

THE SECRET ANGLO-OTTOMAN TREATY OF 1919 IN THE LIGHT OF BRITISH FOREIGN OFFICE DOCUMENTS

by SALAHI R. SONYEL, M. A., Dip. Ed.

Towards the middle of December, 1919, rumours began to spread around that a secret treaty was signed on 12th September, 1919, between Damad Ferit, the Ottoman Grand Vizier, and three British agents, M. S. Francer, H. Morlan and G. Churchill, who pretended to be authorized official British envoys, but who were, probably three Levantines in the employment of the British Intelligence Service. The agreement, which was said to have been prepared in duplicate, approved by the Sultan Vahidettin, and exchanged between the signatories, provided as follows: The British Government undertook to guarantee the integrity and independence of the Ottoman Empire under her own mandate. İstanbul would remain the capital of the Sultanate-Caliphate. The Straits would be under the control of Britain. The Ottoman Government would not object to the establishment of an independent Kurdistan. In return, the Ottoman Empire undertook to use the moral force and authority of the Caliphate in favour of Britain in Syria, Mesopotamia, and in other Muslim countries. The British Government would assist in the efforts to pacify the sentiments against the semi-constitutional administration to be set up in Turkey for the repression of the nationalist movement. The Ottoman Empire would forfeit all her rights over Egypt and Cyprus, whereas Britain would undertake to assist the Turkish delegates at the Peace Conference. After the conclusion of peace, the Sultan would exchange a further agreement with the British Government in order to extend the provisions of Article 4 dealing with the moral force of the Caliphate, and make it more effective and all-embracing. The provisions of this agreement, too, would be kept secret¹.

¹ PRO., FO. 371/5117/E. 260 (PRO. short for Public Record Office and FO. for Foreign Office); these abbreviations will be used throughout the article. Admiral Sir John de Robeck to Lord Curzon, secret despatch No. 177/M. 2705, Constantinople, 3rd. February, 1920, enclosing report HA/455, dated 28th January, 1920.

This so-called agreement created dissension among the Entente Powers, especially between Britain and France, and caused much embarrassment in British diplomatic circles. It afforded an opportunity to Turkish, French and American writers to criticise vehemently British foreign policy in the Middle East, which supported passionately the Greek aspirations for a Greater Hellas to replace the Ottoman Empire on the routes to British India. Hikmet Bayur notes that the agreement was revealed by the French. He believes that this fitted the situation, wishes and thoughts both of the Sultan and of the British, at the time, and could be considered as the reflection of the true state of affairs. He adds that the agreement was published, for the first time, in the *New York Herald Tribune* on 22nd January, 1920. Later on, Franklin Bouillon² disclosed that he had got hold of this document, which he insisted was authentic, and had given it to the said American paper because he believed its publication there would be more effective. Hikmet Bayur emphasises that September, 1919, was the month in which the Anglo-French relations were at their lowest ebb. The original of the agreement could not be found in İstanbul. "Vahidettin must have either destroyed it, or must have taken it with him as he was fleeing on a British war ship. As the British have already denied its existence at the time, they cannot be expected to publish it, even if it exists"³, concludes the writer.

Many Turkish writers and historians including Ali Fuat Cebesoy⁴ Feridun Kandemir⁵, Rahmi Apak⁶, and Kemal Karpat⁷, believe in the existence of such an agreement. The official history of the Turkish Republic, *Tarih*, too, admits its existence⁸. Atatürk, however,

² Franklin Bouillon was the Radical-Socialist deputy for Seine-et-Oise and chairman of the Committee on Foreign Affairs in the French Parliament; see PRO., FO. 371/3752/126386, George Grahame to Lord Curzon, Paris despatch No. 872, 4th September, 1919. He was the chief French envoy responsible for the signature of the *Ankara Accord* of 20th October, 1921, with the Turkish Nationalists.

³ *Atatürk, Hayatı ve Eseri*, V. I, Ankara, 1963, pp. 204-206; see also *Yeni Türkiye Devletinin Dış Siyaseti*, İstanbul, 1935, p. 39 and *Türkiye Devletinin Dış Siyaseti*, İstanbul, 1942, p. 40, by the same author.

⁴ *Millî Mücadele Hatıraları*, İstanbul, 1953, pp. 167 - 176.

⁵ *Mustafa Kemal, Arkadaşları ve Karşıdakiler*, İstanbul, 1964, p. 137.

⁶ *Türk İstiklâl Harbi II. Batı Cephesi*, Ankara, 1965, p. 7.

⁷ *Turkey's Politics*, Princeton, 1959, p. 35.

⁸ *Tarih*, V. IV, Türk Tarih Kurumu, Ankara, 1931, pp. 29 - 30.

was doubtful about the authenticity of this agreement as revealed in his cypher telegram of 12th December, 1919, to Kazım Karabekir, XVth Army Corps Commander at Erzurum, telling him: "A copy has been obtained in İstanbul of the Secret Treaty which has been signed on 12th September 1919 between the British envoys and the former Grand Vizier, Damad Ferit Pasha, and submitted for the approval of the Sultan. We are trying to get hold of the original *in order to confirm its authenticity* . . ." ⁹. Celal Bayar, moreover, points out that this agreement was based on "hearsay" ¹⁰.

The non-Turkish historians who deal with this subject include Harry N. Howard ¹¹, who calls it the "supposed treaty", and points out that the text was published by Pierre Loti in one of his works ¹² adding that, although the treaty was denied by both Governments ¹³, it fitted exactly into "English policy at this time." He erroneously gives the names of the British envoys, who signed the treaty, as Mr. Winston Churchill, M. M. Fraster and Nolan.

Another writer, Elaine D. Smith, in her doctoral dissertation published in Washington in 1959 under the title *Turkey: Origins of the Kemalist Movement, 1919-1923*, attributes to Donald Webster ¹⁴ the claim that the treaty was signed by the Sultan, and says: ". . . Mustafa Kemal's hand was strengthened by the conclusion of a secret agreement (Sept. 16, 1919?) between the Sultan and England's representative which accepted a British mandate for Turkey. Kemal reacted by issuing a manifesto ordering the rupture of all communications between İstanbul and Anatolia. . . The Damad Ferit Pasha Cabinet could not survive this influence along with the resentment aroused by the terms of the secret pact. The cabinet fell on October 2, 1919" ¹⁵.

⁹ *Atatürk'ün Tamim, Telgraf ve Beyannameleri*, V. IV, Ankara, 1964, p. 35; Kâzım Karabekir, *İstiklâl Harbimizin Esasları*, İstanbul, 1957, p. 158.

¹⁰ *Ben De Yazdım*, V. 7, İstanbul, 1969, p. 2211.

¹¹ *The Partition of Turkey*, New York, 1966, pp. 241 - 242.

¹² *La Mort de Notre Chère France en Orient*, Paris, 1920, pp. 153-155.

¹³ The Grand Vizier, Damad Ferit, himself had officially announced, during his fourth term of office, that this so-called Secret Agreement did not exist and that "evil rumours" circulating around were absolutely "untrue and unfounded"; see Tarık Mümtaz Göztepe, *Osmanoğullarının Son Padişahı Vahideddin Mütareke Gayesinde*, İstanbul, 1969, pp. 278 - 279.

¹⁴ *Turkey of Atatürk*, p. 80.

¹⁵ *Turkey: Origins of the Kemalist Movement, 1919-1923*, Washington, 1959, p. 23.

Elaine D. Smith thus draws a wrong conclusion when she claims that the treaty, which became common knowledge only towards the middle of December, 1919, had so much effect on Turkish politics in the middle of September, 1919.

British author Henry H. Cumming, however, is doubtful about its existence although he quotes a passage from Harry N. Howard, referred to above, and adds: "At any rate, from this time, for one reason or another, the British were no longer keen about forcing the Turk out of Constantinople... Until the existence of the supposed secret treaty between Britain and Turkey has been either proved or disproved, this surprising move on the part of a majority of the King's ministers may be reasonably attributed largely to the British fears of Moslem uprising in India and Egypt as a protest against the destruction of the Caliphate"¹⁶.

There is still a tendency among some historians to insist that such a secret agreement did exist. A thorough examination of the Foreign Office documents in the Public Record Office, London, however, failed to confirm its existence, although it brought to light the fact that Damad Ferit, like Sultan Vahidettin, whose favourite Grand Vizier he was, was an extreme Anglophil. He thought he was doing his utmost to procure a British mandate or protection over the Ottoman Empire, in face of the dangers of its partition or dismemberment by the Entente Powers, following the Ottoman defeat at the end of the first World War. His purpose was said to be the preservation of the integrity of the Ottoman Empire and of the Sultanate-Caliphate.

As early as 3rd April, 1919, Damad Ferit went to see Admiral Richard Webb, British High Commissioner acting for Admiral Calthorpe, to tell him that he had been sent by the Sultan, with whom he had a long discussion the day before. The Sultan had told his Grand Vizier that his father, Sultan Abdul Mecid, had brought him up to consider England and the English people as his friends. Experience and observations had confirmed him in these principles. The present object of the Sultan and his Grand Vizier was to make the complete submission of the Ottoman Empire to His Majesty's Government. They saw no power to whom they could turn for help except England. The Grand Vizier, speaking for the Sultan as Caliph, and himself

¹⁶ *Franco-British Rivalry in the Post-War Near East*, London, 1938, pp. 91-92.

as the highest functionary in the state, reaffirmed the submission of Turkey to England, but to England alone, and supplicated British assistance, assuring the British High Commissioner that, His Majesty's Government should, in return, have every support and exercise of good will which lay within the powers of the Turkish Government.

Admiral Richard Webb, in commenting on this interview, remarked that he felt certain that no similar advances had been or would be made to either of his colleagues, for it was not to the French or the Italians that Turkey had looked for aid in the past, and there was much evidence that the desire for British help and guidance was widely spread throughout the country as a whole, and not only among the Turks. The great traditions that had given majesty to the Sultans of Turkey and to the Caliphs of Islam were certainly not yet extinct. He went on "Just as we shall have to live along with 10 or 12 millions of Turks, so shall we also have to live with the moral and religious influences which are concentrated in their Sovereign; and whilst on the one hand it appears to me a mistake to exaggerate the spiritual power of the Caliphate, so it is no less a mistake to underrate the potential dangers of pan-Islamism, and I suggest that it is as important to have a friendly and dependent Sultan in the north, as it is to have a King of like disposition in the south, of Western Asia".

At the Foreign Office, this document was minuted on 22nd April, by N. D. Peterson, as follows: "The Sultan and the Grand Vizier may be sincere in the sense that they are trying to do their best for their own country, but this proposal seems to be . . . an attempt to bribe us, by striking the old familiar note of our responsibilities as a Moslem power and by offering us a favoured position in a reconstructed Turkey, to assist the Turks in escaping the consequences of misrule and defeat. . . The proposers of the arrangement can hardly be ignorant that any attempt to give effect to it must inevitably cause hopeless dissension between ourselves and our Allies. . . Even Pierre Loti could hardly suggest a more effective method of re-establishing the prestige of the Turk. . ." ¹⁷ (Document No. 1).

On 29th May, 1919, British High Commissioner Admiral Calthorpe, informed Lord Curzon, the Foreign Secretary, in a cypher

¹⁷ PRO., FO. 371/4156/60152, Admiral Richard Webb to Lord Curzon, despatch No. 453/1768, Constantinople, 3rd April, 1919.

telegram, that the Grand Vizier had said that, if it was decided that Turkey should be placed under a mandate, in view of the "decadence" of France and the lack of experience of America in governing subjects, it was the earnest desire of all Turkey, "from the Sultan to the last peasant" that this mandate should be given to Great Britain¹⁸. On 5th June, Admiral Calthorpe, in an urgent and very confidential cypher telegram to Lord Curzon, reported that, despite the tremendous drive the French were making to capture the favour of the Turks, he was not very much afraid that the Grand Vizier would be corrupted. Damad Ferit considered that his country stood in absolute need of a guiding and helping hand, both to direct and control the administration, and to relieve the Government from the distress and confusion prevailing in the interior. He desired that this should be entrusted to one power, and that should be England by reason of her ability in governing Moslems in other countries. If he could not get this, he wished for an American mandate, but declared himself absolutely opposed to French control¹⁹.

Damad Ferit's efforts to procure a British protection or mandate over the Ottoman Empire did not escape the attention of the American High Commission in Istanbul. Thus, on 26th August, 1919, the American High Commissioner sent a telegram to the Secretary of State, telling him that rumours were "rife" that Britain and Turkey were about to sign a treaty similar to that just negotiated with Persia. While these rumours were not trustworthy, he thought that they indicated the trend of thinking in Istanbul²⁰.

Meanwhile Damad Ferit continued his systematic campaign aiming at procuring British protection or mandate over all Turkey. On 8th September, 1919, four days before the alleged signature of the secret agreement, Admiral Richard Webb, acting British High Commissioner in Istanbul, sent a very confidential despatch to Lord Curzon, telling him that the Grand Vizier had again complained

¹⁸ PRO., FO. 371/4180/81369, Admiral Calthorpe to Lord Curzon, cypher tel. No. 1153, very urgent, Constantinople, 29th May, 1919.

¹⁹ Ibid., .../4229/85232, Admiral Calthorpe to Lord Curzon, cypher tel. No. 1205, urgent, very confidential, Constantinople, 5th June, 1919.

²⁰ American High Commission to Secretary of State, tel. No. 160, Constantinople, 26th August, 1919 in Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey*, Baltimore, 1965, p. 187.

of the very great difficulties created for the Turkish Government by the indefinite duration of the Armistice, and said that the only way possible to shorten it would be by coming to a secret understanding with Great Britain. Admiral Richard Webb takes up the story: "I at once replied that such an idea was quite out of the question: we would never dream of taking any step except in conjunction with our Allies; and what would they say if they found that His Majesty's Government had indulged in any conversations with the Turkish Government?..." Damad Ferit said that, from the moment of his assuming office, he had never once sought to play off one Power against another according to the traditional policy of the Porte, but it was Great Britain that had fought with and had conquered Turkey, and it was Great Britain that had the greatest interest in Turkey. He referred to British Prime Minister Lloyd George's speech of 18th August, that vital British interests were involved in the Turkish settlement with which Great Britain was most intimately concerned. That expression of opinion had appealed to him most strongly, for the Turkish interests "were absolutely dependent upon Great Britain and upon no other power"²¹.

Ferit then referred to the proposals he had made on 30th March 1919 and said that the Allies had never heard of that communication, so why should they hear of any others? Admiral Webb said that no suite had ever been given to his proposals referred to. Damad Ferit's object was to clear the air and to arrive at an understanding on the claims of the Allies, but more especially of Great Britain, so that when the Turkish question came up for discussion, a large part of the obstacles, in the way of a settlement, might be already removed beforehand, and that the Turkish delegates would know approximately what ground they had to stand on. He instanced the conclusion of the treaty with Persia and his highest desire would be to unite Turkey

²¹ Speech of British Prime Minister in the House of Commons, see *Parliamentary Debates*, 5th series, House of Commons, V. CXIX, cols. 1979 - 2022. Damad Ferit had misinterpreted Lloyd George's speech to the Sultan, claiming that it was in favour of the Ottoman Empire, and that the Turco-British friendship, prevailing during the reign of the Sultan's father, was being reinstated; but the Sultan's private secretary, Ali Fuat Türkgeldi, had translated the French text of the speech verbatim, whereupon Damad Ferit was very much embarrassed, and blushed, see A. F. Türkgeldi, *Görüp İstittiklerim*, Ankara, 1951, p. 235.

and Great Britain, by some similar instrument. Admiral Webb refrained from expressing to him his conviction that the Turkish terms would be a matter of dictation, even if the Allies had some difficulty in arriving at the exact wording which they would dictate, and pointed out that the slightest suspicion of even any separate negotiation could not fail to create exactly that dangerous situation of mistrust and rivalry. Admiral Webb advised Damad Ferit to withdraw his suggestion owing to the greater disadvantages than the advantages.

On 20th September, W. S. Edmonds, in the Foreign Office, minuted this document as follows: "The Grand Vizier repeats his invitation for us to take Turkey under our tutelage. It is the same proposal as we have had from Talaat, from the Ottoman League, and from various emissaries both of the Sultan and of the C. U. P. (Committee of Union and Progress). All sections of the Turkish community would regard British protection with immediate satisfaction, but their ultimate hopes might vary. The chauvinists would hope to throw us over and attack us when we had made them a country again; the more moderate element might be content to live under some form of protectorate. At any rate Damad Ferit probably felt that our support alone could enable him to carry on." Edmonds suggested that Admiral Webb's attitude towards Damad Ferit should be approved. His suggestion was accepted²². Admiral Webb was, therefore, informed of this in a cypher telegram on 23rd September by Lord Curzon²³. (Document No. 2).

Damad Ferit and his Cabinet resigned at the end of September, 1919, and was succeeded by the Ali Riza Pasha Cabinet on 1st October, 1919. From that date until the middle of December, 1919, nothing was heard about the Secret Agreement²⁴. On 23rd January, 1920, however, the British Ambassador in Paris, Lord Derby, in a very urgent cypher telegram, informed Lord Curzon that a certain Adam,

²² PRO., FO. 371/4159/130732, Admiral Richard Webb to Lord Curzon, despatch No. 1633/M/1095, very confidential, Constantinople, 8th September, 1919; see also *Documents on British Foreign Policy*, 1st. series, V. IV, London, 1952, pp. 753 - 754.

²³ Ibid., Lord Curzon to Admiral Richard Webb, Foreign Office cypher tel. No. 559, 23rd September, 1919.

²⁴ Mustafa Kemal to Kâzım Karabekir, cypher tel. dated 12.12. 1919, see footnote 9 above.

Future of Turkey

The memo handed to him by Grand Vizier and of report of an interview with the latter in which the above question was discussed at length.

48129
36640
53456/107

(Minutes)

2. Approve attitude

Copy { Peace Delegation. }
D. P. I.
2/14/19 W. S. S.

The Sultan and the Grand Vizier may be sincere in the sense that they are trying to do their best for their own country, but this proposal seems to be nothing more or less than an attempt to blame us, by stating the old familiar note of our responsibilities as a Muslim power and by offering us a favoured position in a reconstituted Turkey, to assist the Turks in escaping the consequences of misrule
(and

S. Sonyel

and defects other than by a grant of independence to Armenia and autonomy to the Hedjaz. The wisdom of the arrangement can hardly be present that any attempt to give effect to it must inevitably cause helpless division between ourselves and our Allies, and it is perhaps not uncharitable to consider this as at best a secondary objective.

Even Pasha Habi could hardly suggest a more effective method of re-establishing the prestige of the Turk than to allow him to return to Medina from which Fakhri was expelled with so much difficulty last January.

It seems very desirable that we should keep our Allies informed of these proposals, but in view of the advice taken in connexion with the simplest course make through Habi Pasha (see also of incident to Paris, Rome & Washington account), it is not perhaps necessary to say anything to Paris on this point.

Yours faithfully,
S. Sonyel

22/14

A. B. Smith

Future of Turkey

Reports conversation with Grand Vizier who complained of difficulties arising out of long duration of armistice, and suggested that H.M.G. should secretly inform him of nature of peace terms and expressed desire for British protection (Munich).

By. Copy D.M.S. 14. 124460.
 P.S. ✓
 Print Eastways.

J.A. Nicholls.
 1919.

The Grand Vizier repeats his invitation for us to take Turkey under our tutelage. It is the same proposal as we have had from Talat, from the Ottoman Empire, & from various emissaries both of the Sultan & of the C.U.P. All sections of the Turkish community would regard British protection with immediate satisfaction, but their ultimate hopes might vary. The chauvinists would like to throw us over a

S. Sonyel

attack us when we had more than a country grain; -
the more moderate element might be content to
live under some form of protectorate. At any rate
I am sure, probably felt that our support alone
could enable him to carry on.

Admiral Webb's attitude
disturbance as proposed.

W. S. Edmonds

20/9/19.

There are also $\frac{C}{130725}$

G. Kidston.

Sept. 20/19.

J. Hillery
20/9.

The Duke is very much interested
in the Duke's view and on the
Pecuniary agreement which was
not concluded for me with a
beast for

21/19

Relations between WWI and Turkey

"Times" representative gives information re spy. a document signed at Stamboul last Sept. by J. W. Strauss Polack and M. Churchill, alleged official British Agents. Document provides for British to help Sultan to maintain himself at Const ple. and Sultan to help British in resisting French in Syria. Requests authority to deny

(See within) ^(minutes.) in event of document being published

Polack & Churchill are Levantine names & it is possible that these three men were in the employ of our secret service or of the British military intelligence dept. In any case they were not authorised British agents & this highly mischievous business must be entirely bogus.

24/11/20. } submitted.
(Cons'ple)

W. S. Edmonds

24/1/20.

Report to Cons'ple.

N. 65

E. Phipps

Jan. 24
6 am.

24.1.

S. Sonyel

Alleged agreement between W.W. and Turkey

A document, such as is described by "Times" representative at Paris, which is evidently forged and is used for propaganda purposes, is understood to exist signed by three persons, two of them being Churchill & Curzon. Endeavours are being made to obtain a copy.

(Minutes)

(Files only)

This makes it more evident that the whole thing is a Turkish attempt to make real trouble between ourselves & the French.

W.S. / Sonyel

Copy to Paris by ref 173042

W. S. Edwards

30/1/20.

D. Phipps

30.1

J. C. / Sonyel
30.1

Belge 4

Sir J. Tilly.

26

The "Hearst" press
have raised the ghost of
the secret Anglo-Turkish
Treaty & are running
it strongly as anti-
British propaganda.

The "New York Times"
man came to ask Mr
Davis about it & I
saw him & said we
had issued an official
denial at Paris. I
also read him Lord
Crewe's letter to Mr
Davis

S. Sonyel

Davis (See Flax A.) He is
very anxious to be allowed
to publish this as he says
it would constitute a far
more effective demand than
a bare denial, both as
being a specific docu-
ment & because Lord
Gray's signature carries
great weight in the
U.S.

W. G. Brown
2/1/5

Dr. Cope to his doing so
J. S. S. S.
2/1/5

Alleged Turco-British Agreement of September,
1918.

Refers to Foreign Office telegram No. 65 of
24th January (17012/1919) and his telegram No. 84
of January 28th (174587/173042).

Transmits copy of secret report giving substance
of agreement alleged to have been signed by Ferid
Pasha for Ottoman Government, and Messrs. Trancer,
Morlan and Churchill for British Government.

(3/Annex.)

The explanation now suggested is that the document
was fabricated in order to discredit Ferid Pasha.
This is possible but the authors probably hoped
also to make trouble between us & the French.

W. J. Gray

Letter to Berlin ref. No. 1 p. 67

Mr. S. Edmunds

21/2/20

Emmott Dorey

23/2/20

W. J. Gray
2/2

It is evidently a "faki".

H.

S. Sonyel

Also check minutes of S.A. meeting to see if anyone has been wound again - not to see the face of Leger. 11/2

Eastern Department.

12

The attached is a summary of an alleged secret treaty between two British agents and Damad Ferid Pasha which was, I believe, foreshadowed some weeks ago. The "Kolais" is a sensational paper but its revelations will, no doubt, be widely used.

A. W. G. Rendell

12/2/20.

The "Colais" was, if I remember right, in German press before the war. It is quite likely to be an affair, or perhaps Turkey is supplying it with funds. In any case this will produce a very bad effect in France.

We instructed Lord Derby to our friends to issue an explanatory denial in the event of publication, but as the article appeared yesterday morning & we have not heard from Paris it might be well to draw the Embassy's attention to this & instruct them to issue a denial without delay.

E. Phipps

12. 2. 20.

I think the above article is well merited. There is no possible reason for the continued use of this yellow paper. It should be scrapped immediately.

W. J. P. 12

12. 2. 20.

Italian press comments on British policy
in Turkey.

Reports article in "Idea Nazionale" headed
"A secret agreement between England and Turkey".
Article gives terms of alleged agreement with
Denad Ferid Pasha, and violently attacks British
policy in Turkey,

23

This is the same report as was published by the "Eclaire" (E83) &
mentioned by Mr. Davis to Lord Grey. (E671)

1. Telegram to Rome authorizing publication of
demit in any form considered suitable
2. Copy copies made with ref.

W. S. Edmonds

8/5/20.

Antoni Emilio d'Almeida

News Dept.

This silly old report, ridiculous as it is, seems
hard to kill. Proceed as suggested by Mr. Edmonds,
for which purpose I annex dft telegram

W. S. Edmonds

4/5/20

J.

BELGE No. 1

Photo-copy No. 1 & 1a

Sadrazam Damad Ferit'in 3 Nisan, 1919'da İngiliz Yüksek Komiseri Vekili Amiral Richard Webb'le yaptığı görüşmeyle ilgili olarak İngiltere Dışişleri Bakanlığı görevlilerinden N. D. Peterson'un kendi el yazısıyla yaptığı yorum.

BELGE No. 2

Photo-copy No. 2 & 2 A

Sadrazam Damad Ferit'in 8 Eylül 1919'da Amiral Richard Webb'le yaptığı görüşmeyle ilgili olarak İngiliz Hariciyecilerinden W. S. Edmonds'un 20. 9. 1919 tarihli ve kendi el yazısıyla yazılmış yorumu.

BELGE No. 3

Photo-copy 3

İngiltere Dışişleri Bakanlığı yetkililerinden W. S. Edmonds'un sözde gizli antlaşmayı imzalayan İngiliz murahhaslarıyla ilgili olarak 24. 1. 1920'de kendi el yazısıyla yazdığı yorum.

BELGE No. 4

Photo-copy 4

W. S. Edmonds'un sözde gizli antlaşmayla ilgili olarak 30. 1. 1920 tarihinde kendi el yazısıyla yazdığı görüşler.

BELGE No. 5

Photo-copy 5 & 5a

İngiliz hariciyecilerinden D. G. Osborne'un, gizli antlaşmayla ilgili olarak 29. 3. 1920'de Sir John Tilley'e hitaben kendi el yazısıyla yazdığı not.

BELGE No. 6

Photo-copy 6

W. S. Edmonds ve Lord Hardinge'in sözde gizli antlaşmayla ilgili olarak 21. 2. 1920'de kendi el yazılılarıyla yazdıkları yorumlar.

BELGE No. 7

Photo-copy 7

İngiltere Dışişleri Bakanlığı görevlilerinden E. Phipps'in 12. 2. 1920'de *Eclair* gazetesi ve sözde gizli antlaşmayla ilgili olarak kendi el yazısıyla kaleme aldığı yorum.

BELGE No. 8

Photo-copy 8

Max Muller'in sözde gizli antlaşmayla ilgili olarak 4.5.1920'de kendi el yazısıyla kaleme aldığı yorum.

DOCUMENT No. 1

Photo-copy No. 1 & 1a

Original hand-writing of N. D. Peterson, a Foreign Office official, commenting on the Damad Ferit - Admiral Richard Webb interview, dated 3rd April, 1919.

DOCUMENT No 2

Photo-copy No. 2 & 2a

Comments by W. S. Edmonds on 20. 9. 1919 in connection with the Damad Ferit - Admiral Richard Webb interview, of 8th September, 1919.

DOCUMENT No. 3

Photo-copy No. 3

Comments by W. S. Edmonds of the Foreign Office in connection with the so-called Secret Treaty and its signatories.

DOCUMENT No. 4

Photo-copy No. 4

Comments by W. S. Edmonds, on 30.1.1920, in connection with the so-called Secret Agreement.

DOCUMENT No. 5

Photo-copy No. 5 & 5a

Minute by D. G. Osborne, dated 29.3.1920, in connection with the Secret Agreement, for the attention of Sir John Tilley.

DOCUMENT No. 6

Photo-copy N. 6

Comments by W. S. Edmonds and Lord Hardinge, dated 21.2. 1920, in connection with the Secret Agreement.

DOCUMENT No. 7

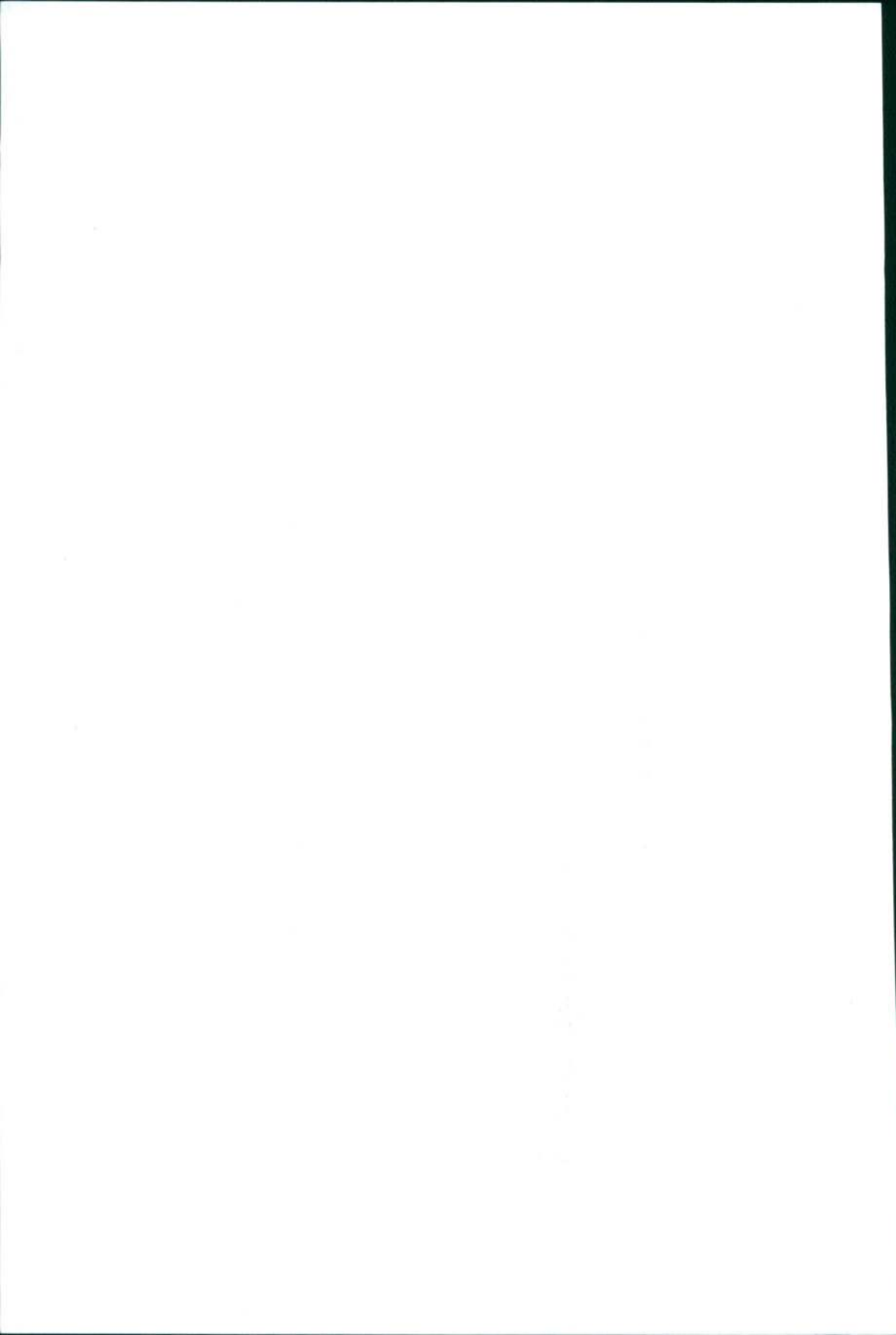
Photo-copy No. 7

Comments by E. Phipps, dated 12.2.1920, in connection with French paper *Eclair* and the Secret Agreement.

DOCUMENT No. 8

Photo-copy No. 8

Comments by Max Muller, dated 4.5.20, in connection with the Secret Agreement.



the *Times* representative, had just been to see him, to tell him that he had seen a document signed at Istanbul in September, 1919, by J. W. Strauss, Polack and N. Churchill, who gave themselves out to be duly authorized British Agents. This document was likely to be published immediately in the French Press. The Ambassador added: "I conclude the whole thing is a fraud. Please authorise me, if publication does take place, to at once deny any knowledge by the Government of the two agents named. The matter is very urgent as may appear in Press tomorrow".

Lord Curzon answered that the Foreign Office knew of no foundation for the statements contained in Lord Derby's telegram. Lord Derby had been instructed to issue a denial in the event of publication, and a telegram had been sent to Istanbul asking for observations on the allegation. On 24th January, 1920, this document was minuted at the Foreign Office by W. S. Edmonds, as follows: "Polack and Churchill are Levantine names, and it is possible that these three men were in the employment of our secret service or the British military intelligence department. In any case, they were not authorized British agents and this highly mischievous business must be entirely bogus"²⁵. Meanwhile Admiral Webb informed Lord Curzon, in an urgent (Document. No. 3) cypher telegram, on 28th January, that such a document, which was "evidently forged and was used for propaganda purposes," was understood to have existed, purporting to have been signed by three persons, two of the names being Churchill and Morlan. Endeavours were being made to obtain a copy. At the Foreign Office, W. S. Edmonds commented on this document, on 30th January, as follows: "This makes it more evident that the whole thing is a Turkish attempt to make real trouble between ourselves and the French"²⁶ (Document No. 4).

At this time the Americans, too, began to take a close interest in the matter. In January, 1920, J. W. Davis, the American Ambassador in London, enquired from the Foreign Office about the "rumours of a secret agreement". On 24th January, Lord Grey sent him a

²⁵ PRO., FO. 371/4241/173042, Lord Derby to Lord Curzon, Paris cypher tel. No. 92, very urgent, 23rd January, 1920.

²⁶ PRO., FO. 371/4241/174587, Admiral Richard Webb to Lord Curzon, cypher tel. No. 84, urgent, Constantinople, 28th January, 1920.

letter saying that Lord Curzon had remarked that there was "not a word of truth in any of it." It was difficult to understand how false statements, "so circumstantial", in which "there is no vestige of truth" got circulated. But the East was "peculiarly full of mischief makers". In the Foreign Office, on 29th March, D. G. Osborne wrote the following note on the document, for the attention of Sir John Tilley: "The 'Hearst' Press have raised the ghost of the Secret Anglo-Turkish Treaty and are running it straight as anti-British propaganda. The *New York Times* man came to ask Mr. Harris about it and said we had issued an official denial at Paris. I also read him Lord Grey's letter to Mr. Davis. He is very anxious to be allowed to publish this, as he says it would constitute a more effective *démenti* than a mere denial, both as being a specific document and because Lord Grey's signature carries a great weight in the United States" ²⁷ (Document No. 5).

Meanwhile Admiral Robeck reported to Lord Curzon on 3rd February, 1920, in a secret despatch, enclosing the copy of a report, dated 28th February, which he had received from a secret source, marked HA/455, in connection with the alleged Turco-British agreement. He said agent T.20 had reported that it was stated in Palace circles that an agreement was signed at Istanbul on 12th September, 1919, between Ferit Pasha, representing the Ottoman Government, and M. S. Francer, H. Morlan and G. Churchill, representing the British Government. Admiral Robeck gave the substance of the agreement and added that the agent had reported that a foreign government had offered a journalist the sum of LT. 300 for a copy of this document. There was reason to believe that it was fabricated for the use in the anti-Damad campaign which had preceded the fall of that Minister. At the Foreign Office, this document was minuted, on 21st February, by W. S. Edmonds, as follows: "... This is possible, but the authors probably hoped also to make trouble between us and the French". H. (ardinge?) added: "It is evidently a fake" ²⁸. (Document No. 6).

On 11th February, George Grahame, acting for the British Ambassador Lord Derby, in a despatch to Lord Curzon from Paris,

²⁷ *Ibid.*, .../5117/E. 671, Lord Grey to J. W. Davis, London letter, 24th January, 1920.

²⁸ PRO., FO. 371/5117/E. 260, Admiral Robeck to Lord Curzon, secret desp. No. 177/M. 2705, Constantinople, 3rd February, 1920.

referred to a document signed at Istanbul by two "alleged British agents" and transmitted an extract from the French newspaper *Eclair* containing an article by M. Georges Bonnamour, entitled "The three attitudes of England with regard to Turkey"²⁹. The article contained the text of a document which was evidently that referred to in Lord Derby's telegram of 23rd January. The writer of the article said its existence was known at the Quai d'Orsay, and that it was "doubtless apocryphal". Although it had been put in circulation to stir up trouble between France and England, he considered it to have been his duty to bring it to light, concluded the writer. George Grahame went on: "In accordance with instructions contained in your telegram No. 118 of 24th January, I have requested *Agence Havas* to publish a statement to the effect that the document in question is a complete fabrication". This document was minuted, on 12th February, by E. Phipps of the Foreign Office, as follows: "The 'Eclair' was, if I remember right, in German pay before the war. It is quite likely to be so again, or perhaps Turkey is supplying it with funds. In any case, this will produce a very bad effect in France. We instructed Lord Derby on January 24th to issue an emphatic denial in the event of publication, but as the article appeared yesterday morning and we have not heard from Paris, it might be well to draw the Embassy's attention to this and instruct them to issue a denial without delay"³⁰. (Document No. 7).

The existence of this secret agreement was thus officially denied; but that was not the end of the story. On 25th April, 1920 Sir George Buchanan, British Ambassador in Rome, sent a despatch to Lord Curzon, telling him that the *Idea Nazionale*, an Italian newspaper "which systematically voices anti-British sentiments and Italian imperialistic aims", reported on 24th instant, in an article headed "A secret agreement between England and Turkey", an alleged conversation of December, 1919, between Sultan Mehmet VI, and "an Ottoman personage", in which the Sultan, deploring the fate of Turkey, stated that, after the dismissal of his brother-in-law, Damad

²⁹ "Les trois attitudes de l'Angleterre su sujet de la Turquie" in *L'Eclair*, 11th February, 1920.

³⁰ PRO., FO. 371/5117/E. 83, George Grahame to Lord Curzon, Paris cypher tel. No. 412, 11th February, 1920.

Ferit, "Who had concluded a direct agreement with the English", Great Britain had undertaken to respect his own position as a political and religious sovereign, but wished to retain control not only of the Straits, but also of Istanbul itself, and had notified him that the Italians, the Greeks and even the French, if necessary, would be removed from Turkish territory. The paper then gave the terms of the "alleged agreement with Damad Ferit", described this report as the "true story" of the Turkish settlement, and "attacked on British policy violently, saying that Great Britain intended to dominate the Arab and Mohammedan world, to remain at Constantinople and to control the Straits". On 5th May, however, Lord Curzon, informed Sir George Buchanan, in a cypher telegram, that the report of the Anglo-Turkish agreement was "of course a fabrication"; and he could issue a denial in any form he considered desirable. At the Foreign Office, Max Muller minuted this document, on 4th May, as follows: "This silly old report, ridiculous as it is, seems hard to kill"³¹. (Document No. 8).

Thereafter the bogus of the Secret Agreement was to crop up every now and again. Yet the only conclusion to be drawn from the foregone examination of British and other documents is that such a secret treaty between Damad Ferit, the Ottoman Grand Vizier, and the official, authorised envoys of the British Government did not exist. The text of a so-called agreement circulated at the time, causing so much rumpus and confusion, was either a fabrication, possibly by the French, in order to promote their own interests in the Ottoman Empire; or Damad Ferit was naïve enough to sign such a document, thus having been taken in by the three Levantines mentioned above, who might have been double agents in the services of British and French Intelligence.

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³¹ *Ibid.*, /5221/E. 4030, Sir George Buchanan to Lord Curzon, Rome despatch. No. 280, 25th April, 1920, and Lord Curzon to Sir G. Buchanan, Foreign Office cypher tel. No. 181, 5th May, 1920.