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PRONOUNCEMENT

BY

Three Allied Ministers for
Foreign Affairs

RESPECTING THE

NEAR EASTERN SITUATION.

PARIS, MARCH 27, 1922.

*Presented to Parliament by Command of His Majesty, in pursuance of
the Address of the House of Commons dated March 29, 1922.*



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Pronouncement by Three Allied Ministers for Foreign Affairs respecting the Near Eastern Situation.

Paris, March 27, 1922.

THE Foreign Ministers of the Allied Powers, France, Great Britain and Italy, having during five days in succession discussed every aspect of the situation in the Near East, having consulted at each stage the military and financial experts who were summoned for the purpose, and having, further, enjoyed the advantage of communicating beforehand with the representatives both of Turkey and of Greece, have unanimously agreed to the following propositions, which they put forward as the most equitable solution that it is in their power to offer to the Near Eastern problem.

The principles which they have throughout borne in mind, and which are the bases of their proposals, have been:—

1. The desire to re-establish peace between the conflicting armies of Turkey and Greece, but to deal fairly with both parties, and to impose upon neither conditions of discomfiture or defeat.
2. They desire to re-establish the Turkish nation and the Turkish dominion in the areas which may fairly be regarded as their own, with the historic and renowned capital of Constantinople as the centre, and with such powers as may enable them to renew a vigorous and independent national existence.
3. They desire to secure full and fair treatment to the followers of the creed of Islam and to maintain the secular and religious authority of the Sultan of Turkey.
4. They desire to compensate the Greek nation for the great sacrifices which they have accepted during the war in the cause of the Allies, and to leave them free scope for their national and economic progress in the future.
5. They desire to enable both peoples, in regions where they are contiguous or where their populations are intermingled, to live in future in conditions of mutual confidence and self-respect.
6. They desire to provide for the protection and security of the various minorities, whether Moslem or Christian, or of other races and creeds, who, whether in Europe or Asia, find themselves placed in the midst of larger political or ethnic aggregations.
7. They desire to prevent the recurrence of armed conflict between the Turkish nation and the European Powers with whom it was recently at war.
8. They desire above all in the solution which they propose not to be suspected of partiality to one side or the other, but with firm hands to hold the scales even between the two.

With these ends in view, the first object of the Allied Powers has been to bring about a suspension of hostilities between the confront-



ing armies in Asia Minor, in order to enable the counsels of peace and the prospects of an amicable settlement to prevail. They have therefore proposed the conclusion of an armistice to the Governments of Turkey and Greece, subject to conditions which are scrupulously fair to both parties and which were defined by the military authorities under the presidency of Marshal Foch.

The Hellenic Government has already signified its acceptance of this proposal. The decision of Turkey is awaited.

The proposal of an armistice has been made with the avowed intention of assuring the peaceful evacuation of Asia Minor by the Greek forces and the restitution of Turkish sovereignty over the whole of that region. The arrangements for this evacuation, as the first step in the general settlement which is now proposed, have simultaneously been elaborated by the military authorities under Marshal Foch, and are capable of being put into execution without delay. It is calculated that the period required for a complete and peaceful withdrawal of the Greek forces will be somewhat over four months.

It will be observed that, in the event of these proposals being accepted by both parties, the recovery of Anatolia by the Turks, which is believed to be their principal national aspiration, will have been attained without any further sacrifice of treasure or life. Correspondingly the retirement of the Greek troops will be effected with honour.

Should this operation be successfully accomplished, the Turkish sovereignty in Asia will exist unimpaired from the Mediterranean to the Straits and the Black Sea, and from the borders of Transcaucasia, Persia and Mesopotamia to the shores of the Ægean.

Accepting the imperative necessity, which is the result both of historical and geographical causes, for the protection of the minorities of alien race or religion who are found, in some cases in large numbers, both in the vilayets of Turkey and in the European possessions of Greece, the Powers have proposed a series of provisions for their full and adequate security, without distinction of race or creed, in both areas. These provisions will be based both upon the stipulations contained in existing treaties or drafts of treaties and in the secular or religious law of the countries concerned. Furthermore, the Powers have decided to invite the League of Nations to collaborate in this object by the appointment of special commissioners to superintend the execution of these provisions in the areas and for the communities who are principally concerned.

The case of the Armenians has called for special consideration by reason both of the undertakings entered into by the Allied Powers in the course of the war and of the cruel sufferings of that people. Accordingly, the aid of the League of Nations is sought, over and above the protection accorded by the minority provisions to which reference has already been made, in order to obtain for the Armenians the satisfaction of their traditional aspirations for a national home.

The interests of peace and the safety of the future demand that Europe shall never again be exposed to the perils and sacrifices which were imposed upon her in 1914 and the succeeding years by the forcible closure of the Dardanelles. The countless lives that were there poured out, the stupendous efforts that were entailed, must not have been expended in vain. The Turks will be readmitted to the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles under conditions which will provide for the existence of a broad demilitarised zone, in order to obviate

the possibility of any hostile military preparations in that quarter. But an Allied force must be placed and must remain in occupation of the Gallipoli peninsula in order to safeguard the free and unimpeded entrance of the Straits. This also will be a demilitarised zone. The Allied garrison will consist of a force sufficient to secure the entrance to the Dardanelles.

The navigation of the Straits will be placed, as already proposed, under the control of an international commission under a Turkish president, on which it is hoped as time passes that all the principal States who are interested in the commerce or navigation of the Straits will be represented.

The demilitarised zone on the Asiatic shore of the Straits will be identical with the existing sanjak of Chanak. No further demilitarisation is proposed on the southern shores of the Marmora, with the exception of the peninsula of Artaki. On the Asiatic shores of the Bosphorus the demilitarised zone will be identical with the existing neutral zone. The islands of Lemnos, Imbros, Tenedos, Samothrace and Mitylene, outside the Dardanelles, and all the islands in the Marmora will equally be demilitarised.

Passing to the European shore of the Dardanelles and the Marmora the three Ministers have been confronted with the difficult and anxious problem of the future of Eastern Thrace. On the one hand, they were unable, for the reasons which have already been stated, to accept a solution that would place the Gallipoli peninsula once more in the hands of Turkey. On the other hand, they were met by the complaint that some, at any rate, of the lines of frontier that have hitherto been proposed between the European possessions of Turkey, to the north and west of Constantinople, and the areas in Eastern Thrace in the occupation of the Greeks, afforded insufficient protection to the Turkish capital, which might find itself exposed in the future, either to the military menace of invasion or to the invidious propinquity of a neighbour with whom it had recently been at war.

Such dangers it was obvious would be most effectively removed (a) by the removal to a sufficient distance from Constantinople of the projected frontier; (b) by the effective neutralisation of the areas outside this line. Furthermore, the Ministers were confronted by the incontestable facts of the existing situation. Whether the attribution of Eastern Thrace to the Greeks by the unratified Treaty of Sèvres be or not be held to constitute a valid title, the Greek forces are in effective occupation and the Greek Government is engaged in administering that area, which, moreover, contains and has long contained a considerable and in certain parts a preponderant Greek population. In these circumstances the Ministers were unable to assume the responsibility of requiring from Greece not merely the complete evacuation of Anatolia, to which it must be remembered in passing that Greece was invited in 1919 by the Powers, but the complete evacuation of Eastern Thrace in addition.

Accordingly, bearing in mind the importance of the strategical considerations before referred to, which may be summed up in the desideratum of reasonable security for the capital and the state of Turkey in Europe, the Foreign Ministers of the Powers invited the military authorities to assist them with their expert advice. These authorities recommended the drawing of a line which will run from the neighbourhood of Ganos on the Marmora in a northerly and north-easterly direction to a point on the Bulgarian frontier in the western part of the Stranja mountains. This frontier will leave

Rodosto, a Greek town, to the Turks. It will place Baba Eski and Kirk Kilisse on the Greek side of the Turco-Greek frontier. The safety of the frontier is assured by the topographical features of the country, and will be further confirmed by the demilitarisation of almost the entire area of Eastern Thrace both on the Greek and the Turkish sides of the frontier. Thus the Greeks will not be able to threaten Constantinople, and the Turks will not be in a position to attack the Greeks.

The periodical inspection of these and the other demilitarised zones will be undertaken by Allied officers attached to the Allied force on the Gallipoli peninsula, the area of whose occupation will be extended eastwards to Rodosto.

It has been considered whether any special provision should be made for the town of Adrianople, which it has been found impossible to sever from the surrounding territories of Eastern Thrace. Smyrna, which will revert to Turkey, and Adrianople, which will be retained by the Greeks, are in a somewhat analogous position. The Powers will be quite willing to enter into friendly communication with the Turkish and Greek Governments, with a view to the conclusion of a friendly agreement upon conditions which will guarantee a full and fair share to the non-Turkish and the non-Greek elements in the populations in the administration of the two cities, and will further safeguard the religious buildings and institutions of Adrianople.

The three Ministers are not so vain as to suppose that this solution of the Thracian problem will be warmly accepted by either party. The problem admits of no such easy solution. They can only commend it to the public opinion of the world as the proposition which seems to them to be most consistent alike with justice and with the facts of the case.

Passing to Constantinople the three Governments desire to confirm their previously expressed willingness to withdraw altogether the threat that was made at the time of the Treaty of Sèvres to revoke at some future date the retrocession of the capital to the Turks. They confirm the restoration of that city to the full authority of the Government of the Sultan; and they are further willing to engage that the Allied forces, by whom it is at present occupied, shall be altogether withdrawn after the ratification of the future Treaty of Peace.

The Turkish Government will be invited to garrison the city with a larger force than was contemplated in the Treaty of Sèvres.

There remain the questions of the future armed force of the Turkish State, the financial independence which it will enjoy, and the suggested modification or surrender of the capitulatory rights which are enjoyed by foreigners.

Concerning the armed forces of Turkey, the Allied Powers are unable to depart from the principles which it has been found necessary to enforce in the treaties that have been concluded with all the other States recently at war, or to admit the continuance of the system of conscription. They will, however, be prepared to consider with the Turkish Government in an amicable spirit the determination of the period within which the voluntary system of recruiting must be established in that country.

As to the numerical strength of the Turkish forces, it is proposed to allow a very appreciable augmentation of the figures which were contained in the Treaty of Sèvres or were afterwards suggested in London in 1921. The forces now finally proposed are: gendarmerie



45,000, regular army 40,000, or a grand total of 85,000 men, a total which is very markedly in excess of the 50,000 designated in the Treaty of Sèvres.

Should the Turkish Government desire the assistance of foreign officers for the organisation of the above-named force of gendarmerie—a measure which will probably be found to conduce greatly to its efficiency—the Powers will be ready to place them at the disposal of the Turkish Government.

With regard to finance. The financial clauses of the Treaty of Sèvres shall be modified in such a way as to abandon the proposed Financial Commission, while reconciling the principle of Turkish sovereignty with the protection of Allied economic interests and with the amount of control necessary to ensure the payment of Turkish pre-war debts to the Allies and a war indemnity fixed at a sum which Turkey can be reasonably expected to pay. The pre-war Debt Commission shall be maintained and a special Allied Liquidation Commission shall be set up for the above purposes.

In respect of the existing capitulatory system, the three Ministers are anxious to secure to Turkey the largest measure of economic independence consistent with the due protection of the interests of the nationals of their respective countries. For this purpose they are prepared to set up at Constantinople, within three months from the coming into force of the Treaty of Peace, a commission composed of representatives of Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan and of Turkey, to prepare, with the assistance of technical experts representing the other capitulatory Powers, proposals for the revision of the capitulatory régime in fiscal matters.

These proposals shall provide for fiscal equality between foreign and Turkish subjects, while safeguarding the former against excessive taxation and abuses in collection, and for any necessary modification of the customs taxes, with the consent of the Powers concerned.

As regards the Capitulations in judicial matters, the Allied Powers repeat their former offer to set up within the same period a similar commission to prepare a scheme of judicial reform to replace the capitulatory system, which will continue provisionally pending the introduction of the proposed scheme. This commission, on which Turkey will be represented, will be at liberty to recommend either a mixed or a unified judicial system.

Such in broad outline are the main features of the settlement which the Ministers of the three Great Powers, acting on behalf of their Governments, have decided unanimously to recommend. These proposals are now submitted primarily to the judgment of the two parties who are directly involved, but secondarily, and in a not inferior degree, to that of the civilised world. Nor is it necessary to add that the people or the Government by whom they were deliberately rejected, if such a misfortune were to occur, would assume a very grave responsibility before the public opinion of mankind, namely, the responsibility of resuming a struggle which has already wrought sufficient havoc among the peoples of two continents, and the renewal of which can only bring further ruin and destruction in its train, besides leading to a permanent embitterment between the races and creeds of the Near East.

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