission of inquiry with its own announcement of reforms.[54] Moreover, the joint proposal of the powers had omitted any reference to the points on which Britain had voiced earlier reservations.

Although her strongest apologist had also recommended an inquiry, Turkey continued to oppose it. Fuad informed Lyons that he and his colleagues feared that the proposal for a commission of inquiry was simply the prelude to the separation of Crete from Turkey. The Russian ambassador had openly avowed this motive and no definite assurances to the contrary had been made by any of the other powers. It would be politically fatal for the present Turkish government to agree to a commission and have it result in the loss of Crete. It would be better to have Crete torn from Turkey by force than to lose the island in such a humiliating fashion. The Porte did not reject the proposal for an inquiry out of hand, but the Turk government had to determine the form and the object it was to assume. And as a preliminary to a free inquiry, the foreign volunteers had to be expelled from Crete.[55]

Earl Cowley, British diplomat in Paris, told Moustier that he did not think it unreasonable for the Porte to insist on the removal of foreign volunteers before agreeing to an inquiry. Moustier replied that only coercion could remove the volunteers or induce Greece to recall

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[53] Hansard, CLXXXVIII (1867), 158-59.

[54] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 243. [55] Ibid., 267-68.

them, and Russia would never agree to remonstrance with Greece. Moustier also believed that the conditions demanded by the Porte were simply to obtain by foreign means what it could not do itself--the removal of the foreign volunteers. He thought the Porte should grant the inquiry unconditionally and allow the insurrection to end of itself. Cowley disagreed.[56]

The Cretan affair was once again at an impasse. The majority of the powers insisted on some positive action to suppress the insurrection. Turkey, at least conditionally supported by Britain, continued to resist. The general consensus of consular and diplomatic officials in Crete was that the Turks could not end the war that by now was becoming more vicious. Omer Pasha, commanding the Turkish troops, had begun a terrible policy of repression, relying on terror to accomplish what he could not do by force of arms.[57]

Nor were the Cretans any more successful in driving their opponents from the island. A provisional constitution had been adopted by the General Assembly in Crete in early April and a governor had been elected.[58] Early in July the provisional government had also taken the drastic step of issuing letters of marque and reprisal. Any damage subsequently accruing to Mediterranean commerce would be blamed on Turkey.[59]

So long as the insurgents could be supplied with volunteers and supplies through the blockade, there was little chance that they would be starved into submission. The Arkadi continued to breach

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[56] Ibid., 260-61.

[57] Ibid., 277.

[58] Ibid., 188-89.

[59] Ibid., 298.

the blockade with regularity.[60] On July 11 she had been joined by two more blockade runners, the Olga and Crete, both purchased in England.[61] The Turk navy was also augmenting its strength. A month later the new Turkish blockader Retimo arrived at Canea from London.[62]

As the insurrection continued with little prospect of abatement, the condition of refugees on the troubled island worsened and was certain to cause public indignation in Europe. Foreign consular agents throughout Crete reported that there was no security for the Christians whatsoever. Everything was at the mercy of the Turk. Disease, starvation, poverty, and atrocity were everywhere. The Christians were denied entry into the towns to buy bread or find work to earn the money to purchase food. The relief commission sent to the Porte was doing little to relieve the plight of the unfortunates. If the Christians asked to leave the island, they were refused. People everywhere were dying.[63] Consul Lloyd at Syra reported on July 30 that Omer Pasha had begun to bombard the coast in an effort to drive the refugees inland where they could not be seen by foreign ships cruising off the coast. An opinion had begun to form that Omer Pasha's intention was to eliminate entirely the Christian element in Crete.[64]

Because every proposal of the powers had been rejected and the insurrection was continuing with great loss of life, it was inevitable that some of the powers would ultimately demand positive measures to alleviate suffering and bloodshed. On July 9 the Russian embassy in

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[60] Times, July 3, 1867. [61] Times, July 19, 1867.

[62] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 324.

[63] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 300-301. [64] Ibid., 306.

Constantinople proposed that the Porte allow Russian ships to remove women and children from Crete.[65] A similar proposal came from Dickson on July 21. Lt. P. J. Murray of the British Meditteranean squadron also suggested that foreign ships be permitted to remove refugees.[66]

On July 21 the foreign consuls in Crete, less the British, sent an identic telegram to Constantinople. The general content of the message was that Turkish irregular troops were devastating the island and the Turk authorities were powerless to stop them. The consuls concluded by asking that foreign ships be permitted to remove refugees if hostilities were not ended immediately. Dickson sent a simultaneous dispatch from Canea with the same information and a similar request.[67]

Subsequently, on July 26, the French ambassador at the Porte commanded the French Mediterranean fleet to send ships to Crete to take off Christian families. His instructions had been anticipated, however, from Paris. On July 21 Napoleon III ordered Admiral Simon to Crete to pick up non-combatants wherever they could be found and to take them to Greece. The mission was to be purely philanthropic and was not expected to degenerate into a political intervention. The dictates of humanity required either an end to hostilities or removal of women and children to Greece.[68]

Russian commanders were also instructed to remove any non-combatants desiring transport to Greece. Gorchakov declared that the people would be removed even in the face of active Turkish opposition.[69]

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[65] Ibid., 290. [66] Ibid., 311-21, 326. [67] Ibid., 326-27.
[68] Ibid., 301-302, 310. [69] Ibid., 301.

During the first two weeks of August the ships of Russia and France were joined by those of Prussia, Italy, and Austria.[70] By mid-August several hundred destitute refugees had been transported to Greece.

Britain continued to stand alone. On August 4 Lt. Murray formally requested that he be allowed to take off refugees and was refused permission. The Admiralty declared that refugee removal was outside the course of neutrality adopted by the British government at the outset of the insurrection.[71] Dickson on August 8 received a petition from the Cretan General Assembly begging that British ships be sent to carry refugees to Greece. People were flocking daily to various points on the coast eagerly looking for European ships to carry them off. The British consul, however, was not permitted to give them any aid.[72]

The Porte's response could have been predicted. Turkey protested what amounted to an invasion of her sovereignty. She also protested the transfer of refugees to the very country responsible for their suffering. In the face of almost total unity among the powers, however, the Porte could do little more than register a protest and a complaint. Subsequent orders were issued to Turkish commanders to offer no resistance to the removal of women and children.[73]

One of the Porte's main objections was that the removal of refugees would prolong the insurrection. Allegedly, this objection was well-founded. Two weeks after the removals had begun, Omer Pasha reported a marked increase in the activity of the insurgents, so much

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[70] Ibid., 312-14, 324.

[71] Ibid., 344.

[72] Ibid., 328.

[73] Ibid., 297.

so that he could no longer guarantee an early end to the insurrection. The Porte was also of the opinion that the demonstration of support by the powers would have a pernicious effect on the pacification of the island. Now that most of the non-combatants had been removed to safety, the insurgents could engage in guerrilla warfare without fear of retaliation on their families.[74]

In early August the number of refugees in Greece was estimated at nearly 30,000. Because the government was unable to care for them, many Greeks had opened their homes to the unfortunate Cretans. The situation was far from wholesome. Persons were being supported in absolute idleness and were becoming daily less disposed to work. Moreover, ideas inimical to Turkey were being planted in their minds that a generation of time would not be able to eradicate.[75] The Athens correspondent to the Times predicted the outcome on August 8. He said that in all probability before too many months had passed the British government would have good reason to congratulate itself for not having participated in such an ill-advised measure as transferring Cretans from their situation in Crete to one more miserable in Greece.[76]

The powers did not stop with removing refugees. On August 14 Stanley learned that both France and Russia had reiterated their recommendations that a commission of inquiry be sent to Crete.[77] The Porte now declared that such an inquiry was no longer entirely out of the question. The Council of Ministers had actually accepted a proposal that a commission be sent to Crete, but on two conditions.

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[74] Ibid., 312.

[75] Ibid., 309.

[76] Times, August 17, 1867.

[77] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 315-16.

The object of the inquiry had to be clearly defined, and the powers had to guarantee the sovereignty of the Sultan, even if the Cretans under pressure from abroad declared for annexation to Greece. When the Porte was constantly receiving reports, however, that Russia and France wanted Crete annexed to Greece, it was difficult to believe that these conditions could be met.[78]

Nor would Britain retreat from her position that a commission of inquiry was unwarranted. Stanley had earlier indicated that he was not entirely satisfied with the information his government was receiving from Crete and that a commission might serve to enlighten the governments. When asked if he continued to adhere to this opinion, however, Stanley said that he doubted whether a commission could supply any better information than he already received from the British consuls in Crete.[79]

The French government continued to press for a commission of inquiry for Crete with every argument and inducement at its command, but to no avail. Then on August 19 an event occurred that weakened the French position in the same proportion that the Turkish position was strengthened. The Arkadi, the indestructible and troublesome blockade runner, was destroyed on her twenty-third run through the blockade. She had been pursued by a number of Turk ships lying in wait, driven into shallow water, and set on fire before being deserted by her crew.[80]

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[78]Ibid., 305, 312. [79]Hansard, CXCI (1868), 809-10.

[80]SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 327-30.

The destruction of this symbol of insurgent resistance augured well for Turkey. The event would certainly not make the Porte more yielding. Pressing their advantages, the Turks were able to announce on September 2 that the hostilities between Turkish forces and the insurgents had been suspended.[81] Dickson reported a week later that to all appearances, hostilities were ended, except for a few insignificant skirmishes in Sfakia and the Keramia Valley. Sickness and suffering everywhere were decreasing.[82]

Having gained the upper hand in Crete, the Sultan on September 12 granted a full and complete amnesty to the insurgents. All who had compromised themselves in the insurrection would enjoy security and protection if they surrendered their arms. Foreign volunteers had until November 1 to leave the island on board either Turkish or foreign vessels. Families would be allowed to emigrate on the condition that they give up whatever interests they had in Crete and not return except with the permission of the Turkish government. Turkish troops would maintain authority throughout the island and the blockade would be continued.[83]

The Cretans were reported to be demoralized and weary of a struggle they now believed to be hopeless. They were willing to accept the suspension of hostilities as the only salvation from their pitiful condition. The number of insurgents still under arms was now less than 1,000 and they were poorly armed and supplied.[84] Apparently,

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[81] *Times*, September 4, 1867. [82] *SP*, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 348-49.

[83] *Ibid.*, 342. [84] *Ibid.*, 350.

the insurrection had burned itself out when it ceased to be a source of hope on one side and a cause of apprehension on the other.

On October 2 the Grand Vizier left for Crete as commissioner plenipotentiary from the Porte to inquire into the real causes of the discontent of the people and to make plans for the future administration of the island. He was empowered to give the Christians as much local self-administration as possible and still preserve the sovereignty of the Sultan.[85] Moustier regretted that the Porte had not followed the advice of France and the other powers and that the commission of inquiry had been rejected. But, since the Porte had sent Aali Pasha on a similar mission, France would wait to see what proposals the Porte would make for ameliorating the condition of the Cretan Christians.[86]

On his arrival in Crete, Aali Pasha instructed each district to elect a specified number of deputies, Christian and Mussulman, to aid him in establishing a new system of government in the island. Aali's scheme was denounced by the Cretan General Assembly, as the representatives of the Cretan people. The Assembly declared that there could be no satisfactory solution of the Cretan question and of the reparations due the people for the losses occasioned by the war except through a mixed commission appointed by the powers.[87]

The Cretan Assembly also sent delegates to Greece declaring that unless certain conditions were met they would be compelled to come to terms with the Porte. The Greek government should espouse the cause of Crete more openly than before, contribute more money for the

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[85] Times, October 5, 1867. [86] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 352.

[87] Ibid., 369, 375-76.

prosecution of the war in Crete, and give more support to the families that had taken refuge in Greece. The Greek government did not immediately comply with these demands and attempted to persuade the insurgents to accept conditions less ruinous and compromising to Greece.[88]

Because hostilities had ended and an amnesty had been declared, the Porte also protested the further removal of refugees. The French had ceased removing families at the end of August, but ships of the other powers had continued their humanitarian work. The Porte would not stand in the way of any refugees who sincerely wanted to leave. But, because of the compulsion exercised by the insurgents on the peaceable people of the island, it had become necessary to limit the deportation of emigrants from Crete. In the future, therefore, the departures would be confined to specified ports where the freedom of action of the intended emigrants could be ascertained. The Porte wanted to protect those who were being driven into exile by the threats of the insurgents. Accordingly, the consuls of those powers still engaged in refugee removal were instructed that refugees could only be removed from the ports not under blockade, and at these points Turkish officials would be stationed to determine whether the exile was voluntary. No refugee was to be removed until officials of the Porte had granted the request.[89]

For the interested powers of Europe the alleged end of the insurrection did not resolve the Cretan question. Still remaining was the matter of Christian grievances and the establishment of a

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[88] Ibid., 372.

[89] Ibid., 356-57, 370-72, 394.

future administration that would not be inimical to the privileges provided for the Christians in the Peace of Paris. On October 31 France, Russia, and Italy, joined later by Prussia, addressed an identic note of remonstrance to the Porte. The powers reviewed the efforts they had made to end the war and its attendant horror and bloodshed and strongly protested the conduct of the Porte throughout the insurrection. Although Turkey had offered no material opposition, the Porte had resisted or rejected every advice, recommendation, and request of the governments regarding such ameliorating measures as a commission of inquiry, refugee removal, and suspension of hostilities. The act of amnesty the Porte now offered provided none of the guarantees considered necessary by the powers to satisfy the grievances of the Christians.

Moreover, the Cretans' refusal of the measures offered by the Porte and the obduracy of the Porte regarding a joint commission of inquiry suggested that nothing whatsoever was to be done to remedy the abuses that had precipitated the insurrection. The powers were apprehensive that the Porte's obstinacy might yet provoke a crisis in the East. Turkey was warned that in such an eventuality she would be unable to count on even the moral support of the powers. The powers believed they had exhausted all efforts at conciliation and now discharged themselves from any responsibility in the difficulties the Porte might subsequently experience.[90]

Fuad Pasha was disturbed at the identic note of the powers and feared that it would have a deleterious effect on suppressing the

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[90]Ibid., 386; Times, November 7, 1867; Hansard, CXCI (1868), 803-804.

insurrection. Elliot shared his apprehensions. The remonstrance of the powers would be taken as an encouragement by the Cretans. They would be strengthened in their decision to resist all efforts of the Turkish government to end the insurrection that was only being kept alive by intrigue from abroad. Elliot believed that the note would be looked upon as an address to the rebels rather than a communication to the Porte.[91]

When asked whether Britain would subscribe to the identic note, Stanley said that he saw no need for a remonstrance. The British government had given no advice to the Porte that had not been followed. The plan of government proposed by the Porte was similar to the local autonomy recommended by Britain for Crete, at least the most essential point had been included--equal rights for Mussulmans and Christians.[92]

Baron Beust chided Stanley for his position. Beust believed that much of the note's effectiveness would be lost because Britain had refused to join in it. Stanley reminded Beust that Britain had never been favorable towards the scheme of an international inquiry into the affairs of Crete. Because of the difficulties the Porte had experienced in putting down the insurrection, such an investigation would only have produced results unsatisfactory to the Ottoman empire. As for the note of the four powers, Stanley declared that the British government persisted in its belief that a policy of absolute non-interference was the wisest because it left Britain free to act as she thought best.[93]

The suppression of the insurrection, meanwhile, was progressing as well as could be expected. On November 20 Erskine reported that

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[91] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 386. [92] Ibid., 367.

[93] Ibid., 404.

the means hitherto used by Greece to keep the insurrection alive were being exhausted. The blockade runner Enosis no longer made such frequent trips, probably because the necessary funds were no longer available. The leaders of the rebellion were also differing on the policy to be followed and the ends to be achieved. In short, Erskine believed that both parties were exhausted by the long struggle and that the insurrection would soon be completely ended.[94] And, as both Erskine and Dickson reported, all foreign ships except Russian had discontinued transporting Cretan families.[95]

On November 1 Aali Pasha declared that the period of general amnesty had expired. Consequently, Turkish troops would spread throughout the island to offer protection and aid to the peaceable inhabitants. Intersecting chains of blockhouses would be erected to divide the island for a more efficient means of pacification. Christians and Mussulmans alike, if they obtained the proper permits, would receive grain and money from the government to relieve their suffering. The activities of the troops would be combined with the administrative reorganization of the areas they occupied and protected.[96]

From the time Aali Pasha arrived in the island as imperial commissioner until the end of 1867 a reformed administrative system was devised for Crete that was eventually embodied in the Organic Statute of 1868. The system eventually adopted was similar to the one established in Lebanon and to what Britain had suggested at the outset of the insurrection. The executive power rested exclusively with a governor-general named by the Sultan. Whatever the governor-general's

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[94] Ibid., 409. [95] Ibid., 409, 412. [96] Ibid., 395-96, 405-406.

religious persuasion, he was assisted by both Christian and Mussulman lieutenants. The governor-general was also assisted by a council in administrative matters and in the collection and expenditure of revenue.

Each of the island's ten districts had a governor named by the imperial government and assisted by someone from a faith other than his own. A local council was also chosen by the people in each province to assist the provincial governor. Each province was in turn subdivided into cantons and administered by sub-governors chosen by the Porte. Here too the governor was Christian or Mussulman depending on the majority of the population and was assisted by a lieutenant drawn from the minority faith.

An elective general assembly was provided for the entire island in which each canton was represented by two delegates. Exclusively Mussulman cantons had Mussulman delegates, exclusively Christian cantons had Christian delegates, and mixed cantons had one Christian and one Mussulman delegate. The assembly met once a year to study questions of public interest.[97]

On all levels--local, district, and governmental--a court system was established to adjudicate all criminal and commercial matters. The tribunals were Christian or Mussulman depending on whether the canton or district was exclusively of one faith. On the governmental level, and in all mixed districts and cantons, there were mixed tribunals. The method of selecting these tribunals varied with the level on which they functioned, but the method was well-defined in each case.[98]

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[97] Ibid., 380-81, 430-35. [98] Ibid., 418.

Partly in response to the wishes of the Cretans, partly in deference to the advice of the British government, and partly on its own initiative, the Porte also announced a number of economic concessions for the island. Beginning in March 1868 and continuing for two years the island was to be exempted from all tithes on native produce. After March 1870 and continuing for another two years only a half tithe, or five percent, would be levied, and the proceeds would be applied to public works at the discretion of the Cretan general assembly.

An additional concession was made regarding military service. The Christians would not have to pay the tax exempting them from military duty so long as the Cretan Mussulmans were immune from the conscription. The latter provision was only one instance of where an attempt was made to remove the inequality existing between Christians and Mussulmans.[99]

Dickson believed that the Porte's concessions were well-calculated to reconcile the demands of the Cretans. There was good reason to hope that in time at least the majority of people would accept the reforms and renew their allegiance to the Sultan.[100] Elliot expressed much the same opinion to Stanley in a dispatch on December 30, but because Christians outnumbered Mussulmans two to one, he criticized the provision for equality in the administrative councils. This condition would only prevail, however, in the general administrative council and in the mixed districts. In the exclusively Christian districts the councils would be exclusively Christian.[101]

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[99] Ibid., 451-52. [100] Ibid. [101] Ibid., 430.

Elliot raised a further criticism. He regretted that the tithe had not been replaced by a fixed tax. Aali defended the taxing arrangement, however, by pointing out that a system of fixed taxes was not adaptable to the entire empire. The Porte had tried to frame the new regulations in such a way that they could be extended eventually to other Christian or mixed provinces. The Christians in Crete were not entitled to any favors simply because they had rebelled. Taxation in Crete was exceptionally light, and it was impossible for any valid criticism to be raised against it. Elliot said that his government felt that perhaps Crete required special treatment.[102]

Britain was generally satisfied with the administrative system worked out for Crete, although it did not provide the full measure of autonomy she had recommended.[103] There was, however, one area of concern. The Organic Statute had not specified that the governor-general was to be a Christian, only that his assistants were to be both Mussulmans and Christians. The Organic Statute also provided that the governor-general and the commander-in-chief of the military were to be independent from one another except in time of crisis when both offices were joined in one person. As the situation existed in Crete, Hussein Avni Pasha continued to hold both posts and would continue to do so until the insurrection had been completely put down. Britain wanted a Christian governor appointed in Crete immediately.

On instructions from Stanley, Elliot repeatedly pressed on the Porte, and on Fuad Pasha particularly, the necessity of appointing a Christian governor-general without delay. The nomination of a Christian

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[102] *Ibid.*, 487.

[103] *SP*, 1877, XCII, 829.

of known ability and good character would be taken as a guarantee that the government would be well-administered in the future and would be an invaluable aid in quelling the insurrection.[104] Fuad was also reminded that the Sultan had assured Ellict of his willingness to appoint a Christian governor-general.[105]

Fuad continued to insist, however, that until the insurrection was completely suppressed Hussein Pasha had to exercise the functions of both governor-general and commander-in-chief. Fuad suggested that perhaps when the decision was made to remove Hussein a Christian governor could be chosen and the command of the troops given to another officer. In any event, no decision would be made until Aali Pasha returned from Crete.[106]

Despite Elliot's persistence, by February 1868 no decision had yet been made on a Christian governor-general. Britain had no intention of forcing advice on the Porte, but found it difficult to understand why the Porte waited so long to take advantage of the good effect that would be produced by appointing a Christian governor-general. When Elliot learned on February 19 that Hussein Pasha had been removed, he suggested that a Christian governor-general be appointed immediately to succeed him. Again he was put off; Fuad would not commit himself until Aali Pasha returned.[107]

On March 1 Aali Pasha announced that his work in Crete was finished and that he was returning to Constantinople. When Elliot subsequently met with Aali, he expressed his regret that the Grand

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[104] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 435. [105] Ibid., 443.

[106] Ibid., 447-48. [107] Ibid., 459; SP, 1877, XCII, 828.

Vizier's return had not been taken as the occasion for appointing a Christian governor-general. Aali replied that to nominate a governor-general independent from the commander of the troops before the pacification was entirely completed would be unwise. For the present it was thought expedient to leave executive and military power in the same hands. The appointment of a Christian governor-general would doubtless make a good impression on public opinion in Europe, but the effect in Crete would not be so satisfactory.[108]

The Organic Statute did not fully resolve the grievances of the Cretans nor solve the problems of Crete. Although the new system offered a large measure of self-government to the islanders, its success depended on the men who implemented it. One of the reasons that dissatisfaction continued in Crete in succeeding years was that the island was ruled by a succession of Moslem governors who after a time did not even bother to summon the general assembly. The administrative system was also extremely complicated for a people as politically unsophisticated as the Cretans. The Porte declared, however, that precautions had to be taken to protect the Mussulman minority from being entirely subjected to the Christian majority, hence the necessity for a complicated system of government.[109]

Nor was the Cretan crisis of 1866-1868 ended with the introduction of a reformed administration. Relations between Greece and Turkey had been increasingly strained and eventually broke at the end of 1868. The crisis was thus not fully resolved until diplomatic and

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[108] SP, 1867-1868, LXXIII, 487. [109] Ibid., 468.

commercial relations were re-established at an international conference convened in Paris on January 9, 1869.[110] For all practical purposes, however, the insurrection ended some months before. On July 24, 1868 Stanley announced in the Commons that the uprising could safely be considered terminated and that the attention of European diplomacy had been diverted to other issues.[111] On December 30 the Times carried a telegram from the East stating that the insurrectionary provisional government of Crete and all the insurgents had submitted and would leave Crete for Greece.[112]

It remains to review the attitude of the British government throughout the Cretan crisis. The general opinion of the government was that although the provisions of the Hatti-Humayun had not been completely carried out in Crete, the grievances of the Christians had been exaggerated and were not the reason for the insurrection. The uprising had been precipitated and maintained by foreign interests and Britain, therefore, had refrained from interfering.[113] The government had sought, however, to obtain self-government for Cretan Christians and equality before the law for both Christians and Mohammedans. These advantages had largely been included in the Organic Statute of 1868.[114]

The government also believed that the Cretan insurrection really involved the Eastern Question. Perhaps the solution to that nettlesome

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[110] Times, January 8, 1869; Times, February 25, 1869; Annual Register, 1868 (New Series; London: Rivingtons, 1869), p. 232.

[111] Hansard, CXCIII (1868), 1747-48.

[112] Times, December 31, 1868. [113] Hansard, CXCI (1868), 1254-57.

[114] Ibid., 705-706.

riddle could not be postponed indefinitely, but it seemed that much was to be gained from delaying the need for a solution as long as possible. Britain alone of the great powers had tried to prevent this solution during the Cretan crisis by opposing the proposals of France and Russia. The British government had consistently refused to offer any advice to the Porte that would likely have resulted in the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire.[115]

The other powers had acted inconsistently with the spirit of the treaty of 1856. Although they were perhaps justified in offering advice regarding needed reforms, they had overstepped the bounds of propriety when they accompanied their advice with threats. It seemed that Russia and France were trying to weaken Turkey and indirectly hasten the need for a solution to the Eastern Question. The removal of refugees, the suggestion of an international commission of inquiry, and the suggestion that Crete be annexed to Greece were all evidences of this, to say nothing of the outright aid given the insurgents.[116]

Britain's policy had been based in part on an old suspicion of France, on the apprehension of Russian designs on the Straits, and on the belief that Turkey intact was necessary for the maintenance of British interests in the East. In contrast to the other states, Britain had refused to agree to anything inherently dangerous to the peace of Europe and prejudicial to the interests of the Christians in the Ottoman empire. On April 24, 1868 Layard declared his firm belief that some of the powers already regretted their course and were willing to admit that the British policy had been the wiser one.[117]

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[115] Ibid., 1230. [116] Ibid., 815-18. [117] Ibid., 1253-55.

That venerable former Prime Minister, Earl Russell, concurred in the policy followed by Stanley throughout the insurrection. Particularly did he approve of the government's stand against removing refugees. In the first place their removal apparently prolonged the insurrection and thereby increased suffering and bloodshed in Crete. Moreover, the refugees had not improved their condition by fleeing to Greece. The relief promised them did not materialize, and their suffering from idleness, hunger, and disease was reportedly great. Russell concluded, therefore, that the removal of the refugees was not an act of humanity and that it was unfortunate that the other powers had interfered in this way.[118]

Stanley declared that he had never been very optimistic regarding the success of such measures as the proposed commission of inquiry. He confessed that he had given a conditional consent to an inquiry at one time, never expecting that it would materialize, as a preferable alternative to some of the other proposed steps. An inquiry was impossible, however, while the war was being waged and if hostilities ceased, there would have been little need for an international commission. One sent by the Porte could ascertain the wishes of the people. Moreover, under any circumstances, an international inquiry would have raised the hopes and expectations of the insurgents, prolonging the insurrection and resulting in disappointment if their hopes were not realized.[119]

Of particular importance to Britain, of course, was the maintenance of the Ottoman empire. The Earl of Malmesbury, Lord Privy

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[118] Ibid., 817. [119] Ibid., 1263-64.

Seal, declared that the government was keenly aware of the need for maintaining Turkish independence. Britain, therefore, had consistently followed a policy of neutrality and non-interference while offering advice to the Porte regarding the treatment of its Christian subjects.[120]

The Earl of Kimberley, who succeeded Malmesbury in 1868, believed that Stanley had acted wisely in resisting any attempt to detract from the independence and territorial integrity of the Porte. Whatever the professed reason given by the powers when proposing refugee removal or commissions of inquiry, the result would have been the dismemberment of the Ottoman empire. He was glad that Britain had not participated in what he called an "artichoke policy," by which a state was divested little by little of its responsibilities and its outlying territories until at last the heart of the artichoke could be eaten in one mouthful.[121]

Stanley gave perhaps the best summation of the stand the British government had taken in the insurrection. Among other things he recognized that such a delicate equilibrium existed in the East that an event such as the Cretan affair, although it did not directly concern the European powers, did involve the Eastern Question. He thought it worthy of note that Britain had a great deal of influence in the East and of particular interest was the reason for that influence. When a British minister gave advice in Constantinople, the Turk government and the Ottoman people, so far as they took an interest in political affairs, knew that the advice was given in a disinterested and impartial spirit. They knew that the British had no private object to promote.

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[120] Ibid., 816-17. [121] Ibid., 815.

If Britain wanted to retain her influence, declared Stanley, she must continue to act in the same spirit of disinterestedness. She had to consider not only what would gratify her own feelings and the popular wishes of the English people or the people of Europe. She also had to consider what was most likely to contribute to the safety and independence of the Turkish empire. Feelings of sentiment could never be allowed to take precedence over matters of policy.[122]

The Foreign Minister confessed that he had seen no reason to depart from the course Britain had adopted at the beginning of the insurrection. She had refused to recommend the separation of Crete from Turkey because she was assured that the Porte would never have accepted such advice except under pressure. It was not consistent with British policy to force acceptance of advice that was otherwise rejected.

A far more important reason, however, impelled the British government to refrain from recommending the cession of Crete to Greece. In Crete an insurrection had broken out whose leaders sought the separation of Crete from Turkey. By encouraging and supporting the insurrection, a highly dangerous precedent would have been established. Had the insurgents, through the agency of foreign support, gained the upper hand and obtained all they desired, unfortunate consequences would have ensued for the rest of the Ottoman empire. The same means that produced insurrection in one part of the empire could well be applied to another. In a short time, or at least in time, insurrections would have broken out in other provinces. Stanley was convinced that

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[122]Ibid., 1266-67.

had the cession of Crete to Greece been adopted as a solution for the crisis in 1866-1868, there would have been a similar claim for independence in Epirus and Thessaly.

Therefore, separating Crete from Turkey would not have been a permanent solution to the Cretan problem and would have contributed to that dismemberment of the Ottoman empire that had to be avoided at all costs.[123] Not only had Stanley considered it inadvisable to recommend the separation of Crete from Turkey, he believed that those powers that had hastily and prematurely committed themselves to such a policy earlier in the crisis had by April 1868 adopted the British view that such a solution would have been neither practical nor advisable.[124]

The final action on the Cretan affair of 1866-1868, although it was not to prove the permanent solution, came at Paris in early 1869.[125] In reporting on this conference the Times outlined British policy when it candidly observed that ". . . our duty towards [the Ottoman empire] is fulfilled so long as we leave it alone and do our best to make others leave it alone also."[126]

The Paris correspondent for the same newspaper made some interesting observations on the conference. In the same building, in the same room, around the same table that had been used in the Congress of 1856, the representatives of the same countries met to

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[123] Ibid., 1262-63.

[124] Ibid., 1267; a concise summary of Stanley's policy can be found in Annual Register, 1868, pp. 134-35.

[125] Ernest M. Satow, A Guide to Diplomatic Practice (2 vols.; 2d ed. rev.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1922), II, 141-44.

[126] Times, January 21, 1869.

resume their diplomatic labors. Said the correspondent, "the Eastern Question would be once more discussed, once more postponed, and once more patched up until circumstances again force it on the notice of the world."[127]

Although the outcome of the Eastern Question was not known in 1869, one point was obvious. For the moment, Turkey would not be dismembered. That the Ottoman empire was allowed to remain intact for a while longer must be attributed to the policy in which Britain persevered from 1866-1868. During a crisis that once more begged a solution to the Eastern Question and that threatened the dismemberment of the empire she sought so desperately to maintain, Britain, by adamantly refusing to participate in any scheme of interference, prevented intervention and partition from taking place.

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[127] *Times*, January 12, 1869.

CHAPTER IX

THE BALKAN CRISIS

By far the most severe testing of Britain's eastern policy in the years 1856-1877 was the Balkan crisis of 1875-1878. The implications of the events immediately preceding 1875-1878, however, were nearly as complex and portentous as those for the Balkan crisis itself. In 1870 Russia had declared that she would no longer be bound by the stipulations of the Treaty of Paris regarding the neutralization of the Black Sea. The unilateral action of Russia created serious difficulties. She had thrown down a challenge to the other signers of the treaty and if it were not accepted, she would have won an incalculable moral victory. The Christians of the East would believe that Russia had deemed the moment opportune to seek a solution for the Eastern Question.[1]

Russia enjoyed a remarkable advantage in Turkey because of the ties of blood and religion. Despite her many faults and ambitions, Russia repeatedly made more sacrifices for the Christians of the East than any other power. She was regarded by the Christians, therefore,

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[1] Times, November 17, 1870; Times, November 25, 1870; Edmond Fitzmaurice, The Life of Lord Granville, 1815-1891 (2 vols.; London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1906), II, 75-79.

as their natural protector and liberator. A large part of British opinion, public and governmental, however, misinterpreted Russian activity in the East. The belief was that only Russia would gain from freeing Christians from Turkish rule, and, therefore, the Ottoman empire had to be maintained intact at all costs. Such an attitude was false, given the feelings of the Balkan peoples. Although they were favorable towards Russia, they had little, if any, desire for union with Russia.[2]

A knowledge of the secret correspondence between Prince Gorchakov and the Russian minister at the Porte, which the British government of course did not possess, would have revealed also that Russia had few concerted designs on such strategic areas as the Straits. It was in Russia's interest too to have the Straits in the hands of a weak power. The policy of Britain, however, was predicated largely on the anxious suspicions that Russia had long-range designs on Ottoman territory. In commenting on the action of Russia in 1870, for example, Earl Russell observed that the object of the British government was not to maintain the present administration of Turkey, "but to keep Russia out of Constantinople."[3]

Britain adopted this attitude several years before the period dealt with in this study. In 1838 Palmerston, who was then Foreign Secretary, believed that Britain must support the Sultan, acting alone if necessary. Nor would he admit that Turkey was decaying or

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[2]Robert W. Seton-Watson, Disraeli, Gladstone and the Eastern Question (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1935), p. 20.

[3]Times, November 24, 1870; see also George E. Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli (London: John Murray, 1920), VI, 3-6.

that deterioration was necessarily inevitable. He believed that Turkey could be propped up and if she could be reformed, she could become a respectable power. This belief remained a fixed part of Palmerston's attitude towards Turkey and was one of the contributory causes of the Crimean war.[4] The same attitude was adopted by Disraeli and the Conservative party several years later and was in part responsible for the disastrous Balkan crisis of the late 1870's.[5] After the furor caused by the Bulgarian atrocities in the summer of 1876, one of the Cabinet members, Lord Salisbury, declared that the traditional Palmerstonian policy would have to end, although in many respects it was continued throughout the Balkan crisis of 1875-1878.[6]

Another significant event of the pre-1875 period was the decisive conservative victory at the polls in 1874. The election was a landmark in foreign policy because it ended a long period of isolation and non-intervention during which great changes had taken place on the continent. The new Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, undertook an active foreign policy.[7] Of great significance was the situation existing on the continent when Disraeli took office. The old balance had been overthrown. France was temporarily in eclipse. Italy was of little consequence. The preponderant position was held by Germany,

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[4]See Rodkey, Journal of Modern History, I (December, 1929), 570-93; and Journal of Modern History, II (June, 1930), 193-225.

[5]Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe, pp. 195-96.

[6]Ibid., p. 522; Gwendolen Cecil, Life of Robert, Marquis of Salisbury (2 vols.; London: Hodder and Stoughton, Ltd., 1921), II 79-89.

[7]Gooch and Masterman, pp. 22-25.

closely allied with Austria and Russia. Britain found herself in a position of uncomfortable isolation, confronted by the old Holy Alliance.[8]

That Britain felt her isolation keenly was evident in a statement made by Lord Campbell who later became Britain's Prime Minister. He said on April 19, 1875 that if Britain were soon forced to act on the Eastern Question, she would be almost without allies. France could no longer be depended on because she had too recently met defeat, and, as some thought, she was occupied too much with resentment. Neither Germany nor Italy was bound by treaty to intervene in the Eastern Question, and Spain had never been accustomed to mingle in Ottoman affairs. Austria was the only possible ally on which Britain might depend, and Campbell advised that the government take steps to secure her friendship before events in the East erupted. He expressed a concern often voiced by the government that Britain could not act on the continent nor in the East without a continental ally.[9]

Also of importance in evaluating British eastern policy during the Balkan crisis was the significant increase in British interests in the East since the Peace of Paris. The tremendous advances made in sea communications (the Suez Canal) made Egypt even more important as a link in the British route to India. The steady encroachment of Russia in Central Asia was also a matter of concern. By 1875,

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[8]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 3-4.

[9]Hansard, CCXXIII (1875), 1192-93. For France's participation in the Balkan crisis see Noel L. Leathers, "France and the Balkans, 1871-1879" (unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Dept. of History, University of Oklahoma, 1963).

within a relatively short period of twenty-five years, Russia had pushed her frontiers some 700 miles further south and 900 miles further south-east. Britain viewed this advance as a serious menace to India, and the extension of Russian influence did little to allay British fears regarding Russian designs on such Ottoman holdings as the Straits.

Russian encroachment in the East likely stimulated even further Disraeli's natural interest in that area. An evidence of this interest was the Prime Minister's securing the title Empress of India for his Queen in 1876.[10] Of even more importance was the extraordinary coup of Disraeli the previous year, in 1875, by which he acquired the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal.[11]

After Disraeli's purchase of the Suez shares, a Times' leader expressed an opinion on the implications this transaction had for British eastern policy. Britain now had a stake in the security and welfare of Egypt. She was also now directly concerned with every development in the southeastern corner of the Mediterranean. She was even more deeply involved in the Eastern Question. And, Britain's policy would no longer be merely that of partisanship, but would now be based on substantial interests that she would have an unquestioned right to maintain.[12]

Because of the insurrection in the Balkans, the enhanced position of Britain in the East due to the Queen's new title, and the

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[10]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 4-5, 7.

[11]Times, November 26, 1875.

[12]Times, November 27, 1875. For opposition to Britain's purchase of the Suez shares and the Queen's new title see Fitzmaurice, II, 157-64.

purchase of the Suez shares, apologists for British interests pointed out once again Turkey's importance to Britain. Mr. J. Reginald Yorke, M. P. from East Gloucestershire, reminded his colleagues that Turkey was the British road to India. And in India there were 30,000,000 British subjects professing the Islamic faith. For the most part they lived peaceably under British rule. A good explanation for this peaceable, orderly, and quiet behavior was the long-established friendship between the head of their faith, the Turkish Sultan, and the British sovereign.

Yorke sagely appraised the situation on the continent. He predicted that since the power of France had been curtailed, Austria, Prussia, and Russia would come together again. They would be able to control everything that happened on the continent, and Britain's only influence would stem from her maritime power. He dreaded to think of the consequences if Turkey collapsed and were partitioned. Even if Britain were compensated with Crete and Egypt, she would lose heavily. If Constantinople were taken by one of the three northern powers, Britain's position in the East would suffer a decline, and she would be denied the resources of Turkey and the eastern Mediterranean. Yorke cited three reasons why Britain had to defend Turkish independence: her interest in India, her maritime supremacy, and her interest in free trade.[13] Disraeli also believed that Constantinople, not Egypt or the Suez, was the gateway to India.[14]

If Turkey was necessary and important to Britain, Britain was of no less importance to Turkey. In 1869, shortly before his death,

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[13]Hansard, CCXXV (1875), 182-83.

[14]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 98.

Fuad Pasha wrote a letter to the Sultan expressing the painful truth that the empire was in danger. He also reminded the Sultan that among Turkey's possible allies, Britain was by far her strongest and most sincere. He was certain that whatever happened, Britain would remain the most steadfast and friendly Turkish supporter. He confessed that he would rather lose several provinces than see the Porte abandoned by Britain.[15]

In keeping with the British government's attitude towards maintaining the Ottoman empire, the summer of 1875 found apologists for Turkey reciting the improvements that had been made since 1856. The army had been reorganized; a navy had been built; communications had been improved; and various judicial, educational, and administrative reforms had been introduced. Mr. Robert Bourke, Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, admitted that the provisions of the Hatti-Humayun had not been completely carried out, but still he doubted that the non-Mussulman subjects of the Porte had many legitimate complaints. The British ambassador at Constantinople, the Turkophile Sir Henry Elliot, declared that there was no persecution of Christians in Turkey, and those isolated cases that were reported from time to time were really the result of sectarian differences. Moreover, Bourke continued, the British government could not interfere in the internal affairs of Turkey even for the benefit of the Christian subjects. Should she do so, Britain would be setting a bad example for the rest of the world. Article IX of the Treaty of Paris expressly forbade powers, individually or collectively, from interfering in the internal affairs of Turkey.[16]

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[15] Hansard, CCXXV (1875), 194. [16] Ibid., 212.

Professions of Bourke and Elliot to the contrary, much discontent continued among Christian groups in Turkey, and in the summer of 1875 a revolt broke out in Bosnia and Herzegovina that reopened the Eastern Question. The situation existing in these most western of Turkey's European provinces was long in the making. When Turkey had invaded the Balkan peninsula in the fifteenth century, the Serbian nobility had accepted Islam while the bulk of the population remained Christians, either Roman or Greek Orthodox. Although the landowners constituted only a small minority of the total population, they were virtually all Moslem, and between them and those who worked their land there had grown up a distinct antipathy. In theory the Moslem and Christian peasants had many privileges such as the right to own land, but in practice these privileges were not allowed. The peasants were subject to heavy taxation and to brutal methods of tax collection. Taxes were especially burdensome when harvests were poor, as they were in 1875.[17]

The social situation, while it was contributory, was not the sole cause of the outbreak in 1875. Foreign influence and certain ethnic movements were also important. One of the movements remaining strong despite periodic suppression was Pan-Serbism. Serbia had aspirations of becoming a Balkan Piedmont and joining with her the other peoples in the Balkans with similar interests and objectives. Another major force was Pan-Slavism or the unity of all Slavs under

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[17] Times, December 15, 1875; Annual Register, 1876 (New Series; London: Rivingtons, 1877), p. 256. For a discussion of the general conditions in the Balkan provinces see "Bosnia and Bulgaria," Edinburgh Review, October, 1876, pp. 277-97.

the direction and protection of Russia. The hope of the Slavs was that with the aid of Mother Russia they could free themselves from Turkish and Austrian rule and form a Balkan confederation.[18]

The situation was further complicated because in both Russia and Austria there were large Slav elements. In Austria, for example, the Slavs constituted the largest ethnic bloc in her heterogeneous population. Count Julius Andrassy, Austrian Foreign Minister, did not care to strengthen this Slav element by annexing any more Balkan territory. Yet, he was opposed to Serbia absorbing Bosnia and Herzegovina in any Pan-Serbian movement and would see these provinces annexed to Austria first.

The presence of Slavs in both Austria and Russia who sought the union of the territory they occupied with a greater Balkan state also caused much difficulty in any attempt at resolving the crisis begun in 1875. Of no less importance was the activity of certain Pan-Slav diplomats who were significantly compromised in the entire affair. Those of note were Count Nicholas Ignatiev, the Russian ambassador at Constantinople from 1864-1877, and the Russian consul Alexander Ionin at Ragusa in Serbia. These men were inclined to follow their own Pan-Slav goals despite the official policy of the Russian government.[19]

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[18]For a discussion of Russian Pan-Slavism see Michael B. Petrovich, The Emergence of Russian Panslavism 1856-1870 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1956); see also Hans Kohn, Pan-Slavism: Its History and Ideology (2d ed. rev.; New York: Vintage Books, 1960); and Benedict H. Sumner, Russia and the Balkans 1870-1880 (London: Archon Books, 1962), pp. 56-80. For the opportunity for Russia to advance her political aims because of Turkish misrule see "Turkey and Russia," Edinburgh Review, January, 1877, pp. 136-54.

[19]Stavrianos, pp. 396-99; Petrovich, pp. 258-63; and Sumner, 74-76. Temperley concludes that the originators of the revolt were

The insurrection breaking out in mid-July was not immediately thought to be serious. The Turkish government took steps to localise the disturbance, however, by offering concilation to the insurgents and urging Montenegro, Austria, and other powers to refrain from aiding the uprising.[20] But, as more was learned of the events taking place in these provinces it became more obvious that the rebellion was assuming crisis proportions. On July 16 the commissioners sent by the Porte to the insurgents reported that they had failed in their mission and that the entire region was ablaze with revolt. It was suggested that the Porte dispatch troops to quell the movement.[21] The disturbances seemed serious enough to the British government that orders were dispatched to consul W. R. Holmes at Sarajevo to go or send someone to the area to report on the situation.[22]

By July 24 the Porte's opinion was that only by force could order be restored in Herzegovina since the insurgents repelled every attempt to arrive at an understanding and continued in their refusal to pay taxes. The Porte still adhered, however, to the view that the insurrection was non-political and local in character and that it would be quickly suppressed.[23] In this attitude Turkey was supported by

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the semi-independent clans in southern Herzegovina and not Russian agents. Harold W. Temperley, The Bulgarian and other Atrocities, 1875-8, in the light of Historical Criticism (London: H. Milford, 1931), pp. 4-8, 43-44; see also L. S. Stavrianos, "Antecedents to the Balkan Revolutions of the Nineteenth Century," Journal of Modern History, XXIX (December, 1957), 335-48. Albrecht-Carrié says that the element of personal initiative figured heavily in the Balkan crisis, for example with General Ignatiev. René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna (New York: Harper and Bros., 1958), p. 168.

[20] Times, July 14, 1875. [21] Times, July 20, 1875.

[22] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 144. [23] Times, July 26, 1875.

Lord Derby, British Foreign Secretary. On August 12 he cautioned that Turkey should use only her own resources in suppressing the disturbance. The uprising should be treated as an internal matter, and it should not be given international importance by making an appeal to the support of other powers.[24]

The matter was not this simple, however. As the insurrection widened in scope, it spread to the very frontiers of Austria where there was already much Pan-Slav or Pan-Serb sympathy for the insurgents. The charge was also often made that elements within Austria were aiding and abetting the insurrection. Austria believed the affair concerned only the internal administration of Turkey, but she found it impossible to refuse admittance to refugees from Herzegovina.[25]

By August 10 the Porte admitted that the insurrection was assuming serious proportions, and the British government was asked to use its influence to urge interested states such as Austria, Montenegro, and Serbia to refrain from aiding the insurgents.[26] Austria and Russia were no less concerned with the spread of hostilities and sought to end the insurrection before it succeeded in driving a wedge between the members of the Dreikaiserbund.[27] On August 18 the ambassadors of Russia, Germany, and Austria urged the Grand Vizier to suspend hostilities in Herzegovina so that the grievances of the insurgents could be

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[24]SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 148. [25]Ibid., 145. [26]Ibid., 147.

[27]Times, August 17, 1875. For the implications of the Balkan crisis on the Dreikaiserbund see William A. Gauld, "The 'Dreikaiserbündnis' and the Eastern Question, 1871-6," English Historical Review, XL (April, 1925), 207-21; and by the same author "The 'Dreikaiserbündnis' and the Eastern Question, 1877-8," English Historical Review, XLII (October, 1927), 560-68.

ascertained. Their suggestion was met with a prompt refusal by the Porte.[28] Two days later the Porte indicated its willingness to accede to the suggestion of the northern powers on the condition that they guarantee that the insurgents, during the suspension of hostilities, would not undertake any action inimical to the Sultan's sovereignty.[29]

Austria keenly desired a cessation of the insurrection because any revolution in northwestern Turkey was extremely dangerous to her. If the Serbs ever succeeded in establishing the Balkan empire of their dreams, it would be difficult to restrain the Serbs in Austria from joining their fellow Serbs. If a Slav kingdom were established on the Austrian frontier, Austria ran the risk of seeing her southeastern province turned into another Venetia. Nor could her problems be solved by annexing the provinces in question herself. From the first Andrassy tried to impress the powers with the necessity of aiding the Sultan in restoring order.[30]

By late summer affairs had reached a point requiring decisive action. The Porte had decided on the use of force and had begun concentrating troops in sufficient numbers to quell the insurrection. Austria and Russia consequently joined in one last suggestion. The powers would send delegates to seek out the insurgents and inform them that they could expect no foreign support. They would have to make their grievances known to a commissioner sent by the Porte to treat with them. Legitimate complaints would be heard and redressed. The Porte accepted this proposition, and Server Pasha, President of the

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[28] Times, August 21, 1875. [29] Times, August 24, 1875.

[30] Ibid.; see also Shannon, p. 20.

Council of State, was sent to Mostar as imperial commissioner. The Porte warned, however, that if the action of the consuls did not attain the desired result, force would be used to end the uprising.[31]

Britain only reluctantly consented to this expedient. She doubted the value of such a proceeding and also believed that any intervention was incompatible with the independent authority of the Porte over its own territory. Derby believed that the powers' intervention would offer an inducement to insurrection as a means of appealing to foreign sympathy against Turkish rule and was not at all certain that such activity would not open the way for further diplomatic interference in the internal affairs of the Ottoman empire. Still, since Turkey had requested Britain's aid, Derby would not refuse it. The Porte was told, however, that it was the considered opinion of the British government that Turkey should have dealt with the insurgents alone and not appealed to foreign support.[32]

Nor did Disraeli want to disrupt the status quo of Turkey. Speaking after the failure of the consular mission the Prime Minister said "if ever there was a case in which interference was to be deprecated it was, in our opinion, in the condition of Turkey, because . . . the interference of other Powers would have been induced, and would have led to a perilous state of affairs."[33]

On September 12 the consuls of the powers left Mostar on their attempt to meet with the insurgent leaders. Should the plan succeed, the consuls would reassemble on September 15 or 16 and inform Server

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[31] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 149-50. [32] Ibid., 150.

[33] Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 206-207.

Pasha of the result of their mission. The next phase of the plan--involving redress of grievances--would then be implemented.[34]

The consular mission failed miserably. Holmes reported to Derby that he and his Russian and French colleagues had not even seen the principal leaders of the insurrection. The Austrian, German, and Italian consuls had been more successful in this respect, but the insurgents refused to meet with the imperial commissioner. They demanded an armistice and European intervention to guarantee the improvements they wanted, but denied that they wanted autonomy. They would remain subjects of the Porte, but only after reforms.[35]

Under the circumstances mediation was stalemated. The insurgents refused to lay down their arms unless certain concessions were guaranteed by the powers, and the Porte refused to discuss redress of grievances so long as the insurrection continued.[36] While trying to suppress the insurrection throughout the months of October and November, however, the Porte magnanimously prepared a program of improvements for the insurgent provinces that included a new governor-general for Bosnia.[37] By early December the list of reforms, which had been under consideration by the Turkish Council of Ministers, was ready to be promulgated. The firman carrying them into effect was issued on December 12.[38]

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[34] *Times*, September 13, 1875.

[35] *SP*, 1876, LXXXIV, 165; Seton-Watson, *Disraeli and Gladstone*, pp. 21-22.

[36] *Times*, October 4, 1875. [37] *Times*, November 23, 1875.

[38] *SP*, 1876, LXXXIV, 201-208.

Critics charged that the reforms were an implicit admission by the Porte that the promises made in 1856 had not been fulfilled. Moreover, the three northern powers had been conferring for some time regarding the insurrection and whatever their proposals, they would be inimical to the Porte's authority. The essence of any scheme imposed from outside, such as that being suggested by Andrassy, would be intervention, and intervention was potentially occupation or something more. The Porte was alarmed. Decisive action was going to be taken. The Porte, therefore, or so it was asserted, anticipated the proposals of the powers by devising an even more comprehensive plan of reform that would extend to all the empire, not just to Bosnia and Herzegovina. In appearance at least the changes promised by the Porte exceeded the demands of Andrassy. The essential difference between the two schemes was that the Porte's did not offer any guarantees. And, it was common knowledge that reforms granted before had not been effectively carried out.[39]

The publication of the firman of reforms had little effect on the insurgents or on the course being followed by the powers. British consular officials observed that had the improvements been granted and carried out a year sooner, they might have been more successful. Now it was too late. The insurgents' demands were more than the Porte would grant. They demanded either autonomy under a Christian prince or occupation by foreign powers until their grievances were redressed, or both. In any event the insurgents were not deluded by the lavish promises of reforms when these pledges had meant nothing in the past.

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[39]Times, December 17, 1875.

Nor did the firman alter the attitude of the powers. Their object remained the pacification of the insurgent districts, and the general provisions of the firman, while they might prove valuable for the future, would not end the insurrection immediately.[40]

When the eastern crisis had erupted in July 1875, Britain was able to assume a waiting attitude. During the height of the crisis, for example, Disraeli had acquired the Khedive's shares in the Suez Canal. But, Austria and Russia were forced to act. Austria was concerned with unrest on her southern borders and the numbers of refugees seeking refuge within her frontier, and Russia was involved because of the growth of the Pan-Slav movement. Neither power had much faith in the reforms promised by the Porte. Even if carried out, they would not quell the disturbances quickly enough.[41]

The time had come for the powers to agree on a common course of action to prevent the peace of Europe from being endangered by the continuation of the Balkan insurrection. The revolt could continue for some time since the Sultan seemed more concerned with general principles of administration than he was with pacification. Andrassy believed that peace had to come before reforms could be carried out. On December 30, 1875, therefore, he addressed a note to the powers outlining what he considered the minimum reforms necessary to pacify the revolted provinces. The Christians would not immediately obtain the guarantees they demanded, but they would be assured that the reforms suggested were recognized as indispensable by the powers. The program suggested by Andrassy provided for complete religious equality, abolition of

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[40] Times, December 18, 1875. [41] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 199.

tax-farming, restriction of taxes to the use of the provinces wherein they were raised, improvements in the condition of the peasants, and a commission--half Christian and half Mussulman--to supervise the implementation of the reforms.[42] Austria had sought to pacify Bosnia and Herzegovina and yet disturb as little as possible the general framework of Turkish rule. To demand reform of the whole Ottoman empire would result either in empty words or general catastrophe. Andrassy knew that a few reforms, precisely stated and sufficiently guaranteed, were more valuable than a detailed reform program that was not carried out.[43]

The Porte would benefit by accepting the Andrassy Note. The powers had agreed not to impose new demands on the Porte and had also consented to support the Ottoman government if the Note was accepted. Acceptance by the powers would give them a formal engagement by which they might restrain Montenegro from intervention and by which the insurgents might be induced to lay down their arms. If all the powers accepted the Note, the Porte could hardly refuse. And if the insurgents did not submit, the Porte could use force, and the insurgents would be denied the support they might have received from foreign sources.[44]

Most of the powers accepted the Andrassy Note within a short time. There was some anxiety, however, that Britain might not accede to it since she had not been invited to participate in its formulation. The other powers, through their ambassadors at London, accordingly

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[42] Ibid., 221-25. [43] Times, January 6, 1876.

[44] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 229-30.

urged the British government to give its assent. They were concerned that if the British government refused to agree to Andrassy's proposals, the Porte would be encouraged to resist.

Resistance would have been dangerous for Turkey. The longer the settlement in the disturbed provinces was postponed, the greater were the possible consequences. If the Austrian attempt at peaceful intervention failed, Russia and Austria would find it difficult to keep Serbia and Montenegro out of the struggle. The armed intervention of only one of these smaller states would complicate the Eastern Question further and place the issue beyond the control of diplomacy. It was also to Britain's advantage to assent to the Note. By agreeing she could bring her influence to bear and moderate the policy of the other powers. She could keep intervention from assuming a more menacing form than that outlined in the Andrassy proposals. If the other powers had to deal with the Turkish problem, Britain's wishes might not be respected, and the subsequent intervention might be more than Britain wanted. Moreover, Britain would be accused of having refused to aid in a settlement that in the opinion of much of the world had become inevitable.[45]

Sooner or later the Eastern Question would have to be answered. The only safe method was to handle the issue in piecemeal fashion, and this is what the Andrassy Note in essence attempted to do. One Turk province at a time was enough to tax the resources of diplomacy. If the opportunities offered by the Andrassy proposals were allowed to

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[45] Times, January 15, 1876.

pass, the powers might soon be forced to apply more severe methods to a larger portion of the Ottoman empire.

The British Cabinet on January 18, 1876, having little real choice, accepted the Andrassy Note, but with reservations. Britain was reluctant to sanction even the slightest intervention in the Turkish empire, but to encourage the Porte in defying the northern powers that had made up their minds to institute changes in Herzegovina would have been unwise. Moreover, given the moral sense of Europe, the appeal of the Balkan Christians, and the attitude of the other powers, Britain could ill afford to remain aloof from the concerted action sought in the Andrassy Note. Britain would support the Austrian proposals in general, but would go no further than offering freindly advice to the Porte. Britain would not pledge herself to administrative details.[46]

Derby justified Britain's joining the other powers because of the Porte's behavior. Had Turkey followed Britain's advice shortly after the revolt broke out and relied only on her own resources to put it down, the subsequent intervention of the powers, first through their consuls and then with the Andrassy Note, would have been unnecessary. Derby did not consider that the Andrassy proposals conflicted with Article IX of the Treaty of Paris so long as they remained only suggestions or recommendations that the Porte should adopt in ending the insurrection and so long as they did not involve any interference in the relations between the Sultan and his subjects nor in the internal administration of the empire. Moreover, the Note contained

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[46] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 240-41.

little that the Porte had not already agreed to on the recommendation of the powers.[47]

Britain's adherence to the Note was tardy and was given only when the Porte asked her to support it. The government's reluctance was due to many considerations. First, the British government was relatively indifferent to the fate of Bosnia because the safety of the road to India was not directly involved.[48] Second, the Cabinet was not aware of the true situation in the East. Much of the skepticism of the government towards the Bosnian uprising was due to the consistently pro-Turkish reports of Elliot from Constantinople. He in turn was influenced by W. R. Holmes the British consul in Sarajevo from 1861-1878. Holmes was convinced that the Bosnian insurrection "was first brought about, and afterwards supported, by foreign influence. . . . There was no particular reason, or any excess of oppression to justify or occasion a rising of the people in 1875 beyond what has existed at any time since 1860. . . ."[49] Many of Holmes' assertions indicated his ignorance of conditions in the two provinces that were his special concern. He was content to remain in such places as Sarajevo and accept almost at face value the highly colored reports of the grossly incompetent Turkish officials in these provinces.

On January 30 the Austrian ambassador at the Porte, Count Zichy, presented the Andrassy Note to the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs, Raschid Pasha. The representatives of the powers subsequently urged the Porte to adhere to the proposals.[50] Two weeks later, on

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[47] Ibid., 238-40. [48] Times, January 19, 1876.

[49] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 315-17. [50] Ibid., 247-48.

February 13, Elliot reported to Derby that the Porte had accepted the Andrassy Note, but with reservations. Four of the five points were unreservedly accepted and only the one calling for the application of tax revenue to the provinces where collected was excepted.[51] The reservations regarding detail were not considered unreasonable, and it now remained to see what effect the Porte's acceptance would have on the disturbance in the provinces.

Although the interested powers and the Porte had accepted the Andrassy Note, at least in principle, the rebels in Bosnia and Herzegovina rejected the Note on the grounds that it contained no firm guarantees that the reforms would be implemented. The failure of the Note was not surprising. There was first of all the conviction that the concessions had been delayed too long. Still, the powers had agreed to the Note to satisfy public opinion and because its provisions might serve as the starting point for future negotiations. Moreover, the many signs of hesitation exhibited by the Turks were interpreted by the insurgents as symptoms of weakness. Further, the eagerness with which Turkey had agreed to the Note was construed by the insurgents as evidence of the Porte's insincerity.[52] The Andrassy Note also failed because the insurgents saw no adequate guarantee of improvement and had set their hopes on what they might obtain as a result of foreign complications. Most contributory of all perhaps was Britain's lukewarm attitude that detracted from the effectiveness of the Note at Constantinople.[53]

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[51] Ibid., 250. [52] Times, April 26, 1876.

[53] Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 31.

For the first four months of 1876 the insurrection remained deadlocked. The Turks were unable to suppress the uprising, and the insurgents by themselves were unable to secure the conditions under which they would lay down their arms. Secure in their mountain strongholds, the rebels were content to await international complications that would swing the issue in their favor.

Adding an even greater degree of urgency to the powers' desires to end the insurrection was the anxiety that the uprising would be extended in the spring of 1876. British consul-general W. A. White at Belgrade reported to Derby on February 5 that menacing preparations had been taking place in Serbia for some months. The extraordinary powers voted to the Skouptschina and the activity of official and unofficial agents confirmed the suspicion that something important was being planned. More than likely an effort would be made in the spring to enlarge the insurrection and delay a pacific solution to the Herzegovina problem by injecting a Serbian or perhaps a Bulgarian question.[54] Two weeks later, on February 18, acting-consul Edward B. Freeman at Sarajevo also reported that insurrectionary activity was definitely on the increase, particularly among the frontier peoples.[55]

Because of the darkening situation in the insurgent provinces both the Austrian and Russian governments cautioned Princes Milan and Nicholas of Serbia and Montenegro respectively to refrain from doing anything to obstruct the efforts of the powers in pacifying the revolt in Herzegovina. If the princes disregarded this warning, they could

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[54] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 277. [55] Ibid., 286-87.

not expect even moral support or sympathy from Europe in the consequences they would have brought on themselves.[56]

In keeping with the warning she had given to Montenegro and Serbia, Austria reiterated her assurances that she was doing everything possible to keep her subjects from assisting in the insurrection.[57] To absolve herself even further, Austria announced on March 2 that in fifteen days she would cut off the food and money that she had been giving to the Bosnian and Herzegovinian refugees. She wanted to observe a strict neutrality.[58]

On February 19 Andrew Buchanan, British ambassador at Vienna, reported to Derby that the pacification of the insurgents was fraught with difficulties and appeared to be next to hopeless. The Porte had granted an amnesty and had invited the refugees to return home, but they refused unless the Porte provided them adequate military protection and sufficient funds to repair the damage caused by the war. This the Porte could not do.[59] Edmund Monson, British consul at Ragusa, was even more emphatic. He said that there was no use whatsoever in trying to induce the refugees to return to their homes. Even if the Porte gave them seed, protection, food, and funds to rebuild their homes--they would not return.[60] And Gorchakov, speaking on the matter to Lord Loftus, British ambassador at St. Petersburg, said that he held out little hope for the negotiations between the insurgents and the imperial commissioner. The Porte simply did not have the money or means necessary to bring the refugees back to their homes, to

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[56] Ibid., 290. [57] Ibid., 291. [58] Ibid., 294.

[59] Ibid., 321. [60] Ibid., 302.

rebuild the houses, and to afford the refugees military protection.[61]

On March 30 the Porte promulgated an amnesty, but Monson was not very optimistic for its success. The proclamation was hardly conciliatory and had only barely mentioned the reforms that the Porte had consented to grant. Monson doubted whether the insurgents would accept the terms; theirs were more demanding. The refugees also feared that if the amnesty was accepted and the hostilities were renewed once they returned to their homes, they would again be the principal victims.[62]

Particularly alarming was the report from consul White at Belgrade that Serbia was continuing her military preparations. On April 8 he reported to Derby that Serbia did not seem sincere in her professions of refraining from entering the war. She apparently intended to side with the insurgents at the earliest opportunity.[63] Serbia was convinced that the time was opportune for turning on Turkey. The Porte had few troops in the Balkan provinces while Serbia had some 50,000 under arms, and this number would be substantially increased when the militia was called out.[64]

Buchanan was alarmed lest continued insurrection endanger European peace. The Ottoman government could be expected to use its every resource to suppress the insurrection, and this would likely inflame opinion in other countries in favor of the insurgents.[65] An added note of apprehension was struck by the announcement of Moukhtar Pasha, Turkish military commander, on April 12 that since the

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[61] Ibid., 332-33. [62] Ibid., 342. [63] Ibid., 338.

[64] Ibid., 351-52. [65] Ibid., 347.

insurgents had not accepted the conditions offered, and since the armistice was to end on that date, the hostilities would be renewed.[66] The balance seemed to turn on Serbia and Montenegro. Prince Milan and Prince Nicholas perhaps desired to remain neutral, but they found it difficult to resist the popular clamor of their people. British consul W. Kirby Green at Scutari was convinced that it was beyond the power of Turkey to suppress the insurrection so long as Montenegro was not observing a strict neutrality.[67]

Meanwhile, the situation in Constantinople was becoming alarming. Nationalist feelings had been stirring, and Elliot reported that there was much anxiety among all classes and reason to fear serious consequences. The Mussulmans had been buying up arms for some time. Elliot and his colleagues thought that British ships in Besika Bay might protect the Christians and invoke confidence.[68]

Agitation and anxiety also rose several degrees after a disorderly Moslem mob on May 6 brutally murdered the German and French consuls at Salonica.[69] The Turkish government left nothing undone to secure punishment for the murderers of the consuls and to offer reparation to the relatives of the murdered men.[70] But, punishing the guilty did not resolve the implications this episode had for the insurrection in Bosnia and Herzegovina. As soon as word had been received of the excitement at Salonica and Constantinople, the British commander in the Mediterranean, Admiral Drummond, was ordered to take

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[66]Ibid., 362. [67]Ibid., 387. [68]Ibid., 405.

[69]Hansard, CCXXIX (1876), 1114-15.

[70]Ibid., 914-15; Annual Register, 1876, pp. 265-66.

his vessels to Besika Bay, and one ship was sent to Salonica and one to Constantinople. The presence of this British fleet in Turkish waters would have future significance.

Of even more direct importance was the effect of the murders on the people of European Turkey. Elliot said that the Salonica episode greatly excited the uneasiness felt among all classes. He believed that the irritation of the Moslems had reached the point where little more would be needed to put Christians in danger in many parts of the empire. Moreover, the Christians in the revolted provinces could hardly help being impressed with the murder of two foreign consuls, in a peaceful town, and under the eyes of powerless authorities. How could they now be induced to trust themselves to the Turkish authorities who were assuring them amnesty and redress of grievances?[71]

Even before these catastrophic events had taken place at Salonica and Constantinople, Czar Alexander in late April had suggested that the Foreign Ministers of Germany, Austria, and Russia meet in Berlin to agree on a joint policy to end the Balkan crisis that promised to drag on indefinitely. The Andrassy Note was to be the basis of discussion and an attempt would be made to devise a practical agreement that would be acceptable to the Porte and to the insurgents. The powers directly concerned in the Balkan crisis had determined to depart from the do-nothing policy of Britain. The murder of the consuls at Salonica and the overthrow of the Grand Vizier suggested the need for immediate action. It was not thought expedient to delay the proceedings

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[71] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 416, 420.

while waiting for Britain to shake herself loose from her procrastinating and lethargic attitude.[72]

Consequently, on May 12 Prince Bismarck, Prince Gorchakov, and Count Andrassy drew up the Berlin Memorandum that proposed an armistice of two months. Both sides were to retain their arms during the negotiations that were to be conducted on the following points: (1) the Turkish government was to assist in rebuilding ruined houses and was to provide temporary relief money and supplies, (2) a consular commission was to be established to supervise these measures, and (3) should the armistice expire before the necessary reforms had been agreed on, the three powers declared that it would be necessary to take "efficacious measures in the interests of peace."[73]

The Berlin Memorandum was submitted to the other powers, and France and Italy indicated their intention immediately of adhering to it.[74] The British attitude, however, was decidedly hostile. In a dispatch to Lord Odo Russell, British ambassador at Berlin, Derby voiced his initial reaction. He found fault with each of the points of the Memorandum, observing for example that to require the Porte to repair the destruction that the insurgents themselves had caused was unfair. He also thought it unlikely that the armistice, granting it was even secured, could be maintained if both sides retained their arms. Moreover, Derby thought that the last paragraph, was almost an invitation to the insurgents to refuse any terms since "it gave them to understand that by continuing the insurrection they would secure

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[72] Ibid., 400, 408. [73] Ibid., 416-17.

[74] Hansard, CCXXIX (1876), 1053.

further intervention on their behalf."[75] Derby's definitive view, however, would have to await further study of the document.

As was to be expected, the Porte also found fault with the Memorandum. The Turk government deemed it unfortunate that the proposals of the northern powers came when they did. The work of pacification already undertaken by Turkey would be undone. The return of the refugees would be hindered, and hope would be awakened in the insurgents that if they waited they would gain more. Moreover, Turkey could not agree to an armistice because the cost of maintaining an idle army for two months would be too great and the troops would become demoralized and disorganized. On the other hand the armistice would afford the insurgents time to reorganize and augment their forces.

As for the relief measures proposed by the Memorandum, the Porte had already promised food and materials. But, for Turkey to agree to provide for the refugees over an indefinite period would only encourage idleness and the continuation of the insurrection. Nor could the consular supervisory commission be allowed without endangering the prestige and authority of the Turkish government. Turkey would not go beyond the limits of the proposals suggested by the powers the preceding December and to which the Porte had agreed.[76] Turkey was further assured in her position on May 16 when Derby told Musurus Pasha that he thought it "very unlikely" that Britain would join the powers in pressing the Porte to accede to the Berlin Memorandum.[77]

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[75] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 423-24. [76] Ibid., 460-61.

[77] Ibid., 426.

After reflecting on the proposals of the northern powers, Disraeli declared that Britain would be unable to cooperate with the other powers in accepting the Memorandum. His objections were based on each of the five points as well as on other considerations. Disraeli believed that participation in the proposals would soon result in the disintegration of Turkey, and the proposal of consular supervision in particular would be inimical to the Porte's authority. Turkey would probably not agree to the terms anyway and even if she did, the insurgents, on the strength of the last paragraph, would likely refuse any terms of pacification because of the intimation that if they continued their resistance, the powers would intervene further.[78]

In a dispatch to each of the British ambassadors on May 19 Derby outlined in more detail the reasons why the government had not joined in the proposals. Although Britain actually attached little importance to form in matters of this sort, still she had not been consulted. Britain would have acceded to the proposals, however, if it had appeared that the plan would have pacified the provinces. But, said Derby, the members of the government could not accept "for the mere appearance of concert, a scheme in the preparation of which they have not been consulted, and which they do not believe calculated to effect the object with which they are informed it has been framed."[79] Derby also stressed that Britain, since the outbreak of the insurrection, had "deprecated the diplomatic intervention of other Powers in the affairs of the Ottoman Empire."[80]

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[78]Ibid., 447-48. [79]Ibid., 449-50. [80]Ibid.

On July 31 Disraeli candidly defended the government's decision to refuse agreement to the Berlin Memorandum. Speaking in the Commons, the Prime Minister said that the British government refused to sanction the Berlin Memorandum:

> because we knew that the Turkish Government and the Turkish nation could not fulfill the conditions which were laid down in the Berlin Memorandum, and because we knew that the Berlin Memorandum ended with an intimation that, if this effort failed, very different measures would be had recourse to. And, of course, the very failure by the Turks to fulfill the rash and reckless promises which, in their miserable state of despair, they were ready to make every day, would have been the foundation for that which we, who were advocating a policy of non-intervention, wished particularly to avoid. It was perfectly clear that as the Turks would necessarily fail to observe the conditions laid down, the Berlin Memorandum would have allowed active interference--an occupation, perhaps, and an occupation in a country like Turkey generally leads to war.[81]

Two weeks later, on August 11, again in the Commons, Disraeli injected another consideration contributing to the decision of the government. The Berlin Memorandum had been refused by Britain because the government was convinced that material interference in Turkey would have been the ultimate result of agreement, and interference was conducive neither to solving the question at hand nor for providing for the general welfare of the world or for the interests of Britain, which after all was the first consideration of the government. The duty of Britain was to maintain the British empire, and the government would never agree to any step "though it may obtain for a moment comparative quiet and a false prosperity, that hazards the existence of that Empire."[82]

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[81] Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 206. [82] Ibid., 1146-47.

The Prime Minister was supported in the Lords by the British Foreign Secretary. Derby's defense declared that the Berlin Memorandum imposed unequal engagements on the parties concerned. The Porte was to be bound, but the insurgents were not. Moreover, had Britain accepted the Memorandum, she would have pledged herself to concur in the "efficacious measures" by which diplomatic action was to be supported. In effect Britain would have been obliged to join in a military occupation. The government could never assent to such an expedient because it was a course that Britain had always rejected and repudiated. Britain did not want to stand aloof and was ready to advise, mediate, and warn, but from the first, the government had carefully guarded against the risk of being drawn into any armed coercion to be applied to the Porte that would have involved Britain in a war inconsistent with her interests. Derby was certain that the government was justified in the stand it had taken.[83]

A Times' leader on May 23 also lent its support to the government's decision regarding the Berlin Memorandum. The article asserted that the position of the government was not easily assailable. The decision was in accordance with a foreign policy that had been praised and practiced by each party as being relatively successful. To stand apart from the disputes of the continent and to avoid entangling alliances or engagements was almost certainly safe. The prevailing impulse of the country would be to approve the government's decision, and those who questioned it would have to be ingenious if they could change public opinion. Non-interference was the normal state of

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[83]Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 34.

British policy, and it would be intervention that would have to be defended.

The Times' writer declared further, however, that Britain was not indifferent to the affairs of the East. That the government had refused to accept the Berlin Memorandum should not be construed as meaning that the Ottoman empire was of any less than vital importance to Britain. Britain had not abandoned the position she had assumed by the treaty of 1856. To charge that Britain had become disillusioned with the Turks because they had failed to reform their government and had defaulted on their debts was to make a dangerous assertion. It was Turkish territory, not the Turks themselves, that was the object of British interest. And to prevent the absorption of that territory by any European power was the chief end and aim of British policy.[84]

Britain's decision was criticized by many who thought that she was making too much of a point of international etiquette in that she had not been consulted in the negotiations leading to the Memorandum. The government instructed its representatives to use every means to dispel this erroneous allegation. Andrew Buchanan at Vienna struck a more hopeful note, however. He believed that perhaps something good would come of this attitude of the other governments. The framers of the Berlin Memorandum might realize the inconvenience of committing themselves in the future to a course of action regarding questions of general interest to all of Europe before they had obtained Britain's opinion.[85]

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[84] Times, May 23, 1876. [85] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 494-95.

Within Britain some members of the Opposition believed the government had erred in rejecting the Berlin Memorandum. The leader of the Opposition, Earl Granville, however, endorsed the government's stand. What he did criticize was that the government dropped the matter completely and did not offer any counterproposal, as the other powers had urged. He felt that unfortunate consequences had resulted from the government's refusing responsibility for further negotiations. This attitude could possibly contribute to the outbreak of hostilities, at least the Prince of Montenegro made this allegation. Moreover, the impression made on philo-Turks and anti-Turks alike was that the neutrality of the British government had been benevolent towards the Turks. The British government, it seemed, was not fully carrying out the obligations Britain had assumed in 1856 regarding the Christian subjects of Turkey.[86]

From Monson came an intimation of the impact the British refusal had on the insurgents. News of the British rejection made a profound impression at Ragusa, the center of Slav agitation and headquarters for the organization controlling Pan-Slavist sentiments throughout the area. The insurgents favored the action of the British while criticizing the futility of the Memorandum proposals. If an armistice was to come, having it begin in July to run for two months would have been more advantageous. Inclement weather would then have halted military operations and allowed Turkey more time to "bleed to death."[87]

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[86] Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 87-90. [87] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 501.

On June 1 Disraeli expressed the hope that the Berlin Memorandum would be dropped.[88] The deposition of the Sultan on May 30, he thought, altered the situation. On July 7 the British government learned that Austria, in agreement with Russia and Germany, had decided to postpone consideration of the measures proposed at Berlin and discussion of the Berlin Memorandum was adjourned sine die.[89] Disraeli believed that the postponement was justified and wise because in the interim, from June 1 to 7, the Porte had anticipated most of the important points expressed in the Memorandum and of its own volition had offered another armistice.[90]

The revolution at Constantinople that had deposed the Sultan and had compelled the rejection of the Memorandum had given the three northern powers the opportunity to retire without a great loss of dignity. A new sovereign, by logic and courtesy, was entitled to a decent interval for considering his policy and procedure. It was only proper that with a new Sultan the negotiations should take a new approach. The demands addressed to a ruler whose character and administration had been known for fifteen years could hardly be transferred to his successor. The rules of diplomacy and decency dictated a pause, and new circumstances might alter the approach adopted by the powers towards Turkey.[91]

While the British government took pains to explain and justify its position and discounted any adverse effects its decision might have on the outcome of eastern affairs, more objective observations

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[88] Hansard, CCXXIX (1876), 1521. [89] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 511.

[90] Hansard, CCXXIX (1876), 1607. [91] Times, June 10, 1876.

might be made. Whatever his expressed reasons for rejecting the Memorandum, Disraeli was motivated in large part by his fear and suspicion of Russia. The two men most responsible for the Memorandum were Bismarck and Gorchakov, and Disraeli distrusted them both. A mere six years had passed since Russia's arbitrary rejection of the Black Sea clauses of the Treaty of Paris. British policy was to support Turkey against Russia, and this policy was bolstered by Disraeli's own attitude and by Elliot who was the very incarnation of that policy.[92]

The results of the British refusal on the outcome of events in the East were little short of disastrous. Queen Victoria reminded Disraeli in May that the three northern powers were more vitally concerned with the welfare of Turkey than the three western powers and that she disapproved of Britain's separating herself from the other governments. She then prophetically voiced her anxiety that Turkey would look to Britain for help against the rest of Europe and that Britain would thus have caused rather than prevented disaster.[93] Indeed, there can be little doubt that Britain's failure to accept the Berlin Memorandum, her reluctance to cooperate, and her refusal to submit a substitute plan made cooperative intervention by the powers impossible and finally resulted in catastrophe for eastern Europe.[94]

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[92]Robert C. K. Ensor, England, 1870-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p. 43.

[93]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 34.

[94]Ibid., p. 35; see also George E. Buckle (ed.) The Letters of Queen Victoria, 1862-1878 (2 vols.; 2d series; London: John Murray, 1926), II, 455-60.

CHAPTER X

THE "BULGARIAN HORRORS"

During and after the episode of the Berlin Memorandum events quickly transpired to plunge the Balkan question to crisis depths. Disraeli's rejection of the Berlin Memorandum and the attitude exhibited by the British government proved to be decisive.

On the advice of Elliot, who feared disturbances in Constantinople as the result of the Salonica murders, Disraeli on May 24, 1876 ordered the British Mediterranean fleet to Besika Bay. His Queen was skeptical regarding the wisdom of this move and warned that Turkey must not be given cause to believe that Britain was advising rejection of the powers' proposals. The Prime Minister denied that the fleet had been sent for purposes other than those directly involving British interests.[1]

Britain's policy, said Disraeli, had always considered the Mediterranean one of the prime highways to her Indian empire. The waters of this sea and those connected with it, therefore, had to be free and secure. The Mediterranean fleet was the symbol and guarantee of British power in the East and, under the circumstances, the power of the British fleet had to be demonstrated. Britain had interests

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[1]Buckle, The Letters of Queen Victoria, 1862-1878, II, 455-56.

that had to be protected and never relinquished. The world must be shown that there could be no change in the status quo in the eastern Mediterranean without Britain's knowledge and consent.

Disraeli declared that the Turks had never been led to believe that the fleet had been sent to the Dardanelles to maintain the Turkish empire. Elliot had from the first made it abundantly clear to Turkey that she must reform and must fulfill her engagements and obligations. The British fleet was to maintain the interests of Britain and her empire rather than to bolster a power that was falling into decrepitude because of its own weakness.[2]

Elliot, from his vantage point, was able to assess popular opinion at Constantinople and added another reason for sending the fleet. He pointed out that the Christian communities in Turkey believed that the British ships in the area had greatly contributed to the safety of the Christians and had prevented the excesses from assuming an even greater magnitude.[3]

The Times' correspondent in Constantinople on June 8 expressed a different opinion. He declared that the presence of the British fleet stiffened the attitude of the Turkish government. The ministers chose to disregard the assertion that the fleet was sent as a demonstration of British displeasure at the Salonica murders and believed that the fleet assured Turkey of British support. This feeling on the part of the Turks was largely responsible in encouraging them to assume a defiant attitude towards the powers.[4]

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[2]Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 211-13. [3]SP, 1877, XC, 113.

[4]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 37.

Also of significance was the political situation in Constantinople beginning in early May. A reforming Ministry had assumed power under Midhat Pasha on May 10. A few days later, on May 30, the grossly incompetent and much disliked Sultan Abdul Aziz was overthrown and was succeeded by Murad V.[5] This weak-minded and incapable individual was permitted to remain in office only until August 31 when he too was removed and Abdul Hamid II became Sultan, to hold his office more than thirty years. Before the reforming Ministry could effect much progress, however, two of Midhat's colleagues, the Minister of War and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, were murdered, on June 14. The Turkish government appeared on the verge of collapse.[6]

Before the implications of the Turkish revolution could be fully appreciated, the governments of Serbia and Montenegro further complicated the critical situation in the Balkans with their mutual declaration of war on Turkey. Prince Milan and Prince Nicholas were rivals for the leadership of the Balkan Slavs and neither one could allow the other to undertake independent action on behalf of the Slav cause. Thus, when Milan declared war on Turkey on June 30, his action was quickly followed by Nicholas who also proclaimed war and marched his troops into Herzegovina.

Milan did not necessarily want war. He was in a dilemma. If he consented to military preparation, he risked the criticism of the powers. But, if he resisted the popular acclaim in his country for the insurgents' cause, he risked his throne. He was well aware that

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[5]SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 481.

[6]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 35-36; Ensor, p. 43.

he was not popular and that there were rivals for his crown. The situation was ironic in that the initiative did not lay with the great powers that were trying to forestall war, but with the principalities themselves, or rather with the factions within them.[7] Milan sought to preserve peace and Serbian neutrality, but in doing so he only enhanced his unpopularity. He had finally succumbed to popular clamor on May 5 and had accepted a new Ministry that was Pan-Slav and pro-war in outlook.[8]

As Serbia's attitude became more menacing, the powers warned her government against precipitating war. France and Austria joined in urging moderation on Milan, and the Russian czar addressed strong notes to both Milan and Nicholas warning them against abandoning neutrality and declaring that if they went to war, contrary to the advice they had received, they could expect no material or moral support from Russia.[9] Britain was again reluctant. She did not think that her urgings would have much effect on Serbia and believed that Austria and Russia would be more successful in this respect. Still, consul-general White at Belgrade was instructed to advise Milan to pursue a pacific policy.[10]

The British government's concern was again the integrity and independence of the Ottoman empire. On May 31 Derby warned Elliot that most of the powers were sending squadrons to Turkish waters and that there would soon be a large naval force concentrated at Besika Bay. He must be watchful lest some power, on the pretext of protecting Christians, violate the treaty of 1841 or lest some proposal be made to

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[7]SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 485-86; Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 31-32.

[8]SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 450. [9]Ibid., 520, 522. [10]Ibid., 511.

summon fleets to Constantinople merely on the pretext of protecting Christians.[11]

The British government also adopted a definite policy regarding negotiations between the Porte and the insurgents and the intervention of the powers in trying to maintain peace. Derby said to Lord Lyons, ambassador at Paris, on June 16 that if the negotiations between the Porte and the insurgents were successful, the powers would not need to act. If they were not successful, the powers could do no good by trying to intervene unless they were prepared to use force, and Britain was not.[12]

Only the day before, on June 15, Derby had declared in the Lords that Britain had no right to interfere in the Balkan crisis on the basis of the treaty of 1856. Article I of that treaty declared that Britain, France, and Austria jointly guaranteed the independence and integrity of the Ottoman empire. The second article of the same treaty declared that any infraction of the terms of the treaty would be treated as a casus belli. Derby pointed out what he considered was a misapprehension concerning the treaty's second article. Serbia, for example, being under the suzerainty of Turkey, was included in the general guarantee of the integrity and independence of the Ottoman empire. But, this provision did not constitute an engagement on the part of Britain, or any other power, to interfere in the internal affairs of the Turkish empire and interpose between the Turkish government and states tributary to that government. This had not been the intention of the treaty. The guarantee was of the integrity and

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[11]Ibid., 481. [12]Ibid., 553.

independence of the Turkish empire against external aggression. Britain had never contemplated participating on one side or the other in internal quarrels between the Turkish authorities at Constantinople and the people in the Turk provinces or dependencies.[13]

Derby adopted the same tone on June 26 when he declared that the government would gladly reconcile, if it could, the insurgent provinces with the Turk government. But, Britain had no right or wish to take part in a "purely internal quarrel." The Porte must be allowed the initiative in its own affairs. It did not follow, however, that the British government was abandoning the Christians in the Ottoman empire. They were, in European Turkey, a majority too numerous and powerful to be disregarded. The problem was "how to reconcile their reasonable wishes and claims with the maintenance of that general system to which all Europe is pledged, and which cannot be overthrown without a general convulsion extending far beyond European limits, and leading to many complications which we can hardly foresee."[14]

The British attitude was again decisive. So long as it appeared that there was some prospect of the powers assuming the initiative in the Bosnian dispute and forcing some kind of settlement, it was possible to check the rising sentiment for war in Serbia and Montenegro. But, when Britain professed that she was unwilling to act in any intervention between the Turks and the insurgents and when the political events at Constantinople gave reason to believe that the

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[13] Hansard, CCXXIX (1876), 1891-92.

[14] Hansard, CCXXX (1876), 416-17.

Turkish resistance was problematical at best, Milan found it impossible to resist public opinion. Despite the remonstrances of the powers, Serbia declared war on Turkey on June 30 and was joined by Montenegro a short time later.[15]

The declaration of war by Serbia and Montenegro prompted the powers to make additional decisions regarding the future. Czar Alexander and Emperor Francis Joseph met at Reichstadt in Bohemia on July 8 and concluded a secret agreement providing for both a Serbian and Turkish defeat. The announcement sent to Derby by Buchanan from Vienna was only that the Reichstadt meeting had been satisfactory. Russia and Austria had agreed to maintain the principle of non-intervention for the present. Should events make it necessary, they would come to an understanding with the great powers.[16]

Derby expressed the opinion of his government when he declared that diplomatic action for the time being would be inopportune. The wiser policy would be to allow the struggle to continue until one side or the other had been defeated. If the Sultan found he could not suppress the insurgents by force, he might be more inclined to concede concessions placing the territories in the same position as Serbia and Montenegro. If the insurgents were beaten, they might be willing to compromise and accept conditions similar to those extended to Crete in 1868.[17]

Even while the powers were trying to keep the Balkan conflict from spreading beyond Bosnia and Herzegovina and before Serbia and

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[15] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 635-36; Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 36-37.

[16] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 634. [17] Times, July 25, 1876.

Montenegro entered the war, however, alarming events were taking place elsewhere in the Ottoman empire. As the atrocities known as the "Bulgarian Horrors" became tardily and gradually known in Europe, the official attitude of the British government towards the Ottoman empire became increasingly embarrassing.

For some years there had been a steady growth of national sentiment in Bulgaria. Revolutionary committees had been established at Belgrade and Bucharest with the design of establishing a Serbo-Bulgar state. A revolution in September 1875 had failed, but during April and May 1876 fresh outbreaks occurred in many villages and there was a plot to burn Philippopolis in southern Bulgaria. Out of the desperation caused by the depredations of the irregular Turk soldiers, the Bashi-Bazouks, and the onerous method of tax collections, the people had been induced to rebel.[18]

The insurrection had even less chance of success than the one in Bosnia. It was only a matter of days before the movement was crushed by the brutal methods of the Bashi-Bazouks and the Circassian immigrant irregular troops. Elliot explained, if he did not justify, such severe reprisals on the grounds that the Bulgarians had begun the uprising. Revolutionary agents had been working among the Bulgarians, supplying them with large quantities of arms and ammunition. The leaders of the insurrection, apparently, were Serbians and other

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[18]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 51-52. Vangel K. Sugareff refutes the assertion that the Bulgarian revolutionists had no plan for liberating Bulgarians from Turkey. Vangel K. Sugareff, "The Constitution of the Bulgarian Revolutionary Central Committee," Journal of Modern History, IV (December, 1932), 572-80; see also C. E. Black, "The Influence of Western Political Thought in Bulgaria, 1850-1885," American Historical Review, XLVIII (April, 1943), 507-20.

emissaries of the revolutionary committees. Vice-consul J. Hutton Dupuis at Adrianople, the nearest British consulate to the scene of the atrocities, reported that the organizers were following the same policy as in Herzegovina. All villages, whether Mussulman or Christian, were ravaged and burned if the inhabitants refused to join in insurrection. Dupuis also remarked that while troops had been used to suppress the uprising, their discipline had been admirable.[19]

The first official news of excesses in Bulgaria was contained in a dispatch from Dupuis on May 9. It was the unofficial news of the atrocities reaching Britain, however, that aroused sentiment. Britain obtained this knowledge through articles published in the Daily News, the leading Liberal newspaper and famous for its foreign correspondence, although official spokesmen for the government were contemptuous of these accounts. The regular Daily News' correspondent in the East was Edwin Pears, a lawyer practicing in Constantinople. He received his information from American missionaries and the officials connected with Robert College. Since many of the students at the college were Bulgarian, the officials at this institution obtained information denied other Europeans. The college officials conveyed the news of the atrocities to Elliot, but when he indicated by his behavior that he would not act, the officials turned to such men as Pears to acquaint Europe with the events in Bulgaria.[20]

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[19]Hansard, CCXXX (1876), 1486-87. Shannon also says that "the massacres in Bulgaria were not unusually extensive, and there is no reason to assume that they were unusually atrocious." Shannon, p. 22.

[20]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 52-53; Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, VI, 42-43.

Unfortunately, the British government relied on the information supplied by the unrepentant Turkophile Henry Elliot at Constantinople. Disraeli, for example, discounted the accuracy of the atrocity stories and assumed that they were only designed as a tool against the government by the Liberals. On June 26 the attention of the Lords was drawn to an article appearing in the June 23 edition of the Daily News. The article in great detail discussed the massacres and outrages perpetrated on Christians in Bulgaria by the Bashi-Bazouks and the Circassians. The account could have been discounted had it not been so well documented. Names of towns, numbers of persons killed, the names of the Turk commanders--all were given. Now it was Derby who admitted that although he had seen the article, he discounted its authenticity because of the reputation of the paper. While he did not assert that the entire account was in error, he did say that none of the official reports bore out in any degree the statements contained in the article. Lacking official confirmation, Derby cautioned that little reliance be placed on such accounts. While it was likely that excesses had taken place, as was inevitable under the circumstances, he reminded his colleagues that stories of violence in the Cretan insurrection had been proven to be nine-tenths untrue.[21]

The attitude of the government can be explained, but not justified, because it was ill-served by its representatives in the East. The pro-Turkish views of Elliot and various consular officials slanted the news in favor of the Porte. On July 6 Elliot reported to Derby that although atrocities had been committed, it was certain that the

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[21]Hansard, CCXXX (1876), 385-87.

details, coming almost exclusively from Russian or Bulgarian sources, were so exaggerated they were worthless. Cases of excesses were so reliably reported it seemed impossible to disbelieve them. Yet, on investigation, the accounts were proven to be absolutely untrue.[22]

That Disraeli was relying heavily on the reports reaching him from Elliot can be seen in his statements before the Commons on July 10. He expressed his hope that when the government received all the information on the events, it would be seen that the atrocity reports had been false or at least exaggerated. The government was in constant communication with its ambassador at Constantinople. Elliot was not insensible to such atrocious proceedings and could be relied on to interfere firmly and energetically with the Turkish authorities if he was aware that such events were transpiring. The British government was also represented by consular officials at Belgrade, Ragusa, Adrianople, and Cettinje and was in constant contact with these men. No news of atrocities had reached the government from them.[23]

Derby took more decisive action on July 13, however, as the result of an account in the Daily News telling of massacres in Bulgaria and reporting that from 12,000 to 25,000 Christians had been killed in the district of Philippopolia alone. He instructed Elliot to verify this account and remonstrate with the Porte against the unprincipled use of Circassians and Bashi-Bazouks. Turkey must be warned not to arouse the antipathy of the civilized world.[24]

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[22] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 645-46.

[23] Hansard, CCXXX (1876), 1181-82. [24] SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 637.

Elliot assured Derby in his answer that the account was indeed erroneous. Some Christians had been killed, but not as many as had been reported. Britain had consuls at Adrianople, Rustchuk, and Bourgas and "they have seldom been able to guarantee the truth of the reports that reached them." Nor had Elliot been able to verify accounts that Bulgarian children had been sold, or that a regular traffic existed in the sale of women, or that cartloads of heads had been paraded through the streets of some of the principal towns.[25] One allegedly reliable source, for example, had reported a massacre of 2000 Christians. Investigation disclosed, however, that only ninety had perished, and those had been killed in warfare, not slaughtered.[26]

Elliot had been assured by the Porte's ministers too that the excesses were exaggerated in order to turn public opinion against Turkey. The Porte's special commissioner to the district of Tatar-Bazardjik, reportedly the scene of many atrocities, declared that rumors were spread to prevent the return of confidence and tranquillity. He believed that when passions had cooled and it became possible to compare facts with the accounts given of them, "it will be astonishing to see how certain people have taken advantage of public credulity."[27]

As detailed accounts continued to arouse public sentiment in England, it became obvious that conditions in Bulgaria were not being accurately reported by the pro-Turkish representatives of Britain. Too many of the accounts, for example those of non-British consuls, newspapers, or travellers, agreed in general content and detail to be wholly discounted. The government decided, therefore, to secure more

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[25] Ibid., 649. [26] Ibid., 660-61. [27] Ibid., 679-80.

accurate information. On July 14 Derby instructed Dupuis to go to Philippopolis and confirm or disprove the reports of atrocities there.[28] Elliot was subsequently instructed to send a member of the embassy to assist Dupuis in his inquiry. Walter Baring, one of Elliot's subordinates, was sent.[29]

Baring could be expected to fulfill the mission entrusted to him. He spoke fluent Greek and knew enough Turkish to enable him to converse with the villagers. He also took with him as interpreter his father-in-law, Mr. Frederick Guarracino, who had been in the British consular service for more than thirty years.[30] Baring declared that he would be impartial, but his long service in the East probably caused him to exonerate the Turks as much as possible.

It was impossible, however, to discount the authenticity of the atrocity accounts reaching England. Throughout the months of July and August Baring submitted his dispatches containing grisly tales of pillage, rape, destruction and slaughter. On July 31, for example, he visited the scene of the Batak massacre and reported the stench of decaying bodies so great that it was only with difficulty that he could force himself into the churchyard to view the carnage.[31] On September 1 Baring made his official report, which was well-substantiated by that of the American consul-general Eugene Schuyler. After making every allowance for the Turks, Baring's estimate placed the number of

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[28] Ibid., 657. [29] Hansard, CCXXX (1876), 1698.

[30] SP, 1877, XC, 31.

[31] Ibid., 143-46. Detailed descriptions of the destruction of some of the largest villages can be found in Ibid., 152-62.

Bulgarian victims at 12,000 and the Moslem victims at no more than 200.[32]

The reports by men such as Baring and Schuyler clearly indicated that those given by the Porte were false. A special commissioner, Edib Effendi, had been sent by the Porte to Bulgaria, and his account substantiated the declaration of the Turkish government that the atrocity reports were erroneous and designed to stir up public sentiment against the Turkish government. From his on-the-spot vantage point, however, Schuyler declared that Edib Effendi's report contained statements that were "utterly unfounded on fact," and that "the whole report may be characterized as a tissue of falsehoods."[33]

The Porte continued to assert that the accounts of Baring and Schuyler were in error, and Baring was asked to go again to Philippopolis to be present when the Turkish commission began its inquiries. The Porte later consented to sending a Christian commission to the Sandjak of Philippopolia to investigate the charges brought against the Turkish irregular troops.[34] When the report of Blacque Bey and Yovantcho Effendi, the latter a Bulgarian, became known, it largely substantiated those of Baring and Schuyler. Even Elliot said on September 26 that these men had learned the truth of the affairs. They too recounted lurid details of atrocities, and the only difference in the accounts was that the Turks placed the number of murdered at about one-fourth that of the others. Mere numbers mattered little since the accounts of ruthless slaughter were the same. Elliot observed that if the Porte was sincere in its promise to punish the guilty, it

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[32]Ibid., 143-46. [33]Ibid., 171. [34]Ibid., 198.

should not lack evidence to convict them.[35]

Even before Baring's official report on the massacres was submitted, sentiment was rising in England. On July 10 a short debate in the Commons indicated that the Liberals and many persons outside Parliament were extremely dissatisfied with Disraeli's attitude regarding the atrocities. The Prime Minister was charged with treating a serious matter with levity. He was accused of "palliating and justifying and denying the truth of things" that were too well-founded to be treated lightly. Letters, newspapers, and other media indicated that the European population at Constantinople was also disgusted with the way the British government had handled the Bulgarian uprising. Elliot was particularly blamed. While the outrages were being perpetrated, Elliot was pretending to know nothing about them and was keeping the government in London ignorant of facts that he should have reported.[36]

The issue was again taken up in the Commons on August 7. The Opposition renewed its charge that the government had badly mismanaged the Bulgarian affair. Member after member expressed his indignation and protested against the government's attitude of indifference and even more against the apologetic tone that had been detected in the official communications regarding Turkey. Elliot was also criticized. If the accounts of massacres were accurate, Elliot's official communications would require explanation. It was inconceivable that a British ambassador, only a few hours' distance from the atrocities,

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[35]Ibid., 418-19. [36]Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 721-28.

would be unable to secure information about them.[37]

Another point of issue was that too often, when questioned about the atrocities, the Prime Minister had answered that his official information did not coincide with the newspaper accounts, or that the accounts were exaggerated. Opponents of the government asserted that the country was learning more of the atrocities through the press than from the government. The "mystery-mongering" of the Foreign Office never allowed the truth to be released until the newspapers had already printed it.[38] To the assertion that the press accounts had been exaggerated, Mr. Jacob Bright, M. P. from Manchester, answered that the correspondents who wrote for the leading newspapers were able men who knew that if they did not write the truth, they would be criticized and their writings denied. It was impossible to think that they would have written without having facts to substantiate their accounts. Even if only a percentage was true, the tales of atrocity were enough to indict the Turkish government for brutality and the British government for duplicity.[39]

To Mr. Evelyn Ashley, M. P. from Poole, it seemed that the government had been all too unwilling to believe the charges brought against the Porte when the atrocities were first reported. The government had failed to take prompt and energetic measures to determine the truth and then to remonstrate with the Porte for its lack of responsibility. The government's behavior led Europe and England to believe that the British government continued to adhere to

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[37]Times, August 8, 1876.

[38]Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 728-29. [39]Ibid., 733.

its former attitude of "skeptical apathy." It was incomprehensible that atrocities such as those in Bulgaria could take place in European Turkey and official accounts of them not reach the government for weeks afterward and the Ministry then be unaware of the truth of the accounts.[40] Since the newspapers had reported the atrocities in great detail and the official news sources of the government had not, it seemed that "a conspiracy of silence" had been maintained by officials and ministers. England had not been informed, and the government had continued to give its moral support to a nation that permitted the atrocities in Bulgaria. The fleet had been sent to Besika Bay without any explanation, and it now appeared that ships had been sent to support Turkey despite the brutalities she had permitted in one of her dependencies.[41] If the government doubted the truth of the newspaper accounts, the telegraph could have been used to verify them. The Daily News had telegraphic reports of everything happening at Philippopolis and the information would have been available via the same media to the government.[42]

Ashley probably touched on the crux of the matter on August 11 when he suggested that the British representatives in Turkey were not adequate for their task. Consul Dupuis at Adrianople was a sufferer from chronic paralysis and was physically incapable of acting in the best interests of the British government. Ashley blamed the members of the government who knew, or should have known, the physical condition of Dupuis and yet allowed him to remain at his post. At one time Dupuis had reported to Elliot that he had no means of determining

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[40] Ibid., 1078-80. [41] Ibid., 723-28. [42] Ibid., 1098-99.

the authenticity of accounts reaching him. Ashley demanded to know why a consul was sent to a district, if not to find such means.[43] The same charge of physical incapacity was brought against Elliot. Many English residents in Constantinople had declared that Elliot's health prevented him from giving his government accurate and detailed information.[44]

Physical limitations could perhaps be overlooked, but certain propensities could not. A great part of the problem was that too many of the British agents in Constantinople and the outlying districts were "from the society in which they mixed, apt to have feelings more in favour of the Turks than the Christians." Many consular officials had resided in Turkey so long they were more pro-Turk than the Turks themselves.[45]

A similar charge, but one more damning, was that British agents, knowing the truth of the atrocities, had willfully misrepresented the news on orders from the home government. Basing his indictment on certain dispatches, Ashley said that part of the government's difficulty had been that the consuls "acted under the belief that they were not to say more than they could help about the shortcomings of the Turkish Government." At one time Dupuis, "unable to report on a better state of things, said if he were compelled to notice the disorders committed, it was not from any desire to say anything adverse to the Turks."[46]

Since the government obtained no official information, Elliot was apparently not telling what he knew or should have known. Although the ambassador knew the character of the Bashi-Bazouks, he did not

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[43] Ibid., 1083-84. [44] Ibid., 734. [45] Ibid., 1123-24.

[46] Ibid., 1085-86; see also Shannon, pp. 18-19.

want to believe the stories about their excesses. He did not want to be told about events in Bulgaria because this knowledge would interfere in the observance of a policy he believed to be of paramount importance. Elliot had shut his mind to the reception of facts that would confuse his prejudices. He had become more like a Turk than an Englishman. Convinced of the wisdom of maintaining the Turkish empire, he did not want to believe anything that would destroy his ideas.[47]

Elliot did not lack sources. Two months after the principal massacres, however, he still claimed to have no reliable accounts verifying the atrocities, although he was always willing to accept information from Turkish sources excusing the Turks. On the occasions Elliot was instructed by Derby to confront the Porte with accounts of massacres, the Porte denied them. Elliot always assumed that if the Turkish government did not know of the outrages, they must not have occurred. But, said Mr. P. Rylands, M. P. from Burnley, Elliot's "prepossessions in favour of maintaining the independence, the integrity, and what he calls in one of his dispatches the 'dignity' of the Turkish Empire, blinded his eyes and closed his eyes to any evidence to the detriment of the Porte, and to the intelligence which was brought to him from all quarters."[48]

Another indictment brought against the government by the Opposition was that official correspondence on the Bulgarian uprising was withheld. Throughout the summer of 1876 there were repeated requests by members of Parliament that the government make these papers

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[47] Times, August 30, 1876; Shannon, p. 19.

[48] Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 445-52.

available. The requests were always met with delay, evasion, excuses, or refusal. At one time Disraeli said that the papers were so voluminous it would be some time before they could be presented.[49] At another time he said the papers concerned foreign governments and their permission would have to be secured before the papers could be printed and laid before the House or that the papers were so recent they could not yet be made public.[50] Another answer often given was that a certain report of atrocities or movement of troops was part of an entire volume of papers and could not be produced apart from the others. Time would be needed for all the papers to be collected.[51]

Disraeli also used the argument that papers could not be produced for fear the ensuing debate would be detrimental to political events in Turkey. After the Porte had proclaimed the amnesty, for example, he declared that debate might jeopardize its success by raising delusive hopes or by creating misapprehension. On another occasion Disraeli flatly declared that it would be inconvenient for the government if debate were allowed on the Eastern Question at that particular time.[52]

The government, of course, defended the position and attitude it had assumed. Elliot was excused on the grounds that he had been occupied with other significant events such as the Salonica murders, the deposition and subsequent death of the Sultan, and the assassination of the Turkish ministers. Also, the Porte consistently denied the truth of the atrocity reports and perhaps there was a certain

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[49] Hansard, CCXXX (1876), 873. [50] Ibid., 947.

[51] Ibid., 1527. [52] Ibid., 266-67.

disposition to believe the accounts of the Turks rather than those of the Christians.[53]

Mr. Gathorne Hardy, Secretary for War, accounted for the government's lack of official information. The government simply did not have an adequate number of consular officials in European Turkey. There were no agents in the disturbed areas except at Adrianople, Rustchuk on the Danube, and Bourgas on the Black Sea. There was none, unfortunately, at Philippopolis. The consul there had been removed before 1872 or else there would have been earlier information on the atrocities taking place in the summer of 1876.[54] On the basis of a House of Commons committee report, consular agents had been removed from those areas where there was no commercial demand for their services.

The Conservatives were trying to insinuate that the reason they did not have adequate information was the result of the earlier penurious action of the Commons under a Liberal Ministry that reduced the number of consuls in Turkey.[55] To rectify the situation, at least temporarily, a British consular agent was sent to Philippopolis on August 8.[56]

When England learned the truth about the atrocities, public sentiment became inflamed against Turkey.[57] All over England, meetings were held voicing indignation at the conduct of the Turkish

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[53]Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 1094. [54]Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 825.

[55]Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 445-52. [56]SP, 1876, LXXXIV, 702.

[57]Hodder, III, 374-76; J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, Lord Shaftesbury (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1923), p. 264.

government and the eastern policy of the Prime Minister. Disraeli's private correspondence indicates that he was aware of public opinion.[58] But, he could not denounce Elliot in public, although he realised full well that a lack of information had placed the government in a difficult position. He also realized that much sympathy for Turkey had been lost because of the news from Bulgaria and that British intervention against a Russian declaration of war would be almost impossible.[59]

Public sentiment was raised even higher in early September 1876 by the publication of Gladstone's pamphlet on the "Bulgarian Horrors." Derby was particularly sensitive to this public opinion and towards the end of August took action that modified British policy towards Turkey. Elliot was warned on August 22 and again on September 5 that the excesses of the Turks had turned public opinion in England against Turkey. Indignation had risen to such a pitch that Britain would find it almost impossible to interfere in the defense of Turkey unless Russia declared war on her. And, said Derby, if Russia did declare war on Turkey, "such an event by which the sympathies of the nation would be brought into direct opposition to its Treaty engagements, would place England in a most unsatisfactory and even humiliating position, yet it is impossible to say that if the present conflict continues the contingency may not arise."[60]

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[58] Times, September 14, 1876.

[59] Ensor, pp. 44-45; On August 7, 1876 Disraeli wrote to Derby that the Bulgarian atrocities had been "a very awkward business, and, I fear, a great exposure of our diplomatic system abroad and at home." Quoted in Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, VI, 46.

[60] Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 472, 485-86.

Again on September 21 Derby instructed Elliot to warn the Porte that it could not disregard the change in English public opinion. Those guilty of excesses in Bulgaria had to be punished in order to restore public confidence. Neither Britain nor any other European country could be indifferent to the sufferings of the Bulgarian peasantry. No political considerations would justify toleration of such acts. Ample reparation must be afforded the sufferers and their future security guaranteed.[61]

Although the government was aware of the extent to which public opinion was turned against Turkey, governmental policy was perhaps little, or only temporarily, influenced. The events of late 1876 and early 1877 in European Turkey were hotly debated in the House of Commons where the policy of the government was either attacked or defended. Relatively little discussion, however, took place in the House of Lords. One reason for this contrast might be that the Commons was elective and therefore its members were more directly responsible and responsive to public opinion.

Even Disraeli experienced the pressure of public opinion during the late summer of 1876. His elevation to the peerage as Earl of Beaconsfield in August 1876, however, enabled him to be more outspoken and yet less concerned with the impact on the public of what he said. Lord Robert Montagu, M. P. from Westmeath, on February 16, 1877 declared that "the Earl of Beaconsfield, having escaped from the anxieties of popular election and attained the dignity of aristocratic

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[61] SP, 1877, XC, 287-88.

altitude . . . ." was expressing different opinions than he had before.[62]

The speech that Beaconsfield made at Aylesbury on September 20, 1876 might be cited to indicate how he was not bowing to the force of public opinion. Said the Prime Minister, "'it would be affectation in me to pretend that the Government is backed by the country. The opinion of a large part in the country would, if carried out, be injurious to the interests of England and fatal to peace.'"[63]

While placating public opinion as much as possible, the government continued to adhere to its conviction that the Turkish empire had to be maintained. Beaconsfield admitted that although means of achieving this object had to be changed, the end remained the same. The Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Mr. Robert Bourke, pointed out how dangerous intervention in the Bulgarian difficulties would have been. If the British government had attempted to use force, it would have led

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[62]Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 504-505. In his last speech in the House of Commons Disraeli defended his government's policy when he said: "What our duty is at this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England. Nor will we agree to any step, though it may obtain for a moment comparative quiet and a false prosperity, that hazards the existence of that Empire." Quoted in Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, VI, 48; see also Earl of Oxford and Asquith, Fifty Years of British Parliament (2 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1926), I, 48-49.

[63]Quoted in Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 671. Beaconsfield wrote the following on public opinion to Derby on September 6, 1876. "What I wish to impress upon you, at this moment, as regards home, is not to act, as if you were under the control of popular opinion. If so, you may do what they like, but they won't respect you for doing it. . . . . If the thing goes well and we get what we want, all this row will subside, and be forgotten before our first Cab[inet] Council, and we shall get the credit of the arrangement; but if an arrangement takes place, and it is supposed that we have acted under the pressure of this Hudibrastic crew of High Ritualists, Dissenting ministers, and 'the great Liberal party,' we shall be contemptible." Quoted in Buckle, The Life of Benjamin Disraeli, VI, 53.

to complications in Europe that might have been the cause for even greater barbarities. Care had to be taken so that the atrocities were not used as a pretext for carrying out a policy detrimental to both Turkish and British interests.[64]

Another danger, often cited, was that any attempt to punish the Mussulmans for their behavior, or any attempt to improve the condition of the Christians at the expense of the Mussulmans, or the mere suggestion of removing the Mussulmans from Europe would result in incalculable bloodshed to Turkish Christians. Consul Reade at Rustchuk observed that "even a foreign occupation of any part of Turkey would have to be well considered, so as not to place the Christians of the interior in danger."[65]

Elliot put it too strongly, of course, when he defended himself of the charges brought against him. His attitude, however, was somewhat similar to that of the government regarding Turkey and the atrocities. Elliot denied that he had been guided by any sentimental attachment for the Turks or that he had shown partisanship by trying to cover up the excesses that the Turks had committed in suppressing the insurrection. He had been motivated he said:

> by a firm determination to uphold the interests of Great Britain to the utmost of my power; and that those interests are deeply engaged in preventing the disruption of the Turkish Empire is a conviction which I share in common with the most eminent statesmen who have directed our foreign policy, but which appears now to be abandoned by shallow politicians or persons who have allowed their feelings of revolted humanity to make them forget the capital interests involved in the question.
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> We may, and must, feel indignant at the needless and monstrous severity with which the Bulgarian insurrection was put down, but the necessity which exists for England to prevent

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[64] Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 742. [65] SP, 1877, XC, 518-19.

> changes from occurring here which would be most detrimental to ourselves, is not affected by the question whether it was 10,000 or 20,000 who perished in the suppression.
>
> We have been upholding what we know to be a semicivilised nation, liable under certain circumstances to be carried into fearful excesses; but the fact of this having just now been strikingly brought home to us all cannot be a sufficient reason for abandoning a policy which is the only one that can be followed with a due regard to our own interests.[66]

On August 29 Elliot answered Derby's dispatch of the twenty-second that had indicated the scope of public indignation and in which Derby had declared that it would be impossible for Britain to interfere on behalf of Turkey. Said the ambassador in Constantinople:

> I am assured that the unconcealed object of some of the newspaper correspondents in the tone they have adopted, is to create in England such a strong current of public opinion against the Turks, as to oblige Her Majesty's Government ultimately to abandon the policy which has at all times been followed towards this country; to cease from allowing themselves to be regarded as interested in its maintenance; and to assume the position of protectors of the Christians against their Mussulman oppressors.[67]

Elliot pushed his point further in a letter to Lord Granville on September 29, 1876 when he said:

> If our traditional policy towards this country had been dictated by a mere sentimental affection for the Turks, what has just occurred might be sufficient reason for changing it, but if, as I hold in common with all Foreign Ministers up to the present time, it was the policy which a consideration of our own interests renders imperative, it cannot be abandoned without sacrificing them.[68]

To be sure, Elliot did not speak for his government in these vindictive statements. When one considers, however, the attitude of Beaconsfield and the conduct of the British government up to the

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[66] Ibid., 197.

[67] Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 503-504, quoted by Lord Robert Montagu, M. P. from Westmeath.

[68] Quoted in Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 63.

outbreak of war between Turkey and Russia, and beyond, it seems that the official attitude differed from Elliot's only in degree.

Beaconsfield believed, with some justification, that the atrocity crusade was a political tool used by the Liberals to attack the policy of the government. This conclusion, together with Beaconsfield's own pro-Turkish bias, caused him to assume an attitude from which it was difficult and embarrassing to retreat, and he was criticized for being indifferent to the pleas of humanity on behalf of Ottoman Christians. If public indignation were genuine, however, why was not the same sentiment manifested in France? Or, if public indignation and sympathy were really sincere why had such feelings not been exhibited in 1860 when Russia had acted so harshly toward the Poles? Moreover, Gladstone, the author of that famous pamphlet on the "Horrors," had responded quite differently during the Cretan crisis from 1866-1868 and had then suggested that mere sympathy for the insurgents, although they were Christians, could not be allowed to dictate official policy.[69]

Unfortunately, Gladstone used the events in Bulgaria as a device to attack the government and its policy. The Bulgarian atrocities were made an issue between the Conservatives and Liberals. Foreign policy was not debated on its own merits, but from the standpoint of party prejudice, colored with passion and bias.[70] There

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[69]Shannon in his book Gladstone and the Bulgarian Agitation 1876 shows how the Bulgarian atrocities were able to provoke a protest movement in England although the massacres were neither unusual nor particularly extensive.

[70]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 54-57; see also Edward F. Benson, Queen Victoria (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1935), pp. 278-9; and Morley, I, 476-77.

was a division of opinion between those who approved or disapproved of introducing a moral issue into the solution of an international question.[71] Many Conservatives resented too the suggestion that they were indifferent and callous and the inference that the Liberals had a monopoly on humanitarian sentiment.

At the height of the atrocity campaign, Beaconsfield sensed that public opinion would change as quickly as it had been formed, that indignation towards Turkey was only a momentary aberration. He believed that as soon as the campaign had spent itself, the people would pause for reflection. In his speech at Aylesbury on September 20 the Prime Minister admitted that the opinion of the country was not behind the government. He also admitted that enthusiasm and sympathy were admirable traits, but the danger lay in that "designing politicians" took advantage of such sentiments and used them for their own ends. Pursuing this conduct would bring about more ruin and outrage, as the result of a European war, than all the Bulgarian atrocities had done.[72]

Also important in the atrocity crusade was that as anti-Turkish sentiment grew in England, Russian society became more outspoken in favor of subject nationalities. Political writers, poets, novelists, and others began to laud the deliverance of Balkan Christians from the rule of the Turkish Sultan. The British Cabinet feared lest Russia take this opportunity to attack Turkey since the atrocity campaign in England might be interpreted as meaning that Britain had

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[71]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 91.

[72]Walter G. Wirthwein, Britain and the Balkan Crisis, 1875-1878 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1935), pp. 94-95.

abandoned her traditional policy towards Turkey. This anxiety was heightened as Russian soldiers and officers continued to move into Serbia.

When Russia joined the atrocity crusade, a curious repercussion became manifest in England. It was one thing for the Opposition or the British public to criticize the government and champion the cause of Bulgarian Christians, but the same criticism by the Russians was looked upon with suspicion and anxiety. As the British government worked to secure an armistice during the remaining months of 1876, an anti-Russian sentiment began to develop in England, and the fear of Russian moves in the Balkans brought an end to the atrocity campaign. Public opinion ceased its attack on the government and began an anti-Russian crusade.[73]

Beaconsfield had been right when he believed that the people would soon come to their senses. Moreover, he was determined for reasons of prestige to pursue a policy independent of the other powers. As a result, Britain emerged at the end of 1876 as the sole defender of Turkey, and the Balkan crisis developed into a contest between Britain, the defender of the status quo, and Russia, whose government sought to alter the situation in the Balkans.[74]

The truth of Beaconsfield's observation that English public opinion had only been temporarily misled was borne out in the way the collective English attitude changed by mid-1877. After Russia declared war on Turkey and began her spectacular march into the Balkans, tension began to mount in England. When Russia was temporarily checked at

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[73]Ibid., pp. 99-101. [74]Stavrianos, p. 404.

Plevna by the heroic stand of the Turks, opinion swung decisively in favor of supporting Turkey. The atrocities of 1876 were forgotten. On July 28, 1877 Queen Victoria expressed her anxiety that there would be a "horrible massacre" of Christians in Turkey if the Russians were allowed to occupy Constantinople. The Queen's apprehensions can be taken as typical of the prevailing mentality. From the position many Englishmen had taken in the atrocity campaign, they had now moved to the defense of Turkey. The Queen was proposing that Britain risk war against the strongest Christian power in the East and support Turkey in reimposing her rule over peoples she was incapable of governing or controlling.[75] Said the Queen, "there is not a moment to be lost or the whole of our policy of centuries, of our honour as a great European power, will have received an irreparable blow!"[76]

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[75]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 220-21.

[76]Quoted in Stavrianos, p. 408. Queen Victoria had become disgusted with Gladstone's atrocity campaign. When the war went against Turkey, the Queen identified herself even more closely with Beaconsfield's aggressive foreign policy, resolving that Britain should limit Russian gains. Sidney Lee, Queen Victoria (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1902), pp. 436-42; see also Ensor, p. 47.

CHAPTER XI

THE BALKAN CRISIS TO THE RUSSO-TURKISH WAR

The spreading of the war in the Balkans to include Serbia and Montenegro increased the complexity of the problem confronting the great powers. For Britain the issue was also complicated because of the furor caused by the atrocities in Bulgaria. Until the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish war in April 1877, the powers tried either to prevent the further extension of the war or make arrangements pending the beginning of greater hostilities. The two major events of this period were the armistice accepted by Turkey after the Russian ultimatum of October 31 and the conference held at Constantinople during December 1876 and January 1877.

The British government was particularly concerned lest the Balkan war continue until some major European power intervened. The Cabinet, therefore, made repeated attempts to secure the cessation of hostilities between Turkey and Serbia and Montenegro. On August 23, 1876 Derby told Elliot that he should urge Turkey to end the war because a continuation of hostilities would endanger Turkey further because of the daily-increasing excitement in such states as Russia.[1]

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[1] SP, 1877, XC, 56.

That same day Lord Augustus Loftus, British ambassador to St. Petersburg, informed Derby that the enthusiasm in Russia for the Serbian cause and the excitement in favor of eastern Christians made it most desirable that no time be lost in ending the war in the Balkans.[2] Again on August 28 Loftus warned that if hostilities continued, the excitement in Russia would make it difficult for the Czar's government to restrain or control the situation.[3] At the same time consul-general White reported to Derby from Belgrade that Russian sympathy for the Serbian cause was likely to prolong the war. The Serbians saw in this sentiment a sufficient encouragement for protracting the conflict and reason to hope for ultimate Russian support.[4]

The British government received "with great satisfaction," therefore, the news that on August 25 Prince Milan had asked the six guaranteeing powers to use their good offices to re-establish peace between Turkey and Serbia. The British government quickly informed the other powers that she was ready to join in any attempts to end the war. Elliot in Constantinople pointed out to the Porte the extreme importance of not losing this opportunity for restoring peace. The British government feared that if hostilities were prolonged, the interference of some of the powers was probable, "the consequences of which might be fatal to the Turkish Empire."[5]

All of the major powers, including Russia, supported the British attempts to terminate hostilities. Gorchakov instructed the Russian representative at Constantinople to work towards that end and also

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[2] Ibid., 98.

[3] Ibid., 100.

[4] Ibid., 120-21.

[5] Ibid., 67-68.

advised the Prince of Montenegro to agree to an armistice.[6] Gorchakov believed that for the present only an armistice could be negotiated. The conditions for peace could not be devised until after an understanding had been reached among the guaranteeing powers.[7]

On September 1 the British government took the initiative in proposing to the Porte an armistice of one month. Britain warned that if the Porte's refusal to conclude the armistice resulted in the armed intervention of some power, Turkey could no longer rely on the support of the British government.[8] Unfortunately, political events within Turkey had an adverse effect on the British recommendation. When Elliot suggested mediation to the Turkish ministers on August 30, he was told that no decision on such a grave matter could be reached because of the situation regarding the Sultan.[9] Elliot answered that in his opinion the accession of a new Sultan would be a splendid opportunity to bring about peace. Events were to prove otherwise. On August 31 the Sultan's throne was declared vacant and the woefully incompetent Murad was replaced by his brother Abdul Hamid II. The ministers at the Porte were now even less inclined to adopt internal reforms. Turkish self-confidence had received fresh stimulus, and the only terms to be offered Serbia would sharply curtail her autonomy.[10]

On September 3 the Turkish Minister for Foreign Affairs informed Elliot that his feeling and that of the public was strongly against accepting an armistice that was regarded as altogether favorable to Serbian interests. If the remainder of the season during

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[6] Ibid., 87. [7] Ibid. [8] Times, September 5, 1876.

[9] SP, 1877, XC, 115. [10] Ibid., 119.

which military operations were possible was lost in an armistice, while the Serbians continued to receive reinforcements and supplies from Russia, the position of Turkey would become intolerable. The ministers were willing to treat of peace on moderate terms, but they could not suspend military operations until they knew the basis of the peace.[11] The ministers feared that once an armistice was concluded, a peace would be dictated by the powers, and, after recent experiences, Turkey had little confidence in the powers' sense of justice.[12]

In the face of the Porte's irrevocable intention to refuse the armistice proposed by the six powers, Loftus warned that some power, Russia for example, might act alone. Czar Alexander wanted to maintain peace. But, however willing the Russian government was to abstain from any open intervention in the war, if the Porte continued to refuse the advice of Europe, the Russian government would be unable to resist the popular excitement in favor of the Serbians and might be forced into a war it would gladly avoid. Unless the powers addressed a collective ultimatum to Turkey to suspend hostilities immediately, under the threat of breaking diplomatic relations if she did not comply, Loftus feared that Russia would take unilateral and peremptory action that could only lead to grave complications. Britain should use her influence to prevent an impending crisis.[13]

Elliot was duly instructed by his government to press strongly on the Sultan's ministers the need for ending the war and to acquaint them of the position in which their conduct had placed Turkey. It was expedient that a pacific policy and moderate terms be proposed. Said

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[11] Ibid., 93. [12] Ibid., 136. [13] Ibid., 214.

Derby "the speedy conclusion of a peace, under any circumstances most desirable, becomes . . . a matter of urgent necessity."[14]

Despite the advice tendered by Elliot and his colleagues, however, the Turkish ministers were opposed to accepting an armistice, and it seemed impossible to convince them of the risks if they continued to refuse. Many of the ministers believed that Russia was determined on war anyway and that it would begin under still more unfavorable circumstances after the expiration of an armistice. Others flattered themselves by thinking that Europe would not permit an unprovoked Russian aggression on Turkey and, therefore, refused to listen to warnings that they were deceiving themselves.[15]

Also important was the Turkish reliance on the British government. Despite Elliot's admonitions that Turkey risked the loss of British support if she continued to reject the armistice proposals, many elements in Turkey continued to believe that Turkey would be supported by the British government in the last extreme. Turkish newspapers contained such statements as "'England will protect us from Russia. . . .'" and "'England will protect us from the interference of the foreigners. . . .'" The Turkish government could hardly be blamed for thinking that the British government would repeat the assistance given twenty years before. On numerous occasions British Cabinet members had declared that Britain would not interfere in Turkey, nor were any other powers expected to do so. Turkey concluded, therefore, that she enjoyed British protection against foreign

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[14] Ibid., 105. [15] Ibid., 106.

interference.[16]

Contrary to the advice of Britain and the other powers, the Porte on September 10 rejected the armistice proposal. At the same time the ministers listed the conditions of peace they expected from Serbia, conditions that were so extreme that Serbia could not have complied with them.[17]

Although Turkey had rejected the armistice proposal, she indicated the peace terms she was willing to accept and on September 15 her military commanders were ordered to suspend hostilities until September 25.[18] On September 17 and 19 Serbia and Montenegro respectively also suspended hostilities. Although fighting had been stopped, an armistice had not been concluded, and the powers were almost in general agreement that an armistice was necessary.[19]

Austria felt that perhaps a naval demonstration by the combined fleets at Constantinople should be used to make Turkey accept an armistice. Buchanan at Vienna sagely pointed out, however, that such a fleet would have to pass the Dardanelles, and forcing the passage would in itself be an act of war.[20] Gorchakov too thought that the powers should insist on an immediate armistice, followed by protracted conferences, and not allow the Porte to attach any conditions.[21] France suggested that the powers withdraw their ambassadors from Constantinople as an indication of their displeasure at the Porte's refusal to accept an armistice.[22]

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[16]Hansard, CCXXXI (1876), 1104-1105.

[17]SP, 1877, XC, 124. [18]Ibid., 209. [19]Ibid., 211, 232.

[20]Ibid., 132-33. [21]Ibid., 134. [22]Ibid., 204.

Britain had taken the lead in proposing an armistice; she also rejected the Porte's overtures for peace and took the initiative in suggesting terms that she thought might form the basis of pacification. Her proposals included the status quo regarding Serbia and Montenegro and administrative reforms, including local autonomy, for Bosnia and Herzegovina. When the Porte protested that Britain's suggestions were diplomatic intervention and a violation of Turkey's sovereign rights, Derby reminded the Turkish ambassador at London that the powers had not abandoned their right to urge on the Sultan the proper treatment of his Christian subjects. Recent events had shown that the exercise of that right was more than ever necessary.[23] On September 16, however, Derby informed the Italian ambassador that if Turkey refused peace terms, Britain would use moral coercion but no force to induce her to comply. Moreover, the British government accepted the suspension of hostilities as equivalent to an armistice and hoped that it would be extended if necessary.[24]

Although Britain would not use material means to force a Turkish acceptance of her armistice or peace proposals, throughout the remainder of September Elliot repeatedly warned the Sultan's ministers of the dangers of rejecting the powers' peace proposals. The warning was repeated that if Turkey did not accept, nothing could prevent foreign intervention and its consequences. At the end of the month Elliot declared that in all likelihood the Porte was being given its last chance to comply without being forced.[25]

The Porte's answer, given to Elliot on September 28, was

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[23]Ibid., 295. [24]Ibid., 208, 223. [25]Ibid., 421-22.

again negative. The Porte particularly objected to the word "autonomy" in the British proposals. The prejudice against the implications of this phrase was so strong that no prominent Turk would acquiesce in its acceptance. The majority of the Mussulmans said that they would rather face the dangers threatening Turkey than consent to such proposals as the administrative autonomy of Bosnia. The powers may not be satisfied with what Turkey had already granted, but she could go no further. The ministers indicated their determination to abide by the worst consequences of a foreign invasion rather than submit to the course recommended by the British.

And the powers were warned. If they wanted a crusade, they had best be aware of the danger such an undertaking presented for the Christians of Turkey. Mussulman sentiment was aroused. If the European countries tried to force the Porte to yield on the British peace proposals or if the Mussulmans thought that European armies were going to compel Turkish compliance no Christian in Turkey would survive. Elliot and his dragoman, Mr. A. Sandison, agreed that a Christian slaughter was a very real possibility. Sandison said to Elliot on September 28 that if the Mussulmans were given reason to believe that they were to be expelled from Europe, "God protect the Christians."[26]

The situation became more ominous with each passing day. On September 28 Serbia renewed hostilities, and Turkey resumed the offensive on October 1.[27] Since a regular suspension of hostilities had not been concluded and war had again broken out, Gorchakov on October 3 suggested imposing an armistice of six weeks to give the two

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[26] Ibid., 422-23. [27] Ibid., 332, 354.

parties time to confer on a definitive settlement of the points at issue.[28] In the event Turkey rejected the proposals, Russia suggested an Austrian military occupation in Bosnia, a Russian occupation in Bulgaria, and a joint entry of all the Mediterranean squadrons into the Bosphorus.[29]

Britain agreed to the Russian proposal of insisting on an armistice of not less than one month, but she could not concur in a military occupation of the Balkans nor a united fleet in the Bosphorus. The passage of the fleet through the Dardanelles would be a violation of treaties and might provoke a war. Elliot also warned that public feeling in Turkey was daily becoming more threatening. If the Turks believed themselves abandoned by everyone and gave way to despair, it would be impossible to predict the consequences. Neither foreign occupation of the Balkans nor naval demonstrations in the Bosphorus could be undertaken without grave danger to Turkish Christians.[30]

Meanwhile Turkey continued to refuse the British peace proposals and insisted that she was willing to concede by general reforms more than the powers asked. To make concessions to single provinces, however, would incite other provinces to revolt, a chance the Porte could not take. Before attempting coercion the powers should wait to see how Turkey fulfilled her promises of reform.[31]

For reasons of her own, on October 10, Turkey suddenly announced that she would agree to a six-month armistice. The reasons for the Turk proposal were obvious. A six-month armistice would allow a

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[28] Ibid., 387.

[29] Ibid., 367.

[30] Ibid., 388-90.

[31] Ibid., 388-89.

prolonged Turkish occupation of Serbia.[32] The Porte's explanation for extending the armistice far beyond the minimum demanded by the powers, however, was that the season of inclement weather was approaching when military operations would be impossible anyway.

After announcing the armistice, Turkey indicated her opposition to concluding a permanent settlement by means of a conference as proposed by Britain in early October. The extended armistice would allow the powers ample opportunity for an exchange of views and proposals without any conference. Moreover, during this six-month interval Turkish reforms would be implemented, and the powers would be able to see how serious and practical the promises of the Porte were.[33]

Gorchakov asserted, however, that an armistice of six months was neither necessary nor favorable to the conclusion of the lasting peace desired by his government. Russia could not urge Serbia and Montenegro to accept such a prolongation of the difficulties of their position. Moreover, the financial and commercial position of all Europe would suffer from this protracted delay. Russia insisted on an armistice of four to six weeks with the possibility of prolonging it if necessary.[34] Serbia subsequently indicated that she would not accept a long armistice if Russia did not support it.[35]

Because of the stand taken by Russia, Derby warned the Russian ambassador on October 13 of the danger to European peace if Russia rejected the Turkish proposal for a lengthy armistice, or if its acceptance was coupled with impossible conditions. English public

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[32] Ibid., 444.

[33] Ibid., 462.

[34] Ibid., 468.

[35] Ibid., 469.

opinion had changed after learning of the Russian project for an occupation of Bulgaria. However strong the feeling in England against the Turkish atrocities in Bulgaria, it would be superceded by a very different sentiment if Constantinople was threatened by Russia. The English people would conclude that the Russian rejection of the Turkish armistice indicated a fixed intention of going to war.[36]

Despite the differences between Russia and Turkey, negotiations were continuing between Turkey and at least the Russian ambassador at Constantinople, General Ignatiev. Acting on his own initiative, Elliot had successfully recommended that the Porte accept the shorter armistice demanded by Russia, provided it could be extended for a similar term if the negotiations were not concluded before it expired. Consequently, when General Ignatiev called on the Grand Vizier on October 21 he was informed that the Porte would agree to an armistice of six weeks, renewable for a similar term, and renewed again for two months if in the meantime negotiations had not been completed.[37] Three days later, on October 24, Ignatiev said he would accept the arrangement proposed by the Porte, but with slightly different wording regarding the prolongation of the armistice. On October 30 Elliot informed Derby that the Porte and Ignatiev had nearly agreed on an armistice and only slight modifications remained to be settled the next day.[38]

The negotiations had been in vain, however, for on October 31 Russia demanded that the Porte submit to an armistice of two months. Russia threatened to suspend diplomatic relations if the Porte failed to comply within forty-eight hours.[39] The hasty action of the Russian

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[36] Ibid., 465. [37] Ibid., 531. [38] Ibid., 564. [39] Ibid., 565.

government was prompted by the complete Turkish victory over Serbia at Aleksinac on October 17. Russia had earlier indicated that she could not concur in a Serbian defeat nor in a peace treaty imposed on Serbia after a Turkish victory.[40]

Elliot observed to Derby on November 2 that Ignatiev must have kept his government informed of the progress of his negotiations with the Porte. The sudden submission of the ultimatum was decided on in the hope that by an immediate cessation of hostilities and the acceptance of an armistice Serbia and the Russian auxiliary troops would be spared. The only way this could be done was to stop the Turks before they had time to take advantage of their success.[41]

Had Turkey refused the Russian ultimatum, a general European war would undoubtedly have resulted, but the Porte consented to the Russian demands and war was averted for a time. Stavrianos suggests, however, that the acceptance of the armistice by the Turks was the last chance for a peaceful settlement of the Eastern Question. The events that followed led to war.[42]

The Russian ultimatum did little to allay British suspicions regarding Russian designs in the eastern Mediterranean. The British government, however, decided to accept the new situation created by the Porte's submission and took the initiative in proposing a conference.[43] The powers were not altogether agreed, however, on where the conference should be held nor what matters the conference should discuss.

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[40] Ibid., 554.

[41] Ibid., 660.

[42] Stavrianos, p. 405.

[43] SP, 1877, XC, 577.

Perhaps the country with the firmest ideas about the conference was Britain. Justified or not, the abiding anxiety of Beaconsfield was that Russia would take Constantinople, and the calculations he made and the policy he followed were influenced by this concern. The Prime Minister was certain that if Russia secured Constantinople she could march at will across Syria, to the Suez, and to Egypt. For Beaconsfield Constantinople was "the key of India."[44] A Times' leader of November 8 reflected the same attitude. "If it were not for India," the writer declared, "our interest in the fate of Constantinople would be of the most remote and shadowy character. . . . we are lords of an empire to which the Levant is our road, and our policy in Europe is systematically affected by the remembrance that we are a great Asiatic Power."[45] These considerations colored the instructions later given to Lord Salisbury, former Secretary for India, and Elliot, the men representing Britain at the conference.

It was not until November 18 that the Grand Council of Turkey sanctioned the Porte's attendance at the deliberations of the powers. In the meantime Turkey had expressed her dread of a conference and said that if she were aware of the powers' wishes, she might be able to grant them and make a conference unnecessary.[46] Turkey eventually acquiesced, but insisted that her territorial and administrative integrity be respected and that the provisions of the Treaty of Paris be strictly observed. The sole object of the conference must be to provide for

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[44]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 98.

[45]Times, November 8, 1876.

[46]SP, 1877, XC, 639.

the implementation of the reforms calculated to improve the welfare and security of all Turkish subjects.[47]

The powers primarily concerned in the East were not agreed, however, on how the welfare and security of Turkish subjects were to be secured. Britain had suggested a conference agenda that stressed the maintenance of Turkish territorial integrity. Russia immediately took issue with this provision, however, because she was determined to end the oppression to which the Christians in the East were exposed under Turkish rule. It might not be possible, consequently, to maintain the territorial integrity of Turkey since it might be necessary to occupy a part of Turkey at least temporarily, cede parts of territory to Montenegro in order to obtain peace, or grant certain provinces local and administrative autonomy.[48]

Derby, however, was adamant. The expression "territorial integrity" was taken directly from the Treaty of Paris and would remain in the British proposals. When Constantinople was finally selected as the conference site, Turkish integrity formed an integral part of the lengthy and detailed instructions given to the British representatives. The aims of the conference, in the opinion of the British government, were the independence and territorial integrity of Turkey, a renunciation by the powers of any exclusive territorial or commercial advantages or influence, peace on the basis of the status quo regarding Serbia and Montenegro, local or administrative autonomy for Bosnia and Herzegovina--but no tributary state to be created, and guarantees against maladministration in Bulgaria.[49]

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[47] Ibid., 709-710. [48] Ibid., 607-608, 707. [49] SP, 1877, XCI, 1-10.

The instructions concluded with a two-fold statement of British policy. On the one hand "Her Majesty's Government cannot countenance the introduction into the Conference of proposals, however plausible or well-intentioned, which would bring foreign armies into Turkish territory . . . ." and on the other hand, it had to be understood by the Porte "that Great Britain is resolved not to sanction misgovernment and oppression, and that if the Porte by obstinacy or apathy opposes the efforts which are now making to place the Ottoman Empire on a more secure basis, the responsibility of the consequences which may ensue will rest solely with the Sultan and his advisers."[50]

The interval between the arrival of the various European representatives in early December and December 23 when the conference formally opened, was occupied with preliminary discussions regarding the issues later to be taken up at the conference. Among the points discussed were the peace to be concluded between Turkey and those Balkan principalities with which she was at war, the disposition of Bulgaria, and the possibility of a foreign occupation of the troubled areas of Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Bulgaria.

Since Russia seemed to insist on an occupation of Turkey, Salisbury recommended that Belgian troops be used for the purpose. He admitted that there was a fair chance of massacres resulting from the measures adopted by the conference. Salisbury subsequently observed to Derby that in the event of disorders a Russian occupation was inevitable, and the use of Belgian troops would forestall this.[51]

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[50] Ibid., 9-10.

[51] Ibid., 58.

Derby acquiesced and even indicated that in the event Belgian troops were used, the British government would advance the money required for the project. The Belgian government, however, was reluctant to accede to the proposal, and of course as events transpired, her troops were not needed and the matter was dropped.[52]

When Salisbury departed England for Constantinople, his personal opinion was that the conference had little chance for success. Subsequent developments proved him correct. Since Constantinople had been chosen as the site of the meeting and the Turkophile Elliot was one of the British representatives, Turkey was encouraged in her convictions that British support had not been withdrawn. The Turks never intended that the conference should be successful since they were merely playing for time.[53]

By December 22 the preliminary sittings of the conference had been concluded and detailed arrangements had been discussed that would be presented to the conference when it met. Events were to make the

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[52] Ibid., 57, 65-66.

[53] Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 122. Salisbury wrote to his wife that he could not refuse Derby's offer to go to the conference, but he believed that it would be a nuisance, "involving seasickness, much French and failure." Quoted in Gwendolen Cecil, II, 91. Derby outlined his reasons for choosing Salisbury to represent Britain at the conference. "I think your going would be desirable because, as a leading member of the Cabinet, you would speak as one having authority and not as the diplomatists; because your tendencies are not supposed to be Turkish, and the choice would therefore satisfy the public, while your Indian experience will have shown you that Russians are not exactly the self-sacrificing apostles of a new civilization which our Liberals seem inclined to consider them; because your going would not humiliate Elliot, whom you would find well-informed and useful as a second; because you would hold your own in discussion; and because you would be able to help in the Parliamentary defence of your own acts." Quoted in Ibid., p. 90.

work of the preliminary discussions of little avail, however. On November 25 Midhat Pasha, the able and reforming governor of Bulgaria, had been appointed Grand Vizier as the person most likely to mollify European indignation aroused by the Bulgarian atrocities. When the first plenary session of the conference opened on December 23, Midhat announced a new constitution for the entire Ottoman empire. The Turkish Foreign Minister later declared to the assembled dignitaries that the new constitution guaranteed equal rights and constitutional liberties to all Ottoman subjects "and in the presence of this great event I think our labors become superfluous."[54]

Despite the fait accompli handed them, the plenipotentiaries met for nine formal sessions until the conference ended in failure on January 20, 1877. One of the few positive achievements of the conference was the decision reached on December 29 to prolong the armistice until March 1, 1877.[55] When the Turk ministers indicated that they were not

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[54]Quoted in Stavrianos, p. 391. A complete discussion of the constitution of 1876 can be found in Davison, pp. 358-408. British Foreign Ministers throughout the nineteenth century were indifferent to constitutionalism in Turkey. It seems a paradox that while Britain was promoting constitutions and parliamentary reform elsewhere in Europe, she did not do so in Turkey. Britain's reason was her belief that Turkish reform could only be realized through the absolute power of the Sultan. Consequently, those Turks with parliamentary and constitutional views received no help from Britain. When the constitution of 1876 was proclaimed, Odian Effendi was sent to London with the promise that if the powers guaranteed the new Turk constitution, Midhat would guarantee justice to the Christians. Derby would not discuss this offer so long as the conference was sitting, and Beaconsfield urged the Porte to give in to the powers and would give no assurance that Britain would support the constitution. Not until the twentieth century did any Turk experiment in constitutionalism meet with any support from Britain. Harold W. V. Temperley, "British Policy Towards Parliamentary Rule and Constitutionalism in Turkey (1830-1914)," Cambridge Historical Journal, IV, No. 2 (1933), 156-91.

[55]SP, 1877, XCI, 73.

willing to treat on the original proposals of the powers, the demands of the powers were reduced. Still the Turks refused to accept the terms of the European governments and suggested proposals of their own that were in turn unacceptable. From January 1 when the Porte first rejected the recommendations of the powers until January 20 when the conference ended, Salisbury made repeated attempts to acquaint the Porte with the peril inherent in rejecting the proposals. If Turkey remained obstinate, she was in great danger of losing her European provinces, and she could expect no support from Britain in the consequences resulting from her rejection.[56]

Turkey was prepared, however, to accept the consequences for rejecting the powers' proposals, and a special envoy, Odian Effendi, Under Secretary for Public Works, was sent to London to explain why the Porte was compelled to reject the recommendations of the powers. It was not only the reforms that were objectionable, but the guarantees demanded for their execution. The use of foreign troops, for example, would be an invasion of the Sultan's sovereign rights and dignity.

Derby agreed with the Porte's envoy that some of the guarantees might be distasteful to the Turkish government and people. But, it had to be borne in mind that promises made by the Sultan and the Porte over the previous twenty years had not been carried out. Because past promises had proved futile, the powers now demanded something more. Turkey must also be aware that Britain's object in proposing and attending the conference was to find a means to avert the contingency of a Russo-Turkish war. The Porte must consider whether it was not in

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[56]Ibid., 198.

Turkey's interest to make the proposed concessions in order to avoid such a calamity.[57]

On January 15, at the eighth meeting of the conference, the plenipotentiaries drew up the minimum program of reforms to which their governments would agree. Turkey was given until January 18 to accept the proposals and if they were rejected the representatives and ambassadors would leave Constantinople. Salisbury in an audience with the Sultan again warned of the consequences of refusal, and Derby likewise cautioned the Turkish ambassador in London against non-compliance. At a meeting of the Grand Council on January 18, however, the proposals of the powers were rejected.[58]

The final meeting of the conference on January 20 served as a sounding board for the plenipotentiaries in voicing their attitudes regarding the obstinacy of the Turks. Particularly vociferous in this respect was General Ignatiev. He declared that Turkey's behavior denied her the treaty guarantees of 1856, and she now assumed sole responsibility for the serious consequences that might result from her action. Moreover, if as a result of the failure of the conference hostilities were renewed in the principalities and if this in turn resulted in danger to the Christians in Turkey, Russia would consider steps to protect her fellow religionists.[59]

It now remains to assess the responsibility for the conference's lack of success. While on his way to Constantinople in November, Salisbury had expressed to Derby his fear that the failure of the conference would not be due to Russia, but to the obstinacy of the

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[57] Ibid., 139. [58] Ibid., 310. [59] Ibid., 375-76.

Porte. Once at the conference, Salisbury saw that he was justified in his earlier apprehensions.[60] Despite the protestations, recommendations, and warnings of the British government, the Porte refused to believe that Turkey would be denied British support in the last extreme. Certain advisors had impressed on the Porte that it could not accede to the proposals of the conference without a loss of honor and a subsequent disintegration of the Ottoman empire. On January 5, for example, Elliot had suggested that the representatives modify their proposals because as they stood they seriously impaired the independence of the Porte that Britain had promised to respect.[61]

In England there was also criticism of such proposals as a foreign occupation of any part of Turkey, and the effect of this criticism was not lost on the Porte. Or, there was the presence of British ships in Besika Bay. On December 25 Salisbury suggested that the fleet be removed to Athens in order to avoid misunderstanding and to support the assertion that no assistance was to be expected from the British government. Elliot thought it best, however, that two ships remain at Besika Bay so that they could be quickly dispatched to Constantinople in case the conference precipitated an anti-foreign sentiment among the Turks.[62]

Also important in explaining Turkish intransigence was the anti-Russian attitude developing in England. A Times' leader on December 22 suggested that the Turks would not have faced the contingency of war with Russia had they not been buoyed up by a conviction

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[60]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 123-24.

[61]SP, 1877, XCI, 268-69. [62]Ibid., 65, 131.

that Britain would be their ally in that war. "A mistaken interpretation of our solicitude with respect to Constantinople is the foundation of this belief . . ." asserted the Times' writer, "but it has been materially strengthened by the noisy boastings of our warlike faction at home."[63]

Of no less importance was Beaconsfield's action in the fall of 1876 when he sent British engineering officers, under Colonel Home, to work at the fortifications around Constantinople, to examine the Turk ports, and to suggest plans for the defense of Constantinople. The presence of these engineers in Constantinople added not a bit to the chances of the conference's success.[64]

The belief that Turkey still enjoyed British support was greatly strengthened, of course, by Elliot's attitude throughout the entire proceedings. On one occasion Salisbury complained that his efforts to negotiate with the Turks were almost completely negated by the presence of Elliot, and he therefore suggested that Elliot be recalled. Salisbury's views were shared by Ignatiev and the other four ambassadors. It was believed that Elliot's recall would add greatly to the chances of peace.[65]

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[63] Times, December 22, 1876.

[64] Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 135-36.

[65] Ibid., 124. Salisbury wrote to Derby on December 29, 1876: "All that I can do is undone, effectively but unconsciously, by the man who is supposed to represent the views and wishes of the English Government. I had hoped that he was going home of his own accord. I fear he has given up this idea. I feel that, however disagreeable it is, I am bound to recommend the Cabinet on some pretext or other to get him away. . . . The repeated suggestions of my colleagues (especially Chaudordy), and my own observation, convince me that negotiations for peace have not a fair chance unless you will take

Beaconsfield was not disposed to listen to Salisbury's advice, however. Toward the end of December the Prime Minister's attitude decidedly stiffened and on December 23 the Cabinet unanimously decided in favor of strong moral pressure on Turkey, but no coercion. By the end of the year the Prime Minister expressed his belief that Salisbury had been too much influenced by Ignatiev and that the former Secretary for India did not seem to be aware that the primary object for his being sent to Constantinople was "to keep the Russians out of Turkey, not to create an ideal existence for the Turkish Christians."[66]

When Beaconsfield learned that Ignatiev had advised the removal of Elliot because his presence jeopardized the success of the conference, his support of the British ambassador became stronger. The Prime Minister's support of Elliot was a fatal blow to the conference and in the long run made war inevitable. Beaconsfield and Derby were agreed in their refusal to use force with Turkey, while Salisbury saw that coercion was necessary to achieve anything positive and that the Turks would not yield so long as Elliot remained in Constantinople. In effect, Beaconsfield's attitude for the year and a half preceding the conference indicated that he was less interested in preventing

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this measure." Quoted in Gwendolen Cecil, II, 118-119. To Lord Carnarvon, Colonial Secretary, Salisbury wrote on January 5, 1877: "It is very unfortunate that Elliot is still here. All the rascally Levantines who stir up the Porte to hold out cluster around the Embassy. My power of negotiation with the Turks is almost nil so long as he stays." Quoted in Ibid., II, 120. Algernon Cecil says of Elliot, "His conduct conveyed to the Turks the comfortable idea that all the resources of the British Empire were at their back." Algernon Cecil, p. 289.

[66]Quoted in Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe, p. 522.

war than he was in bolstering Turkey.[67]

The main cause, therefore, for the failure of the conference was that Britain spoke with two voices, and from this, the Porte drew dangerous conclusions. In Turkey a politician and his policy were supposed to be indissolubly united. The evidence that a policy had been changed was that a politician was dismissed. The simplicity of this conception was intelligible and it helped make understandable the difficulty of the Porte in believing that the policy of the British government at the conference was different from what it had been during the previous summer. Beaconsfield was still the Prime Minister and Derby was still the Foreign Secretary. Salisbury might come and say what he would, but the British government was the same as it had been and was still represented in Constantinople by Elliot. Therefore, the policy of the government must be unchanged. The Porte was naturally led to doubt whether Salisbury represented the real views of the British government.[68]

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[67]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 131-33. Salisbury believed that the Turks had been led to reject the powers' proposals because of the mistaken belief that "the power of Russia was broken, that the armies of Russia were suffering from disease, that the mobilization had failed, and that, consequently, the fear of war was idle. They counted upon every possible contingency. Their traditional policy had been to maintain themselves by dividing the Powers, and they imagined that the Powers would still be divided, and that a general European war would save them." Quoted in Annual Register, 1877 (New Series; London: Rivingtons, 1878), p. 172.

[68]Times, January 13, 1877; Johannes Lepsius, Albrecht Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Friedrick Thimme (eds.), Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871-1914 (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft Für Politik Und Geschichte, 1922-1927) II, 121. Cited hereafter as DGP.

The latter conviction gained further currency when as a sign of their displeasure at the Porte's obstinacy and the failure of the conference, the ambassadors of the powers, together with Salisbury, left Constantinople, but Elliot delayed his departure for several days. The action of the powers, therefore, lost much of its effect, and Elliot's tardy departure confirmed the Turks in their belief that Elliot's influence outweighed that of his combined colleagues.[69]

Now that the conference had ended in failure, Russia had to make the next move, but Czar Alexander was in a dilemma. On one hand, Russia had fully realised that if the conference failed, war with Turkey was virtually inevitable and because of the equivocal view of Britain it would be well to conduct parallel negotiations with Austria. Moreover, there was the knowledge, so hard won during the Crimean war, that Russia could not wage a war in the Balkans without the consent of Austria or at least her benevolent neutrality. Consequently, on January 15, 1877 Russia signed with Austria the Budapest Convention that provided for the eventuality of a Turko-Russian war. By the terms of this secret convention, Austria was to afford benevolent neutrality, oppose any collective mediation, and refrain from agreeing to the implementation of the triple guarantee treaty of April 1856 between Austria, Britain, and France. She was also to resist any action taken on the basis of Article VIII of the Treaty of Paris. The latter article provided that in the event of a disagreement between the Porte and one or more of the other signatory powers that threatened the maintenance of their relations, the Porte and the power concerned,

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[69] SP, 1877, XCI, 380.

before having recourse to war, would allow the other powers to act as mediators.[70] In return Austria obtained the right to occupy Bosnia-Herzegovina whenever a convenient time presented itself.[71]

On the other hand, there was much militating against Russia's going to war. The army was not ready, the treasury was in financial difficulties, and there was the matter of European opinion if Russia broke the peace of Europe. There was a suspicion and jealousy of Russia, unfounded perhaps, but nevertheless real. As soon as the war opened, the moral and humanitarian aspects of the controversy would recede into the background, and the impression presented to the world would be that of a people wantonly attacked while defending their integrity against an ambitious and unscrupulous enemy. And, if the Turks could inflict a defeat on Russia, all their offenses would be forgotten--the stolid misrule, official dishonesty, bankruptcy, Bulgarian atrocities and the rest. Even if Russia were victorious, the European governments would force the czar to limit the scope of his operation and forego the object of his ambition.[72]

Despite the reasons militating against a war and despite the pacific feelings of Alexander, he could not abandon the cause of the Turk Christians. The negotiations had now dragged on for some

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[70] SP, 1877, XCII, 90-91; Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 140. For a detailed treatment of the Triple Treaty of 1856 that was intended to deal with any direct challenge to the order established by the Treaty of Paris see Mosse, pp. 186-201.

[71] The full text of the Austro-Russian convention can be found in DGP, II, 111-15.

[72] Times, January 24, 1877.

eighteen months, and sentiment in Russia was becoming restive to say the least. Not wanting to act alone, yet needing to act, Russia, through Gorchakov, addressed a circular to the powers on January 31, 1877.[73]

In this circular Russia tried to represent the question of the Balkans not as a Russo-Turkish or a Slav question, but one of humanity and Christendom, in which all the powers had a stake.[74] In effect all the powers had been rebuffed by Turkey, and the next step, therefore, ought to be taken in concert. Before determining the steps to be taken, Alexander wanted to know the limits within which the European Cabinets were willing to act.[75]

The czar may have been entirely sincere with his circular, but his sincerity was questioned in certain British quarters. One view held that Alexander, in pursuit of his own ends, merely wanted to prolong the cooperation of the powers and refrain from unilateral action until his allies deserted him and the burden of solution fell on Russia by default. The cooperation of the powers was desired so that they would find it impossible to condemn Russia if the czar were ultimately forced to execute the wishes and enforce the demands upon which all the powers had agreed.[76]

Another speculation was that the circular was merely a device to conceal a retreat from a dangerous position. Russia wanted to occupy two or three months with futile negotiations, remonstrances, and protests, until the Cabinets were thoroughly tired of the whole business and Russia could then retire with some shreds of dignity.

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[73] SP, 1877, XCI, 410-11. [74] DGP, II, 125.

[75] SP, 1877, XCI, 410-11. [76] Times, February 7, 1877.

Or, perhaps Russia was merely waiting until public opinion was tired of indecision and until the weather made military operations in the Balkans possible.[77]

Whatever the motivation for the circular, the British Cabinet professed that since circumstances had changed, it would be better to defer Britain's reply until events had developed more fully. It would be well to see what effect the dismissal of Midhat Pasha as Grand Vizier on February 5 would have on the reforms promised by the Porte and on the peace negotiations with Serbia and Montenegro.[78]

Consequently, Mr. Nassau Jocelyn, who as chargé d'affaires had been left at the Constantinople embassy on the departure of Elliot, was instructed to ascertain to what degree the reforms promised by the Porte in the new constitution had been implemented. He was also to point out to the Porte that reforms could now be adopted without giving the appearance of having been secured by outside pressure.[79] On making his inquiry, Jocelyn was told that many of the reforms proposed by the conference had already been implemented and others required only passage by the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, Vahan Effendi, Councillor of the Ministry of Justice, was to depart for England on February 14 to study the British judicial system and the possibility of adapting it to the procedure of the Turkish courts.[80]

When pressed for an answer to the circular, Derby stated that the British Cabinet's view was little changed from its attitude previous to the conference. Britain was not prepared to adopt

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[77] Times, January 27, 1877. [78] SP, 1877, XCI, 550.

[79] Ibid., 534. [80] Ibid., 544.

coercive measures to enforce proposals on the Porte, nor would she protect Turkey from the consequences if she refused to accept them. Derby said he saw "no present reason for departing from that position."[81] In Commons, Bourke declared that his government intended answering the Russian circular, but the reply would be deferred and would depend on the course of events. The British government, for example, wanted to consult with the other powers before expressing an opinion.[82] Moreover, because of the change in Ministry and the promise to introduce reforms, the Porte should be given a period of time, Loftus suggested a year, to implement the reforms or give evidence that it intended to carry them out. It would require time to put into operation the extensive slate of reforms promised by the Porte.[83]

When the new session of Parliament opened in Britain on February 8, it was evident that the Ministry and the Opposition had divergent views regarding the circular and the events that had prompted it. The leaders of the Opposition insisted that Britain act with the European concert in exerting pressure on Turkey. The powers must compel if they could not persuade. If all the powers made it plain to the Porte that they were agreed on the use of force, their proposals would be adopted without force actually having to be used. Beaconsfield and Salisbury, however, rejected the idea of cooperating with the other powers in compelling the acceptance of the proposals upon which all had agreed. Nor would Derby under any circumstances sanction coercion.

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[81] Ibid., 481. [82] Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 462.

[83] SP, 1877, XCI, 620.

The issue dividing the Ministry and the Opposition was that the former was not prepared to sanction the use of coercion, while the latter was. The Opposition's policy was that the European concert should use force if necessary to secure compliance with the advice of Europe. The traditional positions of the parties were interchanged. The Liberal leaders were advocating a spirited foreign policy, while the Conservative government maintained the wisdom of proceeding more cautiously.[84] Salisbury made a great impression on everyone, however, when he said that the idea of coercion had never been fully analyzed by those suggesting it. They failed to understand how little good and how much harm it would do. The Opposition asserted in return that if Britain would merely cooperate with the other powers and sanction the use of force, the need of using that force would be obviated.[85]

The strongest defense of the government's policy came from Beaconsfield on February 8. Addressing himself to the question of whether Turkey could maintain herself or was doomed to partition, the Prime Minister asserted that Europe had to maintain the policy of territorial integrity. Any departure from that principle was dangerous. He then vindicated the policy of the government since the beginning of the crisis and challenged the assertion that the government had done nothing after rejecting the Berlin Memorandum. For one thing, the Turkish revolution had changed the situation and necessitated

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[84]Seton-Watson suggests that Beaconsfield had no definitive eastern policy from 1875-1877. Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe, p. 523; and Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 146.

[85]Times, February 10, 1877.

an altered attitude. He ended his speech on the same note as ever, that although Britain had deep humanitarian feelings, deeper still was the "'determination to maintain the Empire of England.'"[86]

Europe and Turkey had been following very closely the debates in the British Parliament, and Turkish obstinacy was further encouraged by passages in the Queen's speech on the opening of Parliament. The Turks found particular encouragement in the Queen's declaration that her object throughout the crisis had been to maintain the peace of Europe and bring about the better government of the disturbed provinces "'without infringing upon the independence and integrity of the Ottoman Empire.'"[87] Also encouraging to the Porte was the defense of the course adopted by the British government and the weak attitude of the British Cabinet regarding the punishment of those guilty of excesses in Bulgaria. All these factors served to increase the reliance of the Turks on their diplomatic bluff. The appointment of Sir Henry Layard as ambassador to replace Elliot also played its part since Layard was remembered as the chief advocate of Turkey in the House of Commons.[88]

By mid-February, therefore, the Ministry had assumed a position that exposed it to attack from all sides, either it had gone too far, or had not gone far enough. The Russian note had asked what the British government intended to do, and it appeared that the Cabinet had decided that the safest course for the moment was not to answer the note at all. Something might develop. March 1 and the expiration of the armistice was fast-approaching. Matters at Constantinople could

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[86]Quoted in Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 154-55.

[87]Quoted in Ibid., p. 148. [88]Ibid., pp. 157-58.

not remain as they were. War between Montenegro, Serbia, and Turkey would be continued unless peace was secured, and negotiations appeared to be going smoothly.[89]

Peace was eventually concluded between Turkey and Serbia on February 28 on the basis of the status quo, but the Porte was noticeably stiffening its resistance and indicated little disposition to accept the reforms suggested by the British government.[90] Because of the current situation in the East, therefore, Russia was in a position of considerable difficulty.

The Russian ambassador to Britain, Count Peter Shuvalov, indicated to Derby that his government still desired a pacific solution and still wanted to remain in concert with the other powers. The situation was made difficult, however, because the expense and inconvenience of keeping up armaments was great and could not be continued indefinitely. On the other hand, unless public opinion in Russia was assured that some specific advantage had been gained by the mobilization, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to demobilize. A solution to the difficulties rested on a real improvement in the condition of the Turkish Christians and on the need for declaring that if the term allowed for carrying the reforms into effect expired without sufficient results, the powers would seek means of imposing them. Gorchakov declared that the improvement of the Christians' position would thus remain under the guarantee of Europe and there would be no necessity of Russia separating herself from the rest of the powers.[91]

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[89] Times, February 12, 1877. [90] SP, 1877, XCI, 630-32.

[91] Ibid., 582-83, 595-96.

In light of the developments since January 31, the date of the circular, the Russian government asked the powers to delay their response and indicated that further suggestions were forthcoming. On March 11 the Russians proposed what to them appeared under the circumstances to be the best solution and the one best designed to maintain general peace. The powers should sign a protocol embodying the reforms recommended by the conference, affirming that the present state of affairs was one that concerned all of Europe, and declaring that the improvement of the condition of the Christians in Turkey would continue to be an object of interest to all the powers. The protocol should also declare that the powers reserved the right to undertake common action to secure the well-being of the Turkish Christians and to secure general peace if the reforms were not implemented.[92] Russia suggested that the protocol be signed at London and implied that once the protocol was signed, she would disband her army.

The Russian suggestion of a protocol was the last attempt to avert war. The Porte had prolonged the armistice until April 13 because negotiations had not been completed, and Gorchakov had warned the Russian ambassador at St. James that unless the Porte had yielded by that date, Russian troops would cross the frontier.[93]

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[92] Ibid., 412-13.

[93] Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, pp. 162-63. When Ignatiev was on his way to Paris to discuss the Gorchakov circular, he stopped at Berlin where he laid a draft of the protocol before the German government. He confided the czar's view that joint diplomatic action had to be undertaken within five or six weeks or war was inevitable. DGP, II, 134-36.

Derby on March 13 indicated that his government was ready to agree in principle to the protocol, but that certain reservations would have to be attached to its terms. For example, some formal pledge would have to be given of the Russian intention to disarm if the protocol was signed.[94] Derby told Shuvalov that since the demobilization of Russian forces was the inducement held out to Britain to sign the protocol and the assurance of demobilization was her justification for doing so, the British government had to have some evidence that this object had been secured before laying the protocol before Parliament.

As was to be expected, the Russians objected to this qualification. The bargain was unfair. Turkey was not asked to sign the protocol so was not required to disarm. She was only advised to do so. A state of war still existed between Turkey and Montenegro. If Russia had to disarm, she would be unable to support Montenegro in the event of a Turkish invasion. And, as a matter of dignity, Russia could not be asked to disarm before a similar appeal was addressed to Turkey. Perhaps Russia could disarm if Turkey took the initiative, peace were concluded with Montenegro, and if Turkish reforms were seriously undertaken. But, Russian demobilization would cease if Turkish Christians were threatened with renewed massacres.[95]

Unwilling to run the risk of unnecessary delay, the British Cabinet decided that the protocol might be signed with certain qualifications. The protocol,[96] signed on March 31, reaffirmed the interest

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[94] SP, 1877, XCI, 651; DGP, II, 138-39. [95] SP, 1877, XCI, 710.

[96] The full text of the London protocol can be found in DGP, II, 141-43.

of the powers in the condition of the Turkish Christians, noted the peace with Serbia, suggested a rectification of the frontier in favor of Montenegro, and advised the Porte to put its armies on a peace footing and institute internal reforms immediately. In conclusion the protocol stated that if the unsatisfactory condition of the Christians prevented the return of peace or fostered unrest, the powers would discuss common action on behalf of the Christians and for preserving general peace.[97]

Before signing the protocol, Russia made a special declaration that if Turkey concluded peace with Montenegro, accepted the advice of the powers to disarm, and seriously undertook the reforms contained in the protocol, she should then send a special envoy to St. Petersburg to discuss mutual disarmament. But, if massacres similar to those sustained in Bulgaria occurred, the Russian demobilization would be immediately stopped.[98]

Derby also signed a special declaration that unfortunately weakened considerably the effect the protocol might otherwise have had on Turkey. This declaration stated that the protocol was null and void if Russia and Turkey failed to disarm.[99]

In many respects the compromise reached in signing the protocol was of little effect. Britain had not compromised herself by signing and had assumed no more obligations than she would have undertaken had there been no protocol. Russia had been equally cautious. If she really wanted to bring about war in the near future there was nothing

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[97] SP, 1877, XCI, 414-15. [98] DGP, II, 143.

[99] Ibid.; SP, 1877, XCI, 754-55.

in the protocol barring her. The value of the protocol depended on the attitude of Russia. It could be an instrument of peace only if she wanted it to be.[100]

Since the protocol secured little, why had the British government signed it? For one reason, Salisbury had warned Beaconsfield of the dangers of not accepting the protocol and of adopting an attitude of isolation at this critical moment. It was clear that Alexander meant to go to war if Britain rejected the Russian proposal. Britain's rejection would have put her alone against the other five powers and Britain would have brought on the war by her isolation.

Ignatiev, who had been entrusted with the negotiations on the protocol, was aware that its provisions placed Britain in a difficult position. The British refusal to sign the Berlin Memorandum had allegedly brought on the Serbian war. Now when the czar was attempting to preserve European peace, the British government would make Russian concessions useless by forcing her to leave the Christians to be massacred.[101]

Once the protocol was signed, its provisions were made known to the Porte, and Derby instructed Jocelyn to urge its acceptance. The armistice was running out, and the time was fast-approaching when the decision for war or peace had to be made. There was nothing in the protocol to which the Sultan could reasonably object, and he would be very unwise if he did not take this opportunity to arrange a mutual disarmament and thus assure peace. If Turkey refused the provisions of

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[100] *Times*, April 2, 1877.

[101] Seton-Watson, *Disraeli and Gladstone*, pp. 162-64.

the note, she would incur the displeasure of all Europe. There were also more serious considerations. On April 5 Loftus had informed Derby that unless the Porte adhered sincerely to the protocol, there was the danger of "immediate coercive measures on the part of Russia."[102]

On April 6 Loftus reported to Derby that the Russian czar demanded the Porte's decision by April 13, the date for the expiration of the armistice. Russia could not incur any longer the cost of remaining mobilized. Nor would Russia consent to renewing negotiations that might drag on for months and then end in failure. Russia would make no further concessions. Loftus reminded Gorchakov of the powers' agreement in the concluding paragraph of the protocol with reference to coercive measures, but the Russian statesman replied that Derby's declaration rendered the protocol null and void in the event the reciprocal disarmament of Russia and Turkey was not obtained.[103]

On receipt of the protocol Turkey immediately voiced her objections to it. In addition to opposing territorial concessions to Montenegro, for example, there was the alleged problem of disarmament itself. The protocol contained a clause declaring that the Russian disarmament would cease if any disturbance arose that threatened the Christians. And, acts of violence were almost certain to occur when the Porte began demobilization. There were thousands of Turks under arms, some from six to thirty-three months in arrears in pay. Having borne great sacrifices, many were resentful, and when they returned to their homes they were bound to come in contact with Christians. Deplorable consequences might easily arise from this situation, and

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[102] SP, 1877, XCI, 772, 777, 802. [103] Ibid., 803.

a provocation might be provided for Russia whereby she could justify halting her demobilization. It might well be better for Turkey, therefore, to undertake a war against Russia with a faint chance of success rather than accepting a position that left her entirely at Russia's mercy.[104]

As the result of many circumstances, therefore, the Porte rejected the protocol on April 9 despite the advice of Britain. In their rejection the Turkish ministers appealed to the Treaty of Paris and declared that the protocol was a violation of the treaty's terms. In this respect the idea of ceding territory to Montenegro was particularly offensive.[105] Musurus told Derby that it would be better for the Sultan to risk a war and the loss of one or two provinces than compromise his prestige and independence. Derby pointed out, however, that it was not one or two provinces, but the entire Ottoman empire that was at stake.[106] The Grand Vizier also told Jocelyn that the Porte would willingly negotiate with Russia, but would not submit to the humiliation of sending a special envoy to treat on a matter that could be arranged in a few hours by telegraph.[107]

When he learned of the Porte's decision, Derby expressed his regret that Turkey had rejected the protocol whose principal object had been to extricate her from a position of extreme embarrassment and

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[104] Ibid., 790-91. [105] DGP, II, 145.

[106] SP, 1877, XCI, 432-36.

[107] DGP, II, 145; SP, 1877, XCII, 23-24. Czar Alexander declared that in his opinion the Turks also believed that they could do whatever they chose and still be supported by Britain. DGP, II, 144.

danger. In his conversation with Musurus, Derby observed that the governments of Russia and Turkey were so far apart that there was no need to continue discussion. There were no further steps that Britain could take to avert a war that now appeared inevitable.[108]

A day later, on April 13, a fateful Friday the thirteenth, the armistice between Turkey and Montenegro expired, and the Porte declared that the suspension of hostilities would not be renewed. The Montenegrin delegates advised their government to expect an attack on April 14, and negotiations between the two powers were broken off.[109]

In the days preceding the Russian declaration of war on April 24, the powers took steps, materially or otherwise, in preparation for the outbreak of hostilities. The Russian chargé d'affaires at Constantinople, M. Nelidoff, reported that there was no longer any question of Turkey sending a mission to Russia for further negotiations. The Porte dared not disband its army and could not keep it unemployed.[110]

Recognizing the near impossibility of preventing war, the British government announced the policy Britain would pursue in the event of hostilities. Derby pointed out on April 19 that throughout the proceedings the Porte had been warned that it must not rely on Britain's material support. The British government did not consider itself bound and did not desire to intervene in the war. Said Derby "we reserve to ourselves, however, as we are bound to do, and as every British Government must do, the right of protecting British interests if we see those interests threatened."[111] And just what these interests

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[108] SP, 1877, XCI, 811. [109] SP, 1877, XCII, 1-2, 7.

[110] Ibid., 36. [111] Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 1436-38.

were, Derby later indicated more specifically to the Italian ambassador. Derby declared that "the interests of [Britain] would not allow us to see Constantinople fall into the possession of Russia."[112]

Particularly significant were the efforts of Layard to prevent a war between Turkey and Russia. On April 20, shortly after his arrival at Constantinople, he met with the Grand Vizier to see if the Porte might be induced to make concessions that would be acceptable to Russia, or if some sort of mediation was still possible. The Vizier's refusal to entertain the proposal of sending an envoy to St. Petersburg prompted Layard to suggest that the Porte appeal to Article VIII of the Treaty of Paris.

The British ambassador pointed out that if Turkey wanted to make a favorable impression, she should propose mediation. By such an appeal, Russia would be forced to make a decision, either to accept or refuse mediation. By accepting, Russia would place herself under the control of the powers who might require her to disarm. By refusing, she would place herself in the wrong before public opinion. Turkey could lose nothing and stood to gain a great deal by appealing to Article VIII. If the appeal succeeded, so much the better. If it failed, Turkey would be in the same position as regards her defense, but would have the advantage of having given proof of her desire for peace.[113]

Layard tried valiantly to induce the Porte to propose mediation. On April 23 he reported to Derby that "I am doing all that I possibly can in every direction in the interest of peace."[114] It was not until

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[112] SP, 1877, XCII, 36. [113] Ibid., 162-63. [114] Ibid., 57.

April 23, however, that the Porte decided to appeal on the basis of Article VIII and by this time it was too late. The war began the next day.

Layard was quick to point out, however, that the Porte's appeal to Article VIII had been made before the Russian declaration of war. Turkey was in the right; Russia was in the wrong. Layard admitted that his efforts at peace had failed, but he:

> trusted that the results of his endeavours would furnish one more proof of the earnest desire and continued efforts of Her Majesty's Government to prevent war, [and would] place Turkey in a somewhat better position in public opinion, and may possibly afford hereafter an opening for mediation between the two belligerent powers.[115]

A Russo-Turkish war was not unusual. There had been one every twenty or twenty-five years since the time of Peter the Great.[116] But never had Russia begun a Turkish war under such favorable circumstances. She had a secret agreement with Austria-Hungary, she was assured of benevolent neutrality by Germany, neither France nor Italy would interfere, and Roumania and Serbia were ready to join with the czar's government. Only Britain could challenge Russia, and she could neither act alone nor find an ally.[117] Britain's only action was a declaration of neutrality on April 30 and a statement of the conditions on which this neutrality rested.

On May 6 Derby sent a note to Russia explaining the specific British interests that must not be endangered if she were to honor

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[115] Ibid., 161-62.

[116] William L. Langer, European Alliances and Alignments, 1870-1890 (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931), p. 121.

[117] Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 170.

her declaration of neutrality. First, free navigation of the Danube had to be maintained. Second, communication between Europe and the East through the Suez canal had to be maintained. Any attempt to interfere in any way with the canal or its approaches would be regarded as a menace to India and the commerce of the world. Third, Britain would not allow any power but Turkey to hold Constantinople. Fourth, the existing arrangements concerning the Straits could not be altered. The course of events might demonstrate that there were still other interests, for example the Persian Gulf, that Britain would have to protect.[118]

The questions naturally suggesting themselves are: (1) why did Turkey assume an intransigent attitude, and (2) why did Russia declare war? The matter of Russia's action might be dispatched rather quickly. In addition to whatever specific interests Russia might have had, there was the general belief in Russian official circles that Turkey would not disarm because she could not. Because of lack of funds, the Porte could not disband the army without endangering the peace and maintenance of order in Turkey. It was therefore useless to treat of disarmament.[119]

The Russian government also had the unfortunate impression that Britain could no longer support Turkey because of the force of British public opinion. The effect of the Bulgarian atrocities in England had not been lost on St. Petersburg, and Gladstone's pamphlet on the "Horrors" had been translated into Russian and circulated in Russia. Also noted were the speeches of Gladstone who had advocated the

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[118] Ibid., pp. 170-73. [119] SP, 1877, XCII, 104.

removal "bag and baggage" of all Turks from Europe. Although Gladstone apparently implied only a change of government, the impression in Russia was that a more complete removal was meant.[120]

Turkey's motivations were more complex if not as ill-founded as those influencing Russia. The Turks calculated that at the last moment Russia would draw back and refrain from declaring war. The Porte was aware that Russia faced grave financial difficulties and that the reorganization of the Russian army, undertaken in 1874, was yet far from complete.[121]

A patriotism and religious enthusiasm had also seized the Turkish Mussulmans as they realized that Europe was deserting them. They believed that something like an anti-Turkey conspiracy existed, and, as usual, they closed their ranks to resist the anticipated onslaught. The war would be a holy crusade against Russia. Men eagerly offered their services in the army. Some stations had more volunteers than could be accepted.[122] Derby also said on April 24 that there was on the part of the Turk government "'a deeply-seated conviction that, do what they would, make what concessions they would, sooner or later war would be forced on them.'"[123]

A significant reason for Turkey's attitude, of course, was her conviction that she still enjoyed Britain's support. Sir William

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[120]Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 512.

[121]Seton-Watson, Disraeli and Gladstone, p. 168. On Russia's ability to wage war in 1877 see "The Military Power of Russia," Edinburgh Review, January, 1878, pp. 100-115.

[122]SP, 1877, XCI, 521-23. [123]Quoted in Times, April 25, 1877.

Harcourt, in Opposition, charged that the British policy of remonstrance and persuasion had failed because Britain had never convinced Turkey, nor tried to convince her, that the government was in earnest. The British government had signed the Andrassy Note "'with great regret,'" and had rejected the Berlin Memorandum because it advocated ulterior means. The protocol also contemplated ulterior means, but with this difference--the means were not efficacious. Also, in case the protocol was thought to be too forceful, a declaration was attached showing how the document could be made null and void.

The British government had neglected several opportunities for securing peace. If Britain had not shattered the concert of Europe, for example, by rejecting the Berlin Memorandum, Turkey might have been induced to undertake reform. Harcourt charged that "it was the spectacle of disunion which prevailed, and in which the English Government set the most prominent example, that had encouraged Turkey in a resistance which had culminated in the refusal of the Protocol."[124]

Mr. Evelyn Ashley, also in Opposition, charged that throughout the Balkan crisis the British government had followed a policy of hedging. The result of such a policy was that the government had not checked Russia and had "strengthened Turkey in the belief that England would come to her assistance." The British government had not succeeded in convincing Turk[illegible] she must stand alone in her struggle with Russia. Ashley [illegible]wed that Britain owed a great responsibility to the Turkish Christians because the policy of the British government for the previous two years had only made their condition worse. The

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[124]Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 1115-16.

Turk had been goaded and irritated without being curbed. His savage passions had been roused without taking from him the power to wreak vengeance on the Christians.[125]

Another Opposition member, Sir Charles W. Dilke, concluded that Britain's policy for the preceding several months had destroyed the European concert and had convinced Turkey that Britain was on her side. Britain's refusal to accept the Berlin Memorandum, the sending of the fleet to Besika Bay, the speech of the Prime Minister at the close of the last session defending the independence and integrity of Turkey, the repeated statements of Elliot, the attitude of the British government as indicated at the Constantinople conference, the suggestion that Elliot return to Constantinople--all these acts were alike in that they appeared to demonstrate support for Turkey and encouraged her to resist.[126]

The Opposition members reserved the bulk of their criticism for Elliot and his behavior at Constantinople. His critics charged that the ambassador's conduct proved "that he did not put that pressure upon the Porte which he ought to have done to prevent injustice to the Christian population." Elliot had consistently resisted any intervention in Turkey unless it was in favor of the Porte. He had misrepresented the cause for the Bulgarian uprising and its repercussions and had shielded those responsible. He had contributed to the defeat of the December conference by his attitude that the demands of the powers would seriously impair the independence and integrity of Turkey.

"There was a moral blindness in Sir Henry Elliot," asserted

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[125] Ibid., 1126-27. [126] Ibid., 1150-51.

Mr. P. Rylands, M. P. from Burnley, "which prevented him from sympathising with the inhabitants of the provinces of Turkey, or recognizing important facts affecting their condition. . . ." At the conference Elliot's conduct was "so extraordinary that it was impossible to suppose he would have acted as he did had he not known that he would be backed up by at least two or three members of the Cabinet."[127]

The Opposition also declared that if the government had been sincere in sending Salisbury to Constantinople, Elliot would have been recalled because on every important point he opposed and obstructed the policy of Salisbury. Elliot's policy, apparently supported by the British government, could not have done otherwise than stiffen the resolve of the Turks and convince them that they still enjoyed the support of Britain.[128]

It remained for Gladstone to inject something almost sinister into the policy and activities of the British government. On February 16 he spoke on the papers that had been laid before Commons on the eastern crisis. The former Prime Minister declared that:

> one of the difficulties encountered in reading through these papers is, that, while everything that is declared in them has every appearance, and every just appearance, of being straightforward and decisive, there yet seems to have been somewhere or other under-currents of communications which were constantly counteracting the best declarations and the best intentions on behalf of Her Majesty's Government. And we now know that down to so very recent a period as, I think, the 8th of January last, the two principal persons in the Turkish Government were confident in their declaration that they were to have the support, in the last extremity, at any rate, of Lord Beaconsfield and Lord Derby.[129]

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[127] Ibid., 569-77. [128] Ibid., 452-54.

[129] Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 472-74.

Stafford H. Northcote, Chancellor of the Exchequer, strongly defended the policy followed by his government in the eastern crisis. He declared that the government's policy had been consistent throughout, although as circumstances had changed it had been necessary to adopt different means. The principles followed were many: preserving European peace, maintaining a European concert, upholding the honor and interests of Britain, improving the government of Turkey, and providing better security for the Turkish Christians. The objects had not been and could not be separated. Therefore, the use of coercion to attain one would endanger the rest. Had force been used, for example, to enforce reforms, the Ottoman Christians would have been endangered, European peace would have been threatened, and British interests in the Mediterranean would have been jeopardized.[130]

In carrying out its policy, Northcote said, the British government had announced that it "would not bring about, or be parties to bringing about, any reforms . . . by the use of force and by a resort to war." The government believed this policy was consistent with the honor and interests of the country and the one best suited for attaining British objectives. The government had not believed that military and coercive measures would bring about any real improvement

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[130] Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 468. Medlicott suggests that a new British policy emerged before the end of May 1876 when Bismarck refused Disraeli's bid for Anglo-German cooperation. William N. Medlicott, "Bismarck and Beaconsfield," in Arshag O. Sarkissian (ed.) Studies in Diplomatic History and Historiography in honour of G. P. Gooch (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., Ltd., 1961), pp. 225-50. For British overtures to Austria-Hungary and Germany in the autumn of 1876 see Alfred F. Pribram, England and the International Policy of the European Great Powers 1871-1914 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1931), pp. 10-12.

in the Turkish government. This opinion and policy might have been wrong, but it did not seem possible that coercion would force a government to govern properly.

The Beaconsfield government had refrained from cooperating in proposals such as the Berlin Memorandum because they contained threats. Derby had from the first expressed the opinion, supported by his colleagues, that the government would never threaten to use force and then not do so. Moral pressure was more effective than coercion. But, moral pressure could not be used when military coercion was threatened at the same time. The conference might have been more successful, therefore, had it not been for the mobilization of the Russian army and its threatening attitude that made it difficult for Turkey to give way.[131]

Mr. Gathorne Hardy, Secretary for War, offered the same arguments. According to Hardy the government did not believe that the way to benefit the Ottoman Christians was by an armed interference. To devastate the European provinces of Turkey with war was not the way to provide for their happiness and prosperity. And, most significantly, the British government believed that those powers possessing treaty engagements, yet suffering no national injustice at the hands of Turkey, had no right to take on themselves the vindication, by violence, of the rights of the Christian subjects of the Porte. Even though the British government sympathized with the Turkish Christians and deplored the shortcomings of the Turkish government, Britain still did not have the right to destroy Turkey because she had been guilty of destroying

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[131] Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 1171-75.

others. If Turkey had offended Britain, had interfered with her people, had violated her sovereignty, or had endangered her interests, then it would have been Britain's duty to interfere. Only the interests of the country, however, could justify resort to force. Neither treaty obligations nor international rights would allow Britain to force Turkey's acceptance of the powers' proposals. Those advocating such a policy argued only from the standpoint of feelings, and sentiment was not an adequate principle on which to base policy.[132]

Northcote also defended the government's behavior regarding the protocol. Britain had signed the protocol in the hope that it would be the best means of averting a European war by achieving the reciprocal disarmament of Russia and Turkey. If war could have been avoided, for even a year, the powers would have had the opportunity of urging the Porte to accept the measures that had been agreed on at the Constantinople conference. As for the prefacing declaration, Britain wanted to preclude the possibility of becoming involved in a war because of the protocol. The government wanted to keep itself and the country free to pursue the policy Britain had always pursued--that of using her influence in the cause of peace and humanity and maintaining peace and prosperity throughout the world.[133]

As Hardy pointed out, Britain had no ulterior motives. She had worked for peace and the amelioration of the condition of the Turkish Christians and would continue to do so. "We have pursued one steady policy from the beginning;" he said, "we have gone on steadily

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[132] Ibid., 1099-1101.

[133] Ibid., 1175-78; Hansard, CCXXXIV (1877), 952.

with that policy. . . . So we are prepared to go on." And, regarding the war, Hardy said:

> we reserve to ourselves the position which we have always held, that on such an occasion every great country has a right to look to its own honour, interests, and dignity, in consulting which we shall still watch anxiously over the interests of the Christian subjects of the Porte. But, at the same time, we shall also not be neglectful of the trust which has been reposed in us as the Ministers of the Crown, to maintain and support here, and in every part of the world, the honour and interests of the United Kingdom.[134]

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[134] Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 1108-10.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined one facet of the Eastern Question. And, according to Mr. Austen H. Layard who in 1863 was Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs:

> This so-called 'Eastern Question' is undoubtedly one of the greatest problems that has ever been submitted to any generation of men. Its possible solution has engaged the earnest consideration of the ablest politicans. It has excited the deepest interest amongst statesmen of every nation. . . . Notwithstanding all the speculations and theories that have been hazarded, and the confident assertion, so often made, that Turkey is on the very eve of falling to pieces, no living man has yet been able to give any satisfactory answer to the question of what is to become of the Ottoman Empire, or to propose any political combination which could replace it.[1]

And the Eastern Question continued to resist resolution. Lord Stratford, who had had more experience with Turkey than perhaps any other Englishman, declared on January 4, 1876 that the Eastern Question was a fact:

> a reality of indefinite duration, a volcano with frequent outbreaks and destructive effects. The Empire, from being systematically aggressive, has become a tottering and untoward neighbour. Its struggles for life, the agonies of its dissolution are like to agitate Europe, if not to produce a general war.[2]

What was the solution?

From 1856-1877 Britain followed a policy designed to prevent war and the dismemberment of Turkey and to ameliorate the condition of

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[1] Hansard, CLXXI (1863), 41. [2] Quoted in Times, January 4, 1876.

Ottoman Christians. In the Syrian crisis of 1860, the Cretan uprising of 1866-1868, and the graver Balkan crisis of 1875-1878 Britain insisted on preserving the integrity of the Turkish empire. Although her means varied with changing circumstances, Britain's object was consistent--the protection of Turkish Christians, but within the general framework of maintaining the Ottoman empire intact.

Of importance to this study, of course, was Britain's attitude towards the Turkish Christians for whom she had assumed a joint responsibility in 1856. Gathorne Hardy, Secretary for War, in a speech on April 13, 1877 admitted that his government was sympathetic to the plight of the Turkish Christians and indignant because the Bulgarian uprising had been put down with such brutality, but the policy of the government was not motivated by feelings, emotion, or sympathy. Since the policy of the British government was to protect British interests, Britain would resort to force only if her interests were endangered. Simply because the government pursued a policy different from the one advocated by the Liberals, however, was not to be taken as an indication that the Conservatives were inhumane or non-Christian.[3]

Even Gladstone approved of the government's policy during the Cretan uprising when Lord Stanley paid little heed to the pleas on behalf of humanity. Said Gladstone in reference to the policy followed by Stanley, "'the calls of mere humanity it was his duty to repress, and he has repressed them.'"[4] There were no pamphlets or public meetings in 1867 on behalf of Turkish Christians.

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[3]Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 1105.

[4]Quoted in Ibid., 457.

The British government from 1856-1877 was frequently criticized, by Englishmen and others, for failing to force Turkey to impose reforms or to protect Ottoman Christians. But, Britain refused to use coercion because of the possibility of its resulting in war, and such a war, in the words of Derby in 1877, would be "fraught with every possible danger to the peace of Europe."[5]

And, as Salisbury pointed out in February 1877, coercive measures against Turkey would have been ineffective. Britain could have sailed her fleet up the Bosphorus and burned Constantinople, but this would have accomplished nothing. Britain would have destroyed the only government capable of keeping some 30,000,000 people in some semblance of order and able to provide at least a modicum of safety for thousands of eastern Christians. Britain was not prepared to assume the government of these people, nor was she willing to allow another power to do so.

The threat of using force in Turkey was ineffective too because there was no element in Turkey to which a foreign government could appeal. The government in Turkey was entirely dependent on the strength and power of the Sultan, and he was fearful of a revolution. Appeal to a revolution was out of the question because there was no middle class with the ability to govern. Therefore, any attempt to use coercion would fail. Good government could not be produced in Turkey with threats.[6]

The threat of using coercion was also dangerous because of the possible consequences that might ensue. British ambassadors, consuls,

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[5]Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 668-69. [6]Ibid., 695-98.

and others frequently warned that any attempt to use force in Turkey would be extremely dangerous to the welfare of the Turkish Christians. If the Mohammedan population learned that their government was being attacked by a Christian power on behalf of the Turkish Christians, there would be atrocities surpassing even those perpetrated in Syria in 1860, Crete in 1867, and in Bulgaria in 1876. Said Salisbury on one occasion, "the policy of coercion is, with respect to any country as regards its internal affairs, one of the gravest and most responsible policies which a government can adopt."[7]

The warning of Stafford Northcote, Chancellor of the Exchequer, against the use of force in 1877 can be taken as instructive in assessing British policy throughout the period covered by this study. Intervention might halt a war or force a nation to give up a portion of territory, he said, but if attempted for the purpose of introducing good government into a country, characterized for years by misgovernment, the attempt would likely be unsuccessful. Especially likely to fail was an attempt to improve the government of a country that resisted improvement. The course followed by Britain, therefore, was wise. She had tried by advice, and pressure short of coercion, to induce the Porte to improve the condition of Turkey's Christian population. Unfortunately, the Porte had not accepted the well-intentioned counsel of the British government.[8]

On February 20, 1877 Salisbury in the House of Lords reviewed his government's policy over the last twenty years. In 1856 Turkey had consented to internal reform, and each of the signatory powers

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[7]Ibid., 54-56. [8]Hansard, CCXXXIII (1877), 104-105.

had agreed to observe the integrity and independence of the Ottoman empire. Subsequent developments altered the interpretation of the Treaty of Paris, however, and indicated that the British attitude towards Turkey had to be changed. But, asked Salisbury:

> were we bound, were we justified in at once turning round upon our ancient ally, who had rested upon us so long and who had been encouraged by our acts and words? Would it have been just and straightforward in us suddenly to assume an attitude which would have been hard even on the part of Russia? If it was to be so--if the alliance was to be broken up--if the terrible events which took place within its borders were to have the effect of alienating the undoubted affection entertained by this country towards Turkey--surely it was our duty that we should struggle to the last against the change which forced upon us, at all events, a new and unexpected interpretation of a Treaty to which our country was pledged? Surely it was our duty to exhaust appeal, remonstrance, and exhortation? It was our duty to be the last of the nations to desert the cause which we had formerly maintained; . . . .[9]

And, continued Salisbury, if the government had followed any other course the Turks would have had ample justification for complaint against Britain. This principle explained Britain's policy. This was the reason she had gone to the conference in 1876, not as a preliminary to force, but as a means of peaceful persuasion, to prevent a war between Turkey and Russia.[10]

Hardy also defended British policy and asserted that until the end of the conference in 1877 the British government was bound by the treaties under which it had been acting since 1856. The government had declared time and again that Britain would err if she tried to use coercion in the Ottoman Empire. If Britain used force against Turkey, said Hardy, "we should be doing an act for which there would be no

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[9]Hansard, CCXXXII (1877), 692. [10]Ibid., 692-93.

justification . . . because we should have falsified our promises and been faithless to our engagements."[11] The government had often resisted an occupation of Turkey because it was thought that this would be the beginning of the end for the Turkish empire, but this did not mean that Britain had no sympathy for the Christians of Turkey. Although the government differed from the Opposition and the other powers in the means of achieving redress of the Christians' grievances, the government was not apathetic.[12]

There was also much official British opinion that Turkey could not be dismembered without endangering grave consequences and compounding the difficulties of the Eastern Question. The various parts of Turkey were in no condition to govern themselves. The provinces were divided by race and religion, possessed few persons of wealth or education, and contained a clergy that was generally corrupt and ignorant. In short, most parts of Turkey lacked the elements of self-government. If Turk rule were withdrawn, the ensuing anarchy and civil war in the provinces would lead to a war with unpredictable consequences to European peace, the balance of power, and the security of Turkish Christians. Turkey had to be supported lest she be overthrown, her empire dismembered, and her Christian population abandoned. Interference in the affairs between the Sultan and his subjects was impossible, even though the Christians were allegedly suffering persecution and abuse.

The effect of this opinion was not lost on the Turks. They realized that their strength lay in their weakness. Their traditional

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[11] Ibid., 498. [12] Ibid., 497-99.

policy had been to take advantage of the differences among the great powers. They believed that the powers would always be divided and nothing would be done to dismember the Ottoman empire. The Turks even believed that they would benefit from a general European war.[13] A great deal of truth, therefore, was contained in a statement made by Lord Ellenborough in 1829 when he said "'the Ottoman Empire stands not for the benefit of the Turks, but of Christian Europe--not to preserve Mohammedans in power, but to save Christians from a war of which neither the object could be defined, nor the extent nor duration calculated.'"[14]

Contemporary observers asserted that from 1856-1877 Britain's policy regarding the Eastern Question changed. For example, there was the charge that when the government rejected the Berlin Memorandum, Britain was prepared to go to war for Turkey. But, because of the strength of public opinion, aroused over the Bulgarian atrocities, the government was forced to change its policy. The government declared, however, that a change of policy might, and did, mean only that when circumstances became altogether different, means were modified to meet the altered conditions.[15] There was, therefore, no change in British policy from 1856-1877.

Derby, for example, defended the policy followed by Beaconsfield and denied that the course pursued by the British government had changed, especially throughout 1876 and until the outbreak of war in April 1877. He admitted that the enthusiasm generated by the Bulgarian atrocities had had some influence on the government's

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[13] Ibid., 693. [14] Quoted in Ibid., 491. [15] Ibid., 34-35.

judgment of the situation, but it was only a secondary influence. The primary reason for the action taken by the government, seen in the conference and the protocol, was that Serbia had joined the war and was being encouraged and supported by Russian volunteers. Moreover, the military defeats and successes in Serbia were felt in Russia where the enthusiasm was so great that there was the danger of Russia's becoming overly-excited and entering the war against Turkey. Conditions had thus been altered. This was the danger, which in the interests of Europe, Britain was bound to consider, and her actions had been in accord with the government's desire to maintain European peace, Turkey's integrity, and the security of Ottoman Christians.[16] British policy, however, had not changed, and as Derby said:

> The reasons which induced us to set a value on the territorial integrity of Turkey are permanent and real, and I hold that it is sound policy now [September 11, 1876] as much as it was in 1856 to adhere to that which diplomatists called the territorial status quo. It is possible that the language which is being used may induce foreign politicians and Governments to think that England has changed her mind on that subject. If that impression is produced it will be a misfortune to us and to all the world.[17]

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[16] Ibid., 665-66. [17] Quoted in Ibid., 502-503.

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