

1922

MIDDLE EAST

553

51945

FROM
Foreign Office
C 14136/1952/19

DATE

14th October

RECEIVED
19 OCT 22

FOR CIRCULATION :-

Mr. Salkin
Major Young
Mr. 19/10
Mr. Grindle
Sir H. Lambert
Sir H. Read
Sir J. Masterton Smith
Mr. Wood
Mr. Churchill

SUBJECT
JUBALAND

CONCESSION TO ITALY

Encloses copy of letter to Italian Ambassador re denunciation by the Italian Govt of the agreement with Greece re the Dodecanese Islands and pointing out such action will logically entail cancellation of agreements made by H.M.G. as to concessions to Italy in Africa.

Previous Paper

S
44434

MINUTES

circulate and put
Major Young may like to see first
ratione 19/10

Sir H. Read.

This paper only touches lightly upon the Middle East, and the gist of it, so far as the C.O. is concerned, is contained in paragraph 8. Jubaland. I think the paper should be transferred.

File

20/10

Subsequent Paper

10/10
Mr. [unclear]
19/10
19/10

In any further communication on this subject, please quote

No. *C. 14 136/1952/19*

and address—
not to any person by name,

but to—
"The Under-Secretary of State,"
Foreign Office,
London, S.W. 1.

C O
51945
REF
RE 15 OCT 22

THE Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs presents his compliments to *the Under Secretary of State for the Colonies* and, by direction of the Secretary of State, transmits herewith *copies* of the under-mentioned paper.

Foreign Office,

17 OCT 1952

Reference to previous correspondence:

Description of Enclosure

Date and Day	Subject
<i>Foreign Office letter to the Italian Ambassador 15th October</i>	<i>Italian denunciation of agreement with Greece respecting the Dodecanese.</i>

Similar letter sent to

4136/1953/19).

FOREIGN OFFICE, S.W.1.

October 15th, 1922.

Your Excellency:

I have been informed of the verbal communication which Your Excellency made to the Foreign Office on the 9th instant to the effect that your government now regard as lapsed the treaty signed between Monsieur Venizelos and the Italian Ambassador in Paris on August 10th, 1920, under which an agreement was arrived at between Greece and Italy regarding the future status of the Dodecanese, and that Monsieur Schanzer had consistently declared the question of the Dodecanese to be one to be treated between Italy and Greece.

His Majesty's Government have learnt with astonishment, and with no small concern, that it is the intention of the Italian Government unilaterally to renounce a solemn agreement into which they had entered with the Hellenic Government. The surprise with which I have received this intimation is all the greater since it has been my constant endeavour to render it abundantly clear to the Italian Government that the question of the Dodecanese is one from which His Majesty's Government were, and still are, unable to disinterested themselves. The attitude adopted by His Majesty's Government towards the question was fully recited in the memorandum which I had the honour personally to address to Your Excellency on the 10th of February last. For convenience of reference a copy of this memorandum is enclosed in this note, and I would draw Your Excellency's particular attention to the passage of my letter in which I emphasised that the memorandum was sent to you in order "that there should be no misunderstanding on the matter in the future".

In this

Excellency

Monsieur G. de Martino,

etc., etc., etc.

In thus recording the views of His Majesty's Government I feel confident that your government would appreciate and recollect the continued interest which Great Britain took in this question. It is with deep regret that I now realize that my confidence in this respect was not well founded.

3. The action of the Italian Government in thus repudiating the Greco-Italian treaty, without previous consultation with, or even notification to His Majesty's Government, is the more difficult to understand since, after the date of my memorandum above-mentioned, and at the time of the conversations between Monsieur Schanzer and the British Prime Minister, the question of the Dodecanese formed the subject of repeated discussions between the two Governments; and since in entering upon such discussions Monsieur Schanzer must be held to have admitted, contrary to his present contention, that the matter was not one which could be settled between Greece and Italy alone, His Majesty's Government were at that time prepared, as part of a general settlement, to use their good offices with the Greek Government to secure if possible some modification of the Treaty of August 10th; but they were not prepared to consider that the Dodecanese question was one which could be detached from the general settlement, or decided by unilateral action on the part of Italy. Such a solution of the question is not one which His Majesty's Government were then, or are now, willing either to recognize or to admit.

4. The sovereignty of the Dodecanese is at this moment still technically vested in Turkey. It remains, in order to clear the legal position, to negotiate for Turkey's divesting herself of her sovereign rights in

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the treaty of peace. Under the terms of the treaty signed by Turkey at Sévres but not ratified, the sovereignty was to pass to Italy, to be immediately with certain reservations transferred to Greece, under the subsidiary Italo-Greek treaty signed simultaneously at Sévres. This is the arrangement which, with the approval of Italy, replaced and superseded the scheme originally contemplated by the Treaty of London of 1915, under which Italy would have acquired the islands definitely. The Italian Government are aware that this is not the only respect in which the stipulations of the Treaty of London were subsequently, under the stress of completely changed conditions, superseded and departed from by agreement between the parties. I need only refer to Fiume and Southern Albania, which were under the terms of that treaty to have fallen to Yugoslavia and Greece respectively.

6.

If the Italian Government now repudiate their undertaking to cede the islands to Greece, they cannot expect Great Britain to agree that Turkey should cede them to Italy under the Treaty of Peace for which negotiations are now about to re-open. His Majesty's Government have already manifested their readiness to recognize that the defeat of the Greek army in Asia Minor justifies Turkey in demanding important modifications in the territorial clauses of the Treaty of Sévres. The three allied powers, Great Britain, France and Italy in agreement with Greece herself have consequently decided to allow Turkey's claim to the recovery of the territories in Anatolia and Eastern Thrace when the inhabitants of Turkish race constitute either a majority or at least a large and compact body.

6.

6. This consideration does not apply to the case of the Islands, which are entirely peopled by Greeks. Moreover, Greece has always maintained² as against Turkey the command of the sea; and but for the fortuitous circumstances of the Italian occupation, she would no doubt have become possessed of the Dodecanese, as she became possessed of the other Aegean islands in 1913, and would be holding them at the present moment in all security and with every prospect of permanency.

7. The Italo-Greek treaty of August 10th, 1920, constituted an equitable recognition of these conditions, and His Majesty's Government feel unable, in view of the interest which they have always taken in the matter, to admit the contention that because the Greek Army has been defeated in Anatolia, Greece should thereby be deprived of the advantage of a solemn undertaking to which both Italy and indirectly Great Britain, were parties. I need scarcely repeat what I endeavoured to make clear in my letter and memorandum of 10th February, that in the opinion of His Majesty's Government Italy remains bound by the Græco-Italian treaty of August 10th, 1920, not only to Greece but to the other co-signatures of the Treaty of Sèvres, and especially to Great Britain. To contend that, because the allied powers have declared themselves ready to make certain territorial concessions to Turkey in Anatolia and Thrace, the whole complex of the arrangements embodied in, or deriving from, the Treaty of Sèvres are therefore to be abandoned, would be to jeopardise vital elements of any peace settlement

with Turkey, and to solve a number of serious problems, among others that of Egypt and of the future of the Arab States, which it would now be fatal to re-open. His Majesty's Government regard it therefore as essential to uphold in principle the main features of the Treaty of Sèvres and of the conventions connected therewith, except in so far as the Allies, in agreement between themselves, may decide that particular stipulations of the Treaty have been directly affected by the recent events in Anatolia.

8. In requesting Your Excellency to bring the above considerations to the notice of your government, I would ask you also to indicate to it that, as was stated in the letter addressed by Lord Milner to Monsieur Scialoja on April 13th, 1923, the important concessions which His Majesty's Government were prepared to make to Italy in Africa could only become effective as part of the general settlement and of all the issues raised at the Peace Conference, which settlement included, among other matters, the cession to Greece, within the limits of the treaty of 1921, of the Dodecanese Islands. If the Italian Government now decide to repudiate this agreement regarding the Dodecanese, they should realize that such repudiation will logically and inevitably entail the cancellation of the other engagements into which, as part of the general settlement, His Majesty's Government had entered.

I have, etc.,

(Sd.) Curzon of Kedleston.

CONFIDENTIAL

SECTION I.

1954/1955

No. 1.

The Marquess Curzon of Kedleston to M. de Martino.

Dear Ambassador,

Foreign Office, February 10, 1922.

I HAVE been given to understand that in a recent conversation which you had with certain members of the Eastern section of the Foreign Office, the question was raised whether the status of the islands of the Dodecanese was still governed by the Italo-Italian Treaty of the 10th August, 1920.

His Majesty's Government has certainly been under the impression that your Government remained pledged, both in relation to Greece and in relation to their claims, to the execution of this treaty, and your suggestion that the Italian occupation of the twelve islands was anything more than provisional has occasioned us no small surprise. It is so desirable that there should be no misunderstanding on the matter in the future, that I venture to send you herewith a memorandum embodying my views on the subject and recalling to your Excellency's notice the several stages by which the matter of August 1920 was reached.

I am, &c.

CURZON OF KEDLESTON.

Enclosure in No. 1.

Memorandum.

UNDER article 2 of the Treaty of Ouchy of the 18th October, 1912, the Italian Government undertook to evacuate the islands of the Dodecanese as soon as the Turkish forces, including officers and functionaries, had left Tripoli and Cyrenaica. The execution of this undertaking was delayed owing to the continued presence in Libya of Turkish officers attached to the Sheikh Senoussi, and the Italian authorities therefore remained in occupation of the islands up to the date of the European war.

By the treaty which was signed in London on the 26th April, 1915, France, Great Britain and Russia agreed that Italy should, under the eventual Treaty of Peace, have entire sovereignty over the Dodecanese Islands, and the administration of the islands therefore remained in Italian hands throughout the period of the war.

From the outset of the Peace Conference in Paris it became clear that the United States Government, which had not been signatory to the Treaty of London of April 1915, would be unlikely to consent to the attribution of all these islands to Italy, since they contained a predominantly Hellenic population which was desirous of being united with Greece. The Italian Government from the first fully realised the necessity of replacing article 2 of the Treaty of London by some agreement which would conform with the ethnical position, and M. Tittoni took the initiative in the early part of 1919 in opening negotiations for this purpose with M. Veniselos. His Majesty's Government were given to understand that on the 29th July, 1919, an agreement had been reached between the Greek Prime Minister and the Italian Foreign Minister which fully satisfied the requirements of both countries, and it was not until the next year, with the advent to power of Signor Nitti, that this secret agreement was in any way questioned. M. Veniselos, in his desire to establish friendly relations with the Italian Government, then signified his readiness to reopen negotiations for a new settlement, and these negotiations were pursued between Signor Nitti and M. Veniselos throughout the summer of 1920. By the 3rd August of that year the points in dispute had been narrowed down to the question of Rhodes, and His Majesty's Government were appealed to by the Italian Ambassador in London to facilitate, as far as they could, a settlement of this question. The Marquis Imperiali was informed by the Secretary of State that, in the opinion of His Majesty's Government, the Italian Government would do well to adhere to the terms of the arrangement concluded between M. Tittoni and M. Veniselos in July 1919. The conviction was expressed that the Italian Government

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would find M. Venizelos prepared to make concessions in regard to the less important points; but, as regards the larger question of the agreement itself, the Secretary of State expressed the earnest hope that the Italian Government would not, at the eleventh hour, assume the responsibility of delaying the signature of the Turkish Peace Treaty, which, as long as the agreement regarding the Dodecanese remained unsolved, His Majesty's Government must reluctantly refuse to sign, as well as the Tripoli Agreement, which we would be unable to confirm so long as the question of the Dodecanese remained in suspense.

4. His Majesty's Government at the same time advised M. Venizelos to show an accommodating spirit in regard to all minor points connected with the agreement, and a settlement was therefore reached within the following days, and the treaty was signed at the same time as the Treaty of Sévres on the 10th August, 1920.

5. Under article 10 of the agreement as finally concluded, provision is made for the ratification of the treaty and for the deposit of these ratifications in Paris at the same time as those of the Treaty of Peace with Turkey. It is also provided in the same article that the treaty shall only enter into force at the same time as the Treaty of Sévres. It is not contended, therefore, that the Græco-Italian Agreement of the 10th August, 1920, is now juridically operative, but it is contended that its terms must still constitute the basis of the settlement of the Dodecanesian question. Any other attitude towards this settlement is possible for His Majesty's Government than that which they adopted at the time when the above-recorded communication was made to the Marquis Imperiali.

6. It is evident, indeed, that the question of the Dodecanese is entirely detached from that of the Græco-Turkish conflict which has rendered necessary a revision of the Treaty of Sévres. Moreover, not only was the Græco-Italian Agreement negotiated and signed concurrently with the Treaty of Sévres, but the signature of the Tripoli Agreement and the Treaty of Sévres by the British Empire was conditional on the simultaneous signature of the Græco-Italian Agreement. These facts give to the latter agreement an importance and a solidity greater than its merely juridical value. It not only does the conclusion of such an agreement supersede the previous reference to the Dodecanese contained in the Treaty of London, but it constitutes a moral obligation upon the Italian Government, which the change of régime in Greece, to which the Italian Government were, if anything, indifferent, can scarcely be held to invalidate. His Majesty's Government fully recognise that the Græco-Italian Agreement of 1920 will require to be reaffirmed and ratified before it can enter into force. They do not, however, consider that it can now be regarded as null and void, and, in view of the very direct interest which they formerly took in its signature, they cannot now be held indifferent to its execution.

Foreign Office, February 10, 1922.