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Sahibi : ENDERUN KİTABEVİ adına İsmail Özdoğan

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## ANGLO- TURKISH RELATIONS DURING KEMAL ATATÜRK'S PRESIDENCY OF THE TURKISH REPUBLIC

*Yuluğ Tekin Kurat*

When Kemal Atatürk was elected the first president of the Turkish Republic, Britain was regarded in Lloyd George tradition the enemy. The British occupation in Turkey following the Armistice and the British support of Greece during the Turkish War of Independence were vivid in the minds and the relations between the two countries remained strained because of the outstanding Mosul question.

The British argued that the negotiations on Mosul should have started after evacuation of İstanbul, which was carried out on 6 October 1923. The Turks were reluctant to negotiate before the Treaty of Lauzanne was ratified by Britain, but eventually they agreed to talk<sup>1</sup>.

Sir Percy Cox, the British High Commissioner in Iraq, came to İstanbul with his suit in 1924 and the Conference lasted from 19 May to 5 June at the historical Kasım-Pasha Palace.

The British were impressed with Turkish hospitality and particularly by the appearance of Mrs. Fethi, the wife of the head of the Turkish delegation, the renown Fethi Bey (Okyar). Mrs. Fethi dressed in European style, speaking perfect French and mingling with the delegates and acting as the hostess on social occasions set a pioneering example to the emancipation of Turkish women before the western eyes. Contrary to these pleasant summer parties, the negotiations took a delicate turn. While Fethi Bey proposed that Great Britain should agree to a frontier which would give the Vi-

<sup>1</sup> Annual Report 1924, E 3388/ 44, F. O 371/10870, Public Record Office (P.R.O).

layet of Mosul to Turkey, Cox on the contrary asked that Turkey should recognise a boundary not only to the north of Mosul but further in the northerly direction so as to include the Vilayet of Hakkâri where the Assyrian Christians had been returning, with British encouragement.

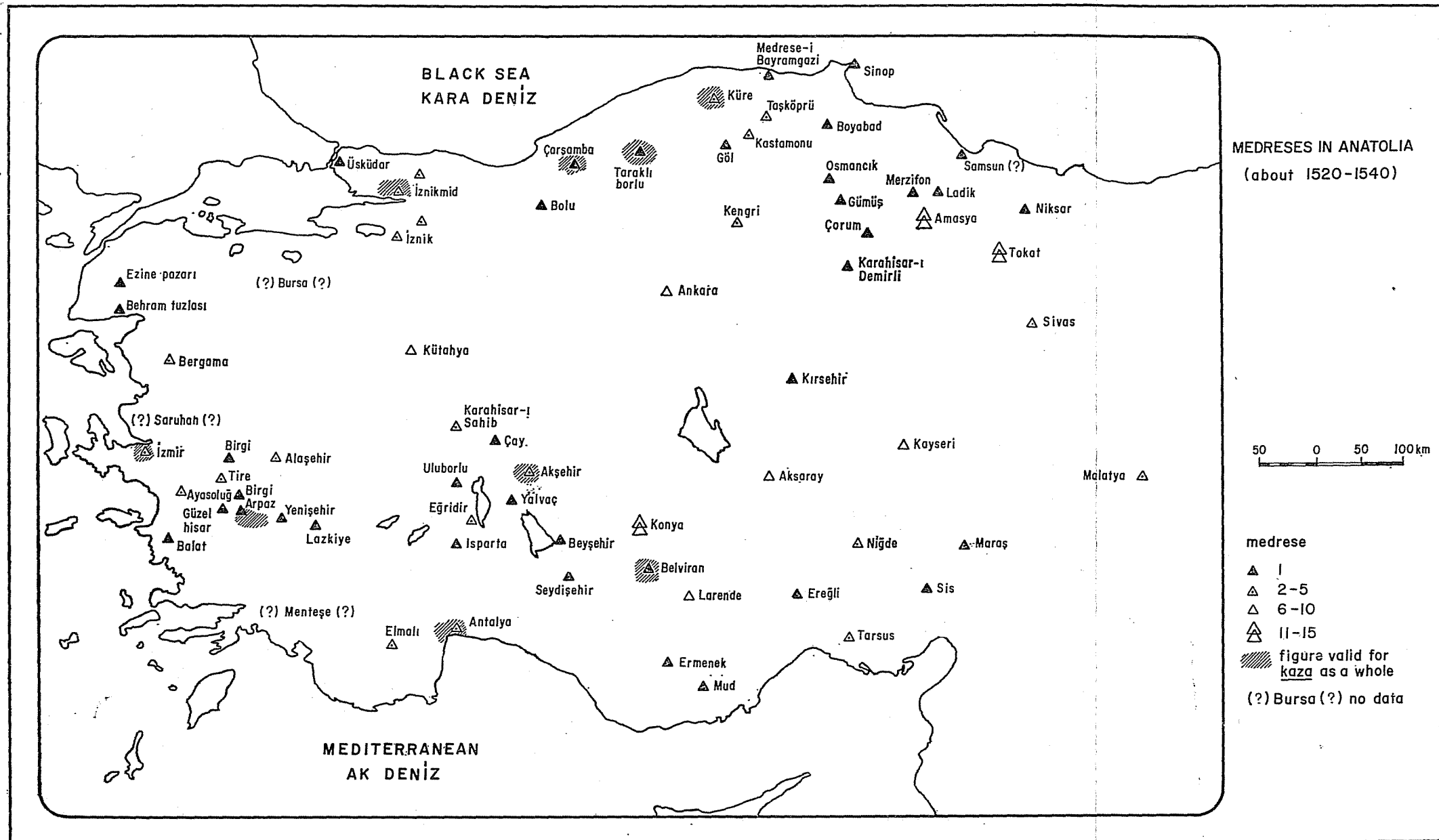
Neither of the sides could agree to any of these proposals. Particularly the surprise British claim on Hakkâri as a homeland for the Assyrian-Christians was in itself the breaking point in the talks. So Cox suggested that the matter be referred to the League of Nations. Fethi Bey declined saying that this was a matter for the governments to decide and not the Conference<sup>2</sup>.

Turkey had a substantial argument in this respect. The treaty of Lauzanne was not yet in force. Therefore, the reference to the League of Nations provided in article 3, paragraph 2 of the treaty could not be executed in advance. Eventually British ratification entered into force on 6 August 1924. But the break up of the İstanbul Conference led to serious incidents along the Turkish-Iraqi frontier, if it could be called a frontier at all. The Turkish governor of Hakkâri was taken hostage by the Assyrian-Christian rebels. In this skirmish some Turkish gendarmes were shot and wounded. In return, the Turkish forces penetrated to the Iraqi territory and surrounded the Hakkâri region from the South, while the British air force attacked and bombed the advancing units killing a few privates<sup>3</sup>.

These events coincided with the diplomatic activities at Geneva. The League asked both sides to pull their forces back and in its resolution of September 30th. declared that an enquiry group, consisting of three members, would make a study of the situation on the spot. The Council of the League having met at Brussels on 29 October also drew a line which was acceptable to both sides. So the famous Brussels line came into being. The subsequent procedure in the League was the setting up of an enquiry commission which went to Iraq in January 1925 and finished its field work in March. However, the report was not made public before July.

2 Ibid.

3 Ibid.



Concerns: S. FAROQHI, «A Map of Anatolian Friday Mosques», *Osmanlı Araştırmaları*, IV; 161-174.

Due to an unfortunate mistake, the map concerning Anatolian *medreses* of the early 16th century referred to on p. 169 has been omitted. We add it now, and hope the reader will pardon the oversight.

This document made an interesting reading. It referred to the lack of Iraqi national feeling and having observed the several preferences of the local inhabitants in the disputed area, stated that the majority of the people were inclined to get British economic protection and support and not necessarily did they have any feeling of solidarity with Baghdad.

Accordingly the report came to the conclusion that the disputed territory must remain under the effective mandate of the League of Nations for a period of 25 years<sup>4</sup>. Therefore the odds were in favour of Great Britain. London had already secured the mandate of Iraq in 1920. This regime was to last for eight years, but King Feisal who was installed at his throne in Baghdad by the British was more than ready to accept this new deal, which was for another 25 years.

When the Council of the League appointed a committee of three members to evaluate this report in September 1925, Turkey lost the support of the Swedish member Mr. Uden, who was favouring the Turkish viewpoint. The riots of the Assyrian-Christian rebels and their deportation from Hakkâri, accompanied with large measures of anti-Turkish propaganda led Mr Uden to change his opinion. Moreover the Turks themselves played their cards badly. Tevfik Rushdi Bey, the then Foreign Minister, had forgotten the pledge given by Fethi Bey at Geneva almost a year ago, that Turkey like Britain had recognised in advance the decisions to be taken by the League of Nations. However Tevfik Rushdi saved the day by putting the following questions : 'Whether the Council in this matter was to act in the capacity of an arbitrator or only in that of a mediator'. The Foreign Minister returned from Geneva knowing that he was beaten but Tevfik Rushdi managed to defer the final decision till December 1925<sup>5</sup>.

There was also considerable tension in Turkey which could be observed in the press. Campaign against the League of Nations and

4 A.J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, London, Oxford. U. Press, 1927, v. I, p. 507.

5 Annual Report 1925, Hoare to Chamberlain, 11 Aug. 1926, E 4798/4798/44, FO 371/11556.

Britain started on September 20th. Many of the leading articles states that the British were quite incapable of understanding that now there was a new mentality in Turkey. So they were resorting to their old tricks and were coming up with the same old charges of massacres of Christians. These charges were to influence the League of Nations in their favour. And what had been the result, wrote the editorial in the *Cumhuriyet*, if the League of Nations had really felt uncertain as to its competence by referring Tevfik Rushdi Bey's questions to the International Court of Justice at Hague. Why had they not Commission of Enquiry was formed? From the very beginning, continued the article, England had brought the necessary pressure to bear upon that institution. Turkey, however, would not renounce her rights and Tevfik Rushdi was fully justified in declaring that Turkey must preserve her liberty of action<sup>6</sup>.

As the League's decision was delayed till the very end of 1925, the presence of Turkish troops near the frontier was a source of constant anxiety for Britain. When the Committee of Imperial Defense met in London on October 15, there was much talk of counter-measures. To discourage Ankara from taking a full scale military offensive against Mosul, Amery, the Secretary for the Colonies, wanted to bring reinforcements from India. He claimed that the action of the Turks in driving out the Caliph and abolishing the Fez had created a great change of opinion in India towards Turkey. The Arabs felt the same the said and added that they could easily raise emergency Kurdish troops in the area. Winston Churchill, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, suggested that Britain should pursue a policy to avoid an open war in the first place. So he was in favour of airforce intervention, which he believed had successfully deterred the Turks in 1924. If, however, air action did not result in stopping the Turkish advance, the Fleet could be brought into operation. Churchill also proposed to seize the island of Tenedos and Imbros as a gage for the return of Turkish troops to their side of the Brussels line. He also implied that Greece would not remain quiet, since her differences with Turkey prevailed. Subsequently the following resolutions were taken :

6 *Cumhuriyet*, 21 Eylül 1925.

- a) Air-commanding officer in Iraq should be authorised to take immediate action.
- b) Naval forces should be prepared to occupy and hold the Turkish islands at the entrance to the Dardanelles, to enter the Sea of Marmara and to blockade Istanbul by sea<sup>7</sup>.

Obviously all these were precautionary decisions. In the meanwhile the British Foreign Office was hard at work to find out as now the Turks were to act in the event of an unfavourable decision. The memo prepared for this purpose stressed the fact that much depended on the President of the Republic. It stated that for Mustafa Kemal Iraq was a matter of prestige. Therefore his policy was to bluff without having to resort to war. But if he saw that his national reputation was at stake, then he would risk going into the war. Whereas the aim of the British foreign policy was to establish friendly relations with Turkey. In this respect the difficulty laid in the fact that as how the British interests in Mosul in one hand and political advantages for Turkey involving Mustafa Kemal's success on the other could be compromised<sup>8</sup>.

On the other hand Lindsay, the ambassador in Turkey, was warning Chamberlain, the British foreign secretary, that Britain should neither support a Kurdish autonomy in Northern Iraq nor allow the League of Nations to come with such an imposition. Otherwise a rapprochement with Turkey would be absolutely impossible. Chamberlain replied that the British policy of Kurdistan had changed. It was no longer the same as in the defunct treaty of Sevres, but Britain could not come against Kurdish inspirations in Iraqi territory<sup>9</sup>.

The court at Hague had come to the conclusion on 21 November and declared that the decision to be taken by the League would be

7 Enclosure E 6586/32/65 Committee of Imperial Defense, 15 Oct. 1925, F.O 371/10826.

8 Memorandum respecting the Iraq frontier, F.O. October 23, 1925. *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939*, London HMSO, 1926, vol 1a; 1st series, p. 768.

9 Austen Chamberlain to Lindsay, E 7485/32/65, 4 Dec. 1925, F.O 371/10826.



binding on all parties in the determination of the frontier between Iraq and Turkey. The decision had to be unanimous, both Turkey and Britain could vote, but their votes could not be counted in determining the unanimity. Tevfik Rushdi objected. According to him the Council could only adopt the opinion of the Court by a unanimous decision of all its members, including the representatives of the disputing parties. This was rejected and on 16 December, with the Turkish delegation boycotting the session, the League of Nations declared itself in favour of Iraq by allotting the territories south of the Brussels line to Baghdad, indirectly to Britain. Accordingly, Britain was invited to submit to the League a new treaty with Iraq, ensuring the continuation for 25 years of the mandatory regime<sup>10</sup>.

Albeit the fact that the British Foreign office held the opinion that Ankara kept bluffing, Major Harence, the military attache, had warned his government in his report of November 9 on Turkish determination to walk into Mosul<sup>11</sup>.

This was indeed the atmosphere prevailing in Turkish military circles. Marshall Fevzi was clamouring for action when Hague's decision was known on 21 November. The Chief of Turkish General Staff came with a report advocating an immediate attack on Mosul which he guaranteed to occupy in 46 hours. A great number of the deputies were supporting Fevzi Pasha. They believed that there would be no real danger in occupying Mosul and that Britain would not go to war. And Turkey after this occupation would be in a stronger position to negotiate. Mustafa Kemal finally put his personal influence, supported by his Prime Minister Ismet Pasha and Tevfik Rushdi, he succeeded in defeating this project at a secret meeting of the Cabinet on November 25<sup>12</sup>. This was typical of Atatürk's attitude, he would never take a premature step nor make a hasty decision. Until the crisis point was reached Atatürk had not stood against the view prevalent in Ankara and in doing so he even appeared to have fallen into disagreement with his Prime Minister. For Ismet

10 A.J. Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, p. 518, 519.

11 Harence's Report, 9 Nov. 1925, Enclosure to Lindsay to Chamberlain, 11 Nov. 1925, E 7045/32/65, FO 371/10826.

12 Ledper's Report from Angora 26 Nov. 1925, Enclosure to Lindsay to Chamberlain, 2 Dec 1925, No: 803, FO 424/263.

Pasha was in favour of conciliation with Britain at the expense of Mosul<sup>13</sup>. It was natural for the military and the deputies to feel strongly about the situation in the nationalistic atmosphere of Ankara. They could not judge the matter in terms of its international implications. On the contrary the President and his two keymen were aware of the fact that the war against Britain would not be confined to the area between the Brussels line and Mosul, but would certainly entail military operations in other fronts, most probably with Greece becoming belligerent as well. Last but not least, it would not be to the advantage of Turkey to defy the League of Nations. As events were to prove, the Turkish ambassadors both in London and Paris been seriously warned that a conflict with Britain would also be a conflict with the League. So Britain was also supported by France<sup>14</sup>.

After having lost the Mosul case in the international platform, the Turkish reaction to Britain came in the form of war of nerves. Tevfik Rushdi having gone to Paris signed a treaty of friendship and neutrality with the Soviet Union, the day after League's decision, that is to say on December 17.

This did not mean that Atatürk was trying to blackmail Britain by making large concessions to the Soviets. The outcome of the Mosul question showed that Turkey had felt the bitter taste of isolationism in the international arena. In this respect the Soviets were not better of either. Europe had taken a collective stand against Moscow by admitting Germany to the League of Nations with the signing of the Locarno treaties. So it was pragmatic for both countries to establish a diplomatic partnership.

With respect to Mosul, Russian diplomacy and the Soviet propaganda were two different things. It is still not exactly known what passed between Tevfik Rushdi and Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, in Paris pending to the signature of the treaty. However it is not difficult to conceive that the Soviets did not commit themselves to assist Turkey with military support if their partner was involved in war. The only guarantee they gave

13 Annual Report 1925, P.R.O.

14 Cabinet meeting, 3 Dec. 1925, CAB 23/51.

was to keep an attitude of benevolent neutrality. The Russian ambassador also made it clear to his English colleague at Paris that this was not an agreement against Britain<sup>15</sup>. On the other hand the Soviet press was ardently supporting the Turkish case from the very beginning of the Mosul dispute.

So it suited the Russian policy that Turkey's relations with the West remained cold. But Atatürk was not prepared to take an active stand in tying himself up to Asian solidarity in fighting against the Western imperialism, at least under the guidance of the Soviet Union. The young Turkish scholar Professor Kurkchuoghlu in his book on Anglo-Turkish relations is quite right in indicating that while Atatürk carried out his programme of modernisation, which also meant secularisation, did not wish to have an all out confrontation with the West<sup>16</sup>. Indeed the new mentality in Turkey had a western outlook in struggling against the unspund traditions of the East.

Also the acquisition of Mosul had not made Britain comfortable. Turkey did not recognise this settlement and the British knew very well that if they took no steps to placate the Turks and came up with certain compensations, they would have a heavy burden on their shoulders in the Northern frontier of Iraq. The continuation of tension in this area would be disadvantageous to Britain since the maintenance of troops on war footing would incur extra expenses on the Imperial budget<sup>17</sup>.

So in order to come to terms, one of the first steps to be taken was to assure Ankara that Britain had no intention to promote a Kurdish home rule in Iraq. Evidently the preservation of Mosul in the Turkish National Pact had also aimed at uniting the Kurdish people of Eastern Turkey with their kinsmen in the South. Atatürk's Republic did not make day discrimination between Turks and Kurds who were originaly of Turkish stock, and their integration in the building up of the new state was the pillar of Ankara's internal policy. The Turkish statesmen were confident of Anatolian Kurds. But

15 Annual Report 1925.

16 Omer Kürkçüoğlu, *Türk-İngiliz İlişkileri, 1919-1926*; A.Ü, SB.F Yayınları, No : 412, Ankara 1978, s. 308.

17 Tyrell to Lindsay, Dec 30, 1925, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, 1st series, vol 1a, s. 877.

what disturbed Ankara was the incursion of some Southern tribes from Iraqi territory which was regarded as a menace to Turkey's national solidarity. Therefore it was essential that Britain should review the border strip in order to reconcile with Turkey.

Also the atmosphere in the British Parliament was very much in favour of a reconciliation. Atatürk's programme of modernisation had impressed the Liberal and Labour deputies to such an extent that they did not utter a single word on the so-called Turkish atrocities. Therefore the Gladstonian school of Turcophobia had already become a dead letter<sup>18</sup>. During the debate on the Mosul question on December 21 the pro-Turkish members of the House dominated the scene. All were in favour of coming to an agreement with Turkey. This opinion can be best summarised in the concluding sentences of Robert Hutchison's speech. «I know under the decision of the League of Nations that we are now bound to a special line. It seems to me that the line can be amended by an agreement. Therefore you should have an arrangement with the Turks, because without a friendly Turk you cannot administer and run that country with advantage»<sup>19</sup>.

The government also subscribed to this viewpoint. Accordingly the day after the debate, Baldwin, the conservative Prime Minister called the Turkish ambassador and declared his government's intention to make an agreement with Turkey. A favourable response was received from Ankara in the first week of January 1926. So Lindsay went to the capital from Istanbul to carry out negotiations on the basis of the League's decisions. But Tevfik Rushdi's proposals were not in conformity with the British approach. The Turkish Foreign minister, however, expressed his readiness to continue conversations with each side maintaining its own opinion<sup>20</sup>.

These talks were quite informative. It emerged that the Turks no longer had any claim on Mosul, but they were against the present

18 Tyrell to Lindsay, Dec 30, 1925, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, s. 798.

19 *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 5th serie, HMSO 1926, vol 189, column 2096.

20 Lindsay to Chamberlain, Jan 29, 1925, *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, s. 806.

21 *Ibid*, p. 807.

status of the Brussels line. For the Turks the present frontier was a floating frontier. During the preceding six years it had been steadily pushed north by the British and created disturbances either in Eastern Turkey and in Western Iran meaning that Britain intended to extend as far as Van. Under these circumstances, to convince Turkey of a permanent arrangement the frontier had to go a good way back to the South. So by the beginning of February 1926, the cardinal question was the readjustment of the frontier region but this time excluding Mosul.

Thus it became apparent to the British that for the settlement of the dispute first and adjustment of the Brussels line was necessary and this step could be coupled with a non-aggression treaty. This was Chamberlain's idea. In order to neutralise the 1925 Soviet-Turkish treaty, he thought of signing a treaty in identical terms. In after-thoughts this was not seen feasible as it was unlikely that the Parliament could ratify such an agreement. Instead another treaty guaranteeing the frontiers of Turkey not only by Britain but also by France and Italy was found more preferable. This would have satisfied the Turks to the utmost. The Turkish leaders wished to carry on with their programme of modernisation and in this respect their primary concern was the internal prestige of the government. For this reason they wanted to be firmly established in their soil.

Britain intended to ask France and Italy to join this agreement. The French could be induced to cooperate but Italy was doubtful<sup>22</sup>.

Italy had never forgotten her losses because of the abrogation of the defunct treaty of Sevres. In 1926, south-western Turkey with its large depopulated areas was still an attraction for the superabundant Italian population. Though Duce Mussolini did not openly speak of Adalia, the construction of naval base in the island of Rhodes and Duce's speech in Tripoli that Italy had a civilising mission in the Mediterranean had created Turkish suspicions. But as early as 1926, Britain was not prepared to commit herself to Turkey against Italian designs.

<sup>22</sup> Lindsay to Tyrell, 12 January 1926, *Documents on British Foreign Policy* vol 1a, p. 802.

So when the Cabinet met on 17 February to give a final version to the policy to be pursued towards Turkey neither a guarantee agreement including other European powers nor a treaty of friendship at the Soviet-Turkish model of 1925 had any value. The most reasonable solution was the cession to Turkey of the two salients at the eastern end of the Brussels line with the only exception that Rawanduz would remain in British hands<sup>23</sup>.

Last but not least there was the possibility of offering the Turks a participation in the oil concessions in the hands of the Turkish Petroleum Company. In this respect the difficulties were great. After protracted negotiations, the shares were held by the Anglo-Persian Company, Anglo-Dutch Shell, the French group and the American group. Since it would be utterly difficult to include Turkey in this set up, as neither of the shareholders would have handed over their rights, the alternative could have been to offer Turkey a share in the oil royalties. When the matter was reviewed in the Cabinet on 3 March, to allow Turkey to have a share in the oil royalties was found negative, it was suggested that Iraq should make some payment from her own resources if a suitable basis for such a payment could be found<sup>24</sup>.

It is curious that the Mosul dispute was settled not by a revision of the Brussels Line by a tripartite treaty between Turkey, Britain and Iraq on 5 June 1926 with a hypothetical oil agreement at the time. When the question was debated at Lauzanne for the first time both İsmet Pasha and Lord Curzon screened this subject on oil. Curzon debied having seen any oil magnates and İsmet Pasha stressed that Mosul was entirely a national issue.

However before and during World War I, at the initiative of the Anglo-Persian oil company, the British Office of the Admiralty and the Ministry of War had become aware of the importance of the rich oil deposits in Northern Mesopotamia, no matter how the statesmen like Curzon looked at the matter purely as a strategy for the defense of the British Empire<sup>25</sup>. Nevertheless, if the British forces had oc-

23 Cabinet Meeting, 17 February 1926, CAB 23/52; P.R.O.

24 Cabinet Meeting, 3 March 1926, CAB 23/52.

25 Helmut Mehjer, «Oil and British Policy. Towards Mesopotamia» *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol VIII (1972), p. 378, 379.

cupied Mosul and its surroundings, this may not be attributed to the triumph of the oil party in the government. From the military point of view, it was done to cover the backdoor of Allenby's army which had reached the northern confines of Syria. So it satisfied all withoiy having caused a controversy.

On the hand there is some observation that the Turks were prepared to grant concessions to the British companies for the exploitation of oil in Mosul region in return for the recognition of Turkish sovereignty in this area. According to the memoires of Dr. Rıza Nur, one of the senior delegates at Lauzanne, some British representatives had private talks with them. Even two Turkish members from the delegation did go to London, the enterprise however, came to no avail<sup>26</sup>. Curzon was disconcerted with private oil deals and he had made his disagreement in such delaings public<sup>27</sup>.

Material is lacking on the nature of these secret talks on oil during the Conference of Lauzanne. However there is ample evidence of Turkish inclination to let Britain have the exploitation of oil and guarantee Turkish sovereignty over Mosul. This can be substantiated in a conversation between Austen Chamberlain and the Turkish ambassador in London in March 1925. Turkey wanted to settle this question outside the League of Nations. Turkey would have Mosul and a British company should have all the exploitation of the oil. A British company could construct the necessary pipelines also through Turkish territory, at least a concession of three or five ports for loading and 3000 km of railway were offered. But the official policy of Britain was never to bring oil into discussions. Chamberlain refused saying that Britain was the trustee for Iraq, they were not possessors but mandatories, so they could not bargain away the rights of this country<sup>28</sup>.

In fact this conversation took place shortly after Britain had acquired the oil concession from the İraqi government on 14

26 Dr. Rıza Nur, *Hayat ve Hatıratım*, İstanbul Altındağ Yayınevi 1968, cilt III p. 1135-36.

27 Ali Naci Karacan, *Lozan*, Milliyet Yayınları, İkinci Baskı, İstanbul 1971, p. 349.

28 *Hansard's Parliamentary Debates*, 5th Series, London HMSO 1926, vol 191, 276-7.

March 1925 as a successor state to the Ottoman Empire in the area. This was also a solid proof for British commercial interests in Mosul oilfields<sup>29</sup>.

In short the Turkish Petroleum Company, which was the making of the Ottoman concession eventually guaranteed in June 1914, became an asset to Iraq and all the Turkish interests in this foundation were interpreted as null and void after the defeat of the Ottoman Empire.

So it was surprising for the British when Lindsay reported to this government on April 21 that the Turks had abandoned any desire for an accession of territory in the south of Brussels line, instead they wanted some participation in Iraqi oil<sup>30</sup>. We also lack material in determining the change in Turkish attitude. Nevertheless it can be interpreted in general grounds that the reconstruction of the country required ready capital whose scarcity was very much felt. In the meeting of the Cabinet on 19 May 1926 Austen Chamberlain favoured the payment of a lump sum from 300 000 pounds up to a maximum 500 000 pounds as an extraction of Turkey's interest in Iraq oil corresponding to 25 years<sup>31</sup>. Eventually the agreement was signed on June 5 and was ratified a month later. Turkey having agreed to receive the capital payment of half a million pounds recognised the Brussels line. This was the turn of tide in the Anglo-Turkish relations for the better.

Ambassador Clerk who succeeded Lindsay in the autumn of 1926 had a very warm reception. And when he moved the British embassy from Istanbul to Ankara in 1928 he won the confidence of the Turkish leaders. This transfer from one of the most splendid spots of natural beauty to the barren Anatolian plateau was, in fact, the confirmation of Britain that Atatürk's government had made good its claim to rule the Republic and Ankara was an essential part of this regime.

In September 1932 the British Government presented Atatürk with a book titled «Official History of the Dardanelles Campaign». It was addressed in honour of a great general, a gallant enemy and

29 Arnold Toynbee, *Survey of International Affairs*, p. 571.

30 Cabinet Meeting, 28 April 1926, CAB 23/52.

31 Cabinet Meeting, 19 May 1926 CAB/23/53.



a generous friend. The President was very much moved by this gesture and London received a letter of thanks on this behalf stating that this gesture was a new proof of the friendship so happily established between the two countries. However when H.C. Armstrong's book 'The Grey Wolf' with its subtitle 'An Intimate Study of A Dictator' made its first edition in October 1932, it marred this friendly atmosphere just a little. The refutation of Armstrong's ideas were published in the Turkish and French editions of the *Akşam*. The editorial on November 19 stated that «the gross unfairness and mendacity of Armstrong's work was the last thing to be expected from one of his race»<sup>32</sup>.

Although he may not have read it, the best criticism of Armstrong came from one of his countrymen. Sir Percy Lorraine, ambassador in Turkey from 1934 to 1939, writing an obituary of Atatürk in the form of a diplomatic dispatch said the following :

Most people who have read Grey Wolf,...would get in the main the picture of a man... to whom friendship was an unknown quantity. I am myself convinced, however, that such a picture of the man would be utterly misleading,... The incalculable good that this man has done in not much more than 15 years... Must be the measure of the man's greatness and the justification of his extraordinary vision. The rest is detail, merely a detail on which a gossipmonger will fasten, but which the historian would do well to reduce to its proper proportion<sup>33</sup>.

Turkey entered the League of Nations also in 1932 and in this frame work, the practical use of Anglo-Turkish friendship became apparent when the Italian aggression against Abyssinia took place. The efforts of the League of Nations to stop that war in 1935 led to the application of economic sanctions against Italy. Towards the end of 1935 the Italians were using threatenning language in Ankara. They were criticising the Turkish zeal in the application of these sanctions. No doubt the Turkish zeal had manifested itself in the good understanding with Britain. In December 1935 London received

32 *Akşam*, 19 Kasım 1932.

33 Percy Lorraine to Halifax, November 25, 1938, E 7361/69/44, F.O 424/282.

the Turkish assurance for military support if war broke out in the Mediterranean. In return Britain confirmed on 2 January 1936 that she would intervene if Italy attacked Turkey<sup>34</sup>. When the sanctions were removed on 18 July 1939, the strained relations between Ankara and Rome were eased, but Turkish suspicions of Italian designs never ceased.

Besides during the spring of 1936 the Turkish diplomats felt very much concerned about the danger of a general European war. In addition to the crisis created by Mussolini, Hitler's occupation of the Rhineland and his withdrawal from the League indicated trouble in their wake, not to mention the Italian fortification in the island of the Dodecanese. So Turkey could not afford the risk of being taken aback at a moment when so many unpleasant surprises were circulating around. In a conversation which took place between Tevfik Rushdi Aras and Lorraine on 8 April 1936, the Turkish Foreign Minister revealed his Cabinet's intention to send troops into the Straits zone as a precautionary measure and then to notify the signatory powers of the Lausanne Conference. Lorraine remarked that the occupation of the Straits would not be favourably regarded by Britain<sup>35</sup>. Aras pleaded that the step he proposed was the only way preventing a possible Italian invasion from taking place at the Straits. Lorraine endeavoured to dissuade the Minister from taking such a unilateral action and advised him that Turkey should invite the signatory powers to review the status of the Straits. He also requested to have an audience on this matter with the President while delivering a letter from King Edward VIII announcing the death of his Father and his accession to the throne. But before Atatürk had received the British ambassador the matter was discussed in a full meeting of the Cabinet with the President on the chair. The decision was not to reoccupy the demilitarised zones pending the result of their attempt to obtain a revision of the Straits Convention signed at Lausanne. When Atatürk received the ambassador on 10 April he said both he and the Turkish government had greatly appreciated

34 Percy Lorraine to Eden, 28 January 1937, E 823/823/44, FO 371/20866 Annual Report 1936.

35 Lorraine to Eden, 10 April 1936, *Documents on British Foreign Policy 1919-1939*. 2nd Series, London HMSO 1977, V. XVI, p. 664.

the frankness and sincerity with which Lorraine had urged British views on them<sup>36</sup>.

Aras invited the signatory states to come to Montreux in 22 June 1936. The difficulties which arose were due to the fact that Turkey had not produced any definite proposals until the actual opening of the conference. When they were submitted, the participants objected that it was not a revision but a redraft. However with the British mediation to undertake to prepare a draft based on the Turkish text, the Conference progressed<sup>37</sup>.

There was another difficulty because of the Soviet attitude. Apparently the Turks and the Russians had failed to reach a preliminary agreement. Returning to the atmosphere of 1833, the Soviet delegation had formally proposed the complete closure of the Black Sea to any non-Black Sea belligerent. However they were induced to give up this point when Turkey undertook to furnish even more passage information than that formerly supplied by the Straits Commission.

A satisfactory basis for settlement was reached on 15 July and the agreement was signed and sealed on 20 July by all the Powers concerned with the exception of Italy which took no part in the negotiations.

While on the alert against any Italian hostile move, Atatürk did not trust Hitler much. Nevertheless there was serious danger that Turkey might become an economic protectorate of Germany. Berlin's policy of purchasing vast quantities of Turkish goods, at prices well below the world market level on clearing basis, seemed that Turkey was therefore basolutely tied to the German market. And to off-set this commercial penetration Atatürk saw to it that the exports to Germany were reduced. Moreover the contract for the construction of an iron and steel plant at Karabük was given to an English firm, Messrs Brassert, in the face of the competition from Krupps.

Even the visit of Dr. Schacht, Hitler's minister of finance, in November 1936 did change the scene. His unlimited credit offers

36. Ibid, p. 668.

37. Annual report 1936.

did not impress Atatürk and when Dr. Schacht asked if Turkey needed German support in the question of Sandjak, he also received a polite no<sup>38</sup>.

The sandjak question strained the relations between France and Turkey. Despite French appeals for British backing, London did not wish to take an active stand against Ankara. So Britain advised Turkey to search the solution within the framework of the League of Nations and not to take any drastic action.

What actually cemented the Anglo-Turkish diplomatic collaboration, was the very successful and yet unofficial visit of King Edward VIII in September 1936. The crowds in Istanbul loved him and the impressions of this visit brought feeling of mutual friendliness to the people walking the streets in London or Ankara, at Manchester or Bursa.

In other words, the hand that was stretched by Atatürk to the King to help him come ashore on the quay of Dolmabahçe Palace from the barge, sealed the Anglo-Turkish friendship that was to culminate in several alliances after his lifetime.