

# **AN EVALUATION OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE'S ENTRY INTO THE WORLD WAR**

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## **I. INTRODUCTION**

The First World War years is the only period of direct state of war in History between the Turks and the British. This was, it seemed, the end of the centuries -old Turco- British friendship.

Was the Ottoman decision to enter the War on the opposite side of the British, a Turkish error? Or was it an objective necessity? Or was it both?

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the main factors that affected the Ottoman decision. This will be an evaluation also of whether the Ottoman entry into the War was a real parting of the ways between the Turks and the British.

## **II. THE ROLE OF THE GENERAL FACTORS UPON THE OTTOMAN DECISION**

Bi -polarity in international relations from late- XIX. century onwards, was a major factor that eventually affected Ottoman policy as well. All the major parties of both blocs were interested in the Ottoman Near East. In addition to rivalry in the Near East among Britain, France, Russia and Germany; there was a Russo-Austrian struggle in yet another Ottoman piece of territory, namely the Balkans. Ever since the XVII. century, the Turks were in a state of continuous retreat from the innermost of the continent of Europe. The developments from late-XIX. century onwards now faced the Turks with the danger of an out-and-out withdrawal from the continent of Europe.

### III. THE ROLE OF THE PARTICULAR FACTORS UPON THE OTTOMAN DECISION

#### A. External Factors

##### 1. Fear of Isolation

The Ottomans were well aware of the danger facing the Empire. It was inevitable, for a decaying power like the Ottoman Empire, to seek the alliance of any one of the two power blocs. This was also in line with the Ottoman "policy of balance" from the beginning of the XIX. century onwards, which was based upon friendship with one great power against the other ones.

Especially after the Balkan Wars of 1912-13, Ottoman sensitivity regarding alliance with a power bloc, increased even further.

##### 2. Choice Between Triple Entente and Triple Alliance

The Ottoman decision to ally itself with the Triple Alliance, was the outcome of a general trend in its relations with each one the Entente powers, from late-XIX. century onwards :

###### a. The Russian Factor

Russo-Turkish enmity was a major barrier to Ottoman alliance with the Triple Entente. However, as it will be mentioned again, the Ottoman Government will make efforts towards an alliance with Russia even at the very last moment. However, this was against the very nature of affairs, given the increasing determination of Petrograd to deliver a final blow upon "the Sick Man of Europe".

###### b. The British Factor

The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878 marked a turning-point in Turco-British relations. Realising the danger of a sudden Ottoman collapse in the hands of Russia, which would be a fatal threat against British interests in the Near East, Britain turned to a policy different than its former policy<sup>1</sup> of protecting the territorial integrity of the

<sup>1</sup> See: Frank Edgar Bailey, *British Policy and the Turkish Reform Movement, A Study in Anglo-Turkish Relations, 1826-1853*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1942, pp. 115 and 232; Rifki Salim Burçak, *Türk-Rus-İngiliz Münasebetleri, 1791-1941*, İstanbul, 1946, pp. 11-13 and Elie Kedourie, *England and the Middle East, The Destruction of the Ottoman Empire, 1914-1921*, Bowes-Bowes, London, 1956, p. 29.

Ottoman Empire against Russia. Britain first established its rule in Cyprus<sup>2</sup> in 1878 and later in Egypt in 1882.

As British interest in the Near East (and the Arab world) deepened—especially after the Suez Canal was opened in 1869<sup>3</sup>—it was inevitable that British friendship with the decaying power in Istanbul should lose ground. As the traditionally anti-Turkish Liberal Party came to power in 1880, change in British policy became even more evident.

The Pan-Islamic propaganda launched by Sultan Abdulhamid II, whose disenchantment with the British since the Russo-Turkish war led to his use of the weapon of pan-Islamism and the caliphate to embarrass them in India<sup>4</sup>.

The Russo-British alliance of 1907 was yet another blow to any prospects of an Ottoman accession to the Triple Entente. It was, on the other hand, an extremely serious threat against the very existence of the Ottoman Empire. This was the materialisation of the ominous threat Prime Minister Lord Salisbury had expressed in his letter to the Grand Vizier Sait Pasha in June 1895: "General feeling [in Britain] is increasingly to the effect that the Ottoman Empire will not continue to exist. What contributes to the existence of the Ottoman Empire, is the fact that Britain is not allied with Russia. If an alliance comes out, the Ottoman Empire will perish<sup>5</sup>."

### c. The French Factor

France, too, had an increasing interest in the Near East from the XIX. century onwards. Although, this meant a rivalry between Britain and France on the one hand, and between Russia and France on the other, it nevertheless was yet another element of discomfort for the Ottoman Empire. What is more, the conclusion of the Triple Entente manifested that the Ottomans could not lay much hope on

<sup>2</sup> Britain had considered other alternatives like Mohammerah and Alexandretta. However, the former was not considered strategically satisfactory and the latter was also discarded due to the sensitivity of the French. For other reasons (and alternatives like Crete), see: Ram Lakhan Shukla, *Britain, India and the Turkish Empire, 1853-1882*, People's Publishing House, New Delhi, 1973, pp. 69-77 and 78ff.

<sup>3</sup> Bailey, *op. cit.*, p. 40.

<sup>4</sup> Shukla, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

<sup>5</sup> Enver Ziya Karal, *Osmanlı Tarihi, Cilt VIII: Birinci Meşrutiyet ve İstibdat Devirleri, 1876-1907*, Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayını, XIII, Seri, No. 16, Ankara, 1962, p. 139.

the rivalry among Britain, France and Russia. The Triple Entente was, so to speak, also a common front against the Ottoman Empire.

#### d. The German Factor

Thus, alliance with Germany was Hobson's choice for the Ottoman Empire. Indeed, Kaiser Wilhelm II's policy, also turning towards the Near East, was a ray of hope for the Ottomans. Although this was yet another element of threat against the Ottoman Empire, as indeed the Ottomans were aware, at times, of German designs and even intrigues<sup>6</sup>—like in the case of the 1909 incidents in Cilicia—nevertheless, Germany was still regarded as the only hope in the power balance against the other Great Powers.

Turco-German cooperation in the construction of the Bagdad Railway, heralded the future position of the Ottoman Empire in the World War looming ahead.

### B. Internal Factors

In parallel with the re-orientation of Ottoman foreign policy, internal developments, too, favoured a rapprochement with Germany:

As Germany's ties with the Ottoman Empire strengthened from late-1880's onwards, Sultan Abdulhamid II's authoritarian rule was yet another factor that presented a barrier against good relations with Britain, and France, for that matter. The Sultan was extremely unpopular in Western liberal circles.

The proclamation of the Second Constitutional Rule in 1908 might be considered to herald a new lease of life in Turco-British relations. What is more, with the dethronement of the Sultan—the *bête noire* of Britain and France—a year later; prospects for a rapprochement with the West seemed even greater.

The liberal values of the Union and Progress—which was the real power in Istanbul right from 1908 onwards—might prove to be a bridge between the Turks and the West. However, this was only part of the matter.

Although it is true that the rise to power of the Union and Progress aroused some hope in Britain as well; as indeed was manifested

<sup>6</sup> Frank G. Weber, *Eagles on the Crescent, Germany, Austria and the Diplomacy of the Turkish Alliance, 1914-1918*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1970, pp. 20ff.

by a rapid development in relations with the Ottoman Empire, this was doomed to be only of short duration<sup>7</sup>:

First, as the Union and Progress, which had ended the authoritarian rule of Sultan Abdulhamid II, turned towards heavy-handed measures itself, initial sympathy in Britain soon lost ground. Britain soon began to believe that the Young Turks were no different than the Old Turks<sup>8</sup>. Moreover, the developments towards constitutional rule in Istanbul might set a dangerous precedent for the Muslim subjects of Britain and France elsewhere in the Near East and Africa<sup>9</sup>.

Secondly, although some elements within the Union and Progress had pro-British and pro-French tendencies; more influential figures like the War Minister Enver Pasha —the rising star of the régime— were known to have pro-German leanings.

It will be mentioned further below that German influence in Istanbul increased rapidly soon afterwards.

Last but not least, was the general trend of affairs which had—as mentioned earlier— drifted the Turks and the West apart. The yawning gap in relations with the Triple Entente powers was the outcome of profound reasons not to be changed by rather short-lived and outward developments in only one of the so many factors.

Thus, from 1910 onwards, Turco-British relations began to deteriorate rapidly. The following document is an open manifestation of this trend:

Mr. Marling, in his report<sup>10</sup> to Sir Edward Grey, which he sent from Istanbul on December 20th, 1910, said that the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs Rifat Pasha, in the course of an interview, stated that the “warm sympathy which had been evoked in Great Britain by the re-establishment of the constitution had given place almost to disapproval.” Rifat Pasha, added also that Britain “appeared in particular to be unfriendly to the Committee.” Mr. Marling said in reply that “the feelings of England were as friendly as ever they had been but... that the course of events in Turkey had caused considerable

<sup>7</sup> See also: Feroz Ahmad, “1908-1914 Yılları Arasında Büyük Britanya'nın Jön Türklerle Münasebetleri”, *Tarih Enstitüsü Dergisi* (İ.Ü. Edebiyat Fakültesi), Sayı: 2 (Ekim 1971), pp. 153-180, *passim*.

<sup>8</sup> Philip P. Graves, *Briton and Turk*, Hutchinson-Co. Ltd., London, 1941, p. 136.

<sup>9</sup> See: Ali Kemal Meram, *Belgelerle Türk-İngiliz İlişkiler Tarihi*, Kıtış Yayınları, İstanbul, 1969, pp. 183-184.

<sup>10</sup> FO 371, Vol. 1017, Doc. No 46567.

disappointment in England." Mr. Marling went on to remark that "Great Britain was also disappointed that there had been no recognition of the very great services... rendered to Turkey in the early days of the régime, e.g. over the questions of independence of Bulgaria, and the Austrian annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, when without (British) support Turkey would never have obtained a single penny of the two large indemnities." Mr. Marling also stated that his representations in various cases "were not received with the friendly spirit (Britain) expect(s) to find in the Ottoman Government." "If there had been any change of sentiment, it was not on (the British) side, but on that of the Turks themselves..." Mr. Marling added.

The interview manifested differences of opinion on many other issues, too. It was clear that Britain's attitude towards Turkey was changing<sup>11</sup>.

#### IV. EVENTS THAT PRECIPITATED WAR AGAINST THE ENTENTE

##### A. The Role of the Tripolitan War

Italy, which was in fact a Triple Alliance power, was already in increasing familiarity with Britain and France from 1900 onwards.

Italian interest in the Eastern Mediterranean had also increased in the same years. Indeed, the Italian attack against Tripoli in 1911, faced the Ottoman Empire — as the owner of the territory — with yet another threat easy to be identified with the Triple Entente, despite an illusory membership of the Triple Alliance.

British policy towards the Turkish soundings for a close relationship with London during the Italian War, demonstrated the cooling atmosphere in Turco-British relations :

Indeed, when the Ottoman Ambassador in London proposed on October 31st, 1911 to the Foreign Office<sup>12</sup> either an alliance between Britain and the Ottoman Empire or an eventual Turkish participation in the Entente, the British reply<sup>13</sup> dated November 2nd, 1911, with all its elegance, manifested the gap between the two parties :

"...His Majesty's Government have declared and observed an attitude of strict neutrality in the

<sup>11</sup> Sir Edward Grey, in his reply to Mr. Marling (Foreign Office, January 13th, 1911) said: "...I approve the language you used to Rifaat Pasha..." *Idem*.

<sup>12</sup> FO 371, Vol. 1262, Doc. No. 43250 (File No. 43250).

<sup>13</sup> *Idem*.

state of war which has unhappily arisen between the Ottoman Empire and the Kingdom of Italy\*. This attitude is one from which His Majesty's Government cannot depart during the existence of hostilities, and they are therefore precluded from entering on any negotiations which the Imperial Ottoman Government may wish to initiate for the purpose of investing with a more formal and binding character and of extending to a wider scope the friendly relations happily existing between the Ottoman Empire and this country. His Majesty's Government would be happy as soon as the relations between the two belligerents have been restored to a normal and pacific footing, to discuss and examine with the Imperial Ottoman Government the measures which might be adopted for establishing on a firm and durable basis a thoroughly good understanding between the Ottoman Empire and this country..."

The British reply, with its highly diplomatic elegance, discarded the Turkish hopes for an alliance with Britain.

The Ottoman Government, however, resumed the topic once again on June 12th, 1913<sup>14</sup>. Sir Edward Grey's reply to the Turkish Ambassador, dated July 2nd, 1913<sup>15</sup>, was again evasive on the score of an alliance :

"...Your Highness is already well aware of the complete and sincere goodwill and sympathy felt for Turkey by the people of this country and by His Majesty's Government and of their strong desire to see tranquillity, order, justice, good government, and a sound financial system firmly established in the dominions of... the Sultan and

\* According to some British documents, "the fact that Italy was the only power which showed understanding to Britain in the Boer War"; and "that the British press welcomed the Italian action and sided with it" were among the reasons why Britain pursued a policy of neutrality in the Turco-Italian War. (From Sir R. Rodd to Sir E. Grey, September 30 th, 1911 and from Sir E. Grey to Sir R. Rodd, October 2nd, 1911) : Erol Ulubelen (Der.), *İngiliz Gizli Belgelerinde Türkiye*, Yaylacılık Matbaası, İstanbul, 1967, pp. 105-106.

<sup>14</sup> FO 371, Vol. 1826, Doc. No. 27117.

<sup>15</sup> *Idem.*

his authority consolidated throughout his Empire. His Majesty's Government feel convinced that these objects cannot be attained by a defensive alliance between Turkey and any one power alone but require for their realisation the whole-hearted cooperation of the Ottoman Government with the Governments of all the Great Powers, particularly of those who, like Great Britain, have special interests in the Turkish Empire, either by reason of their geographical position or of commercial enterprises in which their subjects are concerned there.

...it is my hope and the wish of His Majesty's Government that this policy, on the successful pursuit of which, I feel sure, the future strength and prosperity of the Ottoman Empire depends, may be adopted by all the Powers, with whom I intend to discuss it."

The Turkish hopes for an alliance with Britain were, it seemed, doomed to come to nothing<sup>16</sup>.

## B. The Role of the Balkan Wars

Neither the Entente Powers, nor Germany, for that matter, did anything to stand against the changes in the status of the European Turkey, the Balkan Wars of 1912-13 introduced. This, certainly, was against the spirit and the letter of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, which was a joint Anglo-Germano-Austrian achievement to save the Ottoman Empire.

Sir G. Lowther's dispatch from Istanbul to Sir Edward Grey, dated December 5th, 1912<sup>17</sup>, made the following evaluation as to the attitude of the Turkish press towards Britain, regarding the latter's policy during the Balkan War :

"...the local newspapers... are loud in their lamentations at the perfidy of Europe, and particularly England and France, in abandoning Turkey and

<sup>16</sup> The Anglo-Turkish Declaration Respecting Persian Gulf, signed on July 29th, 1913, was certainly not what the Ottoman Government would have preferred. For text, see: FO 371, Vol. 1817, Doc. No. 35336 (File No. 20107).

<sup>17</sup> FO 371, Vol. 1522, Doc. No. 52369.



the *status quo*... they openly confess that Turkey is friendless unless she can buy a friend, and that, until she can find the wherewithal to do so, she will remain the catspaw of whichever group she joins. One paper maintains that the Ottoman Empire should stand by itself away from Europe, from which it has never derived the slightest advantage. The rest, however, are agreed that Turkey should enter some combination of powers. Great Britain is looked on as a broken reed, but Germany, Russia, and the Balkan League are each put forward as possible allies. The suggestion put forward by the 'Times' that Turkey should remain absolutely neutral, has not been received with any enthusiasm. Ever since she entered the concert of Powers, the 'Sabah' says, Turkey has suffered. But she cannot help herself. Neutrality is for her an impossibility.

...In the meantime, while discussions continue as to the line of action which this country should adopt, the press cannot refrain from giving expression, sometimes openly, sometimes by hints, to the hope which is entertained by every Turk that history will repeat itself, and that, as in 1878, Turkey may still be able to profit by the rivalries of the Powers to pull something out of the fire."

British indifference as to the fate of the European Turkey increased the Ottomans' dependence upon Germany, though the latter, too, had nothing to prevent the Ottomans' shameful defeat in the Balkan Wars.

On the other hand, the Turkish defeat in the Balkan Wars, deeply hurt the public feeling, and strengthened the determination to wait for an opportunity to prove the Turkish valour, in order to eradicate the national disgrace that fell upon their country.

### C. Increasing German Influence : Turco-German Alliance

The Ottoman Empire's drift towards Germany gained an ever-increasing momentum from mid-1914 onwards. German military advisers symbolized the increasing German influence in Istanbul.

Although the Ottoman leaders sought the possibilities of an

alliance with Britain, France and even Russia just before the outbreak of the War<sup>18</sup>, nothing could be achieved.

Finally, on August 2nd, 1914, Turco-German Treaty of Alliance was signed in Istanbul<sup>19</sup>. By signing this Treaty, the Ottoman Empire had finally cast in its lot with Germany. It was also the victory of the pro-German forces in the Ottoman Government which had won the upper hand.

#### D. Drift Towards War

The Ottoman Government did not enter into the World War immediately after the signing of the Turco-German Treaty.

Turkish declaration of neutrality raised hopes for a change in the Ottoman decision to side with the Triple Alliance in the face of the War.

However, when Britain and its allies asked the Ottoman Government to remain neutral; Turkish counter-demands were; a solution to the Egyptian problem, return of the Aegean Islands and an end to the capitulations, about which the nationalist Union and Progress was most sensitive.

These Turkish demands were not met<sup>20</sup>. It is interesting to note that when the Ottoman Government unilaterally announced the abrogation of the capitulations on September 9th, 1914; not only the Entente, but also its ally Germany expressed openly dissatisfaction by a joint note of protest on September, 10th<sup>21</sup>.

<sup>18</sup> Fahir H. Armaoğlu, *Siyasi Tarih, 1789-1960*, Üçüncü Baskı, SBF Yayınları, No: 362, Ankara, 1975, pp. 418-419. See also: Weber, *op. cit.*, pp. 44-47 and 51-52 and Aptülaha Akşin, *Ataürk'ün Dış Politika İlkeleri ve Diplomasisi, Birinci Kısım (1919'dan Lozan Antlaşması'na Kadar)*, İnkılâp ve Aka Kitabevleri Koll. Şti., İstanbul, 1964, pp. 15 ff.

<sup>19</sup> For text, see: J.C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East, A Documentary Record, 1914-1956*, Vol. II, D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., New York, 1958 pp. 1-2.

When this secret treaty was signed, the British Ambassador Sir Louis Mallet was on leave and away from Istanbul and thus could get no inkling of the Treaty. Joseph Heller, "Sir Louis Mallet and the Ottoman Empire: The Road to War", *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Jan., 1976), p. 5.

<sup>20</sup> Armaoğlu, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

<sup>21</sup> Hurewitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 2-3.

The abrogation of the capitulations aroused great delight among the people, thus, preparing the groundwork for a justification of Ottoman entry into the War in the weeks ahead. Akşin, *op. cit.*, p. 45.

As the drift of the Ottoman Empire towards the War gained speed, Britain felt increasingly anxious on the possibilities of a Turkish attack on Egypt :

For instance, in his dispatch to Sir Edward Grey (from Istanbul, September 27th, 1914)<sup>22</sup>, Sir Louis Mallet stated that he asked the Grand Vizier the reason for "the acts of war on the Egyptian border." The Grand Vizier said in reply, that there was mobilisation going on, and that the Bedouin were withdrawn and he also assured that there would be no such acts of aggression again. "He said that there was no thought or question of attacking Egypt", Sir Louis Mallet added.

In his dispatch to Sir Edward Grey, two days later, on September 29th, 1914<sup>23</sup>, Sir Louis Mallet again referred to this matter :

"In have spoken again to Grand Vizier... His Majesty's Government need have no anxiety about Egypt. He knew what the situation was there and how secure was the British Administration. He asked me to assure you that Turkish Government would not in any circumstances make any movement against Egypt or originate intrigues there. He again expressed greatest anxiety for good relations with Great Britain, which he was determined to maintain."

Turkish assurances could not alleviate Britain's fears. Britain also believed that the Grand Vizier was personally sincere in his assurances for good relations with London; but his views did not represent a general attitude of the Ottoman Government. The following document is a clear manifestation of the British way of thinking in this matter:

Sir Edward Grey wrote the following to Sir R. Dodd on October 1st, 1914<sup>24</sup> :

"The Italian Ambassador informed me today that Turkish troops were moving in Aleppo and elsewhere, which seemed to portend an attack on Egypt. German naval and military officers were moving about, and there were thirty submarine mines, which it was supposed were destined for

<sup>22</sup> FO 371, Vol. 2142, Doc. No. 53820 (File No. 50851).

<sup>23</sup> FO 371, Vol. 1971, Doc. No. 54198 (File No. 49402).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, Doc. No. 56028.

Akaba ...I said that we had heard it... The Grand Vizier continued his peaceful assurances, and said that the Turkish Government would never attack Egypt. We were aware that all these preparations were being made, and I thought that there were three parties in Constantinople :

- (1) one for peace and neutrality;
- (2) one that was pro-German and ready to be made the tool of Germany by attacking Egypt in order to prevent troops being brought that way to fight the Germans in France; and
- (3) one that realized that, whatever happened, Turkey was not to be allowed to reconquer Egypt and control the Suez Canal, and that, if Turkey took action, it should not be to suit Germany, but to get advantages for herself out of the situation. This, I thought, they would try to do by getting back something in Europe."

Thus, mutual anxieties between Britain and the Ottoman Empire continued. Britain insisted upon Turkish neutrality; whereas the Ottoman Government, on its part, was anxious of British activities in the Gulf area. For instance, Sir Edward Grey sent a cypher telegram to Sir Louis Mallet in Istanbul on October 2nd, 1914, and said<sup>25</sup> :

"Turkish Ambassador yesterday again referred to the presence of H.M.S. 'Odin' in the Shatt-el-Arab. I told him that the vessel was at Mohammerah, and that under the Treaty of Erzeroum the waters of Shatt-el-Arab as far as and even above Mohammerah are open to navigation by Persian vessels and that Persia has raised no objection to H.M.'s Ships on duty in the Gulf proceeding to Mohammerah as usual and that the 'Odin' is doing nothing more than this.

...His Excellency reiterated the assurances given to you by the Grand Vizier as to the intention and desire of Turkey to remain absolutely neutral."

The following document can best describe the state of affairs in Istanbul prior to the final outbreak of war :

<sup>25</sup> FO 371, Vol. 2142, Doc. No. 55365 (File No. 50458).

In his report to Sir Edward Grey on October 26 th, 1914<sup>26</sup>, Sir Louis Mallet said the following, concerning his interview with the Grand Vizier (and Foreign Minister) Said Halim Pasha :

"...He remained silent for some time, and then replied with gravity and some embarrassment that he fully realized how disastrous was a policy of hostility to Great Britain and Russia, that he had been resisting pressure for three months in the face of great odds, and would continue his resistance to the end.

...His Highness went on to say that his personal position was exceedingly difficult, as it was being said that he was afraid of complications with Great Britain on account of his interests in Egypt...

...He spoke rather despondently at first, but towards the end of the interview regained his usual confidence, assuring me that no incursions could be made into Egypt, and that there was a great deal of fanfaronade in all the talk about Egypt. He said that he... would see Minister [of War] to-day, and continue to use all his influence in the direction of moderation.

He begged for your confidence and support."

### E. Final Declaration of War

After nearly three months since the signing of the Treaty, the German warships Goeben and Breslau, which had joined the Turkish fleet, as an interesting episode of the War on August 10th, 1914<sup>27</sup>, bombarded Odessa on October 29th, 1914<sup>28</sup>.

This was a critical stage; but yet, war, it seemed, could still be averted. However, when a last-minute attempt was made in this di-

<sup>26</sup> FO 371, Vol. 2139, Doc. No. 63594 (File No. 38623).

<sup>27</sup> The fact that Britain had commandeered at the outbreak of the War the two Turkish warships built at the British dockyards with popular donations, had paved the way for a dramatic change in the Turkish public opinion, thus playing into the hands of Germany during the Goeben and Breslau incident. For the incident, see : Armaoğlu, *op cit.*, p. 422. See also : Heller, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> For the events, see : M. Cemil, Lozan, Birinci Cilt, Ahmet İhsan Matbaası Ltd., İstanbul, 1933, pp. 161ff. See also : Kâzım Karabekir, Cihan Harbine Neden Girdik? Nasıl Girdik? Nasıl İdare Ettik?, Tecelli Basımevi, İstanbul, 1937, *passim*.

rection, nothing was achieved<sup>29</sup> and, finally, on November 5th, 1914, British declaration of war brought the Ottoman Empire into war against Britain and its allies<sup>30</sup>.

The following document describes Sir Louis Mallet's farewell call to the Grand Vizier :

In his report to Sir Edward Grey, dated October 31st, 1914<sup>31</sup>, Sir Louis Mallet said that he told the Grand Vizier that if the German mission did not withdraw immediately, he would then leave the next day; but if it did, he would, in that case, stay to communicate with Sir Edward Grey.

The Grand Vizier, however, said that it was not in his power to send the German mission back immediately. Sir Louis Mallet replied saying openly that 2/3 of the Cabinet was outside the control of the Grand Vizier. The Grand Vizier replied that he would try to prevent war with Russia and Britain and that he still enjoyed moral power and that he would use it.

Sir Louis Mallet judged in his report that he thought the Grand Vizier was sincere. He also added that "the Turkish people should realize where the Germans and a handful wrong-thinking and reckless men were driving Turkey." "Therefore, our withdrawal from Turkey will assist the Grand Vizier in explaining this to the people", Sir Louis Mallet added.

Sir Louis Mallet also added that the activities in Syria and the Black Sea incident were the Germans' job and that he believed Turkey could not really be accused for it. Sir Louis also said : "Britain should not open war against Turkey unless it attacked Egypt; although rela-

<sup>29</sup> The Ottoman Government decided on October 31st, 1914, to send a note to Russia for a peaceful solution of the Black Sea incident (by paying compensation and pledging to keep fleet out of Black Sea in future). FO 371, Vol. 2145, Doc. No. 66638 (File No. 64913). However, the Entente Ambassadors in Istanbul had decided on October 29 th. 1914, that "in view of probability that attack on Odessa was carried out by Germans without full authority of Ottoman Government... they should... inform Ottoman Government that they must choose between rupture with Triple Entente or dismissal of German naval and military missions..." (Sir Louis Mallet to Sir Edward Grey, Istanbul, October 29th, 1914: Doc. No. 64925).

Thus, the Entente Powers and the Ottoman Empire had fallen definitely apart.

<sup>30</sup> Hurewitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 4-7.

<sup>31</sup> FO 371, Vol. 2145, Doc. No. 65843 (File No. 64913).

Philip P. Graves (*op. cit.*, p. 189) writes that Sir Louis Mallet later told him that "the Grand Vizier had an affecting interview with (him). He wept copiously and cried: 'Don't leave me (Ne me lachez-pas):'"

tions must cease until German influence is broken." Sir Louis Mallet added that the Turkish Heir to the Throne had sent him an indirect message stating that he had no knowledge of the recent events; that he would not consent to a war with Britain and that he did not want the British Ambassador leave the country. The Heir to the Throne also added that Minister of Finance Cavit Bey and a great majority of the influential persons were of the same opinion. Sir Louis Mallet also said that the Minister of Justice too, had sent him a similar message.

It was in this atmosphere that declarations of war were made.

Britain and its allies could now give a definite stimulus to their policy of dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire. Britain's first step was to annex Cyprus on November 5th, 1914, the day declaration of war was made<sup>32</sup>.

## V. CONCLUSION

The point now reached in Turco-British relations was a natural outcome of a trend of many decades past.

It was, indeed, inevitable for the Ottoman Empire to ally itself with the Triple Alliance. This is recognized as such, by Atatürk, too, who was a strong critic of the Ottoman Government, and who, indeed later created a new Republic out of the ashes of the Ottoman Empire. However, Atatürk was also of the opinion that although alliance with Germany was inevitable, the Ottoman Government should, nevertheless, have entered into the War at a later stage<sup>33</sup>.

The First World War, as the only "direct state of war" period in Turco-British relations, saw the collapse of the Ottoman Empire which brought the six centuries-old Empire to its natural end.

The new Turkish Republic, established after the World War, following the Turkish National War of 1919-1922, may even be considered to owe its *raison d'être* to the Ottoman decision to enter the War on the side of the Triple Alliance, which proved to be the losing party.

The new Turkish State aimed to modernise under the leadership of Atatürk. Atatürk was determined to Europeanise the new Republic in the full sense in order to create a strong base for the Turkish society.

<sup>32</sup> The London Gazette, Vol. IV (Oct. - 16 Nov. 1914), Friday, 6 November, 1914, p. 9012.

<sup>33</sup> Şevket Süreyya Aydemir, *Tek Adam (Mustafa Kemal'in Hayatı)*, Birinci Cilt, 1881-1914, Dördüncü Baskı, Remzi Kitabevi, İstanbul, 1969, p. 197.

This new State, soon turned towards stronger and more realistic relations with Europe in general, and with Britain, in particular.

Following the First World War, during the Turkish War of Independence, the British had accused the Turks for prolonging the World War by entering it against the Triple Entente<sup>34</sup>. The British authorities had also accused the Turks for having accelerated the Soviet Revolution by creating a barrier in the Straits against the Entente's efforts to send aid to the Czarist régime\*.

It is true that Turkish entry into the War prolonged it and also that the Turkish resistance in the Straits speeded up the developments that led up to the Soviet Revolution.

However, this is rather too rigid an evaluation of causality in History. Both the Turkish entry into the War, and the Turkish victory in the Straits were only of secondary value to the so many more fundamental factors that affected the prolongation of the War and the break-out of the Revolution in Russia. What is more, the Ottoman Empire did not enter the War with the aim of prolonging it; neither did it put up a stout resistance in the Straits simply to assist the Revolution in Russia.

Moreover, as discussed in this paper, Turkish decision to enter the War on the side of the Triple Alliance, was the natural and inevitable outcome of many basic and objective factors and of some rather minor and subjective ones.

<sup>34</sup> Foreign Minister Lord Curzon said at the House of Lords on August 4th, 1920 that "Turkey was offered the maintenance of its territorial integrity in 1914, in return for its neutrality." Lord Curzon went on to say that "Turkey refused this; and that it prolonged the War by two years by entering it and that it caused great loss of life and properties on the part of the Allies. Now Turkey had to be put into such a situation that it could not repeat such crimes any longer." 41 H.L., Deb. 5s., pp. 726ff.

Also, Lord Curzon said at the House of Lords on February 7th, 1922: "... Turkey must never be allowed to shut and bang the doors of the Straits. (In 1914, she could do this and indeed prolonged the War by at least two years)... imposed upon our peoples almost immeasurable sacrifices of money and men, and exposed Europe to dangers which we can never allow her to repeat." 49 H.L., Deb. 5 s., p. 30.

\* This was an irony of history in itself. The British had sent a squadron as far as the Sea of Marmara, to prevent the Russians from occupying Istanbul in 1878; and this time in 1915, it was "blasting this piece of land to get aid to Russia." Josephy Murray, *Gallipoli, 1915*, New English Library Ltd., London, 1977, pp. 181-182.



As to one final evaluation of the Ottoman decision from the angle of Turco-British relations, it is safe to conclude that to enter the War on the side of the Triple Alliance, has, in actual fact, come as a prelude to an everlasting friendship between Britain and Turkey.

I will conclude with Lt.-Colonel Howard-Bury's\* words at the House of Commons on February 15th, 1923<sup>53</sup>: He said that the Turks were a proud and fighting race, and that they were, prior to the World War, driven into the arms of the Germans. He went on to say that the loss of the traditional Turkish friendship proved harmful and that it was necessary now to become friends with Turkey again.

Both Britain and Turkey have acted up to this mutual need for friendship ever since.

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\* MP, Conservative Party.

<sup>53</sup> 160 H.C., Deb., 5s., pp. 461-462.