

THE ATTITUDE OF BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER SIR HORACE RUMBOLD TOWARDS THE TURKISH NATIONAL MOVEMENT, 1920-1923

Dr. SALÂHI R. SONYEL

When Sir Horace Rumbold, the British Minister in Switzerland, succeeded Admiral Sir John de Robeck, on 17 November 1920, as High Commissioner in Istanbul,¹ the Ottoman Empire, a member of the Central Powers, was already defeated by the Entente Powers (the Allies) in the disastrous Great War, and was forced to sign the Armistice of Mondros (Mudros) on 30 October 1918.

The Allies, taking advantage of the secret treaties which they had contracted during the war for the complete dissolution and partition of the Ottoman Empire,² had occupied many territories inhabited predominantly by Turkish Muslim people;³ whilst the occupation of Izmir and its hinterland by Greece on 15 May 1919 had contributed tremendously to the upsurge of the Turkish National Movement under Mustafa Kemal (Atatürk). These developments had led to the establishment in Anatolia of a revolutionary government that pledged to struggle for national liberation, in accordance with the solemn declaration embodied in the *Misak-ı Milli* (National Pact),⁴ in contrast to the government in Istanbul whose authority and sway did not extend beyond the walls of the Ottoman capital, but which, nevertheless was recognised by the Allies as the "legitimate government" of Turkey.

When Sir Horace Rumbold arrived in Istanbul on 17 November 1920 with specific instructions to promote and defend British imperial interests, the Istanbul government was already brow-beaten to sign the Treaty of

¹ Public Record Office, Foreign Office documents in the category FO 371 (Political): FO 371/5279/E 12674: about the appointment of Sir Horace Rumbold as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary at Constantinople (Istanbul), on 9.10.1920, with the title of British High Commissioner pending the resumption of normal diplomatic relations with the Ottoman Empire.

² S.R. Sonyel: *Turkish Diplomacy, 1918-1923*, London 1975, pp. 1-2.

³ *Ibid.*: p. 4.

⁴ *Ibid.*: p. 9.

Sèvres, on 10 August, without consulting the Nationalist Government in Ankara,⁵ whilst the Greek army had tried, without success, to impose that treaty on the Turkish Nationalists by force of arms, in a military campaign authorised by the Supreme Council of the Allies, and lasting from 22 June to 16 July.

The Treaty of Sévres had satisfied nobody, except British Prime Minister David Lloyd George, Greek Premier Eleftherios Venizelos, the Armenian leaders Bogos Noubar and Avetis Aharonian, and a few Kurdish chieftains intriguing with British officials in Istanbul. The French and the Italians, too, were dissatisfied with it.⁶ Hence there was a general outcry against the treaty, and for its revision. It was amidst this outcry that Rumbold took up his new appointment in the Ottoman capital, and immediately informed Lord Curzon, the British Foreign Minister, about the general impression in Allied circles in Istanbul that the situation must, inevitably, lead to a considerable modification of the treaty. In his telegram to Curzon on 27 November he added that the defeat of Armenia (by the Turkish National Forces, in the campaign that began late in September)⁷, must, at least, make the partial revision of the treaty necessary, and that drastic revision would be unavoidable if the Greeks lapsed in the Izmir area.

“If the revision of the treaty becomes inevitable”, he pointed out, “it appears to me the object of the Allies should be to find a solution which will 1. accelerate the pacification of Asia Minor; 2. enable the Allies to emerge from the situation with the minimum of damage in the eyes of the East, and the Turkish Nationalists in particular; 3. secure the future well-being of non-Moslem minorities... Retain as much control over the Turkish administration as possible. I fully realise the repugnance which must be inspired by any idea of treaty to suit the Nationalists...”⁸

⁵ *Ibid.*: pp. 77 f.; Command 963 of 10.8.1920; FO 371/5095/E 4107; *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, vol. VIII 1st series, pp. 141-3; Forbes to Tilley, San Remo dispatch, 29.4.1920.

⁶ Sonyel, p. 83.

⁷ *Ibid.*: pp. 48 f.

⁸ FO 371/5058/E 14960: Rumbold to Curzon, telegram no. 1253, Istanbul, 27.11.1920; see also *Documents on British Foreign Policy* 1/XIII, pp. 193-4.

A critical situation had arisen for the Allies as a result of the juncture of Turkish Nationalist and Bolshevik forces in the Caucasus, following the defeat of General Wrangel and his White Russian forces, and that of the Dashnakist forces of Armenia, thus nullifying Article 4 of the Treaty of Sévres. The disappearance from the political scene both of Damat Ferit, the Grand Vezir, and Eleftherios Venizelos, the Greek Premier, the former by resignation, after losing the sympathy and support of the political parties and High Commissioners in Istanbul, never to return again; and the latter by being voted out of office by the Constantinists at the general election held in Greece in November, further aggravated the situation.⁹

Sir Horace Rumbold felt nothing but contempt and disgust towards the Turks, particularly the Kemalists; although he was relatively tolerant towards the "old-type" of Ottoman Turks, particularly those who ingratiated themselves to the British, such as Sultan Vahdettin. When he was received in private audience by the Sultan on 6 December, together with Andrew Ryan, the British dragoman (translator/interpreter), who acted as interpreter, as the Sultan preferred to dispense with his own officials, Vahdettin was extremely nervous. This nervousness, however, wore off later, until he became quite animated.

The Sultan mentioned occasions in the past when, owing to the harshness of England, or her unreadiness to support a Turkish statesman like Kâmil Pasha who relied on her entirely, Turkey had been driven into the arms of Germany, and this had been very unfortunate for Turkey. But Rumbold blamed the Turkish people for turning to Germany. The Sultan then talked about the necessity of the friendship of England. He asked for British advice, and Rumbold promised to give it when asked for, particularly after the ratification of the Treaty of Sévres. "The Sultan appears to be a weak but well-intentioned man and very anxious-minded", he reported to Curzon on 12 December. His report was minuted by W. S. Edmonds of the Foreign Office as follows: "The Sultan knows little enough where to turn for advice and support. He is no doubt genuinely anxious to secure our help, and this may stand us in good stead as soon as peace is concluded".¹⁰

⁹ Sonyel, pp. 85-6.

¹⁰ FO 371/5058/E 15871: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 1632/M. 3709, Istanbul, 12.12.1920.

From the date of this first interview with Vahdettin, Rumbold is believed to have become a Sultanist, as his later dispatches indicate. Towards the end of December Rumbold began to take an interest in, and intrigue with, various Kurdish militant leaders in Istanbul. He wrote to Curzon on 29 December, enclosing a memorandum by Andrew Ryan on "proposals put forward by certain Kurds in Constantinople (Istanbul) for combating the Bolshevik menace".

"If it should become part of the policy of His Majesty's Government to utilise the Kurdish elements to counter (Kemalist) activities", observed Sir Horace Rumbold, "the Kurdish notables of Constantinople (Istanbul) would have a part to play...; but they are extremely disunited, and with the exception of Seid Abdul Kadir, and perhaps some of the members of the Bedrhan family, the leading Kurds here are too imbued with Turkish traditions to inspire great confidence".

In the memorandum, Ryan described how he was approached some days earlier by Hamdi Pasha, the former Ottoman Minister of Marine, on the subject of the utilisation of the Kurds as a barrier against the descent of Bolsheviks towards Mesopotamia.

"This is no new suggestion", declared Ryan; "Seid Abdul Kadir, the most influential single Kurd here, has frequently spoken of Bolshevik danger. Abdul Kadir's doctrine some months ago was that the Kurds could be used to destroy the Kemalists, and to bar the Bolshevik progress. Ferid Pasha adopted this theory to the extent of including the organisation of an anti-Kemalist movement in Kurdistan (Eastern Provinces of Turkey) in his plans for the repression of the Kemalists".¹¹

Three days later Rumbold informed Curzon that the Kurdish leaders in Istanbul had, for two years, been urging that they should be allowed "to work up a movement in Kurdistan under British auspices". They had always claimed to have sufficient influence with the local chiefs to enable them to do this. Rumbold was approached recently by Kürt Hamdi Pa-

¹¹ FO 371/6346/E 342: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 1701/M/1743/5, Istanbul, 29.12.1920.

sha with the suggestion that Abdülkadir and others should be allowed to go to Mosul (Musul) "to work up the tribes into united opposition to any Bolshevik aggression... Local notables, from time to time, come and urge utilizing the Kurds to counteract Bolshevism and Kemalism".¹² However, for the time being, British policy was to keep the Kurds quiet, and to make use of them in the last resort.

Meanwhile, the growing strength of the Turkish Nationalists worried the British Government, and Rumbold hurried to advise Curzon on 20 January 1921 that it was useless to regard Mustafa Kemal any longer as a brigand chief. The Ankara Government had "tight grip" on the whole of Asia Minor not in effective foreign occupation. It exercised all the functions of government "with average efficiency as efficiency goes in Turkey", remarked Rumbold. The bulk of the population, "sheep-like as always", according to the British High Commissioner, recognised its authority without demur, and the majority of the Muslim element "supported it strongly, as standing for the best interests of Turkey and the individual Turks". It had been strong enough to repress "quickly and thoroughly" any attempt at local risings by anti-Kemalists. "It would be most unwise to count upon the collapse of Kemal in the near future from lack of money. Officials are better off than those of the Central Government", warned Rumbold.

The Turkish situation as a whole, the High Commissioner believed, had become almost inextricable. If the Treaty of Sévres was still to be regarded as the basis of the future, the Allies had to be united and prepared to fight a new war on a large scale. If the treaty was to be modified, the way out might possibly be to make the Allies' displeasure with Greece excuse for a new territorial settlement, by giving controls over Turkey more palatable appearance while sacrificing as little as possible of their efficacy, by gradually building up, from Istanbul, a new position, with the Sultan as the corner-stone, and by giving him definite and whole-hearted assistance, with a view to the reconstruction of the administration on sound financial basis.

"I recommend that some such programme be employed, if only to avoid the alternative of being compelled presently to

¹² Ibid., document no. E 43: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 1, Istanbul, 1.1.1921.

recognise the Kemal Government, to which it is certainly not desirable that victorious Allies should go as suitors of peace", declared Rumbold.¹³

Towards the middle of April 1921, following the failure of the London Conference¹⁴ and the ensuing Greek advance in Anatolia,¹⁵ Rumbold began to express the hope that a more moderate party might evolve from the Nationalists in Anatolia and Istanbul, and acquire sufficient influence to dominate the movement as a whole. This hope, however, which was not very strong at best, was weakened by Greek military reverses.

"Nevertheless, if it is right to regard men like İzzet Pasha and Bekir Sami Bey as relatively moderate", Rumbold wrote to Curzon on 13 April, "it may be possible to promote their becoming, with others of the same way of thinking, the nucleus of a new movement, which would stand for an united Turkey, loyalty to the Sultan, or at least to the Throne, and a certain amount of give-and-take in the next stage of negotiations with the allies".¹⁶

But soon after, his hopes were dashed, as Bekir Sami, on his return to Ankara from London, was persuaded by Mustafa Kemal to resign for having failed, whilst in Europe, properly to interpret and voice the Ankara programme. Ahmet Muhtar, in the words of Rumbold, "a most undesirable person", was reported to have replaced Bekir Sami, but the press had stated that he would be provisionally succeeded by General Fevzi Pasha, the Commissioner for National Defence.¹⁷ "It is quite clear that the extremists at Angora (Ankara) have the upper hand, and that we must expect trouble from them", Rumbold wrote to Curzon.¹⁸

¹³ FO 371/6464/E 1006: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 43, Istanbul, 20.1.1921.

¹⁴ Sonyel, pp. 91 f.

¹⁵ Sonyel, pp. 105 ff.

¹⁶ FO 371/6468/E 4615: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 371, Istanbul, 13.4.1921.

¹⁷ Bekir Sami was actually replaced by Yusuf Kemal as Foreign Minister. Sonyel, p. 115.

¹⁸ FO 371/6470/E 5695: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 352A, Istanbul, 17.5.1921.

Rumbold also informed Curzon, on 25 April, that "the well-known Circassian leader" Ahmet Anzavur was ambushed by bands, and killed, a few days earlier, in the district of Karabiga.

"The part played by Ahmed Anzavur in combatting the Nationalist Movement will be known to your Lordship from the numerous previous reports", Rumbold cabled Curzon. "His movement collapsed many months ago, and he had ceased to be of much immediate importance, but his death is worth noting, as it deprives the anti-Kemalist Circassians of a leader of considerable natural ability... Since the collapse of Anzavur's organised movement, and the change of government here after Ferid Pasha's fall last October, they (the Circassians) have collaborated to some extent with the Greeks, but they are an unstable, turbulent, and disunited element".¹⁹

Meanwhile, a development that closely interested Rumbold was that the Greeks, with whose diplomatic representative, Votsis, Rumbold was intriguing,²⁰ were exploring the possibilities of encouraging the Kurds to give the Kemalists trouble on their eastern borders.

"Every scheme for reducing the Kemalists by force of arms had included vague plans for raising Kurdistan against them, and there has always been a certain number of Kurds, imbued with Kurdish national ideas, who have been anxious to see some such plan put into execution...", he reported secretly to Curzon on 11 May 1921.²¹

Besides, Rumbold believed that "a complete Greek victory would be less disastrous than a complete Nationalist victory" in Anatolia.²²

Two weeks later he informed Curzon that, on 25 May, Emin Ali, the head of the Bedirhan family, had called on Andrew Ryan of the British High Commission, with his son Celadet, who was one of the more active promoters of the Kurdish Movement. Emin Ali had said that, he and his

¹⁹ FO 371/6574/E 5226: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 416, Istanbul, 25.4.1921.

²⁰ FO 371/6475/E 10961 and E 10966: Rumbold to Curzon, confidential dispatch no. 892, Istanbul, 27.9.1921, and secret dispatch no. 898, 28.9.1921.

²¹ FO 371/6346/E 5713: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 476, Istanbul, 11.5.1921.

²² FO 371/6513/E 5926: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 493, Istanbul, 18.5.1921.

friends, had come into touch with the Greek representative in Istanbul, who had listened favourably to the suggestion of a Kurdish movement against the Kemalists, which would promote the interests of both Greece and Kurdish "nationalists", but that they could not proceed unless sanctioned by the British Government. Ryan had said that no encouragement could be given to the attempt to create a rising in Eastern Anatolia. Nevertheless, Rumbold asked Curzon to bear these proposals in mind, as they had been advanced so many times.

"A Kurdish movement would be a very difficult instrument to handle, but if the extremist tendencies of Angora (Ankara) should end in forcing Great Britain and France into a definite conflict with the Kemalists, the anti-Kemalist sections of the Kurdish race might possibly be turned to account", he declared.²³

Rumbold kept on returning to his favourite subject: the upholding of the authority of the Sultan. On 4 May he cabled Curzon as follows:

"(After the defeat of the Greek army in Western Anatolia)... if the Allies are forced by the triumph of the Extremists in Angora (Ankara), themselves, to join issue with the Kemalists, it will be to our interests to be able to appear as upholding the authority of the Sultan and the only legitimate Government. This contingency is only too possible. It is thus desirable that we should maintain the distinction between the Constantinople (Istanbul) and Angora (Ankara) Governments; that if the merger takes place, we should help to give it the appearance, at least, of the disappearance of the latter and the perpetuation of the Central Government under the Sultan; and that we should keep Constantinople (Istanbul) and the district occupied by us, outside the area of hostilities between the Greeks and the Kemalists. I am not disregarding the fact that the Greeks stand between us and the Kemalists, and that any disaster to the Greeks must greatly increase our own difficulties in dealing with the Angora (Ankara) leaders..."²⁴

²³ FO 371/6346/E 6215: Rumbold to Curzon, confidential dispatch no. 521, Istanbul, 25.5.1921.

²⁴ FO 371/6511/E 5263: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 325, Istanbul, 4.5.1921.

Rumbold's Sultano-philia had become almost a legend. On 25 May he wrote to Curzon that he was received in private audience by the Sultan before his departure from Istanbul on his annual leave. He wished to seize the opportunity of being received by the Sultan independently of his colleagues, and to mark the fact that "His Majesty's Government regard the Sultan as a personage to be treated with consideration, and as still being the ultimate fount of authority in this country (Turkey)".²⁵

After the initial Greek military successes in Anatolia in July 1921,²⁶ Rumbold, who had returned to Istanbul early in August, delivered to the Sultan a message, which the British King had authorised him to give to Vahdettin, to the effect that His Majesty hoped that the Sultan would soon reign over an united Turkey at peace with her neighbours.²⁷ But soon after, the Greeks were routed at the Battle of Sakarya, and the growing hostility of the Kemalists towards the Grecophile British, forced Rumbold to write to Curzon on 16 September as follows:

"For the moment there are two Turkeys, one of which is under our control, and the other escapes our control. On the Constantinople (Istanbul) Government we can enforce the observance of the armistice; in the case of the Nationalist Government at Angora (Ankara) we cannot enforce it, unless we are prepared to use force at the centre, which is out of the question, I understand. The only form of force we could use against the Nationalists at the present moment would be a blockade of their ports. No doubt this would be an effective measure, which would hamper the Nationalists considerably ... It is certain that force alone will count with the Nationalist Government, until that Government, owing to its military and financial embarrassment, comes to the conclusion that, it is worth while to conciliate the British Government".²⁸

On 6 December he wrote to Curzon privately, advising against a British *rapprochement* with the Turkish Nationalists, similar to the French one

²⁵ FO 371/6470/E 6213: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 518, Istanbul, 25.5.1921.

²⁶ Sonyel, pp. 122 f.

²⁷ FO 371/6525/E 9286: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 742, Istanbul, 9.8.1921.

²⁸ FO 371/6530/E 10697: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 855 (7508/4070), Istanbul, 16.9.1921.

that had led to the signature of the Ankara Accord on 20 October 1921,²⁹ and observing:

“I have long realised that a settlement cannot be effected without bringing Angora (Ankara) into line, and that, as none of the Allies will, or can, fight the Kemalists, the settlement must be almost wholly favourable to the latter. If Greece were alone to suffer by this, it would not matter so much. She is incapable of holding extended territories in Asia Minor, except on a war footing. We have, however, our own interests to consider, and we have moral obligations, other than those to the Kurds and the Christians of the Mosul vilayet. I think we should still do what little we can to redeem our moral obligations, which are indeed obligations of honour, to the subject populations in the whole of the territory to be eventually left to Turkey”.

As to British interests, Rumbold believed that these required:

- “(1) That Turkey should not be a centre of pro-Islamic propaganda, and thereby a perpetual instigator of trouble in our Moslem dependencies in Egypt and Arabia;
- (2) that Turkey should not be able easily to attack us in Mesopotamia;
- (3) that the Straits should be left open; and
- (4) that Turkey should be a tolerable place for our nationals to live and do business in”.

He went on supporting the Sultan who, he believed, was “worth a great deal”. His influence was, for the time being, completely in abeyance, but the Sultanate was “too venerable an institution to lose its hold permanently on the mass of people...; if its influence revived, the present Sultan could be made a useful asset to us”.

Rumbold did not support the “theory” that Britain should treat with Mustafa Kemal.

“I know that this theory is not held in the F.O. (Foreign Office)”, he went on; “but it appears to be gaining hold on other departments and their advisers. I am not myself very

²⁹ Sonyel, pp. 135 f.

hopeful about the future here. It may be that we shall have to capitulate to the Kemalists. It may be that the Bolsheviks will install Enver as their viceroy at Angora (Ankara). For the moment I think we should continue to work on your own present lines of promoting mediation between the Greeks and the Turks, of seeking to get Constantinople (Istanbul) and Angora (Ankara) into double harness, and of harmonising all that has happened up to date, in a general settlement to which the two Turkish governments, and all the Allies, shall be parties".³⁰

Yet Rumbold had no hope that the "rulers at Angora" would accept any terms which fell substantially short of their National Pact. They were out, according to Rumbold, not merely for recovering Izmir and Thrace in complete sovereignty, but they were against real safeguards for minorities, the Capitulations, and any form of control, financial or otherwise. They were also for the right of the Turks to manage their own affairs, and against any idea of yielding to foreign pressure. He cabled Curzon on 15 January 1922, observing that, if the Allies offered a settlement much better than the Treaty of Sévres, but falling short of the National Pact, he believed that Mustafa Kemal would reject it; "but it might then be possible to offer it to the Sultan, on condition that he, with the moral support of the Allies, should appeal to the country to support it and get rid of Chauvinism", he remarked.

Rumbold's Sultano-mania and Kemalo-phobia this time did not escape the notice of the British Foreign Office officials, and on 17 January D. G. Osborne commented thereon as follows:

"... It is significant that, while here Sir H. Rumbold speaks of signs of disintegration at Angora (Ankara), the Sultan thinks the time is at hand to *'passer en activité'*, and asserts himself against the Nationalists. We have, here, once more, the suggestion that the Sultan should ratify a treaty and then appeal to Anatolia. But if this appeal should fail, we have no means of enforcing the treaty outside the Constantinople (Istanbul) area, and the Nationalist army is still a danger to the Greeks and ourselves. As circumstances are at present, there-

³⁰ FO 371/6480/E 13810: Rumbold to Curzon, private letter, Istanbul, 6.12.1921.

fore, we cannot gamble on a peace with the Sultan alone, but must come to a settlement with Kemal. But circumstances may change".³¹

It is interesting to note here that, on 13 January 1922 Rumbold had received a message purporting to come from the Sultan, saying that he believed the time had come to "*passer en activit *", and that he would like to see Rumbold; his idea being, according to the bearer of the message, to secure the moral support of Britain, and substitute his authority for that of Ankara. The message was brought by the Sultan's nephew Prince Sami, whom Rumbold described as "less balanced than his step-father Ferit Pasha, and much involved with politicians whose dream is to bring the latter back to power".³²

By this time Rumbold's Turco-phobia had reached its zenith. "The Turks are a very irritating people to deal with", he wrote to Carton de Wiart on 20 December 1921. "They have even less political instinct than the Poles".³³ Rumbold's pessimistic attitude had arisen from his belief that, "the Kemalist Turk", as he wrote to Findlay, his colleague of Cairo days, on 13 October 1922, was "inspired by blind chauvinism, hates all foreigners, and thinks that he can run his country himself, without any foreign intervention".³⁴

To Hamit Bey, the Kemalist representative in Istanbul, who went to see him on 19 January 1922, Rumbold said that the Turco-Greek conflict in Anatolia had reached an *impasse*. There was only one way out, and that was that both sides should make sacrifices. Neither side could hope to get all it was out for. When Hamit replied that the Turks had already made the utmost sacrifices possible, Rumbold retorted that these "so-called sacrifices" were the result of the Great War in which Turkey had been beaten. If the Turks stood out for the integral acceptance of the National Pact, it would be difficult to bring about peace. Were the Turks prepared to go on fighting until they had realised all the conditions of

³¹ FO 371/7853/E 589: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 27, Istanbul, 15.1.1922.

³² Ibid., document no. E 676: Rumbold to Curzon, personal and secret cipher telegram, Istanbul, 15.1.1922.

³³ Martin Gilbert: *Sir Horace Rumbold: a portrait of a Diplomat*, London 1973, p. 246.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 276.

their National Pact; and could their army eject the Greeks from Asia Minor, he asked Hamit, who, according to Rumbold, was depressed at the prospect of a resumption of hostilities, and replied, "half-heartedly", that he thought the Nationalist army could drive the Greeks out of Asia Minor. Rumbold said that, even if the hostilities were renewed in the spring, and continued throughout the summer, the Near Eastern question would be no nearer solution. The only result would be that both belligerents would be completely ruined. He did not neglect to impress upon Hamit that, throughout their conversation, he had been expressing personal opinions.³⁵

In February 1922 when Yusuf Kemal, the Foreign Minister of the Ankara Government, passed through Istanbul on his way to Europe to plead the Turkish case, Rumbold described him as "a smallish man of about 50 years of age. He was dressed with great care. His right hand has been injured. He speaks French fluently. His demeanour throughout the conversation was very quiet. He expressed himself temperately and in marked contrast with the tone of his communications to the High Commissioners". The impression Rumbold had derived from the interview he had with him was that Yusuf Kemal was beginning to appreciate some of the difficulties in the way of the full realisation of the National Pact. "I think he will realise these difficulties more and more as he gets further away from Angora (Ankara) and establishes contact with the Allied Governments", he reported to Curzon on 18 February.³⁶

On 7 March he transmitted the translations of the photo-copies of six documents, which an A.D.C. of the Sultan had sent to the acting first dragoman of the British High Commission, the day before. These documents were stated to have been abstracted from the baggage of Kemal Bey, the secretary of Yusuf Kemal's mission, which had recently left Istanbul for Paris, to have been photographed, and then replaced, during a two-days' absence of Kemal Bey from his father-in-law's house where he was staying. "While I cannot, of course, guarantee that these documents are genuine, they appear to me, on the face of them, to be not improbably so", commented Rumbold.³⁷

³⁵ FO 371/7854/E 1100: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 83, Istanbul, 21.1.1922.

³⁶ FO 371/7856/E 2225: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 185, Istanbul, 18.2.1922.

³⁷ FO 371/7857/E 2757: Rumbold to Curzon, secret dispatch no. 232, Istanbul, 7.3.1922.

About a week later, in the course of a conversation with Tevfik Pasha, the Grand Vezir, Rumbold said, it looked that Mustafa Kemal was more than ever counting on the Soviet Government for support. Thereupon the Grand Vezir quoted the following Turkish proverb: "*Denize düşen yılanı sarılır*" (the person who falls into the sea cuddles a serpent), which Rumbold had it translated as "a drowning man clutches a serpent". The British High Commissioner pointed out that the serpent would probably bite Mustafa Kemal. The Grand Vezir then said that he had never been able to tolerate Bolshevik doctrines, and had always been apprehensive lest the Nationalists might commit themselves too far with the Bolsheviks.³⁸

When, early in the spring of 1922, the Allies decided to mediate between the belligerents in Anatolia, and in March they offered them an armistice,³⁹ Rumbold asked Grand Vezir Tevfik Pasha, on 1 April, when he visited him, how the Istanbul Government viewed the settlement proposed by the Allied Foreign Ministers. The Grand Vezir said that, whilst a very great step had been made towards the restoration of peace, the decision that the Greeks were to retain Adrianople (Edirne) gravely impaired the value of the proposed settlement in Turkish eyes. Thereupon Rumbold said that the Allied Governments had gone to the extreme limit in making their proposals. They were made unanimously, and must be looked on as a whole. The Allies could not give everything to the Turks and leave nothing to the Greeks. The war in Anatolia had reached a deadlock, the only issue from which was a reasonable compromise. He did not believe that the Nationalist Army could drive the Greeks out of Asia Minor any more than that the Greek Army could achieve a complete victory over the Nationalist Forces.⁴⁰

In May Rumbold noticed that Mustafa Kemal had "a good deal of opposition to content with, and he is said to be unpopular with a large number of officers in the Army", but he nevertheless appeared to dominate the situation. There was no indication that any important section of politicians at Ankara were disposed to weaken on the National Pact.

³⁸ FO 371/7856/E 3036: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 255, Istanbul, 13.3.1922.

³⁹ Sonyel, pp. 161 f.

⁴⁰ FO 371/7860/E 3776: Rumbold to Curzon, secret dispatch no. 326, Istanbul, 3.4.1922.

"The Kemalists", Rumbold wrote to Curzon on 1 May 1922, "appear to have inherited the capacity of the C.U.P. (Committee of Union and Progress) for sinking differences whenever it is necessary for the accomplishment of their main purpose. I do not consider that it would be safe to found any hope of an early collapse of the Turkish resistance to the latest Allied peace terms on internal dissension at Angora (Ankara)... Mustafa Kemal has shown, throughout the last three years, a great capacity for pulling his movement together at critical moments. The sound conclusion appears to me to be that, if military operations of a serious kind should be resumed, neither the Greek nor the Turk is assured of success, and the result of a campaign this summer, while uncertain as regards its effect on the military equilibrium, would almost certainly be as inconclusive as that of the last year".⁴¹

On the other hand, the Istanbul government was still too impotent to dare sign away anything considerable, so long as the Kemalist organisation remained in being. Although the Ankara government, according to Rumbold, was subjected to "great internal strain", and Mustafa Kemal's personal ascendancy had been much shaken, whilst the opposition in the Grand National Assembly and the Army appeared to be growing, there was no indication yet that these internal dissensions meant that any party at Ankara was ready to weaken on the National Pact.

"If Mustafa Kemal goes under - (a contingency which must now be reckoned on, though not counted upon)", observed Rumbold, "the possible candidates for the reversion of his authority are: 1. the Enverists, 2. the old leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, and 3. the Sultan... From our point of view, the development still most to be desired is that the Sultan should regain some real authority, but the chances of his doing so are slight, so long as he is unable to obtain the backing of Great Britain, or the Allies, or to tell his people that, if they trust themselves to him, he can obtain what the average Turk considers essential to reasonable

⁴¹ FO 371/7863/E 4700: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 408, Istanbul, 1.5.1922.

peace, i.e. elimination of the Greeks, both from Asia Minor and Eastern Thrace".⁴²

However, despite Rumbold's erroneous pontifications about the impotence of the Turkish Nationalist Army to eject the Greek Army from Anatolia, when the Greeks suffered a fatal defeat at the hands of the Kemalists, late in August and early in September 1922,⁴³ he wrote to Lancelot Oliphant, assistant secretary at the British Foreign Office, as follows:

"... There are many here, including the British community, who would have been pleased to have seen the Turk get a real knock at the beginning, even if we had difficulties later. I believe if the Turks had tried to take us on, and had got a bad knock at the start, the chances were even that they would have thrown up the sponge".

On 23 October he wrote to Lord Stamfordham (the King's secretary):

"There is only one thing at which they (the Turks) are any good, and that is fighting, and from that point of view, I am afraid that the trouble we have averted now is only trouble deferred, for the Turk, once back in Europe, may well be the author of another Balkan war in two or three years' time. He will begin by trying to get Western Thrace".⁴⁴

Rumbold also hastened to inform Curzon on 4 September that, he recognised the claim which the Greeks had to British consideration, but he did not think that the sympathy with them should blind the British to the fact that, if their collapse was complete, the whole position of the British Government in regard to the settlement in the Near East was endangered. The hurried evacuation of Asia Minor alone, which then seemed inevitable, involved dangers to the British position at Istanbul and in Mesopotamia. If the Greeks had to leave Eastern Thrace as well as Asia Minor, the British policy as regards the Straits would also be threatened

⁴² FO 371/7869/E 7790: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 335, Istanbul, 5.8.1922.

⁴³ Sonyel, pp. 169 f.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, *op. cit.*, p. 275.

with failure. Events were moving so rapidly that Rumbold believed the British Government should study immediately the possibility of a comprehensive balance between the British and the Kemalists.

“The collapse of the Greeks may place us in the situation in which the only alternatives of His Majesty’s Government would be complete surrender to the Kemalists backed by the French, or strong independent action. I have in mind the possibility of such action as occupying the Gallipoli Peninsula”, he suggested.⁴⁵

In a private and secret cipher telegram dated 14 October and addressed to Lord Curzon after the Chanak (Çanakkale) crisis and the signature of the Armistice of Mudanya,⁴⁶ he called on the British Foreign Secretary to prevent any reduction, previous to the conclusion of peace, in the British military, naval or air forces in the Dardanelles and at Istanbul. The British Admiral and General Harington shared his view, he claimed, and went on to observe that the ultimate factor, which had brought the Turks to reason at Mudanya, was the British display of force, and their knowledge that the British would use it in the last resort. He remarked:

“No reliance whatever can be placed in Turkish assurances, and we cannot count on the vigorous support of our Allies in resisting Turkish pretensions at the conference. The Turks know perfectly well that France and Italy will not break with them on any account, and will make full use of this knowledge at the conference. Their position will still be stronger than it was at Mudania, owing to the foothold they obtained in Thrace, and to the withdrawal of the Greek forces out of striking distance. The chief card in our hand at the conference will be the presence of the British forces of occupation”.⁴⁷

Two weeks later, when he learnt that İsmet Pasha was elected Minister of Foreign Affairs in Ankara and would “almost certainly” be the head

⁴⁵ FO 371/7885/E 8873: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 379, very urgent, Istanbul, 4.9.1922.

⁴⁶ Sonyel, pp. 173 f.

⁴⁷ FO 371/7903/E 11094: Rumbold to Curzon, cipher telegram no. 564, private and secret, Istanbul, 14.10.1922.

of the Ankara delegation at the forthcoming Lausanne Conference, he found this news as "not reassuring". "It portends sabreing at the conference. İsmet's attitude at Mudania was most intractable until the last day when some concessions were reluctantly made under instruction from Angora (Ankara). If he goes to the conference, he may attempt to play the role of Hoffman at Brest-Litovsk. His extreme deafness adds to the difficulty of discussion", Rumbold reported to Curzon on 28 October.⁴⁸

He also wrote to Lord Stamfordham on 13 November as follows:

"A swollen-headed Turk is a dreadful person to deal with, and I have no wish to stay here under the Kemalist regime. My colleagues and I are agreed in thinking that, our Government would be wise to transfer us elsewhere, after the signature of peace".

He was bitter about the British press which had so readily supported the Turkish Nationalist cause. He particularly took to task *The Morning Post* and *The Daily Mail*.⁴⁹

When the Lausanne Conference, which Rumbold attended as the second British delegate after Curzon,⁵⁰ was approaching a breaking point in January 1923, Rumbold made a speech on 6 January at the sub-commission on minorities, advancing suggestions for the creation of an Armenian "National Home", and appealing for Turkish assistance in facilitating the repatriation of the Assyrians.⁵¹ Thereupon Turkish delegate Dr. Rıza Nur caused a furore by insisting on speaking before the French delegate, and then refused to accept any discussion of these questions, and left the room abruptly. The president complained to İsmet Pasha about him, who said it was, "all a misunderstanding".⁵²

Rumbold's method throughout the negotiations was, when difficulties threatened, to talk directly to İsmet Pasha. On 11 January he wrote to Lord Stamfordham that the Turks had made "heavy demands on our pa-

⁴⁸ FO 371/7907/E 11757: Rumbold to Curzon, coded telegram no. 631, Istanbul, 28.10.1922.

⁴⁹ Gilbert, pp. 277-8.

⁵⁰ FO 371/7967/E 14346: List of the British Delegation at Lausanne.

⁵¹ FO 371/9858/E 467: Speech by Rumbold on 6.1.1923.

⁵² FO 371/9059/E 598: Foreign Office to Nevile Henderson, cipher telegram no. 68, London, 11.1.1923.

tience and good temper", particularly in the case of the Patriarchate remaining in Istanbul. İsmet was not difficult to deal with, but the second Turkish delegate, Dr. Rıza Nur, "has no pretensions to being a gentleman, and easily loses his temper", Rumbold remarked.⁵³

On 16 January he wrote to Nevile Henderson, the British acting High Commissioner in Istanbul, of what he termed a "great humiliation" that was about to take place: the British delegation had been invited to dine with the Turks. Rumbold had told Curzon early in the conference that he had never asked a Turk inside his house whilst he was at Istanbul. But the French "have let us down", he remarked. They and the Turks shared the same hotel, and began by asking the Turks to dinner. The Italians followed suit, with the result that Lord Curzon had to ask the Turks to a "big dinner". This, he did, without consulting Rumbold, with the result that Rumbold was "extremely vexed at having to dine with the Turks".

"But there is no alternative", he remarked, and went on, "and thus we have the ridiculous spectacle of an exchange of hospitality with the people with whom we are trying to make peace, and with whom a rupture is possible. It is repugnant to me to think my wife may be taken in to dinner by a man like Rıza Nour. It is very disgusting".

Henderson replied on 23 January that he hoped "the food was good, even if the humiliation was great".⁵⁴

When the Lausanne Conference broke down and İsmet Pasha returned to Ankara, Rumbold wrote to Henderson on 30 January:

"I have never run up against such a lot of pig-headed, stupid and irritating people in my life... In our opinion it would be political disaster to leave Constantinople (Istanbul) under Turkish pressure. There must be no bowing to threats: British soldiers must be protected, and Britain's position kept secure. We would welcome a little display of energy".

Henderson, on the other hand, advocated a serious show of force. He wrote to Rumbold on 30 January:

⁵³ Gilbert, p. 282.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

“The quickest way to get peace is to show the Turks that we really are ready to go to war. Arguments and reasoning mean nothing to them, but the certainty that England, however reluctant, is prepared to fight them again, would convince them (that) they must sign”.⁵⁵

Rumbold detested Istanbul, and wrote to his daughter Constantia, from Britain, on 13 February 1923:

“It’s an awful bore having to go back to Constantinople (Istanbul), but it can’t be helped, and we must hope that we shan’t have to be away for long, for these wretched Turks must make up their minds, in the next few weeks, whether they want peace or war”.⁵⁶

On 27 February he wrote to Lord Newton:

“It is impossible to say what the fanatics and wildmen of Angora (Ankara) will do. They have got a wonderful treaty, and if they were wise, they would accept it at once, but the Turk is an extraordinary fool, and often seems incapable of seeing which way his bread is buttered...”.⁵⁷

Rumbold believed that Mustafa Kemal, “who is a real statesman”, he wrote to Sir Reginald Wingate on 27 February, “would influence the Grand National Assembly in favour of moderation, and that the Lausanne negotiations would be resumed. But the Turk is a post-master of the art of spinning out matters, and it may be several weeks, or even two months, before the final settlement is reached, even supposing we get a settlement”.⁵⁸

When the Kemalists were debating, in the Grand National Assembly, the possibility of the resumption of the conference, Rumbold wrote to Lancelot Oliphant, on 5 March:

“It seems to me absolutely incumbent on everybody concerned to take care that the renewed discussions lead to the

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 284.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 285.

signature of the treaty. Nobody could afford a second failure... All the ignorant gasbags at Angora (Ankara) are having a run for their money. When you come to think of it, it does seem ridiculous that a small nation of seven million or so inhabitants should be keeping the whole world on tenterhooks. The soldiers and sailors here are bored stiff, and their one wish is to get away".⁵⁹

After the Turks delivered to the Allies their counter-proposals, and accepted to resume the negotiations, Rumbold wrote to Lord Stamfordham on 13 March, from Istanbul, praising the speed at which the Turks had produced their counter-proposals, commenting formally on both their speed and business-like form. He no longer anticipated even the "risk of war". The Turkish treaty could now be finalised in a month or so of discussion, he believed. On the same day he informed Curzon that Mustafa Kemal had made up his mind that peace was necessary, and intended, if it was secured, to proceed with his projects of internal reconstruction.

"If peace is concluded", Rumbold pointed out, "it will be followed by a violent internal struggle between the Kemalists and anti Kemalists, and both sides are already playing for position... These struggles... will tend to weaken a very arrogant Turkey, and as the conclusion of peace will drive a wedge between Turkey as a whole and the Bolsheviks, whatever party comes out of the internal struggle uppermost, will probably be a little more inclined than it might otherwise be to treat the Allied Powers with consideration. I do not really anticipate a really friendly attitude on the part of any dominant party in Turkey, for a long time to come, but we shall be treated with respect".⁶⁰

During his last month in Istanbul Rumbold spent the time "working off colleagues at a succession of meals", as he wrote to his daughter on 28 March. He was appalled at the attitude which many of these "colleagues" had adopted towards the Nationalist representative in the city.

⁵⁹ FO 371/9069/E 2630: Rumbold to Lancelot Oliphant, private letter, Istanbul, 5.3.1923.

⁶⁰ FO 371/9071/E 2920: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 160, Istanbul, 13.3.1923.

“The way some of the foreign representatives fawn on Adnan is sickening”, he wrote to Oliphant on 26 March. “The other day the Swedish Minister (Gustav Oscar Wallenberg), an oily and thoroughly untrustworthy person, gave a dinner in Adnan’s honour. Our old friend (Mark) Bristol (of the USA) was present, and was sent in after Adnan. This did not, however, prevent him from competing with his host in licking Adnan’s boots. Such flattery is very bad for the Turks, particularly when coming from Admiral Bristol”.

“The Americans make me sick”, he wrote to Oliphant on 2 April, “they talk big to one’s face, and pretend to help one, and then go behind one’s back. At the conference, they once, or twice, tried to get us to adopt certain suggestions of their own, with regard to the Minorities and the Armenian National Home. When I asked if they were prepared to press their suggestions themselves, they replied in the negative. As they had no standing on the green, I refused to be their instrument”.⁶¹

As the resumption of the conference was approaching, Rumbold wrote to Curzon, on 16 April, that he had been informed from a few “good sources” that the Turks were entering the renewed conference at Lausanne in confident expectation of obtaining all the demands they had put forward in their counter-proposals. They had proclaimed that these counter-proposals were their last word,

“but anyone acquainted with the methods of the bazaar knows what value to attach to the phrase ‘last word’”, remarked Rumbold, who observed that “the egregious Riza Nour is to be a member of the Turkish Delegation, which apparently is to consist of the same experts as were present in the first conference, including Zekai Bey, of whose attitude it was necessary to complain early in the conference. It is a pity that the Turks have included these two persons in their Delegation”.⁶²

Two weeks earlier, Rumbold, who was asked by Curzon to head the British delegation, had already written to Sir Eyre Crowe, permanent under-secretary at the British Foreign Office, as follows:

⁶¹ Gilbert, p. 287.

⁶² FO 371/9074/E 4092: Rumbold to Curzon, dispatch no. 226, Istanbul, 16.4.1923.

"I have no intention to travel with İsmet and his phalanx of wild men from Angora (Ankara)".

He set off for Lausanne on 19 April, after having written to Sir Percy Loraine, the British Minister in Teheran, three days earlier, as follows:

"We must really try and fix up peace this time, but the Nationalist Turk is a difficult man to deal with, and the Turkish Delegation consists entirely of backwoodsmen, who have no pretensions to being gentlemen, and are entirely devoid of the courteous manner of the old-fashioned Turk".

The self-confidence of the Nationalists did not please him. "An uppish oriental", he told Loraine, "is an unpleasant animal".⁶³

Following the inauguration of the second part of the conference, on 23 April, Rumbold telegraphed Curzon his general impression of İsmet Pasha's attitude, which was corroborated by what French delegate General Pellé gathered, and which was that İsmet Pasha was determined to get peace, as he felt that he could not return to Ankara empty-handed for the second time. "İsmet struck me as being very preoccupied", Rumbold remarked.⁶⁴ Two days later he repeated his observations to Henderson, adding: "İsmet is frightfully keen to get peace - and an early peace". İsmet's keenness, he wrote to Lord Stamfordham on 5 May, was "the best guarantee of our success".⁶⁵

Rumbold's work was made easier, throughout the negotiations, because the British Intelligence Service had succeeded in intercepting İsmet Pasha's instructions from Ankara. He therefore knew at which point the Turkish delegation was instructed to break off the negotiations. On 18 July, when the conference had ended, he wrote to Lancelot Oliphant that, "the information we obtained at psychological moments, from secret sources, was invaluable to us, and put us in a position of a man who is playing Bridge and knows the cards in his adversary's hand".⁶⁶

⁶³ Gilbert, pp. 288-9

⁶⁴ FO 371/9075/E 4148: Rumbold to Curzon, telegram by bag, no. 5, Lausanne, 23.4.1923.

⁶⁵ Gilbert, p. 289.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 290.

Towards the end of the conference the question of the legal safeguards for foreigners could not be resolved.

“Ismet was too irritating and tiresome for words this morning”, Rumbold wrote to Henderson on 29 May. “He is afflicted with a dreadful cough, and his deafness, added to his limited intelligence, makes it a work of almost superhuman difficulty to get him to understand any argument at all... True to type, the Turks tried to go back yesterday on what they had agreed to on Saturday. There are times when I wish I could plunge the whole Turkish Delegation into the lake and have done with it”.⁶⁷

“At a private meeting with the Turks last Saturday”, he wrote to Henderson on 5 June, “I let off steam, and unburdened myself of some home truths, which I had long contemplated telling the Turks. Too often, I told them, their methods were those of the bazaar”.

Rumbold, however, claimed to have understood İsmet Pasha’s difficulties.

“He is between the hammer and the anvil”, he explained to General Harington on 5 June, “and it must be dreadful to have to serve such an ignorant crowd as those at Angora (Ankara). Although Ismet is the pick of a very moderate bunch of Turks, he is always trying it on himself, and one sometimes has great difficulty in keeping one’s temper with him”.

At one private meeting Rumbold told İsmet Pasha that it was “quite obvious to us that he was being hunted by his own Government”, and suggested that he should tell the authorities at Ankara “to keep quiet”. On another occasion, having, as he explained to Henderson on 12 June, “put the wind up the Turks”, he noticed that Ismet’s hand “was quite damp”. The whole Turkish delegation, he added, “are afraid of the noose, whichever way matters go here. The real villains of the piece are at Angora (Ankara)...”.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 291.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

Meanwhile, the unconfirmed pre-war concessions of the Allies, in the Ottoman Empire, had constituted the last stumbling block to the conclusion of peace. The Turks, assisted by the Americans, pressed the Allies to drop clause 2 of the draft treaty, connected with these concessions, in consideration for an assurance that private negotiations in Ankara were proceeding satisfactorily. Over the question of these concessions, which conflicted with the American Chester concession granted by the Turkish Government to the Americans, the conference almost broke down again; but on 17 July the Allies made further concessions, and surrendered to the American policy of "open door".

İsmet Pasha refused to recognise the Turkish Petroleum Company, which conflicted with the Chester project. Tired, obstinate, and frightened by his instructions, he held out. He was instructed by Mustafa Kemal that, if the Allies did not accept the last Turkish proposals, the conference should be ruptured, and the delegation should return to Ankara. Turkey had the power "to impose her will by force of arms". The Turkish army was "ready and impatient". The Turkish people were "absolutely fed up and can wait no longer".⁶⁹ Of this Turkish attitude Rumbold was aware. He decided to drop all mention of the Turkish Petroleum Company in order to secure a settlement. His action, which dissatisfied Curzon, Oliphant described as "a sad capitulation to the Turkish General".⁷⁰

As the complex negotiations neared the end, Rumbold wrote to Henderson on 10 July:

"None of us pretend that the Treaty is a glorious instrument. It is nothing of the kind, but as we had to make bricks without straw, it has been the best we could to".

He wrote, in exasperation, on 23 July, to his friend John Lawrence Baird, Minister of Transport: "We ought to have gone for the Turks at the time of the Chanak business and bombed Angora (Ankara) with all its gas-bags".⁷¹

⁶⁹ Sonyel, p. 225.

⁷⁰ *Confidential Print* (CP) No. 110: Curzon to Rumbold, Foreign Office, London, telegram, 18.7.1923, and minutes by D.G. Osborne and Lancelot Oliphant, 18.7.1923 in FO 371/9087/E 7399.

⁷¹ Gilbert, p. 297.

After the signature of the Treaty of Lausanne, Rumbold set off for London. Stanley Baldwin, the Prime Minister, wrote to him on 25 July:

“Not only as Prime Minister, but also as an old schoolfellow at Hawtrey’s, I send you a line of welcome on your return home, to express my warm appreciation of the infinite patience you have shewn, and the great skill you have displayed in an impossible situation”.

Even Lord Curzon was mollified by the final result: “You have, indeed, earned all our gratitude”, he wrote that same day, “by your patience, good temper, perseverance, and unfailing resource”.⁷²

Nevertheless, the glory of Lausanne belonged, not to Sir Horace Rumbold, but to İsmet Pasha, for his patient diplomacy, and to Mustafa Kemal, the creator and successful leader of the Turkish Liberation Movement. It was not surprising, therefore, that the Treaty of Lausanne was generally acclaimed as the greatest diplomatic victory of Nationalist Turkey.⁷³

⁷² Ibid., p. 298.

⁷³ Edward Reginald Vere-Hodge: *Turkish Foreign Policy, 1918-48*, Ambilly-Annemasse 1950, p. 46; Henry H. Cumming: *Franco-British rivalry in the postwar Near East*, London 1938, p. 186; *Le Temps*, 18.7.1923; *The Times*, 28.7.1923.