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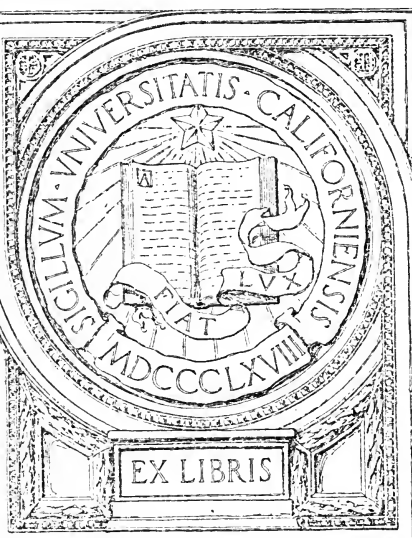
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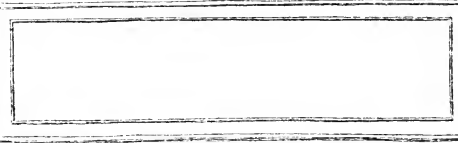


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A

ON THE POLICY OF

GREAT BRITAIN *in*
THE NEAR EAST *and*
CENTRAL EUROPE.

BY

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Imperial Turkish Parliament.

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The Author feels indebted to his
friend, Mons. D. Mamartcheff,
for the translation into English.

TO THE
AUTHOR

A View on the Policy of Great Britain in the Near East and Central Europe.

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The power of Great Britain is not founded only upon her material strength and riches of the earth, but more on humane traditions and her moral prestige throughout the history of mankind.

We all know that the constitutional and legal regime which became the pattern for all other nations was fought out originally by the English nation during a period of three hundred years of stubborn and bloody fighting.

England was responsible for the abolition of serfdom, and she it was who cleared the seas of pirates. Liberty and safety on the seas have existed only under the ægis of Great Britain. It would be no paradox to say that to-day one can travel any distance much more safely on the high seas than one mile on land. In the nineteenth century under British supervision there was not a single foreign civilian injured on the high seas, nor was the trade of any foreign country hampered. The motto, "Freedom of the Seas" was only used by the enemies of England as a rallying cry to appeal to the masses. This has been confirmed by the eminent German Professor Stier Somlo in his book, "*Die Freiheit der Meere und das Völkerrecht*" Leipzig, Veit & Co., 1917, p. 59. He distinguishes between freedom of the seas in time of peace and in time of war by declaring "*that as a problem it is aimless, as a performance—fruitless, and as a goal—utopical,*" p. 119.

Finally, the prestige of England rests on her humanity towards and readiness to succour the suffering and oppressed small peoples as those of Macedonia, Crete, Armenia, &c.

I shall not dwell on the significance of the English literature and science; but one cannot pass on without mentioning British genius for colonisation which has always been a bearer of culture and progress wherever it has been carried out.

TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE
TURKISH PARLIAMENT

One day during a conversation with my Arabian colleagues in the Turkish Parliament, I asked them why they preferred the British to the Germans. They replied: "The Englishman comes to our land, gets a concession and then he is quite satisfied to manage his affairs by putting only one or two of his own countrymen as managers while he leaves all the rest to be arranged and served by the local people; but the German is a notorious bureaucrat, and from the manager to the last hall porter in the business, he will put in only Germans."

The late Grand Vizier, Haki Pasha, whilst lecturing on International law in the University of Constantinople used often to say: "Egypt in our hands was a desert with hundreds of thousands of beggars and homeless people. The English cultivated the land, brought justice to the country, and turned more than one million poor fellaks into rich cotton farmers."

But the greatest tradition of British policy was always considered to be her magnanimity towards the defeated. Unfortunately this was ignored in Versailles two years ago, and it is still ignored to-day in the Near East towards the Bulgarians and the Turks.

The Bulgarians were, during five centuries, serfs politically under the Turks, and by religion and education under the Greeks. There has never been another instance in the history of Europe of a nation suffering so long under a double yoke, and yet, since having obtained forty-three years ago a free national existence, the Bulgarian nation has been on three occasions divided up, viz., in Berlin in 1878, in Bucharest in 1913, and in Paris in 1919. On the last occasion especially, to this small nation of peasants was applied an almost exact copy of the Versailles Treaty of Peace, made up for a great industrial merchant country like Germany.

I shall leave aside the suppressed ethnical rights, but the most painful event is the deprivation of Bulgaria of her natural territorial outlet to the sea through territories peopled by Bulgarians and Turks, and this at a time when every other nation was accorded the right of free access to the sea, even through places peopled with foreign populations.

In this case even the geographical principle was also violated, the very same principle which is the basis of British

policy in the English Channel, as well as in the Irish Channel. It was only Kaiser Wilhelm and Bethmann Hollweg in the past who did not take into account that fundamental principle of British policy and even asked the then British Government what would be their conduct in the case of the violating of Belgian neutrality, forgetting that for the maintenance of this principle Britain, during two centuries, waged gigantic wars against Holland, Spain and France, with the sole object of guarding and securing the freedom of her coasts.

For this reason cutting off Bulgaria from the only free outlet in the Ægean littoral in the twentieth century, the century of trade and communication with abroad, appears to be an enormous blunder. And still, in the Treaty of Neuilly, Western Thrace was ceded to the Great Western European Powers in whose judgment, humanity and fair play Bulgaria always had full confidence ; but in the Treaty of Sèvres this territory, which was vital to Bulgaria, was transferred to an opponent Balkan nation, an age-long enemy of the Bulgarian race, not enjoying a universal recognition of modern free State institutions and policy, and notoriously lacking in any organizing capital. It would be absurd to believe that Greece will be in a position or will sincerely desire to help Bulgaria in her economic developments across the Thracian territory towards the free sea.

But what would appear most dangerous is for Britain to build up her whole policy upon a single person. The impartial critic will pay a great tribute to Mr. Venizelos' policy of clever statesmanship displayed in 1913 by his moderation in the hour of victory ; but it is hard to find the same principle in his policy of 1919 which, in fact, was a deviation of his own on account of the policy of his ambitious friends and the imperialistic aspirations of certain chauvinistic classes of the Greek people.

In fact and law the agreement arrived at Sèvres on 27th November, 1919, is not valid, and it does not really guarantee the rights of the Bulgarian nation on the free sea. The minimum of security of guarantees in this respect would have been to give Bulgaria a real territorial access for her railway to the sea, a port itself and adequate surrounding territory, either under Bulgarian protection or under the

protection of the League of Nations, as in the case of Dantzic for Poland or Fiume for Jugoslavia, the arguments being still more in Bulgaria's favour in this case, as the population of Dede Agatch and its districts is predominantly Bulgarian. (The French Census of March, 1920.)

Further proof of the importance of this territory to Bulgaria is the very first condition Radoslavov put before the Turks in 1915, and the railway to Dede Agatch along Maritza was the buying price of that unhappy alliance.

Since the Middle Ages, even when there was not much trade upon the sea, the Bulgarians under geographic impulse have always tended towards the sea and have fought for the possession of the Thracian littoral. The whole history of the wars between Byzantium and Bulgaria arose from the natural tendency towards the possession of Thrace. Even in the Balkan War, which was declared in the name of the liberation of Macedonia, the Bulgarian armies, following traditional policy, marched and fought in Thrace. It is not by an accident that the Bulgarian nation sings: "Maritza is Groaning."

There are three large rivers in Bulgaria rising from the bosom of the Balkans—Struma, Mesta and Maritza. The mouths of all these were handed over to the Greeks.

The Bulgarians, in their revolutionary attempts against the Turks in 1903, shed their blood over the Thracian mountains, while in 1912, during the Balkan War, the bones of 30,000 soldiers lay rotting on the Thracian fields. There is not an inch of land in Thrace on which was not shed Bulgarian blood during the last ten centuries.

Finally, the *very interest of Great Britain* is to see that every nation in the world has at least an effective free port to an open sea and this not only for the sake of maintaining direct trade with that country, but chiefly to be in a position to enable her to exercise her influence in regard to that particular State. If there had been even a small landing of a few British battalions in the summer of 1915 at Dede Agatch, this peaceful demonstration would have saved the British nation a great many of the sacrifices and much of the expenditure made on the expedition in the Dardanelles and Salonika. Is it not a proven fact that all the Bulgarian diplomats abroad, with the exception only of Rizov in Berlin and

Passaroff in Athens, all Bulgarian statesmen and party leaders with the exception of Radoslavov and his party men, and almost all the prominent Bulgarian generals were for the Allies, while the majority of the Greek diplomatists abroad, all party leaders except Venizelos and all the Greek general staff were against the Allies ?

Heavy and great is the punishment of little Bulgaria. Though reduced to the position of a harnessed and disarmed State, one is surprised to see during the last two months a most well planned propaganda carried out by some English politicians and newspapers against her, accusing her of deeds and intentions for which there can be no evidence and which she could not possibly carry out. That is obviously entirely in disaccord with the real British character, whose alpha and omega is fair-play, justice and magnanimity. Are the Bulgarians to think that these are to be refused them ?

Neither is the present *British policy* in regard to *Turkey* in harmony with geography and ethnography, nor is this policy in the interests of Great Britain. By repelling the Bulgarians and the Turks from their natural geographical ports, the former are thrown towards the Danube and Central Europe, while the latter, together with the whole of the Mahomedan world, towards Russia.

The writer has nothing against the Greeks. He was the first Bulgarian to visit in 1911 the late Greek patriarch Joachim III., and did his best for the reconciliation between Greeks and Bulgarians. To him who believes in the principle that the progress and the future of the Balkan nations is only in their mutual understanding and friendship, it appears that the present British policy with a view to its far-distant consequences, is not really in the interests of the Greeks though it may be dictated by most sincere intentions. Though this may seem paradoxical, to the writer it is obvious that it is not in the interests of Greece to violate the feeling of all their neighbours, Turks, Bulgarians, Serbs, Albanians and chiefly the Italians.

The history of ancient rivalry between Rome and Athens may well be repeated on a smaller or bigger scale. Not so quietly would *Italy* look at the substitution of the old Venetian culture in the Ægean Sea for the new Greek one ;

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nor could Italy now send her labourers and emigrants any more to America or Central Europe, as she used to do before the War. There are no markets for Italian industry, either in Western or in Central Europe. Willing or unwilling, Italy will have to look forward to the Eastern shores of the Mediterranean and the Ægean, and there her policy will encounter the Greeks.

It is very difficult to understand what is the real interest of Great Britain in giving preference to a few millions of Greeks to three hundred millions of Mahomedans; in any case this would hardly help much for the reconciliation and co-operation between Christians and Mahomedans. Great Britain is destined to play the rôle of cultural intermediary between the Asiatic and American continents, and in this respect it would be quite right to say that one of the chief duties of British policy would be to reconcile the Christian with the Moslem civilizations. The world has suffered much by now from racial and religious antagonisms. Does the future not lay in the opposite directions which alone can lead to a better settlement?

I happen to know well the Turks and the Moslem world. The Mahomedan religion contains in itself a supernatural and latent but powerful tendency to create strong bonds, even stronger than Freemasonry could create. The failure of the *Holy War* which was easily proclaimed by the young Turks during the last war was due to its offensive character, a fact which is quite contrary to commands given in the Koran. A defensive action might easily degenerate into a "Holy" upheaval.

Once the Turks were satisfied in their legitimate rights, the militarist and chauvainist manifestations of the Kemalist and young Turk policy would die away and the peaceful and progressive elements preponderate.

Asia Minor is sparsely populated. The Turks have before them the task of curing the wounds of a series of previous unhappy wars and revolutions which happened during the last hundred years. It will be quite a great task for them to devote all their attentions in that direction only.

The Turks and the Moslems in general are people of traditions. They value order and honour. They would tolerate

more readily a European or British control, but it would be a delusion to think for a second that they would permit that control to be given to the Greeks, the very nation which was, until quite recently, under their domination.

The Great War, in this respect, was a great lesson to every nation, and it taught all to value more liberty, as well as to elucidate the political outlook of Asiatics and Africans, pushing them, in this respect, a century forward. It will be a fault of heavy future consequence to ignore a fact of such great importance,

It is true that at present the people, especially in the countries that suffered defeat, are feeling to a great extent tired and worn out, and it would be ridiculous to believe that the present generation would contemplate any suggestion of undertaking a war of revenge. On the other hand, a more liberal, gradual and humane interpretation of the Treaties of Peace in a spirit of impartial justice would help greatly to strengthen the pacifist feeling and tendency of this and the future generations.

And yet the *Entente* should be preserved at any cost, as otherwise the world would be plunged into anarchy. Practically none of the defeated nations has a serious interest in breaking it up. Such an event happening between France and England would create an explosion of ruinous consequences as well in Central Europe as in the Near East.

For the avoiding of this it will be necessary to follow a policy of give and take, and France would do the best for her own interest in accepting the British point of view on the Silesian problem. This is a matter of great importance, the benefit of which would surely be felt in the course of the next few years. One may be a Slav or a Frenchman, but above any local interests there are the interests of Europe and the ultimate interests of the whole of mankind. As the nineteenth century was the era of Nationality, so the present century is the age of industry and technical progress.

Poland is such a vast country that she has enough room for national expansion during the next hundred years in order to consolidate her industry and power, and to develop her own resources, while to give up and leave Silesia in German hands would be a sure step towards the pacification, political

and economical, of Central Europe. Such a solution of this troublesome problem would be the first olive branch towards a peaceful settlement in Central Europe. Any other solution contrary to geographic and economic principles would gradually ferment into a grave problem for Europe, graver even than was the Macedonian problem for the Balkans.

The position of *Austria* is worse compared with any one of the other defeated States. The most sympathetic and progressive nation of Central Europe is convulsed with agony. It is probably the only country where the bread ticket system is still in existence, and even the bread obtainable is principally made of maize. To refuse self-determination to the Austrians, even if as a result of self-determination they were to join Germany, would not be a far-sighted policy, as the peaceful Austrian element added to Germany would assist the pacifist German masses in neutralizing the Prussian element. And this gradual evolution of the German nation would be a super-guarantee of the safety of France, a country whose prosperity and well-being every intelligent person should desire.

It becomes more obvious that the application of the economic clauses of the Treaty of St. Germaine is quite impossible, and the least that Europe can do for Austria's sake in her great hour of need is to lighten the heavy burdens imposed on her by helping her financially.

The economic downfall of Bulgaria and Hungary imposes the necessity of taking a broader view and granting the remission of the heaviest of their financial obligations.

* * * * *

It is well said that the Treaty of Sèvres no longer exists. It is easier for the Entente to take up a quite new and impartial line of policy in respect of Turkey, as well as Bulgaria, relating to the clauses with regard to Thrace, as this Treaty has not yet been ratified nor legally accepted by any of the parties concerned. The territorial outlet of Bulgaria at Dede Agatch, the access of Turkey at Smyrna, an efficient application of the clauses referring to Minorities in Asia Minor, Thrace, Dobrudja and Macedonia, are the minimum necessities that are at present required to be taken by considerations of law, ethics, geography and economics, as well as in the interests of Great Britain herself.



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