

CHAPTER I

BRITAIN'S NEW INTEREST IN TURKEY, 1833¹

BRITAIN'S policy² of maintaining "the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire" has long been accepted as an integral part of her foreign policy throughout the whole of the nineteenth century. Several attempts³ have been made to correct this false impression, but it has continued to persist. When and for what particular reasons did the protection of Turkey become a cardinal principle of British foreign policy? Though not generally recognized, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century the British Public in general and the Foreign Office in particular had very little interest in the affairs of Turkey. The attitude of the British Foreign Office with respect to Near Eastern affairs underwent a profound change in 1833. The event which marks this new interest on the part of the Foreign Secretaries, as well as a large portion of the British populace,

¹ Some of the material in this and the chapter which follows appeared in my article "The Economics of British Foreign Policy" published in the *Journal of Modern History*, vol. XII, no. 4 (December, 1940), and is reprinted here with the permission of the University of Chicago Press.

² The most authoritative recent treatments of British policy in the Near East prior to 1855 are: H. W. V. Temperley, *England and the Near East: The Crimea*, London, 1936, and V. J. Puryear, *England, Russia, and the Straits Question, 1844-1856*, Berkeley, 1931. Professor Puryear's *International Economics and the Diplomacy of the Near East, a Study of British Commercial Policy in the Levant, 1834-1853*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1935, adds little to his earlier diplomatic study of the problem.

³ In addition to the accounts already noted, mention should also be made of F. S. Rodkey's *The Turco-Egyptian Question in the Relations of England, France, and Russia, 1832-1841*, Urbana, 1921, and J. E. Swain's *The Struggle for the Control of the Mediterranean prior to 1848, a Study of Anglo-Turkish Relations*, Boston, 1933. The following articles were also useful: R. L. Baker, "Palmerston and the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi," *English Historical Review*, vol. 43 (1928), pp. 83-89; C. W. Crawley, "Anglo-Russian Relations, 1815-1840," *Cambridge Historical Journal*, Cambridge University Press (1929), vol. 3, pp. 47-73; and F. S. Rodkey, "Lord Palmerston and the Rejuvenation of Turkey, 1830-1841," *Journal of Modern History*, I, (December, 1929), 570-593, and II, (June, 1930), 193-225.

was the crisis of 1833, in particular the signing of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi between Russia and Turkey by which the Ottoman Empire virtually became a protectorate of the great Russian state.⁴ It is the purpose of the present chapter to explain the somewhat abrupt change from the passive indifference to affairs in the Near East to active interference in favor of the Turks, a program which was followed for more than two decades, i.e. as long as Palmerston and Stratford Canning held important positions in English diplomacy.

Various explanations have been advanced for Britain's interest in prolonging the life of "the sick man of Europe." Possession of territory in the Mediterranean is the most usual answer to the question; yet, Britain had been a Levantine power since 1815, when the Vienna Congress granted her protective rights over the Ionian Islands. These possessions were never regarded as exceptionally valuable and were finally ceded to Greece in 1864. As far as Gibraltar (acquired 1704) and Malta (annexed in 1800) were concerned, these outposts of the Empire achieved their greatest significance after the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. Since that date British interest in the Near East and the Mediterranean has been paramount.

More fundamental underlying causes for the new importance of the Ottoman Empire in British policy were the steady improvement in trade relations with the Turkish state, and the evolution of new methods of transportation to the distant ports of the Empire and the world. As will be pointed out more fully in a later chapter the constant increase in exports after 1825 to Constantinople, Smyrna, Beirut, Salonica, and Trebizond, — to mention only the most important ports under Turkish control, — compelled even the most conservative Britishers to recognize the significance of the Sultan's dominions to the economic prosperity of the British Isles. Moreover, the development of steam-propelled transports in the second and third

⁴ Prior to 1833 "Britain had played a defensive role in the Near East." The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi tended to "focus British attention and concern on the Mohammedan countries of the Mediterranean." H. L. Hoskins, *British Routes to India*, Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1928, p. 146.

decades of the last century made a shorter route with convenient stopping places for fuel and water necessary; as the Mediterranean began to replace the Cape as the more direct pathway to Asia and India, Turkey, because of her geographic position, took on new importance. In the first decades when the Mediterranean route was used it was less economical than the all-water Cape route, largely because of the overland portages at Suez or through Syria to the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, but the possibilities of a new means of transportation, namely, the railroad which had already proved itself in England, kept alive the new interest in the eastern Mediterranean until the canal became an actuality.⁵ The perfection of ocean steamships, steam river-boats, and the railroad combined to make the Near East a half-way house to India.

Until the protection of her own interests became paramount British anxiety for "the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire" was slight. Only in so far as a rupture of the *status quo* in the Near East might cause a realignment of powers in Europe and possibly war, was the English foreign office interested in Turkey prior to 1825. Pursuance of this policy partly explains how Britain first became involved in Turkish affairs. To maintain the *status quo* England would necessarily have been forced to support the Sultan against his rebellious subjects, the Greeks, "an act entirely counter to her political and intellectual philosophy."⁶ From 1822 to 1826 the foreign office vacillated. Finally, in 1826, partly because of the influence of the Phil-Hellenes in England, though more largely due to the bungling diplomacy of the Duke of Wellington, George Canning found himself definitely involved in an attempt to force mediation of the dispute between the Sultan and his Greek subjects, a policy which culminated in one of the most embarrassing incidents of the nineteenth century, the Battle of Navarino Bay. In the ensuing Russo-Turkish war, which finally

⁵ Hoskins, *op. cit.* Mr. Hoskins' treatment of this problem leaves little to be desired; he examines the problem from the political and diplomatic as well as from the geographical and economic points of view.

⁶ Swain, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

achieved freedom for the Greek state by the Treaty of Adrianople, Britain was hardly more than an observer.

The result of her observations was a new interest in Turkey as one of the members of the European family of nations. Hoskins describes this most succinctly as follows:

In 1827 there was much vacillation and doubt as to what should be British attitude toward the Turkish Government. That Power had long been courted because it could give commercial privileges or withhold them at pleasure. Likewise it could grant or refuse rights of passage to India by any of the nearer routes and its fiat was unchallenged. But the Battle of Navarino — the most enlightening of a series of significant events — suddenly lifted the veil and disclosed to Great Britain and to the world at large not a powerful Empire, but a weak, disintegrating state, honeycombed with corruption, stricken with poverty, disorganized and disunited, and incapable of any long or consistent course of action. The Ottoman Empire had become little more than a loose confederation, although its traditions still gave its government a prestige quite out of proportion to its real strength.

In the face of this revelation, British attitude had to be revised. The first impulse was to stand aside and permit the forces of disruption to complete their work. Religious and moral forces in England, active at the time, strongly contributed to this tendency. After the Russo-Turkish War, however, with both Russian and France strong in the eastern Mediterranean, the alternative policy was adopted at London, and the determination to protect and preserve the Turkish state and particularly its capital, Constantinople, became a corner stone of British foreign policy for the next half century.⁷

While the Greek episode was enlightening to many Britishers, few really appreciated the significance of the demise of "the sick man of Europe." Only the most far-seeing diplomats, Stratford Canning for example, perceived in 1829 or 1830 what the break-up of Turkey would mean to Britain. Palmerston, who had become Foreign Secretary in 1830, was new at the diplomatic game, having been associated with the war department

⁷ Hoskins, *op. cit.*, p. 135. Swain supports this view in the statement that "the setback which the British experienced in 1829 (i.e. Greek freedom) did not alter their belief or their determination that Turkey should be kept intact." Swain, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

prior to this time. Moreover, the Foreign Secretary's attention was confined to events nearer home, namely the Belgian crisis. That his interest in the Ottoman Empire was not aroused until he learned of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi is now a well-established fact, and one which has never yet been stressed sufficiently.⁸

The year 1833 is a more accurate starting point for the new policy with respect to Turkey for in that year several happenings focused the attention both of the public and the Foreign Office on the Near East. First, it was not until the middle thirties that a large body of traders with extensive financial interests at stake began to press for a more active policy, through such journals as *Blackwood's*, the *Edinburgh Review*, and the *Quarterly*. Trade with the Ottoman state had not been substantial enough until that time to warrant their asking the government to intervene in behalf of the Turks. Second, as steam navigation grew in popularity in the Mediterranean, transportation across the land areas of the Near East became more desirable. Though a wide difference of opinion existed as to which was the best route and how it could be conquered most economically, all recognized the importance of Turkey's geographical position. But the fact that British influence in the Near East was not seriously threatened until 1833 was most important. Mehemet Ali's defeat of the Sultan's forces at Koniah was climaxed when Russia secured a dominating position in the affairs of the Porte by means of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi, July 8, 1833. The Russo-Turk treaty caused to become fixed a policy toward which Britain had been tending for several years. Palmerston was shocked into action by the events of 1833. That this experience was one of the great lessons of his diplomatic career and the real basis for the policy he pursued during the following decades is seen as one explores the episode in detail.

⁸"If Russia had freed Greece in 1829, she enslaved Poland in 1830; this was the turning point for Whig Principle. The dividing line for Palmerstonian policy was rather the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi; for in these matters Palmerston was

The Greek War for Independence, which had been the occasion for Mahmoud's destruction of the Janissaries, the first and most significant step in his reform program, also precipitated trouble between the Sultan and his most powerful vassal, Mehemet Ali, a struggle which out-lived Mahmoud, and indirectly enhanced the whole reform movement in the Ottoman state. Mahmoud II did not fare well in his early attempts to subdue the rebellious Greeks.⁹ His army was not a small one, but it was poorly organized, with little or no discipline, and few able generals. To defeat the Greeks on land was impossible with such an inefficient army. The Sultan's navy was even worse. Far inferior to that of the Greek merchants' fleets, at times it was barely able to insure sufficient supplies coming in to Constantinople. An efficient fleet was absolutely necessary to keep the sea-ways open to the capital, and to bring in troops from outlying parts of the empire to subdue the recalcitrant Greeks.

Though Mehemet Ali of Egypt, the Sultan's vassal, possessed a fleet,¹⁰ Mahmoud hesitated to call upon him, because to do so would be to exhibit his weakness to all his subjects. Finally in 1824, despairing of the outcome of the war up to that time, he reluctantly asked Mehemet Ali for his assistance. Mehemet immediately complied, the next year sending his son, Ibrahim Pasha, a very able general, with an army of 17,000 men trained in the latest European fashion. The successes of this force are well known to every student of the Greek Rebellion. Mahmoud had purchased his vassal's assistance with the promises of Crete

no Whig but a true Canningite." Crawley, "Anglo-Russian Relations, 1815-1840." *op. cit.*, p. 49.

⁹ The delusion which had long prevailed as to the power of the Turkish Empire, a delusion which was their greatest protection and strength, was destroyed by the success of the early nineteenth century revolutions, especially the Greek Revolution, 1821-1829.

¹⁰ Mehemet Ali's fleet, though inferior numerically to that of the Sultan, was much better equipped and manned. Cf. Canning's *Memorandum*, Appendix I, p. 240. After 1829, the ships which had been lost in the Greek War, especially at Navarino, were replaced, and others were added until by 1837 Mehemet again had a sizable and powerful navy. Cf. H. H. Dodwell, *The Founder of Modern Egypt; a Study of Mohammed Ali*, Cambridge (England), 1931, pp. 73, 223.

and part of the Morean peninsula,¹¹ a very high price which he later regretted, and which was the chief bone of contention between the two rulers for the next fifteen years.

That the Sultan and his vassal would eventually come to blows over this bargain of desperation was certain because of the nature of the two men. Mahmoud and Mehemet shared some of the same characteristics — especially acquisitiveness, and stubbornness.¹² A man of vision and energy, Mehemet Ali is well described as the Napoleon of the East, the greatest easterner since Suleiman the Magnificent. An Albanian by birth, he began as a successful tobacco merchant in Salonica. In 1798 he went to Egypt as an officer in the *bashi bazouks* to fight against Napoleon. No mere adventurer, Mehemet soon perceived his opportunity to make use of the high position he had won in the army. Within seven years (1805) he had achieved the coveted position of Pasha of Egypt, the richest pashalik in the whole Ottoman Empire. He continued his policy of playing the Mameluke Beys against the other opposition parties in that confused country (eventually destroying the Beys in 1811), until he was the sole ruler of Egypt, responsible only to his suzerain, Mahmoud II. During this time, however, Mehemet did not limit his efforts to political maneuvering entirely. He improved agricultural conditions, stimulated business and commerce, and built up a large and efficient army and navy with which he was able to extend his rule up the Nile as far as Khartoum, over the Wahabis in Arabia, and the tribes to the west.

Mehemet Ali believed that a great king was one who knew how to use both the sword and the purse, and his whole policy was built around that idea. He was forever drawing the sword

¹¹ Mahmoud promised to surrender Crete outright, whereas the Morea was to be governed by Ibrahim Pasha in the Sultan's name. Cf. J. A. R. Marriott, *The Eastern Question*, Oxford, 1917, p. 188.

¹² Dodwell's biography of Mehemet Ali is by far the best study in English covering the whole life of the Egyptian. Mehemet's rise in Egypt is fully treated in S. Ghorbal, *The Beginnings of the Egyptian Question, and the Rise of Mehemet Ali*, London, 1928.

to fill his purse, with which he extended and reorganized his army and generally built up his country. His intervention in favor of Mahmoud in 1825 had been made on that principle. Mahmoud adhered somewhat to the same policy, but he never was as successful in fulfilling it. After the defeat by Russia in 1829, a defeat which cost him the Greek state, the Sultan was in no mood to surrender more territory to the Pasha of Egypt. He realized his position as precarious, and gave no attention to making good his rash promises of 1824. He went even further, and entertained in his heart the fond hope of depriving Mehemet Ali of his independence, and once again bringing him into complete subjection to Constantinople. Thus these two rulers glared at each other for three years, each hoping to forestall the aims of the other; finally in 1832-1833 Mehemet openly rebelled and for a time threatened the very existence of his sovereign's state.

From the point of view of Egypt the Turco-Egyptian crisis of 1833¹³ had its immediate cause in the French occupation of Algiers in 1830. When the French seemed to have gained a definite foothold in Algeria, Mehemet Ali turned his face from the west to the east. Syria, not only nearer to his Egyptian domains, but also not separated by vast desert stretches, was much more suitable ground for expansion. Moreover, control of Syria was becoming an absolute necessity, since for years it had provided a place of asylum for Mehemet's enemies.¹⁴ For these reasons, about the middle of the year 1832, Mehemet Ali ordered his son, Ibrahim Pasha, into Syria. Mahmoud's forces were speedily defeated and the Pashalik of Acre was incorporated within the Egyptian Empire.

Had Ibrahim's forces now turned back, there would never have resulted the crisis of 1833, and the new attitude of the powers resulting therefrom. But the Egyptian army continued its march through Syria, and into Asia Minor as far as Koniah.

¹³ For a brief account of the 1832-33 crisis, cf. Swain, *op. cit.*, pp. 89 ff.; a fuller account can be found in F. S. Rodkey, *The Turco-Egyptian Question*.

¹⁴ The Pasha of Acre freely admitted those who opposed Mehemet's Egyptian administration.

Ibrahim even hoped to go on to Constantinople, but his father advised caution, lest the great powers be unduly aroused. The Sultan, panic-stricken by the rapid progress of Mehemet's forces, appealed both to England¹⁵ and France for assistance in sparing his capital from his unruly subject, but both nations were so involved in settling the recent Belgian crisis that they paid little heed.

Stratford Canning, who had but recently returned from a special mission to the Porte, frantically urged his government to go to the rescue, but the new reformed parliament was faced with domestic issues, and international events nearer home blinded the Foreign Office to the real importance of the crisis in the Near East.¹⁶ Palmerston later admitted (August 28, 1833) that the Sultan had appealed to Britain in November, 1832 for "maritime assistance," but he explained that "it would have been impossible to have sent to the Mediterranean such a squadron as would have served the purpose of the Porte. . . ." ¹⁷ "If England had thought fit to interfere, the progress of the invading army would have been stopped, and the Russian troops would not have been called in; but although it was easy to say, after events had happened, that they were to be expected, yet certainly no one could anticipate the rapidity with which they had succeeded each other in the East." ¹⁸

In despair after the rout at Koniah and the refusals of France and England to succor him, Mahmoud sent a frantic call for help to his former enemy, the Tsar, and here the appeal was

¹⁵ Immediately following the fall of Acre, Namic Pasha, a major general of the imperial guard, was sent to England to secure naval assistance on the coast of Syria. F. O. 78/212, Mandeville to Palmerston, October 18, 1832. Palmerston received his request for aid November 3, 1832, Hansard, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, 1834, p. 321.

¹⁶ Crawley, "Anglo-Russian Relations," *op. cit.*, p. 55.

¹⁷ Hansard, *Parliamentary Debates*, London, 1833, 3rd series, vol. 20, p. 900. Belgian and Portuguese problems were important issues in Palmerston's mind in 1832, and both these affairs called for the use of a part of the English fleet.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, vol. 19, p. 579. This statement was made in the House of Commons on July 11, 1833. When the Foreign Secretary learned of the Russian treaty, his regret at his inaction was even greater. For further defense of his actions in 1833, see Palmerston's speech of March 17, 1834, *ibid.*, vol. 22, pp. 318-349.

not in vain. In fact the reply of the Tsar's Foreign Minister was so prompt that Mahmoud, — sensing a trap, hesitated to accept the proffered assistance.¹⁹ By February, 1833, however, the Sultan was so alarmed by Mehemet's advances that he was ready to welcome the Russians, preferring to risk them in their new role of friend rather than enemy.²⁰ The Tsar immediately dispatched seven ships of the line bearing a force of forty thousand men which within a few weeks was encamped on the Asiatic shores of the Bosphorus.

The presence of Russian armed forces so close to the Ottoman capital forced the French and English Foreign Offices to cooperate,²¹ and they offered mediation. When the Egyptian ruler announced dissatisfaction with the suggested settlement,²² France and Britain tried to exert pressure on the Sultan (by means of a naval demonstration) to make peace. Eventually (May 3, 1833) the Sultan decided to relinquish Adana as well

¹⁹ In December, 1832 Mahmoud had refused the Tsar's offer of fifty thousand men, believing that it was naval support he needed more than anything else. After the defeat at Koniah, however, the Sultan, ready to accept whatever assistance he could get, approved the second proposal of Russia, presented through General Mouravieff. F. O. 78/222 Mandeville to Palmerston, December 31, 1832; and F. O. 27/463 Granville to Palmerston, No. 27, January 21, 1833.

²⁰ For an excellent account of how the Russians changed their policy from one of forceful annihilation of the Ottoman Empire to one of peaceful penetration toward Constantinople between the years 1827 and 1833, see S. M. Gorianov, *Le Bosphore et les Dardanelles*, Paris, 1910, pp. 25-81.

²¹ Palmerston had at first refused the French offer of a joint settlement of the problem, because he feared that De Broglie had designs on the Near East. As a matter of fact the French Foreign Minister, though sympathetic with Mehemet, did not regard the destruction of the Turkish Empire with favor. Close cooperation between France and England at an earlier date might well have made Russian intervention unnecessary and thereby have maintained the *status quo* in the Near East. Swain, *op. cit.*, p. 92. Talleyrand, who was on a special mission to London concerning the Belgian crisis at that time, was struck by "the extreme coldness with which for the last three months the English Government has received all our overtures relative to Eastern Affairs, . . ." Talleyrand to De Broglie, March 22, 1833, quoted in C. M. de Talleyrand-Perigord, Prince de Benevent, *Mémoires*, 5 vols., New York, 1891-1892, vol. 5, p. 94. Talleyrand gives an excellent picture of the attitude of the British Government towards the Eastern Question at this time, especially the Foreign Minister's indecision, and his inability to lead his cabinet in favor of joint mediation. *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 67-95.

²² Mehemet wanted Adana; the substitution of Aleppo or Damascus was not satisfactory. F. O. 78/222, Mandeville to Palmerston, No. 61, March 31, 1833.

as Syria, and the peace of Kutahia²³ was signed.²⁴ The Russians immediately began to withdraw their forces, and the crisis seemed to have passed without a rupture. This amicable state of affairs was not long-lived, however, for it was shortly learned unofficially that two days before the Russian evacuation was completed, they had arranged and the panicky Sultan had signed the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi (July 8, 1833), a treaty which placed the Sultan in the lap of the Tsar, and what was more important, a treaty which completely reversed the policies of the western powers, especially that of England.²⁵

The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi,²⁶ which was to last for eight years, consisted of six articles. After declaring for perpetual peace and amity between Russia and the Ottoman Empire, the treaty provided for mutual assistance in case the independence of either power was endangered. As such it was purely a defensive alliance. The most important feature of the treaty, however, was a secret article, which was not officially communicated to the British Foreign Office until January 16, 1834, but of which they were aware several months before that date. This secret article released the Turks from furnishing men or arms to Russia in case she was attacked, but provided that for this release Turkey would promise to close the straits at Russia's command. The secret article reads as follows:

In virtue of one of the clauses of Article I of the Patent Treaty of Defensive Alliance concluded between the Imperial Court of Russia

²³ G. F. von Martens, *Nouveau Recueil de traités d'alliance, . . . depuis 1808 jusqu'à présent*, 16 vols., Gottingue, 1817-1842, XVI, 18-20.

²⁴ For an excellent summary of the 1833 crisis, see Hoskins, *op. cit.*, pp. 143 ff.

²⁵ In one sense the British were in part responsible for the signing of the Unkiar treaty, though they did not realize it at the time. Lord Ponsonby was new at his post, having arrived at Constantinople (May 1, 1833) but two days before the treaty of Kutahia was signed. Ponsonby learned, May 10, 1833, that Sir Pulteney Malcolm had been ordered to hold his fleet off the Dardanelles, but in no event to enter the Straits without orders from the Admiralty. F. O. Turkey 78/220, Palmerston to Ponsonby, 10 May 1833. The Porte recalling Admiral Duckworth's forcing of the Straits in 1807, misjudged Britain's intention of protecting Constantinople from Mehemet, and therefore considered the treaty with Russia was necessary.

²⁶ E. Hertslet, *The Map of Europe by Treaty*, 4 vols., London, 1875-1891, no. 168, II, 925 ff.

and the Sublime Porte, the two High Contracting Parties, are bound to afford to each other, mutually substantial aid, and the most efficacious assistance, for the safety of their respective dominions. Nevertheless, His Majesty the Emperor of all the Russias, wishing to spare the Sublime Ottoman Porte the expense and inconvenience which might be occasioned to it by affording substantial aid, will not ask for that aid, if circumstances should place the Sublime Porte under the obligation of furnishing it. The Sublime Porte, in place of the aid which it is bound to furnish in case of need according to the principal of reciprocity of the Patent Treaty, shall confine its action in favour of the Imperial Court of Russia to closing the Strait of the Dardanelles, that is to say, to not allowing any foreign vessel of war to enter therein, under any pretext whatsoever.

Interpretation of the phrase "closing the Strait of the Dardanelles" was one of the most controversial points in the months immediately following July, 1833, and so it has remained for more than a century.²⁷ The diplomats of 1833 were well aware that by this treaty Russia had at length acquired what she had been seeking for more than half a century, namely, a protectorate over the decadent Ottoman state, based on Turkey's pledge to close the Dardanelles to "any foreign vessel of war," "under any pretext whatsoever," which might "favour the Imperial Court of Russia." Yet few contemporaries assumed that since the entrance of Russian warships into the Bosphorus and the Sea of Marmora was not mentioned, Russia had the right of egress from the Black Sea. This misunderstanding was the result of analyses made after the crisis and curiously enough has survived until our own time.²⁸

Gorianov, who is perhaps more responsible for this misconception than any other writer on the subject, maintained that since the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi reaffirmed all existing treaties between Russia and Turkey, Russia, by article 7 of the

²⁷ The acceptance of Mr. Philip E. Mosely's interpretation of the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi by the foremost authorities on the subject will undoubtedly finally settle this very moot question. Cf. P. E. Mosely, *Russian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Eastern Question in 1838 and 1839*, Cambridge (Mass.), 1934.

²⁸ Rosen. *op. cit.*, I, 186-189; N. Jorga, *Geschichte des Osmanischen Reiches*, 5 vols., Gotha, 1908-1913, V, 372.

Russo-Turkish Treaty of September 23, 1805, had the right to send her ships into the Mediterranean at will.²⁹ Recently the Russian materials have been reexamined and a point which the great Russian archivist and historian overlooked has been established, namely, that, since the treaty of 1805 was denounced by Turkey in 1806, it could not have been reaffirmed in 1833.³⁰ "The secret article on the Straits," writes Mosely, "did not contain any provisions contradictory to the principle, maintained by the Porte, of closing the Straits to all warships. . . ." ³¹ Thus, while Russia was able to prevent warships from entering the Black Sea, she did not secure in 1833 the right to send her warships into the Mediterranean.³²

Another question which caused much trouble during the thirties was raised by the phrase "in case of need." Did this mean that Russia might demand that the strait be closed at all times or merely when Russia was at war? A contemporary French army officer, Marshal Marmont, who had travelled extensively in Russia and the Near East, interpreted this to mean exclusion of all war vessels, except those of the contracting parties, at *all* times. Writing in 1835, he said: "From the letter of the treaty, and its secret article, it has been generally considered that the exclusion of foreign ships of war from the Dardanelles would only take place in the commonly understood 'case of need,' of the existence of hostilities between the contracting parties (Turkey and Russia), and any other maritime

²⁹ Gorianov, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

³⁰ Mosely, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 11. The principle referred to constitutes the ninth article of the Anglo-Turkish treaty of 1809 which states that "As ships of war have at all times been prohibited from entering the Canal of Constantinople, namely, in the Straits of the Dardanelles and of the Black Sea; and as this ancient regulation of the Ottoman Empire is in future to be observed towards every Power in time of peace, the Court of Great Britain promises on its part to conform to this principle." Though this principle had been accepted for many years, it was first formulated in writing in this Treaty of 1809. Cf. J. W. Headlam-Morley, *Studies in Diplomatic History*, London, 1930, p. 224. Of course neither the Anglo-Turkish treaty of 1809 nor the treaty of Unkiar Skelessi affected any but ships of war. Merchant ships might pass the Straits at any time for the usual fee. Hansard, *op. cit.*, vol. 22, 1834, pp. 324-325.

³² Temperley, *The Crimea*, p. 414, note 109.

powers; but the spirit adopted and acted upon carried the principal to the exclusion at *all* times, of the ships of war of *all* nations, but those of Turkey and Russia. . . ." ³³ Gorianov, writing seventy-five years later, basing his conclusion on the preface of the treaty of 1833, holds much the same view, but "it is the clauses of the treaty, not the general preface, which have force in international law." ³⁴ In the minds of the Russian diplomats who arranged the treaty, this broad interpretation did not exist. The treaty of 1833 was merely a separate guarantee within the old principle, formulated in 1809, and provided only for assistance from Turkey when Russia was at war with some other power. ³⁵

If Russia did not believe in 1833 that she had the right of egress into the Mediterranean, and if she understood the treaty to be only effective when she was attacked by some outside power, what advantage did the great Slav state derive from this new arrangement with Turkey? According to Mosely, Russia's primary motive in making the treaty of July 8th was "to secure recognition from the Porte of her paramount interest in Turkey and of her previous right of intervention, to the exclusion of the alliance and intervention of the Powers." ³⁶ Russian policy since 1829 had been one of preserving the Ottoman Empire from "premature dissolution until more favorable circumstances should permit Russia to take the share appropriate to her as the most powerful neighbor." Friendship with Turkey had to be maintained, "since it was preferable that the Straits be in the hands of a weak and officially amicable government rather than in those of any European state." The only reasonable conclusion that can be made is that while the immediate advantages of the treaty were slight, the "potential advantage to Russia" was very great, in that "in accustoming the Porte to the position of vassal" Russia had "prepared the way for a repetition of the 1833 expedition." ³⁷

³³ Marmont, *op. cit.*, p. 53.

³⁴ Mosely, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9, 21, 23; cf. also Temperley, *The Crimea*, p. 413, note 106.

³⁶ Mosely, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

As will be pointed out later,³⁸ a "repetition of the 1833 expedition" was just what Palmerston was most anxious to forestall, since the firm establishment of a Russia protectorate over Turkey would be detrimental both to British connections with India and to her trade with the whole Near East. The Foreign Secretary's immediate concern, however, was the problem of the Straits. In his opinion the treaty of 1833 was a direct abrogation of the Anglo-Turkish treaty of 1809, and he immediately protested. Britain's protest, presented by Lord Ponsonby, August 26, 1833, concluded with the statement that "if the stipulations of that treaty (Unkiar Skelessi) should hereafter lead to the armed interference of Russia in the internal affairs of Turkey, the British government will hold itself at liberty to act upon such an occasion, in any manner which the circumstances of the moment may appear to require, equally as if the Treaty above mentioned were not in existence."³⁹

The government of Louis Philippe sent an equally emphatic protest, expressing its dissatisfaction with the treaty. This protest was communicated to the Russian government by the French Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburg, Monsieur I. de LaGrene, as follows:

The undersigned, Chargé d'Affaires of his Majesty, the King of the French, is instructed to express to the Cabinet of St. Petersburg, the profound affliction which the French Government has experienced on learning the conclusion of the Treaty of the 8th of July last between his Majesty the Emperor of Russia and the Grand Signior. In the opinion of the King's Government, that Treaty imparts to the mutual relations of the Ottoman Empire and of Russia a new character, against which all the powers of Europe have a right to pronounce themselves. The undersigned is therefore instructed to declare, that if the stipulations of that act were hereafter to bring on an armed intervention of Russia in the internal affairs of Turkey, the French Government would hold itself wholly at liberty to adopt such a line of conduct as circumstances might suggest, acting from that moment as if the said treaty existed not. The undersigned is also desired to inform the Imperial Cabinet that a similar declaration has been de-

³⁸ See *supra*, ch. 4.

³⁹ Hertslet, *op. cit.*, II, 928n.

livered to the Ottoman Porte by His Majesty's Ambassador at Constantinople.

(Signed) I. de LaGrene ⁴⁰

Nesselrode's reply is significant:

The undersigned has received the note by which M. I. de LaGrene, Chargé d'Affaires of his Majesty the King of the French, has communicated the deep regret which the conclusion of the Treaty of the 8th of July, between Russia and the Porte, has caused the French Government, without stating at the same time either the motives of that regret or the nature of the objections to which that Treaty may give rise. The undersigned cannot be acquainted with them — still less can he understand them. *The Treaty of the 8th of July is purely defensive: it has been concluded between two independent powers, exercising the plenitude of their rights, and it does no prejudice to the interests of any state whatever.* What could, therefore, be the objections which other powers might deem themselves justified in raising against such a transaction? How, above all, could they declare that they consider it of no validity, unless they have in view the subversion of an empire which the Treaty is destined to preserve? But such cannot be the design of the French Government. It would be at open variance with all the declarations it made in the last complications in the East. The undersigned must, therefore, suppose that the opinion expressed in M. de LaGrene's note rests upon incorrect data, and that, when better informed by the communication of the Treaty which the Porte has recently made known to the French Ambassador at Constantinople, his Government will rightly appreciate the value and usefulness of a transaction concluded in a spirit as pacific as it is conservative.

That act changes, indeed, the nature of the relations between Russia and the Porte; for, to a long enmity, it makes relations of intimacy and confidence succeed wherein the Turkish Government will henceforth find a guarantee of stability, and, if need be, means of defence calculated to ensure its preservation. It is in this conviction, and guided by the purest and most disinterested intentions, that his Majesty the Emperor is resolved on faithfully fulfilling, should the occasion present itself, the obligations which the Treaty of the 8th of July imposes upon him, acting thus as if the declaration contained in M. de LaGrene's note did not exist.

(Signed) Nesselrode ⁴¹

⁴⁰ Marmont, *op. cit.*, p. 302.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

The British Foreign Office, which had not been actively interested in Turkish affairs since Navarino, was given somewhat of a jolt when it learned the terms of the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi. The Foreign Secretary, Lord Palmerston, had not yet learned the art of quickly sizing up a given situation, and what is more important, he did not know exactly what action to take in order to forestall foreign influence and keep England's position uppermost in Turkey. The Palmerston of 1833 was by no means the Palmerston of 1839 or 1841. In spite of his long service in various subordinate positions of the Tory Cabinets since 1809, in spite of his devout aim to become a disciple of his illustrious predecessor, George Canning, it must be admitted that during the first years of his long reign over the Foreign Office he seemed to be groping about, a little uncertain as to what was the best course to follow. In this he was not unlike the great Bismarck during the first years of his long regime as head of the Prussian state some thirty years later; whether wisely or no at least Bismarck acted promptly; ⁴² herein Palmerston failed in 1833.

Palmerston's failure to act promptly in 1833 was not due to his lack of knowledge of the Turkish problem. Hardly had he assumed office when the liquidation of the Greek War was before the powers. In this affair Palmerston supported the Greeks, but this was by no means a disavowal of his statements concerning the integrity of the Sultan's domains. Acting on the advice of his agent, Stratford Canning, Palmerston had fostered the independence of Greece, "partly because he sympathized with Hellenic aspirations, partly because he felt that the strength and essential integrity of the Turkish Empire would be maintained rather than injured by the removal of this inflammatory appendage." ⁴³ On this basis he had agreed to the extension of the limits of Greece in 1831. In 1832, however, Palmerston did not look upon the continued disintegration of

⁴² Cf. Bismarck and Polish Revolt of 1863.

⁴³ *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, 3 vols., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (England), 1922-1923, II, 289.

the Ottoman Empire as a major diplomatic problem. "To judge from the absence of French and British ambassadors at the Porte,"⁴⁴ sarcastically remarked the opposition *Times*, "and from the official silence maintained on the subject by the governments connected with the Mediterranean, one would have supposed that the decisive battle of Koniah was the first event of the war, and that this *dénouement* of an extraordinary drama came upon western Europe with all the surprise of novelty."⁴⁵

The year 1832 found Palmerston more interested in events nearer home, in particular the question of the independence of Belgium. "The truth seems to be," concludes R. L. Baker, "that the swift succession of events in the Near East caught Palmerston preoccupied, unprepared, and belated."⁴⁶ In a letter to Ponsonby, December 6, 1833, Palmerston recognizes his lack of preparedness for the Russian *coup* six months before. "Preparations," wrote Palmerston, "however, have been made, and are still making, to enable H. M. Gov't. to deal with future circumstances according to the view which may be taken of the exigencies of the moment."⁴⁷

Palmerston's unpreparedness did not result from lack of warning from his agents in Constantinople. As early as August 9, 1832 Stratford Canning⁴⁸ reported that the Porte, having

"Canning, having finished his mission on the Greek question, left Constantinople August 11, 1832. Ponsonby, due to circumstances at Naples where he had been ambassador, did not arrive at Constantinople until May 1, 1833. Chargé d'Affaires Mandeville was acting ambassador during the interim. The French ambassador, Roussin, reached Constantinople February 17, 1833.

⁴⁴ *London Times*, May 7, 1833.

⁴⁵ Baker, "Palmerston and the Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi," *op. cit.*, p. 85. Swain holds somewhat the same view. "Palmerston's Mediterranean policy, for a time, lacked precision. He agreed with the traditional policy of preserving the Ottoman Empire from the ravages of greedy powers, but he was slow in realizing that there was any immediate danger." Swain, *op. cit.*, p. 75. Cf. also Crawley, "Anglo-Russian Relations," *op. cit.*, p. 55. Ponsonby's original instructions, dated December 11, 1832 (he was appointed November 9, and accepted November 29, 1832), should prove valuable in establishing definitely the truth of these statements. The instructions are conspicuously absent from both the ambassadorial and consular materials.

⁴⁶ F. O. 78/220, Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 23, December 6, 1833.

⁴⁷ Canning was in Constantinople from January 28 to August 11, 1832 for the purpose of securing the Sultan's assent to the final terms of Greek settlement.

more confidence in Britain than any other power, had made direct proposals for an alliance. Though Canning was aware that the Sultan sought support in suppressing Mehemet Ali he did believe "that those Powers whose interests are at all involved in its (Turkey's) fate should lose no time in adopting towards it a steady systematic course of policy in one sense or the other."⁴⁹ Again in December, 1832 Stratford Canning, sensing the predicament of the Porte in its relations with Mehemet Ali and Russia, begged the Foreign Minister to pursue a more active policy in the eastern Mediterranean. Motivated by a deep regard for the Sultan and his people, and well aware of what the victory of Mehemet would mean to British commerce, Stratford advised that the defeat of the Sultan would so weaken his empire that it would not only render further encroachments by Russia more easy, but also would retard the internal improvements "essential to the maintenance of his (the Sultan's) independence."⁵⁰ "In one respect, however, the prospect is clear," concluded Canning. "Let Mehemet Ali succeed in constituting an Independent State, and a great and irretrievable step is made towards the dismemberment of the Turkish Empire. That Empire may fall to pieces at all events; and he must be a bold man who would undertake to answer for its being saved by any effort of human policy. But His Majesty's Government may rest assured that to leave it to itself is to leave it to its enemies."

Canning's warning, however, fell on deaf ears. The Foreign Secretary felt that if matters were allowed to run their course both the Sultan and Mehemet Ali would soon exhaust their resources and arrange a reasonable settlement of their diffi-

⁴⁹ F. O. 78/211, Canning to Palmerston, August 9, 1832.

⁵⁰ F. O. 78/211, Canning to Palmerston, December 19, 1832. This Memorandum of Canning's provides not only a candid picture of the situation in the Near East, but also the cool indifference with which the ambassador's report was received at the Foreign Office. Although this document has been printed before (*Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, II, 638, and in Crawley, *op. cit.*, Appendix 5), I include it here as Appendix I, because the marginal notations in Palmerston's own handwriting so well explain the lack of a definite Near Eastern policy prior to 1833.

culties. Palmerston's lack of interest was naturally anathema to a man like Canning. The marginal notation which typified Palmerston's attitude at the time was in the form of a question: "Is not the unwieldy extent of the Turkish Empire one great check to the improvement of its industry and resources and possibly one great cause of its external weakness?"⁵¹ At the very moment the Foreign Secretary pondered this question, the Sultan's forces were being severely defeated at Koniah (December 21, 1832); this defeat was followed by the unsuccessful appeals to Paris and London, and eventually the acceptance of the protecting arm of the Tsar. Palmerston breathed easier when the Russian troops began to evacuate, following the settlement of Kutahia.

Ponsonby's report⁵² of a probable alliance between Russia and Turkey awakened Palmerston with a start. He immediately despatched a letter to Ponsonby, August 7, 1833,⁵³ instructing him to advise the Sultan against any form of alliance with Russia, which England could but regard as a cessation of confidence. If a treaty had already been signed, Ponsonby by all means was to prevent its ratification. This dispatch reached Ponsonby several days after the final ratifications had taken place. Thus, Palmerston's inactivity in Mediterranean affairs in the previous two years, due in part to the fact that he had not yet fully comprehended the magnitude of his tasks, made it possible for France to make extensive gains in northern Africa, and Russia to extend her influence over the coveted Straits, gains which seriously threatened the new route to India.⁵⁴

When the Russo-Turkish treaty became known,⁵⁵ thinking

⁵¹ Appendix I. p. 239.

⁵² Ponsonby reported July 10, 1833 that he possessed a copy of the convention signed July 8th between Russia and Turkey. At this time he did not know about any secret articles but he surmised the existence of such. F. O. 78/223, Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 32, July 10, 1833. Copy of Treaty enclosed in Ponsonby to Palmerston, No. 35, July 12, 1833. F. O. 78/224.

⁵³ F. O. 78/220, Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 15, August 7, 1833.

⁵⁴ Palmerston "was not easily convinced that both France and Russia furthered their interests, Russia with the Sultan and France with Mehemet Ali, at the expense of the British." Swain, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

⁵⁵ *Morning Herald*, August 21, 1833.

Englishmen were quick to perceive its real significance. David Urquhart looked upon the alliance of July 8, 1833 as "an offensive treaty against England, and an abrogation of the treaty between England and Turkey of 1809."⁵⁶ Another contemporary blamed the British government for the sorry state of affairs in the Ottoman Empire and the necessity of such an arrangement with a strong power. "It was not until the Russians," he writes, "*not being able to awaken us* — came forward themselves, that we began to rub our eyes and wonder at seeing the eagle hovering over the minarets of Constantinople: — so that in very truth, we — we alone — are responsible for the present state of affairs in that quarter."⁵⁷ In October, 1833, three months before the treaty was officially announced⁵⁸ the *London Times* expressed the hope that this arrangement which gave the Russian Tsar *carte blanche* in Turkish affairs would be resisted with vigour by all the Powers.⁵⁹

These censures of the actions of the Foreign Minister, while not immediately effective, are worth noting because they forced Palmerston to prepare a definite policy with respect to Turkey and keep to it during the ensuing years. For the moment, however, Palmerston was not prepared to counteract the effect of the treaty, so he pursued a policy of watchful waiting. The moment of hesitation in Palmerston's policy as regards the preservation of the Ottoman Empire did not last longer than a few months. By the end of the year, determined to prevent Russia from intervening in Turkish affairs under the terms of the Unkiar treaty, the Foreign Secretary was especially vigilant lest the Sultan, by some overt act, should provide the Tsar with the necessary pretext for intervention. "The great object of the British Government," wrote Palmerston on October 2,

⁵⁶ David Urquhart, *Sultan Mahmoud et Méhémet Ali Pasha* (quoted in Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 382).

⁵⁷ "Reflections on the Domestic and Foreign policy of Great Britain since the war" by a British Merchant, *Quarterly Review*, London, 1833, vol. 49, p. 527.

⁵⁸ Treaty of July 8th was not officially announced until January, 1834, though it had been ratified by the two powers in September, 1833, due to vagueness of Porte's copy of Treaty.

⁵⁹ *London Times*, October 16, 1833.

1833, "is the maintenance of peace, . . . we are averse to any great changes in the relative distribution of political power because such changes must either be brought about by war or must have a tendency when effected to produce war."⁶⁰ In December, 1833, he instructed Ponsonby to do everything in his power to prevent Mehemet Ali from swerving from his momentarily peaceful policy, lest he become "the instrument of Russia, to work out his own degradation," and that of Turkey as well, because Palmerston was convinced that Russia's treaty with Turkey was but one step in her "aggrandizement toward the South."⁶¹

Palmerston urged Ponsonby to use his influence to persuade⁶² the Sultan that Britain was the truer friend of Turkey, since her interest in the Ottoman state was not motivated by any territorial acquisitiveness. "Conveniences and dangers might be avoided," he warned, "by reverting to the ancient policy of the Porte; and by looking for aid to England, instead of leaning upon a powerful and systematically encroaching neighbor."⁶³ Through Ponsonby, Palmerston cleverly insisted upon an elucidation by the Sultan of certain doubtful points in the Porte's version of the treaty,⁶⁴ with the purpose of bringing

⁶⁰ F. O. 78/226, Palmerston to Campbell, October 2, 1833. Palmerston had strengthened his understanding with France following the Munchengrätz convention of September 18, 1833 in order to counter balance this Austro-Russian rapprochement. With the aid of France he hoped to maintain the *status quo*.

⁶¹ F. O. 78/220, Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 23, December 6, 1833. This document has been published by R. L. Baker in the *English Historical Review*, XLII, 83-89. The method of carrying out the general policy outlined in this dispatch was worked out by Palmerston and his cabinet during the next two years. This dispatch is significant as the first expression of the British government's views on the affairs of the Near East, following the startling events of 1832-33, and also because it is the basis for the policy pursued during the next six years. Cf. also F. O. 65/206, Palmerston to Bligh, No. 101, December 6, 1833.

⁶² Ponsonby, shortly after his arrival in Constantinople, secured contact with the Mahmud through the embassy physician, Dr. MacGuffog, and one Vogorides, "the Prince of Samos," two men who had been used by Canning as intermediaries in the solution of the Greek question in 1832. F. O. 78/225, Ponsonby to Palmerston, "Secret," December 19, 1833.

⁶³ F. O. 78/220, Palmerston to Ponsonby, No. 23, December 6, 1833.

⁶⁴ *Cambridge History of British Foreign Policy*, *op. cit.*, vol. II, Appendix C, p. 639. Palmerston knew that the copy of the Treaty of July 8, 1833, com-

home to the Sultan the fact that Britain recognized him as a vassal of the Tsar. Palmerston's protests having gone unheeded, he immediately began to work out detailed plans for circumventing the influence of the Tsar, and within five years Britain's prestige in the Near East was much improved.⁶⁵

Thus, the crisis of 1833, which marked a new low in the steady decline of the Ottoman Empire, was really a blessing in that it brought about a more active policy upon the part of Britain, and through the rivalry of England and Russia, Turkey was greatly improved in the next decade. Palmerston, who had previously looked upon the Near East as of no great importance, now began to consider it as the mainspring of his whole Mediterranean and Indian policy. The Treaty of Unkiar Skelessi had shown him how far British influence in Turkey had declined, and he was determined to improve it.⁶⁶ Every phase of the Near Eastern question was examined,⁶⁷ and measures were designed to win the favor of the Sultan as well as to encourage the reform movement already in progress in Turkey. Palmerston recognized only too well that as long as Russia controlled the Straits, and thereby Constantinople, she held a dominating position in the Eastern Mediterranean, and he never rested peacefully until the hated Treaty of Unkiar was no more, and British influence had replaced that of Russia.

Fear of Russia⁶⁸ was not the only reason, however, which caused Palmerston to make the Near East an integral part of his foreign policy during the next two decades. British policy in the nineteenth century was motivated by a variety of influ-

municated to the Foreign Office by the Porte, was defective, because Ponsonby had transmitted to London on July 12, 1833 a true copy of the Patent Treaty and the Secret Article which he had secured from unofficial sources. F. O. 78/224, No. 35. Ponsonby to Palmerston "confidential," July 12, 1833.

⁶⁵ See Chapter IV.

⁶⁶ "The British policy of maintenance of Turkey, the beginnings of which go back to 1791, was made a reality after Unkiar Skelessi." Puryear, *International Economics*, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁶⁸ Cf. "The Diplomacy of Russia," *British and Foreign Review*, vol. I, no. 1, 1835, pp. 126 ff.

ences, — political, religious, humanitarian, and last but by no means least, economic. The need of new outlets for the increased production of the factories at home was always a driving force in the policy pursued by the Foreign Office. If Turkey was to be free and independent, she must receive sympathetic support from some other power than Russia; encouragement of the reform movement already in progress was one of the best methods of undermining Russia's influence and thereby making the Porte self-sufficient. Moreover, a strong Turkey would insure an outlet for British produce as well as a source of supply for certain useful raw materials.