TJWS

Türk Savaş Çalışmaları Dergisi
Turkish Journal of War Studies
e-ISSN: 2717-7432

Crete in the Aftermath of the 1877-78 Turkish-Russian War

1877-78 Türk – Rus Harbi Sonrasında Girit

David BARCHARD[1]

[1] Araştırmacı - Yazar

ORCID: 0000-0003-4233-1871

Araştırma Makalesi

Sorumlu yazar/Corresponding author:

David BARCHARD

E-posta/E-mail:

dbarchard@gmail.com

Geliş tarihi/Received:

16 Ekim 2020

Kabul tarihi/Accepted:

31 Ekim 2020

Atıf/Citation:

Barchard, David. "Crete in the Aftermath of the 1877-78 Turkish-Russian War". *Türk Savaş Çalışmaları Dergisi* 1, no. 2 (2020): 170-199.

Özet

1877-78 Osmanlı-Rus Savaşı sadece Balkanlar ve Kafkaslarda güç sistemi ve sınırları değiştirmedi Ege bölgesini de etkiledi. Balkan milletleri ve onların Osmanlı hudutları içindeki akrabaları Osmanlı yenilgisinden istifade etmeye kalkıştı. Girit adası ayrılıkçı akımın yükselişinin iyi bir örneğidir. İngiltere ve Fransa uzun süredir kendi çıkarlarına çok iyi hizmet eden statükonun devamı taraftarıydı. Ama ülkelerinin Girit ve genel olarak Osmanlı'ya yönelik politikalarını sorgulayanlar da bulunmaktaydı. Rumlar tarafında Girit'te başlatılan ayaklanma kısa süre içinde etnik gruplar arası şiddetli bir çatışmaya dönüştü ve büyük güçleri adaya müdahaleye zorladı. Bu makale adadaki şiddet dolu olayların diplomasiye etkilerini incelemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: savaş, isyan, çatışma çözümlemesi, diplomasi, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu, İngiltere, Yunanistan

Abstract

The Ottoman-Russian War of 1877-78 radically transformed power system and borders not only in the Balkans and Caucasus but also in the Agean Sea region. Balkan nations and their separatist cousins within the borders of the Ottoman Empire tried to get benefit from the Ottoman defeat at the hands of the Russians. The island of Crete is a very good example of the rise of separatism. Britain and France wanted to preserve the status quo which had been working fine for their interests for a long time. But even in these countries there were individuals who were questioning their countries policy towards Crete and the Ottoman Empire in general. The rebellion in Crete which had been initiated by the Greeks spiralled into communal fighting in a short time and forced the Great Powers for intervention. This article is the story of diplomatic reactions to the violent developments in the island.

Key Words: war, rebellion, conflict resolution, diplomacy, Ottoman Empire, Britain, Greece

INTRODUCTION

The Turkish-Russian War of 1877-8 was essentially one of Russian expansion in the Balkans and as a result, Greece stayed out of the conflict until the following year. Throughout the summer, its foreign minister Charilaos Tricoupis issued assurances that Greece would give no assistance or encouragement to insurrectionary movements in Crete or elsewhere.[1] That meant that at this stage the potential insurgents in Crete did not get the assistance that they were expecting and also that the Ottoman authorities were able to prevent the Greek consulate on the island playing the role which it had done in 1866-8. During the summer, the Ottoman Vali or governor that year, Hasan Samih Paşa, inaccurately referred to here as 'Semih Bey'[2] arrested and deported Greeks suspected of being agents of the revolutionary committee in Greece[3], but his scope for taking more vigorous action was limited by British efforts to prevent a deterioration of Ottoman-Greek relations. Greece signalled during the summer that it would not go to war against Turkey until after the Russians had taken the key Bulgarian town of Plevna, something which did not happen until the last days of 1877.

However, by December that year, the situation began to move very much faster. At the beginning of the month, Tricoupis told Hugh Wyndham, the British Minister in Athens, that the Greek government feared competition in Crete from Russian agents who were inciting the Cretans to revolt and assuring the Cretans that they were deserted by Greece[4].

Soon after, the Greeks allowed the local Greek chieftain Hadji Michalis return from exile in Athens to Crete. His return was supposed to be merely the action of a private individual, Tricoupis said. He repeated what he had been saying about Crete since the summer, which was that Greece would abide by its obligations to prevent bodies of armed men and stores leaving for Crete, but it could hardly prevent an individual from departing the country. Until now this had sounded reassuring, but Hadji Michalis was obviously not returning to the island for private business. The months ahead would demonstrate that he was armed and financed directly by the Greek government.

INSURRECTION

Once Hadji Michalis returned to Crete, it was only a few weeks before an insurrection was in full swing. On January 11 1878, Wyndham reported to London that arms were being clandestinely forwarded to the island from Greece and that bands of fighters were also being sent

[1] British Foreign Office Printed Papers Presented to the House of Commons: *Further Correspondence regarding the Affairs of Turkey,* no. 19 (1878), Stuart to Derby, June 9, 1877. Subsequent references to Printed Papers (i.e. edited versions of British official diplomatic correspondence) are presented below as "*Affairs of Turkey*". When reference is made to an original unpublished document, the Public Record Office (now The National Archives, Kew) details are given, usually indicated by a catalogue number beginning 'FO'. Correspondence going via the British Embassy in Istanbul to London is collected under '*Affairs of Turkey*' while direct communications between the British Consul in Canea and London are collected as '*Affairs of Crete'*. I have worked from printed or archival material, but most of the 'Printed Papers' from the Embassy are now available free online from Google Books.

[2] Sandwith's later reports correct the name and title to 'Samih Pasha', e.g. Af*fairs of Turkey 1878,* Sandwith to Derby, 8 February 1878.

[3] *Affairs of Turkey*, no. 10 (1878), p.6, Layard to Derby, July 19, 1877.

[4] *Affairs of Turkey*, no, 10 (1878), p. 91, Wyndham to Derby, December 2, 1877.

there. These were however only a sideshow. The main focus of the extreme party in Greece was the idea of obtaining the two provinces to the north, Thessaly and Epirus.

Enthusiasm for the insurrection was perhaps less great in Crete than it was in Greece itself. There was a strong peace party among the Christians of Crete. Memories were still strong, both of the suffering of the island during the uprising of 1867-9 and also of the way in which the aspirations of Greek nationalists had been placed above the well-being of its inhabitants, a point which foreign friends of the Cretans, such as the US consul and journalist William Stillman, continued to make at regular intervals.

Nevertheless, tension inside the island was building up steadily as meetings continued in which Christians asserted their political rights. A committee of their representatives had been formed and was sitting in Apokorona. It was evidently anxious that its activities should not culminate in a typical insurrection and to this end, it made what seems to have been genuine efforts to conciliate the Muslim population, announcing that the interests of Christians and Muslims were identical, that the persons and properties of Muslims were to be respected, and that individual Christians should give Muslims no reason to complain of their conduct.

FLIGHT TO THE TOWNS

These protestations were not sufficient to allay the fears of the Muslims and in December of 1877, as a Turkish-Greek war began to appear imminent, Muslims began to desert their homes and rush to the safety of the fortified towns. It was at least the sixth time that century that they had done this. "There is a constant flow of these poor creatures, who are running away from an imaginary danger…" Thomas Sandwith reported to London[5].

But in the same report, he noted that when a chief (Sandwith was referring to Hadji Michalis but did not name him) arrived with his followers from Greece, several hundred rifles, and 100 cases of ammunition at his home district of Lakos (today Lakkoi) in the mountains,

> […] he was welcomed by the people but told in unmistakeable terms that they would not abet him in an insurrectionary design…the inhabitants in this part of the country are disinclined for any hostile movement. There is certainly no enthusiasm at present for annexation to Greece.[6]

OTTOMAN REACTION

To forestall an uprising, the Ottoman Government sent out two imperial commissioners. The senior of them was Costaki Adossides Pasha, one of the Ottoman Greek officials who had accompanied A'ali Pasha on his mission in 1867 and been appointed governor of Lassithi. He was accompanied by Salim Effendi who seems to have won the cautious approval of the Cretan Christians during his time on the island. The appointment of Adossides Pasha had been made, so

[5] *Affairs of Turkey*, No 25, (1878), 1, Sandwith to Derby, December 22, 1877. For a recent study of Sandwith see, Stephen Boys Smith, *Thomas Sandwith, a British consul in the Levant,* (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2020).
[6] *Affairs of Turkey*, no. 25, (1878), 1, Sandwith to Derby, December 22, 1877.

he claimed, at the suggestion of the British ambassador in Istanbul Henry Layard, who had in turn been recommended by Sandwith to secure his appointment.[7]

Chances of a compromise did not at first seem very good. No Christian chieftain was willing to be seen openly negotiating with the Ottoman administration, while Hadji Michalis quickly demonstrated that he was a formidable opponent by burning down the blockhouse which overlooked Lakkos (it was standing empty because there were not enough Ottoman troops to occupy it) and letting it be known that anyone who enlisted with him would be paid (presumably with funds he was bringing from Greece) as well as armed.

Cretan Muslim opinion was also hardening. The exodus from the countryside into the fortified towns continued and a secret society "formed of the most bigoted Mussulmans, whose principle of action seems to be to do all in their power to the Christians had come into being.[8] The multiculturalism which the Tanzimat reformers had brought to the mid-nineteenth century Ottoman Empire was slipping away and the spirit of the Hamidian empire had begun to show itself.

By the middle of January, there were few Muslims left in the open country from Candia westwards. In vain did the Assembly, whose Christian members now styled themselves, the 'General Assembly of Crete' promise to live in 'harmony and brotherly friendship' with them and denounce the disorders in the towns which followed the influx. On January 8th, British vice-consul Lysimachus Calocherino, asked Sandwith to request that a British gunboat be sent "to remain for some days in this port, in order to repress the fanaticism of the Turks [i.e. Cretan Muslims.]" "The Turks are pretending that they are not in security in their homes on account of some robberies which have taken place there…"[9] The flight into the towns dismayed the Ottoman authorities too. Costaki Adossides Pasha battled against the leadership of the Cretan Muslims and even banished from the island those whom it identified as ringleaders in summoning the rural population from the land. "He is incessantly combating the evil influences which gather around the *konak [Governor's Residence]*, and strengthens the hand of the Vali," wrote Sandwith[10] but he could not help noting that the Christians were growing more implacable and it was generally expected that Adossides Pasha's mission would end in failure. The Christians had unilaterally held elections to nominate members for the Assembly in January and their leaders still refused to talk directly to him.

However, the insurrection had still not taken off, despite the determined efforts of Hadji Michalis. The Assembly's demands were for enhanced autonomy, not for union with Greece. When an insurgent chief raised the revolutionary flag at Kissamos, the event fell flat. Restraint was visible in other ways. In the countryside, the empty homes of the Muslims remained as their owners had left them. In the towns, where food and water were in short supply, some of the refugees at least grumbled that they had been misled into fleeing to the castles.

[7] *Affairs of Turkey,* no. 35 (1878), p. 8, Layard to Salisbury, April 9 1878. On Layard, see *The Queen's Ambassador to the Sultan. Memoirs of Sir Henry A. Layard's Constantinople embassy (1877-1880),* (ed.) Sinan Kuneralp, (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009), and *The Private Letters of Sir Austen Henry Layard during his Constantinople Embassy (1877-1880),* (ed.) Sinan Kuneralp, (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2018).
[8] *Affairs of Turkey,* no. 25, (1878), Sandwith to Derby, December 31, 1877.
[9] *Affairs of Turkey,* no. 25, (1878), pp. 9-10, Calocherino to Sandwith, January 9, 1878.
[10] *Affairs of Turkey,* no.25, (1878), p. 12, Sandwith to Derby, January 21, 1878.

Christians however were now also preparing to flee. The Ottoman authorities would not allow women and children to travel to Greece, as had happened in 1866, but inhabitants of many villages made preparations to go into the mountains[11]. On February 4, the Ottoman Government recalled Samih Pasha and appointed Mehmet Ali Pasha military commander and made Adossides Pasha civil governor. War between Greece and Turkey was now a reality, for on February 2nd, 25,000 Greek troops had crossed into what was then the Ottoman sancak of Tırhala but which to Greeks was already Thessaly. Crete was simply one field of action in this aftermath to the Russian war against Turkey.

Perhaps it was the news that war had broken out which caused Samih Pasha to lose his head. His very last action as governor was to hand out up to 600 Peabody Martini rifles to the Muslim population of villages around Canea at Perivolia and Mournies. This led to immediate attacks by them on their Christian neighbours in Galata and other places where members of the two religions had always been at loggerheads, planting the Ottoman flag on the roof of the headman and making a bonfire of his furniture. [12]

In panic, the Christians bundled up their household goods and fled into the mountains, pausing only to inform the foreign consuls of what had happened. Sandwith then drew the matter to the attention of Adossides Pasha and the Ottoman Colonel of the Gendarmerie who immediately intervened to stop the distribution of guns, issue stern warnings to the leading Muslim inhabitants about the dangers of the situation, and make arrangements for those who had taken part in the attack to be put on trial. That was as far as he could go[13].

Three days later, the leading Muslims of Canea and refugees from the countryside, sent a telegram to the Grand Vizier in Istanbul. They were, they said, the largest landowners and merchants in Crete, even if they were not a majority of the population and they strongly rejected all proposals to turn Crete into an autonomous principality.

By now fighting seemed imminent. The *kaymakam* (district officer) of Selinos, the outlying administrative centre of Sfakia, a place which the Ottoman army would not be able to defend, was summoned to Canea at the start of February. Without an insurrection, the status of Crete would, as Tricoupis had warned, probably not change at any international conference after the war. Russia had now signed a cease fire with the Ottomans after driving down through Bulgaria and Thrace to the very outskirts of Istanbul. The Panhellenion, a nationalist brotherhood society, surviving from the previous war, had once more resumed the work it had done ten years earlier of ferrying men, arms, and provisions to Bali Bay west of Candia.

On February 18th, the Cretan Committee announced from the village of Argyropolis that it had received no replies from the Ottoman Government to its demands and so was breaking off the negotiations with the Imperial Commissioners and appealing to the Great Powers for the settlement of the Cretan question. Theodore Dellyanni, now the Greek foreign minister, reported the conflict to his colleagues across Europe in extremely sanguine terms. Ottoman officials and their forces were pinned down into a few strongholds; Hellenic flags, were everywhere to be seen,

[11] Ibid, February 2 1878.
[12] *Affairs of Turkey,* Sandwith to Derby, February 8, 1878.
[13] Ibid, February 8, 1878.

and the conduct of the insurgents was exemplary. "Unfortunately," he observed, "it cannot be said that that of the Ottomans is as praiseworthy. On the contrary, the bands of robbers which for some months have been formed in the great centres of the island continue to pursue their work of devastation. The sure and easy refuge which they always find in the fortresses after their successful raids serves to embolden them.[14]"

This was not simply propaganda. The claims potentially carried international consequences as far as the Great Powers were concerned. If the charges were true, Turkey was breaking its treaty commitments to respect the rights of its Christian citizens and Europe would be entitled to intervene. Lord Derby asked Sandwith to investigate and received the reply that the Christians had neither attacked Ottoman forces anywhere nor "done any injury to the Mussulman civil population[15]. Sandwith felt so certain of the situation, that he concluded that the Christians would wait for the Great Powers to give them security and they would not resort to hostility against the Ottoman government or to injuries against the native Muslims. One is tempted to ask why events which Sandwith had himself already reported, such as the destruction of the blockhouse at Lakkos or opening fire on Ottoman positions did not count as acts of hostility or why, if they faced no danger, the Muslim population had fled to the towns and the Ottoman authorities abandoned most of the countryside. In any case his forecast was swiftly proved over-optimistic.

On the morning of February 24th, the fighting finally began in Crete when 2,000 armed Christians descended from the hills around Fort Izzettin, near the village of Canida and began firing upon it but were fairly easily dislodged. Ottoman regular and irregular soldiers beat them off, with artillery support from two Turkish naval vessels in the bay. Sandwith offered his 'conjectural computation' that there had been around eight to ten killed or wounded on each side. While this was happening, the Muslims of Canea held a long meeting with Adossides Pasha, demanding that 1,000 of their men be allowed to enrol as irregulars or 'bashi-bozooks.' In Candia, the authorities tried to persuade the Ottoman government to send in shipments of barley from north Africa or Anatolia and introduced rationing for barley purchases by each family.

After the attack on Fort Izzettin, the insurgents then marched to another blockhouse at Alikianou and succeeded in capturing it. Eighty Albanian soldiers who were inside it fled and were sent by Adossides to garrison the monastery at Aghia Triada on the Akrotiri peninsula, where local Christians, alarmed at the militancy of their Muslim neighbours had fled. Meanwhile Vamos, the main centre of the Apokorona district had been cut off and was under threat. Adossides Pasha tried once again to open up a line of communications onto the insurgents to get them to allow provisions for the victualling of the Ottoman garrison at Vamos could be carried out.

By February 12, there was serious fighting around Rethymno and Candia, reported by the British Vice-Consuls (local Greeks) there, Trifilli and Calocherino, as attacks upon the Christian majority by the Muslim minority. Sandwith reported that;[16]

[14] Ibid 24-26, Delyanni to Gennadius, 22 February 1878.
[15] Ibid 26-27, Sandwith to Derby, February 20, 1878.
[16] Ibid 21, Sandwith to Derby, February 14 1868.

> The Christians have scrupulously respected the property of the Muslims […] the only plea they [the Muslims] can urge in their defence is the pressure of want, by which they are being sorely pinched.

He added of the Candia Muslims that they "have a bad name for lawlessness and ferocity." No complaints by the minority against the majority are recorded. By now the Ottoman authorities were pulling their soldiers out of the blockhouses and concentrating them on the garrison towns, and the fortresses of Izzeddin, Grabusa, Kissamos Kastelli, Francokastelli, and Vamos.

Costaki Pasha was now under very strong pressure indeed from the Cretan Muslims to enrol them into some sort of emergency fighting force and reluctantly agreed to issue them with rifles on condition that there were no attacks on Christian villages. About 300 Peabody-Martini rifles were issued to the Cretan Muslims, a point about which Costaki clearly felt very awkward for he told Sandwith immediately afterwards that this was the result of a 'misunderstanding.' Sandwith commented to London that "the presence of one of Her Majesty's vessels would certainly conduce to a sense of security."[17] This wish was granted. *HMS Foxhound* was despatched to Crete from Malta.

Despite the fighting, Sandwith was convinced that the attack was the work of individual chiefs and not of the Cretan Assembly itself. He believed that an appeal from the foreign consuls in Canea, led by himself as their *Doyen* would be sufficient to get such incidents stopped. His first thought was to get permission from the Ottoman government to do this, but Costaki Pasha said that it would cause deep resentment among the Muslims for the foreign consuls to be seen to be acting in this way. Meanwhile the Ottoman authorities tried hard to maintain order. On March 19, Thomas Sandwith mentioned to London that the prisons "are full of Mussulmans guilty of violence towards Christians and who have been condemned by the special commission.[18]"

In conversations with the consuls, Costaki Pasha explained that he had been forced by 'popular clamour' to arm the Cretan Muslims. "He begins to see that it is beyond his power to restrain the native ferocity of these Mussulmans, whose hatred towards Christians is unrelenting.[19]" Attitudes towards Ottoman troops on the other hand were generally much kindlier: when the Greek foreign minister published claims that Ottoman soldiers had mutilated the bodies of Cretan Christians, Sandwith immediately declared to London that he disbelieved them—and later announced that they had been disproved.

To drive home the message that the Muslims were brutal aggressors, Christian communities again began to issue petitions to the consuls, listing attacks by unnamed Muslims on specific Christians. These documents were then relayed by the government in Athens to foreign powers. The Christians of Candia listed a dozen attacks, all robberies, between January 30 and February 22nd. There were no killings claimed. The goods stolen were mostly building materials, including window frames, woodwork, beasts of burden, clothing, and of course any cash found on the victims. From Rethymno, 144 Christians inhabitants reported that "The Mussulmans of this district are the most violent and fanatical of all those living in Crete…[they] first removed the shutters of

[17] Sandwith to Derby, February 25, 1878, FO 195 1191, *The National Archives*, Kew (hereafter *TNA*).
[18] *Affairs of Turkey* No 25, (1878), p. 48, Sandwith to Derby, March 19, 1878.
[19] Ibid, p. 49, Sandwith to Derby, March 25, 1878.

the windows and the doors of the Christian houses in the villages, as well as other objects of furniture.[20]" Yet it was not alleged that this was the deliberate destruction of dwellings though that activity was one of the characteristic features of a nineteenth century Cretan insurrection in full spate. Robberies of this kind, if they actually took place (and it must be remembered that Dellyanni's claims were intended as war propaganda and always greeted with considerable scepticism) suggest the existence of a very destitute population.

To keep the country districts around Candia under some kind of control, the government allowed the setting up of bodies of mixed gendarmes in Pediada and at Archanes.

In mid-March the Ottoman government landed seventeen battalions, about 7,500 regular troops in Suda Bay. By the 25th, it had marched three battalions of 400 men into the district of Alikianou. There was a skirmish with the insurgents who were occupying the hills above the block house there and nine Ottoman soldiers were killed. The action was a breach of the truce which the Ottoman authorities had agreed to observe with the insurgents a month earlier, but it was justified by the claim that the army had been summoned by the people of Alikianou[21]. Adossides Pasha had prevailed upon the military commander, Osman Nuri Pasha, not to involve the bashibozuks in the fighting, but around 10 am, news reached Canea that the Ottoman forces were having a difficult time, and the town crier went through the streets appealing for volunteers to go and fight alongside the army. The Bashibozuks rushed down the road to the battle.

This was a humiliating reverse for the Ottoman Christian governor Adossides.

> His authority is set at naught," wrote Sandwith. "His Excellency has lately become the object of extreme dislike on the part of the Mahometan population because he is doing what he can to restrain their fanaticism […] they begin to bestow on him the opprobrious epithet of 'Ghiaour'… His moderation and conciliatory disposition are freely attributed to his desire to favour his own religious community at the expense of the Moslems. [22]

Gavur, which combines the connotations of 'infidel' and 'wog' in English remains to this day one of the most offensive expressions in Turkey. The multicultural Ottoman administrative traditions which A'ali Pasha and the leaders of the Tanzimat created were breaking down in the collision between emergent national communities.

Adossides Pasha was obviously in an impossible situation. He was a Greek Orthodox Christian, governing a frightened and desperate Cretan Muslim community which saw itself as under attack from its more numerous Greek Orthodox neighbours and placed in charge of Ottoman soldiers. His position was made worse by the fact that the Christian Powers restrained the Ottoman Empire and Cretan Muslims from even matching the sanctions to which their opponents could resort. He might have been more effective had he at least been able to act as the moral representative of the Muslim Cretans, but, before and after his time, successive Ottoman administrations were always slow to identify and articulate the grievances of the Muslim population, partly because they seem to have feared (as A'ali Pasha did) that such admissions would be

[20] Ibid, pp. 53-59, Dellyanni to Gennadius,, March 16 1878.
[21] Ibid, no 50, p.58, 50. Sandwith to the Earl of Derby, April 3 1878; *Affairs of Turkey,* no.35 (1878), 2-3, Sandwith to Derby April 1.
[22] *Affairs of Turkey,* no.35 (1878), 2-3, Sandwith to Derby April 1.

dangerous for them with their own public opinion, and partly, one suspects, because much of the time it perhaps did not even occur to them to do so.

Yet the Christian Ottoman high officials whom A'ali Pasha had set in place at the end of the previous decade had an essential role to play if the Ottoman Empire was ever going to evolve into a unified political community. Furthermore, these Christian pashas and effendis were by no means always failures. Given the right backing and resources, they could sometimes be very successful as the next ten years would show in Crete. In the spring of 1878, there was one such example already in Crete. Though he had been besieged and shot at by the insurgents at his base in Vamos, there was general agreement that Nicholas Sartinski Efendi, the governor of Apokorona and Sfakia, had been an outstanding administrator, even though his district covered parts of the island which had never been effectively under close Turkish administration before.

Sartinski however was not liked by Abdülhamit's ministers in Istanbul and was soon recalled. Sandwith gave him a glowing letter of recommendation to take back to the capital, which was perhaps a kiss of death for his chances of regaining popularity in the Palace. The mood of Istanbul was signalled very plainly on April 6 when Salih Pasha, a new military commander arrived, accompanied by Brigadier Necip Pasha. Salih Pasha, though Circassian by background had been born in Crete, and he seems to have had close contact with the leaders of the Cretan Muslims from the moment he arrived.

It soon became clear that Salih Pasha, a man of whom we know little except what his adversaries reported about him, belonged to what the British Embassy in Constantinople called "the fanatical and anti-European party"[23] That is to say, he belonged to the school of thought which held that the Muslim Turks should ignore the tightening skein of political restraints on the empire from the Christian world and try and fight their way out of the diplomatic and military encirclement of the west.

In the wake of the recent crushing Russian victories over the Empire in the Balkans this was fairly obviously a doomed strategy, but desperate situations throw up men with desperate views and reckless plans of action. Salih Pasha seems to have been exactly such a man and he was in tune with the Cretan Muslim Beys who perceived that they were in a life and death struggle to retain a long-term presence on the island and who thought that the Ottoman army could be used to avert the approaching Christian ascendancy on the island. Ultimately this strategy had a chance, as subsequent generations of Ottoman Muslims would see with increasing clarity, only if it had led towards the geographical separation of Christians and Muslims into distinct zones: but Salih Pasha's tactics suggest that he was merely trying to expand the cordon of Ottoman controlled areas around the towns as a prelude to bringing the whole of the island under his military control.

The new commander quickly made it clear that he aimed to put down the insurrection with a strong hand. One of the first things he did was to shut Canea and other towns off from the stream of Christian farmers who came to buy food in the towns, believing that hunger and the protests of their families would drive them to submit.

[23] See Layard's valedictory despatch, *Affairs of Turkey* No 7, (1880), 5.

In this he was following earlier moves by the Muslim refugees in the coastal towns who had already done their best to seal themselves off from the Christians. Despite orders to the contrary from Adossides, no Christian could pass through the gates of Rethymno into the town and circumstances were somewhat similar at Candia. There were 'continuous reprisals' between the two communities. Inside the three garrison towns, there were now, according to British estimates, 60,000 Cretan Muslims collected, more than half of them refugees[24]. The risks of 'grave disturbances' made the Ottoman authorities apprehensive. The stock of food available for them was dwindling each day and as their hunger grew, so the thoughts of Muslims of Rethymno and Candia turned increasingly to organising of armed sorties from the town to snatch animals and food from nearby Christian settlements.

All this made Adossides Pasha's position even worse. Though officially he outranked Salih Pasha, the Pasha was the real leader of the Ottoman administration of Crete because he was the military commander and it was his decisions that counted.

If things were bad for the Muslims in the three towns, they were hardly much better in the countryside where it was widely felt that Crete had been forced into a new struggle against the will of its people by Hadji Michaelis and his backers in Athens. "The thoughtless action of certain chiefs come over from Greece plunged the Christians into hostilities which the means at their disposal did not admit of their carrying to a successful issue, and these very chiefs are themselves convinced of the error they committed now that they witness the result of their action in the famine-stricken people around them. The present situation is a hopeless one, for the Turks are not in sufficient force to occupy the interior, and the insurgents can only hope to prolong the struggle at the cost of infinite suffering to the helpless and the weak," Sandwith reported in early April.[25] A week later after Adossides Pasha returned from the east of the island, reporting that there was little popular support anywhere for the insurgency; he again mentioned the suffering of the Muslim population in the garrison towns.

Two days later, Vice-Consul Trifilli reported a massacre by Mussulman raiders in Aghios Basilios near Rethymno. There were said to have been fourteen people killed at Koksarre, along with 400 sheep and 70 beasts of burden. Sandwith thought that the number of dead was over-stated: a later report gave it as six.

Though the General Assembly claimed that its goal was to maintain Crete as an autonomous principality, at the beginning of April it took the daring step of announcing the creation of a Provisional Administration[26]. It declared its firm intention to resist any advances by the Turks and to defend itself, every encroachment by them, but it did also make reference to both communities. Its leaders were relatively unknown figures: A. Bitsaki, Carilaos Askoutsi, A. Mikadoulaki, and Steliano Hadjoki.

The new 'government' promptly set up its own police force and courts of law, dealing out summary justice. It did not of course contain any Muslim members: that was a physical impossibility. Instead it signalled benign intentions towards them as clearly as it could. The obvious

[24] Ibid, p.7, Sandwith to Derby, April 7, 1878.
[25] *Affairs of Turkey,* no.35 (1878), p. 4, Sandwith to Derby, April 2, 1868.
[26] Ibid, pp. 4-5, Sandwith to Derby, April 2, 1878.

way to do so was to show that it would respect the rights and even the interests of the Muslims from the countryside who were now locked up inside the towns and could not get to their farms. In some districts the new police were entrusted with guarding vacated Muslim property. To protect the security of the homes of the Muslims of Selinos, for example, they removed the doors and windows of their houses, recorded the details in catalogues and stored them away safely. They were to be returned to their owners when peace returned, provided that the latter could show that they had not been involved in the attacks on Christian villages around Canea. The returning Muslims would also get their crops restored to them, provided that they paid for the cost of watching over them and other general working expenses.

When a British steamer ran aground near Selinos in March, the self-proclaimed authorities showed a similar ostensible high-mindedness by abstaining from salvaging the 800 sacks of flour in its hold, even though there was a serious shortage of food and bread was available to very few. Guards were set to watch the ship, though it eventually broke up and sank completely. All this, Sandwith saw as evidence of "their [the Christians'] moderation and justice and desire to conform to civilised usages.[27]"

Osman Nuri Pasha's lapse in allowing the Bashibozuks to come to his aid proved to be his undoing. As a result of the diplomatic representations which followed Sandwith's despatch about it, the government in Istanbul decided to recall him and appoint Salih Pasha in his place. The new commander was to be accompanied by Colonel Briscow, an officer working in the Turkish gendarmerie. Layard who did not know Salih Pasha but had been told good things about him was hopeful. But in the event, the idea of sending a British officer to help run the Cretan gendarmerie did not get off the ground while Salih Pasha turned out to be a hardliner.

There was certainly an urgent need to improve the working of the gendarmerie. In 1878 as in the later crises that would follow in Crete over the next two decades, the weakness of the gendarmerie was one of the main reasons why the government could not keep the situation under control. And, as in the later crises, the reasons why the gendarmerie were ineffective boiled down to one extremely simple cause: they were not being paid. In April 1878, some of the *zaptiyes* or gendarmes in Crete were owed more than thirty months of salary. Worse still, because of the lack of food which the garrison towns were now experiencing, they were put on 'short rations' which meant in practice crusts of dry bread. Not surprisingly the corps was close to mutiny. Sensing this, the government began to place its own men at its head. Most of the Cretan gendarme constables were Albanians, but during April 1878 the government began replacing several of the senior gendarme commanders with native Cretans.

On April 15th, 700 gendarmes went together to a mosque in Candia, swore an oath of brotherhood and solidarity—and then went to their new Cretan commander to demand their arrears of pay. "Of course, there could be but one answer to this demand, viz. that at present that there was no money to pay them," wrote Sandwith.[28] He found it surprising that they had remained faithful to their command for so long. Receiving nothing from their commander, they went to the Vali and then to the military commander, Osman Nuri Pasha. Obtaining no satisfaction, they

[27] *Affairs of Turkey*, no. 35, 1878, Crete, 7-8, Sandwith to Derby, April 8, 1878.
[28] *Ibid,* p. 10, Sandwith to Derby, April 13, 1878.

announced that they would take no more rations and pooled their money to buy food among themselves, giving the government a deadline of Friday 19 April. In Candia too, the *Mutassarif* (sub-governor) told Vice-Consul Calocherino that the gendarmes could not be trusted while they remained unpaid. The Christian gendarmes had been in exactly the same situation, but that problem had been resolved simply by disbanding them altogether[29].

The same day in Rethymno, the lack of law and order on the island was demonstrated again by another massacre. Sixteen unarmed men gathering herbs in the countryside to eat were attacked. Nine were killed and the tenth taken prisoner. A further three were unaccounted for. There was this time no doubt about the incident which was confirmed both by the Ottoman authorities and Trifilli, the British consular agent. This was the worst incident so far on the island and its victims were not Christians but Muslims. The Ottoman authorities, who had shown the bodies to a crowd of 300 Rethymno Muslims, said the bodies had been seriously mutilated. The British vice-consul, as Sandwith immediately noted presumably with approval, made no mention of this and his reports on the matter were largely devoted to demonstrating that the Ottoman authorities had been guilty of sensational reporting and that there had been no mutilation of the dead men and that the murders could be understood, if not extenuated, as an act of vengeance for the earlier murders at Kokkara.

Sandwith responded by taxing the Ottoman authorities with their allegations of mutilation. They replied by accusing Trifillo, of wanting to cover the story up. Sandwith then, most unusually for him, sailed from Canea in *HMS Bittern* to Rethymno to look at the bodies for himself. He reported to London that the claims of mutilation had been 'greatly exaggerated'. There had been a 'savage murderous assault on the murdered men' and some of them had clearly been stabbed after their deaths (several of them had severe stab wounds although all had been shot by bullets) but, concluded the British consul, "it does not so clearly appear that their bodies had been wantonly mutilated." One victim had lost the end of his nose, another part of his ear—but this hardly amounted to the claims which the Ottoman authorities had made. Foreign consuls had not actually seen the bodies, because Trifilli, being an ethnic Greek, had been warned by his *kavas* (Ottoman diplomatic guard) that it would be imprudent to do so while public feeling in the town was running so high. And the murders themselves were essentially an act of reprisal.

Of the wickedness of the killings and the men who committed it, the infallible topics of consular discussion when wrongdoing by Cretan Muslims was alleged, there is not the slightest mention. As far as can be judged, none of the Christian or mainland Greek allegations of crimes by Muslims was ever subjected to a similarly searching investigation. Where they were blatantly untrue, or probably so, they were simply quietly dismissed after they had been noted.

While in Rethymno, Sandwith heard news which disquieted him more than the murders. Salih Pasha, the new commander of the Ottoman army in Crete, had begun his term in office with a visit to Rethymno where he had been petitioned to grant an amnesty, as a result of which all Mussulman prisoners had been released. Neither Costaki Pasha nor the *Mutassarif* of Rethymno were pleased with this development and Salih Pasha himself seems to have been embarrassed by

[29] *Ibid,* p. 12, Sandwith to Derby, April 21 1878.

it, for back in Canea he called on Sandwith and told him that the *Mutassarif* of Rethymno, not himself, had ordered the release. Perhaps he had been warned of the trouble that could follow if he was unfavourable named in a despatch by Sandwith. Salih Pasha must have been well aware of the fragility of his position, for his instructions stated that he could remain only on the defensive and could not carry hostilities into the country areas held by the enemy.

Beneath the surface however, there were still forces working for a compromise in Crete. Some of the Muslim refugees in the large towns for example, had opened up negotiations with the local Christians to see if they could not be allowed to return to their homes. However private deals of this sort were strongly opposed by the Christian chiefs who were committed to securing the union of Crete with Greece in exchange for the arms and money they had received so far. Nonetheless in early May, with the barley harvest approaching, pressure from the Muslim refugees in the towns to be allowed to return to their homes. They asked Costaki Pasha to send detachments of troops into the country districts to guarantee the safety of returning Muslim farmers. Adossides set out in an Ottoman government steamer to sail around the island and investigate whether it was possible to enable the Muslims to return in at least a few places. He took with him, Mustafa Paputsali, who had been chosen by the Muslims of Candia to represent them, but whom Sandwith describes as "a notorious leader."

Sandwith had been told by Christians of their desire to see their Muslim neighbours back again and "the majority of Muslims will find their property untouched." The consul added:

> I cannot believe that they are running any risk in trusting to the good faith of the Christians, who have given the best proof of their friendly disposition, by abstaining from destroying their property during their long absences.

AMBASSADOR LAYARD'S PEACE INITIATIVE

It was at this point that Sandwith decided to put forward his own peace proposals in **a** letter to Layard. In the middle of May, the British ambassador had written to the consul, asking him to suggest ways of resolving the conflict by identifying terms which both sides could accept.

Layard blamed 'Greek intrigues' for the renewal of hostilities in Crete and he was personally very sympathetic to Turkey. He had known the country on and off for around four decades and some of the top figures in the empire had been his friends throughout that period. Behind him was a prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, who was also pro-Turkish and had shown himself committed to the preservation of the Ottoman Empire three months earlier when he had brought the Russian advance on Istanbul to a halt by sending the British fleet through the Dardanelles to lie in the Sea of Marmara opposite the Russian encampment at Yeşilköy.

Not all of Layard's judgements as ambassador were happy ones, but on this occasion, he had sized the situation up correctly, probably because he had been briefed by the recently recalled governor of Sfakia and Apokorona, Nicholas Sartinski Efendi. There was scope for Britain to act as an intermediary between the insurgents and the Ottoman authorities. Most people on either side in Crete did not want the fighting to go on and did not want union with Greece at this point in time.

Sandwith was somewhat baffled by Layard's enquiry when the first telegram reached him from the ambassador, but in response to specific questions informed him that if the ambassador could persuade the Ottoman government to grant an armistice, he thought that a deal could be done. The insurgents would want lower taxation and lighter government without local governors, he believed.

Curiously, Sandwith did not mention the key question, which was how to find an acceptable way of sharing representation and power on a more proportionate basis between Cretan Christians and Muslims. He agreed to put the idea to the Vali but warned that he was surrounded by "a disreputable clique of Mussulmans.[30]" The two chief figures among these, Sandwith believed it would be necessary to send into exile. They were Hamid Bey, Salih Pasha's Muslim Councillor, and also Hasan Bey Kavouri, the latter a member of a family which would lobby hard for the Cretan Muslims in Istanbul in the next generation and which, after emigrating from Crete to the mainland, would earn distinction in Turkey in the second half of the twentieth century in fields as different as diplomacy and film-making. No doubt Hamid and Hasan were hardliners on the question of the rights of the Muslims, but it is another obvious sign of the inequality with which the two communities on the island were viewed. Sandwith would not have tolerated the exiling of a Cretan Christian leader.

Four days later, the consul travelled down the road eastwards from Canea to Apokorona. He took with him his vice-consul and landlord, Henry Moazzo, to act as translator and perhaps as advocate for the proposals he was going to advance. On the evening of Tuesday the 22nd of May, he arrived at the village of Fre where it had been arranged that he would meet the Christian Provisional Government. He put up a tent for the night but postponed his formal meeting with the chiefs until the next day. In the morning the Insurgent chiefs appeared, and they formed a circle around him to hear what he had to say. It was a slightly nervous moment for both sides. Sandwith reported that;[31]

> Forming a circle around me on the ground, I observed many chiefs whose names are well known in Cretan history, such as Korakas and Kostaros who had taken part in every insurrection since 1821. Gorgoni, Hadji Mikali […]

He had his text for them written out and translated into Greek. He read it to them in English, with Moazzo translating sentence by sentence as he went along.

It was a very short speech. Sandwith said simply that England was aware of dissatisfaction with the working of the 1867-8 settlement and the Organic Statute; the struggle however was bringing them only misery and worse would follow. The Ottoman Government had agreed to allow England to mediate between it and the insurgents and there would be a full amnesty if the Christians would agree to allow the Ottomans working with the British to design a new form of government for Crete.

As soon as the address was over, Sandwith's listeners begged to be given the written text. The consul obliged, though he was well aware that this meant that it would soon appear in full in

[30] Ibid, pp. 22-23, Sandwith to Layard, May 18, 1878.
[31] Sandwith to Layard, May 26, 1878, F0 195/1191, *TNA*. (The Blue Book text omits the names of the chiefs given in the original despatch.)

the Greek newspapers. After declaring that union with Greece was what they desired, the chiefs broke up into little groups, went to the village schoolroom and began discussing the document.

However, they quickly made Sandwith aware of the pain and embarrassment they felt at being asked to do something which would betray Greece after it had supplied them with so much arms and money to fight for annexation.

> There is no denying," Sandwith told Layard, "that the feeling did them honour. The desire for union with Greece, I have observed to be strongly growing ever since hostilities began, and I attribute it mainly to the substantial aid which the Chiefs and their followers have not ceased to receive from that country from that time to the present.[32]

But the chiefs also feared the likely indignation of the peasant farmers if it became known to them that such good terms had been offered. Sandwith also learned that the chiefs believed that they had only lukewarm support in the east of the island and that the insurgents in the centre, and at Rethymno and Mylopotamos, were on the verge of submitting to the Ottomans.

However, many of the chiefs were at first in no mood to accept these terms, and Sandwith gave them a second day to think over the proposals. Eventually he got a letter of acceptance, but one which insisted that there must be an armistice rather than just an amnesty. The armistice was to last until "the definitive solution of the Cretan problem."[33]

The Ottoman Government was indeed prepared to make peace upon these terms. It was also asked to recall Salih Pasha immediately and to remove Hamid Bey and Hasan Kavouri from the island. An instruction from London to Layard commended him on his insistence that these "two persons, stated to be fomenters of disorders," should be sent into exile.[34] Some of the chiefs who were directly paid from Greece were unable to sign, while the chiefs from Sfakia were in dispute with the others and so composed and signed a separate letter of their own, along the lines of the acceptance. Support for the idea of Cretan autonomy, rather than union with Greece, was stronger in Sfakia than other parts of the island.

Greece was now sending very large amounts of money each week to the insurgents. The last week in May saw the Panhellenion bring in 1000 gold Napoleons, while 3,000 had arrived on the previous trip. A few weeks later a letter from Hadji Michalis to the Greek consul in Canea was intercepted. In it the Consul acknowledged receipt of 275 'beans'—which was generally taken also to mean gold Napoleons.[35]

When news arrived from Istanbul that the Ottoman government was not disposed to grant a formal armistice and would simply agree to the suspension of hostilities with a complete amnesty, prospects for a settlement seemed to hang in the balance. The insurgents would be cutting

[32] The British Government was being advised by its Legation in Athens that there were no Greek 'insurrectionary agents' in the Island of Crete. One official wrote "The Cretan Committee in Athens sends arms and supplies, but the insurrection is said to be purely Cretan." *The Affairs of Crete,* no. 28, (1878), p. 15. Hugh Wyndham to Salisbury, May 16 1878. 'Insurrection' was a euphemism invented by the Foreign Office to soften its response towards Christian rebels in the Ottoman lands. Calling them rebels would have implied condemnation.
[33] *Affairs of Turkey,* no.35 (1878), p. 28.
[34] *Affairs of Turkey,* no.35 (1878), Layard to Salisbury, June 7 1878; Cross to Layard, June 11
[35] *Affairs of Turkey,* no 28 (1878), Sandwith to the Marquis of Salisbury, June 24, 1878

themselves off from a generous flow of funds and assistance from Greece, while they also knew that the Powers would meet later that year in a Congress which would redraw the map of the Balkans. They might get better terms there than the ones which Layard had offered them.[36]

There were also divisions on the Ottoman side. It was clear to everybody that the sort of settlement which Layard was trying to broker on the island would mean a substantial shift in power towards the Christian majority. The Moslems may have resented this for the sort of reasons which ruling or privileged minorities always resent such changes. But it has also to be remembered that their own possible expulsion from the island had been under discussion –usually of course only to deny that it could ever happen– for at least the past four decades, that that while the diplomatic contacts were getting under way, they were living under virtual siege, and that this was at least the fifth time in the life time of older Cretan Muslims that this had happened. Even by 1878, many Cretan Muslims must have spent at least ten to twenty percent of their lives not in their homes but under siege in the fortified towns. While it may be true that these sieges were not always quite as confrontational as they looked, for there were ways in which Christian and Muslim neighbours struck private deals to look after each other's property, the lack of food and water meant the periods of confinement were horrible experiences. And the Muslims must also have been well aware that the foreign consuls on the island, men like Sandwith and Stillman, took little or no interest in what they suffered and were briefed exclusively by Christians.

For the property-owning Muslim Beys, who owned large tracts of land around the towns, there was also the prospect that they would suffer the loss of their property and wealth. They had active interests to defend and right through until the 1890s, they believed in armed vigilance—to the extent that this policy was possible for Muslims in Crete.

Their natural allies therefore were the Ottoman commanders and officers who came to the island. The Ottoman civilian governors, who had to work closely with the foreign consuls and to respect international diplomatic sensitivities, commanded little esteem, for they seemed to be counselling surrender by stages while offering neither protection nor any long-term hope to the people they administered.

There are times in history when whole peoples and communities are trapped in insoluble situations for which no practical political or administrative way out can be found. The situation of the Cretan Muslims seems to be one such, though it was hardly a unique fate. They were just one part of arising from the jumble of mixed populations which a vast mosaic of ethnic cultural conflicts and contradictions stretched from the Danube to the Caucasus, all of whom were now, under the tutelage of the western European Christians, engaged in self-discovery along nationalist and religious lines, claiming exclusive rights to the land they lived in, and consequently locked in ever deeper hatred and feuds with other people who lived alongside them.

The plight of the Muslims in Crete, like that of most Muslims in south-eastern Europe, was that they were 'outside international society'. They lacked friends and influence and whatever views they had on the situation in which they were engulfed, they had no means of communicating them in any detail. The same perhaps, was also still true for the Christian peasantry of Crete, but it was

[36] *Affairs of Turkey,* no.35 (1878), pp. 31-2, Sandwith to Layard, July 1, 1878.

not true for the emergent Cretan Christian merchants, administrators, doctors, professionals, and writers who were now starting to come on the scene. The exclusion of the Cretan Muslims from international society had many roots. One of them was the cultural gulf between Islam and Christianity and the fact that the Cretan Muslims, appearing effectively as little more than de-Hellenised Greeks, lacked access to both the high culture of the Ottoman Empire and that of the Christian and Greek world. There was also the continuing social distinction between Christians and Muslims. It was difficult for western visitors to the island to form close personal friendships with Muslims, or even to talk to them very much, a situation which was fairly typical of Ottoman provincial society.[37] As a result they were very poorly understood. Each such basic features of Cretan Muslim life as Bektashi'ism, the tolerant syncretistic Islamic brotherhood to which most Cretan Muslims of Janissary descent belonged, passed completely unnoticed by western observers.

By 1878 the Cretan Muslims suffered from other disadvantages. One was that the Ottoman system of government under Abdülhamit II rested on institutionalised suspicion. Most Ottoman citizens were no longer in a position to state any individual critical opinion freely to westerners, and simply appeared to be part of a hostile oriental despotism, engaged in a futile struggle against the spread of western values and ideals.

If you don't know people, it is easy to demonise them, especially if you live in close and sometimes fearful proximity to them. Successive British consuls on Crete found it rather harder to accept that Cretan Christians were just as likely as Cretan Muslims to engage in acts of violence than distant observers in Britain—even strongly Christian ones like Lord Salisbury, though Sandwith is perhaps an exception. His predecessor, Consul Dickson had been much more sympathetic to the views of Ottoman officialdom in the 1860s. Why the change?

The explanation seems to lie in the changing social and economic context which the consuls worked and lived in, and the arrival of the telegraph and swift communications links with the Western newspapers. Until the 1858 crisis, the British consul of the day had essentially been a westerner living in a Muslim society but on very close terms with its centres of power. Charles Ongley had been a very close friend of two governors, possibly closer than was good for any of them, and it had been to his house that Veli Pasha had fled when he lost control of the situation on the island.[38] But this proximity to senior Muslim officials was decreasing while the social life of the consuls was increasingly tied up with that of a more Christian Greek middle class, educated along Western lines,

After the 1850s (we should remember that 1859 was the year that Lysimachus Calocherino joined the vice-consulate at Candia) the locus of power and the sources of reporting altered. The Muslim community was viewed entirely from the outside and though the best consuls took care to investigate the state of opinion inside it, most did not. And, though the consuls were now active

[37] See David Barchard, "Modernity, Muslims, and British Archaeologists: Michael Gough And His Nineteenth Century Predecessors" in (ed.) David Shankland, *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck (1878-1920)*, (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2004), 257-280.

[38] See David Barchard "*Veli Pasha and Consul Ongley: A Diplomatic Relationship That Got Too Close"* in (ed) S. Kuneralp, *A Bridge between Cultures*, (Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008), 69-122

forces in the Cretan political situation in their own right, they did not at this stage do anything practical to foster dialogue or closer working relations between the two communities on the island.

As of June 1878, began, Costaki Adossides Pasha, enjoyed only the title and not the substance of being Vali of the island. Real authority among the Muslims had passed to the war party. During his three months of the island, the Cretan-born Salih Pasha, held himself 'aloof from the Christian element of the population, frequenting the society of the most bigoted Muslims."[39] The commander seems to have had little or no regard for the actions of Costaki, for when the Vali ordered the re-arrest of Apaki and other Muslim prisoners at Rethymno, the suspected murders of the six Christians killed at Koksarre Salih Pasha ordered the men to be released a second time, without even informing the Vali. "His Excellency is forced to brook the insult," wrote Sandwith.[40]

Salih Pasha seems to have been close to attempting an expedition into the hinterland to enable the Muslim peasants to return to their homes. Perhaps this might have resulted in the creation of a Muslim enclave in the countryside around Canea. A similar operation was also about to get under way at Rethymno. Costaki learnt from Sandwith news of the proposed removal of Hamid (who was his personal counsellor) and Hasan Kavouri, for the Vali had heard nothing about these changes from his own ministry—and told Sandwith that Hamid was too powerful in local politics to be easily treated in this way.

British influence and the personal reputation of Layard in Istanbul were still in the ascendant and on June 20, he was able to inform London that orders had been issued to remove Salih Pasha from his command in Crete as a result of his representations. Layard also named the Ottoman officer he thought should be named as Salih's replacement. This was Salim Pasha, the commandant in Candia in whom Sandwith reposed much trust.

This degree of interference in the details of Ottoman administration was unusual even by the standards of Abdülhamit's Turkey, but it needs to be remembered that this was 1878, the year in which the British navy had intervened to stop Istanbul being taken by the Russians and the Sultan deposed, and that Layard had spent so much of his life in Turkey and was so closely linked to senior Ottoman officials by personal friendships and longstanding knowledge of the situation that he could step well beyond the boundaries of what was usual, although his personal relations with the Sultan were precarious.

ARRIVAL OF THE BRITISH FLEET

To increase its influence over the population of Crete, Britain now stepped up its naval presence around the island. On June 5, Admiral Lord John Hay arrived in Suda Bay with *HMS Minotaur* and *HMS Defence*, and the following day *HMS Black Prince* arrived, commanded by the Duke of Edinburgh, Queen Victoria's second son who had once been a favourite candidate in Athens to fill the vacant throne of the kingdom of Greece.

The effect on the mood on the island was immediate. On June 10, Sandwith wrote to London that "The presence of the Channel Squadron in these waters has had a marked and most

[39] *Affairs of Turkey,* no.35 (1878), 33, Sandwith to Layard June 1 1878.
[39] Ibid.
[40] *Affairs of Turkey, Crete*, vol. 82, 1 June 187, Sandwith to Layard.

salutary effect on the population, and more particularly in restraining the ardour of the military authorities." [41]

Once the British ships had arrived, the *vali* was able to get Salih Pasha's proposed inland expedition stopped with a telegram to the *Mutassarif* of Rhethymno. However, the British aim of achieving an agreement between the Ottoman Government and the insurgents 'without a drop of blood' still seemed rather distant from reality. The Panhellenion was continuing to land arms and ammunition on the island and for the first time there were signs that an insurgency was breaking out in the eastern end of the island. In Lassethi, the *konak* or headquarters of the Ottoman *Mutassarif* was burnt down.

Salih Pasha and his supporters among the leading Cretan Muslims were not willing to give up without a struggle. On June 10, five leading Cretan Muslims boarded the steamer for Syra on their way to Istanbul to protest against the changes being proposed for Crete. They had been elected by the Muslims of Candia, Rethymno, and Canea and their mission seems to have been to get the Ottoman government to remove Costaki Pasha from the governorship of the island.[42] At the same time, the Ottoman army began a push outwards from Rethymno, moving the military cordon which separated territory under Ottoman army control from that in the hands of the insurgents into Mylopotamos, Amari, and Aghios Basilios. Sandwith was informed of this by Trifilli and immediately asked the Ottoman authorities to explain why they were doing this, in violation of the agreement that neither sides would move from their positions. The official answer was that the move was being made in response to appeals from Christian villagers. Trifilli swiftly reported that this was not true. The move had been made after appeals from Muslim farmers in the town who wanted the cordon widened so that they could go back to their farms and reap their harvest: an explanation which did not legitimise the advance of the army in Sandwith's eyes.

In Candia too strong pressure came from Muslim farmers to be allowed to go back to their lands and bring in the fruit and grain harvests while there was still time. So Costaki Pasha agreed that they should be allowed to do so. About 600 men were armed with Martini rifles, given half a battalion (200 troops) to accompany them and they proceeded southwards to the plain of Messara. Along the way they came to blows with the Christians. Calocherino reported that they had committed many atrocities including, he said, three murders. There certainly seems to have been some violence for Salim Pasha ordered twenty bashibozuks to be arrested and sent back to Candia in disgrace to go on trial. The insurgents retaliated immediately with reprisals on the bashibozuks, swiftly killing two of them.

These shocking events rather overshadowed the fact that the insurgents had also launched hostilities in Mirabello. They had in fact made it clear well in advance that there would be more fighting soon. On 15 June they had told Sandwith and the Consuls that they were rejecting Britain's offer of mediation and would appeal over the heads of the English to the other Great Powers in congress[43]. Because of the coldness and mutual suspicion which temporarily clouded Greek-Russian relations at this time, there was absolutely no chance that the Russians would now begin to give logistical support to the Cretan revolt in the way that they had done in the 1866 uprising.

[41] *Affairs of Turkey, Crete*, vol. 82, June 15, Sandwith to the Marquis of Salisbury.
[42] Ibid, pp. 35-6, Sandwith to Layard, June 6, 1878.
[43] *Affairs of Turkey, Crete*, vol. 82, no.35 (1878), p. 34, Layard to Salisbury June 16, 1878.

All the insurgents could do was to hope to be able to resist pressure from Britain until the Congress got going.

The following day Sandwith travelled, apparently on his own initiative, down the road from Canea to Apokorona to meet the leaders of the revolt once more. He was curious to learn why the mediation offer, which was extremely popular with most of the Cretan population, had been refused by the chiefs. During the weeks that the offer from had been hanging in the air, Greece had stepped up its supplies of arms and money to the insurgents and the General Assembly felt, as its members told Sandwith, far more dependent on the mother country than they had been in the spring[44].

In Apokorona, most of the leadership had dispersed into the hills in readiness for action as soon as the letters refusing the British mediation offer had been signed. Sandwith found only a few members of the Provisional Government and the General Assembly who would talk to him. They told him that for formal discussions it would be necessary to summon the 120 members of the General Assembly from the four corners of the island and contacting them would take at least ten days.

The Mediterranean summer was now far advanced and out in the countryside, the harvest was over. A good deal of it had been stolen. "I learnt with much concern that since my last visit three weeks before, a large part of the crops belonging to the Mussulmans had been reaped and appropriated by the Christians," Sandwith noted. "And that in many cases considerable damage had been done to their dwellings." Deals to share the produce between the rightful owners and the insurgents had been struck in some cases, but Sandwith very much doubted that there was much prospect of them being carried out faithfully.

"On the whole, it appeared to me that the moment was almost past for reconciling the two hostile communities," he added.

As a result, Sandwith did not press the insurgents to accept the British terms. When he got back to Canea, he told Costaki Pasha of the way in which the Cretan Muslims were being robbed of their crops. It was a bitter moment for the government. Prospects looked worse than ever for a settlement between the two communities.

The first shots had in any case already been fired, even before the Assembly had rejected the mediation offer by Britain. Around 11 June a group of them gathered on a hillside near Aghios Nicholaos opposite the garrison island of Spinalonga and firing down into the castle and also into an Ottoman navy corvette, the *Sinop* stationed there. They were relatively soft targets for the Ottoman army in that part of the island seldom saw much action and taken completely by surprise.

A sergeant and two sailors were killed, and three others wounded. One of the many organisational weaknesses of the Ottoman army had been glaringly exposed. The guns of the Ottoman army in Spinalonga castle were so old that they could not be adjusted to fire at targets high above them and so their shots could not reach the insurgents on their hillside.

[44] *Affairs of Turkey, Crete*, vol. 82, no.35 (1878), pp. 43-4, Sandwith to Layard, June 20, 1878.

THE CONGRESS OF BERLIN

A day or two later sixty armed volunteers arrived from Greece. It now looked more likely than ever that there would soon be further fighting on a large scale across the island. There was of course a powerful international aspect to the timing of all these events. For these particular weeks saw one of the most important points in the history of 'Old Europe.' On June 13, 1878, the great congress opened in Berlin which was to demarcate the lines along which power politics in the Balkans and the Eastern Mediterranean ran for the next three decades. This was the moments which the Cretan insurgents and their masters in Athens had been holding out for during the previous six months. It is therefore readily understandable that during the four weeks of the Congress of Berlin, the insurgents did their best to push Crete into the world's headlines.

In the west of the island too, had also been fairly serious fighting. In Apokorona that day and during the next as four battalions of the Ottoman army marched eastwards from Canea.

The potential international implications of this action were much more serious than those of the Christian Cretans. While an attack by insurgents would merely be noted by Britain and the powers, if the Ottoman Army was defying the commitments it had given to the powers, it would call for some response from them. Moreover, as soon as the fighting happened, allegations of brutalities and massacres of Christians began arriving in London. These would, if confirmed, invite further intervention from Britain on behalf of the powers to protect the Christians. However, for several days there was confusion in London about just what had happened. Sandwith's report of the latest clashes, written on 25th June, did not arrive in London until July 3rd. So for a week, all that was known was a telegram which the Foreign Office had received from other sources on 25 June and which painted events in a much more damning fashion than Sandwith was accustomed to do.

The telegram read as follows: -

> *Monday evening* –Hard fighting continues today at Vamos, Stylo, Veshorio. Turks burning, pillaging, sacking everything. Large number of people lost. Thirteen women massacred. Turkish fleet took part in action.[45]

It came from an Englishman, a Mr Pender living in Canea, and it was not clear whether he had written the telegram or was merely relaying it. Nonetheless London immediately forwarded it to Layard in Istanbul. As Layard promptly pointed out, its provenance was by no means clear. Layard suspected Greek propaganda and called for caution. "Greeks are doing their utmost to foment insurrection in the island" he wrote. However, he must have known that such qualifications would be received with certain coolness if not downright scepticism in London.

When his telegram finally arrived, Sandwith confirmed that there had indeed been violence, and in at least three parts of the island, though he described the clashes as only 'trifling collisions',[46] despite the lives which had been lost in the course of them. He thought that one of the three, the attack by the insurgents at Spinalonga should clearly be blamed on the insurgents alone. There had

[45] Turkey, no.35 (1878), 38 Cross to Layard, June 25, 1878.
[46] *Affairs of Turkey, Crete*, vol. 82, no.35 (1878), 46-8, Sandwith to the Marquis of Salisbury, 24 June 1878.

also been another killing of a group of Muslims at Rethymno where around 20 June, five Muslims were killed by Christians in an attack which Sandwith described as 'cold blooded murder.'[47]

This time there was not much room for doubt about mutilations. One of the dead was a young boy whose relatives took his body to *HMS Minotaur* and showed the wounds to Vice Admiral Hay's men to try and convince them "of the savage character of the warfare carried on by the Christians." Feelings among Muslims in the town ran at fever pitch. But Sandwith who waxed fiercely indignant on so many other occasions, stayed cool on this one.

This was partly because he was able to report that the Provisional Government had immediately written a long letter to the Consuls of the Powers in Canea, making it plain that they were deeply distressed by this 'shameful deed' and had appointed an Extraordinary Commissioner to capture those responsible and try them. In any case, the next day there was a revenge killing of three Christians on the same spot, and the body of one victim had been partly burnt.

The attack on Spinalonga and the killing of the five Muslims at Rethymno had evidently enabled Salih Pasha and the Ottoman forces to consider themselves absolved from their commitment to remain on the defensive. On the 23rd of June, a force of two or three thousand men had begun an advance from the Bay of Suda into Apokora.

The Ottoman forces consisted of five battalions under Salih's deputy, Necip Pasha, who had attacked the villages of Irivara and Plaka and the troops were then said to have set fire to them. However, at Armenous, the defenders held on stubbornly and the Ottoman forces were repulsed. Eventually, after Salih Pasha had called in Bashibozuk reinforcements, the resistance collapsed, and the village went up in flames. Not long afterwards the Ottoman forces advanced towards Epano Chori.

The General Assembly had been swiftly in touch with the consul about what was going on. A letter from the Assembly accused the Ottoman troops of burning villages and crops and also accused them of the murder of 11 women and three old men. It estimated that there had been losses of about 50 men each on both sides. Sandwith was not sure how truthful the claims of massacres were, but he had received information suggesting that the firing of villages and fields was the work of Ottoman troops, especially the Syrians (in every Cretan insurgency Syrian troops were regarded as much more brutal than the Anatolian soldiers) and not the Bashibozuks, who as Cretans had their own stake in allowing the harvest to go ahead.

Learning all this, Sandwith went straight to the governor's place to see the Ottoman Vali to see what he could do to stop the fighting. Adossides told that the troop movements were nothing to do with him and that he was powerless to stop the troops advancing to preventing acts of plunder by irregulars. He revealed that Salih Pasha had never thought of consulting him. Indeed, it seemed that preparations for the advance had been carried out so stealthily that the Vali had not even known that an invasion of Apokorona was afoot. There was some good news however. Salih Pasha was being recalled and though Salim Pasha not been appointed in his place, the new commander on the island, Ali Haydar Pasha, had already arrived from Istanbul at Candia and would be in Canea in the morning. Costaki Pasha thought that the attack was Salih Pasha's reaction to

[47] *Ibid.*

news of his recall and that he was "determined to take his revenge for the long period of inactivity which had been forced upon him."

Reading these unguarded, indeed abject confessions by Adossides Pasha about his own lack both of any practical influence on events and also of sympathy with his Ottoman military colleagues, it is hard not to wonder what effect they later had on the Pasha's career in Istanbul. One must also ask whether or not anyone in London ever thought or cared about this. For the Pasha's were transmitted in despatches from Canea by Sandwith and were printed and made public for all the world to read within a few months. This happened despite Adossides's own pleas for confidentiality. On June 20 for instance, he asked Sandwith that a request he made to Admiral Hay to send *HMS Foxhound* to cruise along the coast of Kissamos "should be considered confidential, as should it hereafter be made public, it would not tend to improve the feelings of coldness with which he is regarded by a considerable section of the Mussulman population." [48] Within a few months, the full text of both the Christian Pasha's request and his subsequent appeal for confidentiality were on sale in the streets of London in a form which he could not repudiate.

This looks like a gesture of contempt by British officialdom for a Christian Ottoman provincial administrator with whom they had worked. Even if this is not that, it can hardly have been an accident. When Blue Books were being prepared for publication, diplomats were normally asked to excise anything in their despatches which they thought might be unsuitable or embarrassing. Other sensitive passages would be removed in London, sometimes to the annoyance of their authors. There are in fact protective excisions where other matters are concerned in some of the published versions of the consular despatches from Crete in 1878.

As we have already seen, the names of the Cretan Christian chieftains who met Sandwith at Fre in mid-May, when Britain was trying to impose itself as a mediator in the conflict, were cut out of the Blue Book, even though the Ottoman authorities must have known exactly who they were. Presumably it was feared that if they were named in print, there might have been repercussions later. Adossides Pasha, a top ranking official in the Ottoman Government, evidently did not merit similar solicitude.

This small episode affecting Adossides **P**asha points to a larger one: the multicultural approach to the problems of the Balkans and the Near East, of which the single generation of Christian Pashas was a living embodiment, failed partly because the politicians and officials of Britain and the other Powers cared nothing about it.

On June 25, Adossides Pasha sent a note round early in the morning, asking Sandwith to come and see him. He was even more informative than he had been on his previous meetings. He had sent two trustworthy persons off to Apokorona to see what was going on there and had also been visited by a deputation of women and old men from Armenous, who said that the troops had massacred a large number of people, but that they had been saved by the intervention of the Cretan Muslims. Furthermore, the fighting seemed to be spreading. Adossides had news that Cretan Muslims at Candia and Hierapetra were demanding arms from the Ottoman authorities with a view to attacking neighbouring villages. He thought that there was a plot to drive the Christians from

[48] Turkey, no.35 (1878), p. 43, Sandwith to Layard, June 20, 1878.

the Canea and then fall upon them and massacre them. Though he was the Ottoman governor of the island, Adossides seemed as vehemently hostile towards the Cretan Muslims as any Cretan Christian insurgent. He warned that Muslim women were standing in the roads insulting Christian passers-by and threatening them with violence. Christian shopkeepers with premises near the gates of Canea had shut them for the day. He was convinced that without the presence of the British fleet, there would have been 'terrible scenes' already. The Governor thought that Hamid Bey and Hasan Bey Kavouraki were the chief fomenters of the trouble and should be immediately banished.

LAYARD'S SITUATION IN ISTANBUL WEAKENS

In Istanbul, the events in Crete had put Henry Layard under pressure on a different matter. The first signs that a breach was opening between him and his political masters in London were now beginning to appear. Layard had been appointed by Lord Derby, who had watched the Cretan problem from a basically neutral perspective for many years. He had been the Foreign Minister during the 1866-69 insurgency who had held Britain back from joining with the Russians and the French to force the Ottoman Government to cede Crete to Greece. But at the beginning of April 1878, Derby had unexpectedly resigned and his place as Foreign Secretary was taken by Lord Salisbury, another hereditary grandee but endowed with one of the very sharpest intellects in Victorian England which had won him a Prize Fellowship of All Souls at Oxford in his student days. However, it was an intellect combined with stronger than average Christian prejudices, making him very similar in some respects to the archenemy of the Ottomans, the philhellene William Gladstone who was now leading the opposition Liberal Party.

Salisbury was no philhellene, in fact he was deeply cynical about southern Europe and the Mediterranean countries generally, but he had long believed that the Ottoman Empire would never reform and that the rule of Christians by Muslims was intrinsically wrong. Moreover, he had spent [six weeks] in Istanbul during an abortive international conference in late 1876 and early 1877, during which Abdülhamit and his ministers had declined to listen to his advice. In Istanbul, Salisbury had found the company of the Russian ambassador, the famous Count Ignatieff, known as Mentir-Pacha, more congenial than that of Sir Henry Elliot, the generally pro-Turkish and anti-insurgent, ambassador. Layard, who was fluent in several Oriental languages including Turkish, represented an intensification of Sir Henry's attitudes and was identified with the general policy of trying to build up a reformed and strong Ottoman Empire at the eastern end of the Mediterranean as a bulwark for international stability.

But in a diplomatic landscape which was dominated in Britain by Salisbury and Gladstone, rather than Disraeli and Palmerston, Sir Henry was an anachronism. Turkey had been reduced to second league status in European power politics by the upheavals and redrawing of the map of the Balkans which followed the Turkish-Russian conflicts of 1876-8. It was certain to shrink still further in the future—and under Abdülhamit the country's moves towards Western-style modernity and constitutionalism were abandoned in favour of a return of rule from the Palace. Turkey seemed to have regressed into an old despotism. A certain nervousness in the tone of Layard's despatches and a palpable tendency to over-emphasize his own influence with the Ottoman Government, betray the awkwardness that the ambassador felt when dealing with Salisbury.

Yet Layard also neglected to move quickly on matters on which he should have known Salisbury would be punctilious. One of them was quite a small incident in Crete. On May 1, a few days after the first talks with the Insurgent chiefs in May, Sandwith had come under fire on the road from Apokorona. He believed that Ottoman troops were responsible. It was not a major incident, but it was an act of disrespect towards Britain and he had reported it somewhat diffidently to Layard. The ambassador evidently did not take the episode very seriously, but London certainly did. A month after the incident, Sandwith was sent a note of sympathy from Whitehall and Layard was told to raise the matter with the Ottoman government.

Layard seems to have been tardy in doing this, for a few days later he was reminded, by Cross, deputising for Salisbury who was in Berlin, of the matter in a frigidly worded instruction. Part of the reason for this chilly note was a response to public opinion in Britain where the fighting in Crete was now attracting considerable press and political attention, almost all of it sympathetic to the insurgents and hostile to the Ottoman authorities. Layard was told to bring this point to the attention of the Ottoman government.

It was becoming steadily clearer that a serious difference existed between the outlook of the ambassador and that of the new Foreign Secretary Lord Salisbury on matters to do with Crete and the Ottoman Empire generally. Layard, a specialist on Turkey with many years of experience there and clear ideas about how Turkey could be encouraged to evolve into a modern society as an ally of Britain, was no longer relevant. The men who would make British policy towards Turkey in the years ahead were now, on the Conservative benches, Salisbury who believed that Turkey could never reform and that Britain should have joined forces with Russia in partitioning it in 1853, and on the Liberal side of the house, Gladstone who coined the phrase '*unspeakable Turk'* and wanted Ottoman administration expelled 'bag and baggage' from the Balkans—a phrase redolent, though the Liberal statesman evaded admitting it, of racist ethnic cleansing.[49] Gladstone was also a firm personal and ideological enemy of Layard who had deftly manoeuvred him out of British politics just when the ambassador had been close to achieving cabinet office.[50]

Layard's life's work should have come to a triumphant crescendo during his time as ambassador in Istanbul, but these exchanges with London were harbingers of serious troubles ahead.

During these months, Crete was not the only island which the British ambassador was thinking about, for during the last week of the conference, it came out at the end of the first week of July that Britain and Turkey had made a secret bilateral deal a month earlier under which Cyprus was to be ceded to Britain. The news was officially made public on July 8th. Britain was to become an eastern European power in its own right. This development can hardly have been a surprise to any diplomat who read the newspapers. At a time when so many other nationalities and powers were dipping their hand into the pot and claiming territory from the Ottoman Empire, Britain's

[49] For Gladstone's dispute with Frederic Burnaby on this matter, see Thomas Wright, *The Life of Colonel Fred Burnaby*, London, 1908, p.*154;* Michael Alexander, The *True Blue: The Life and Adventures of Colonel Burnaby,* (New York: R. Hart-Davis, 1958), 118-9.

[50] Gladstone's destruction of first Layard's political and later his diplomatic career is examined in an as yet unpublished article by me. Gladstone's election victory in April 1880 was the signal for Layard's immediate removal from not just the Istanbul embassy, but also his diplomatic career.

imperial dignity require that it get some kind of reward for fending off the Russian threat to the Empire the previous spring. The trouble, from Britain's point of view, was that there was nothing much in the region that it actually wanted or needed.

On July 13, the Congress of Berlin ended. Greece emerged from it relatively advantageously though without regaining Crete. Protocol 13 of the final communiqué at Berlin which became the basis of the formal treaty between the powers published the following November, obliged the Ottomans to hold talks with Greece over a frontier revision in Thessaly. Otherwise Great Powers would impose a transfer of territory. Greece was not a military victor over the Ottoman Empire, and it had not in any real sense been an ally of Russia during the fighting. But its friends among the Powers were sufficiently strong to accept the idea that Greece should be 'compensated' with Ottoman land to make up for the rise of Bulgaria as an independent state and the final end of Greek ambitions in the Balkans. The reference to Crete at Berlin came with Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin which committed the Ottoman government to apply A'ali Pasha's organic law of 1868 'scrupulously' and to introduce various modifications.

This was despite the pleas of Delyannis to the members of the Congress to endorse the transfer of the island to Greece in the interests of peace in Europe. Several of the Powers would in fact have been content to place Crete under a Greek Commissioner, a step which would have been a fairly open prelude to the annexation of the island by Greece. For a short time, the insurgents' hopes rose again, but in 1878, Crete lay within the gravitational orbit of a single superpower and that was Britain. Its prime minister, Benjamin Disraeli, now Lord Beaconsfield believed strongly in the need to protect British interests in the Mediterranean and was not going to give way to the rest of Europe on this matter.

So, the insurgents of 1878 in Crete had no option but to come to terms with the fact that their island would stay in the Ottoman Empire. A month earlier they had rejected British mediation and resumed the armed struggle in the hope of extracting union with Greece from the conference. The General Assembly's members now returned to Sandwith in dejection, their earlier defiance of Britain completely gone.

They presented the Consul with petitions asking for Crete to be declared a British protectorate along with Cyprus. This now seemed the only conceivable exit from Ottoman rule. Failing that, they declared, they wished Crete to be made into a self-governing principality within the Ottoman Empire as the Island of Samos was. Samos indeed seemed to offer a model of self-government which could only be envied. Since the 1830s, a succession Christian Ottoman governor had been nominated by the Sultan to rule it and they were supported by a small garrison of Ottoman army soldiers without any trouble from its mostly Christian Greek population. The secret of Samos's tranquillity was something that Crete could not match as its population was much more homogenous than that of Crete.

CRETE RATHER THAN CYPRUS FOR THE BRITISH?

Under the post-Westphalian international system, Britain was entitled to extract some 'compensation' from the Peace Settlement of Berlin, though apart from Egypt it had no direct interest in acquiring territory in the eastern Mediterranean and its pro-Turkish Prime Minister,

Benjamin Disraeli, was loath for it to do so. Nonetheless not extracting compensation, when even Greece (which had not taken part in the conflict) did, would have meant a loss of face as an imperial Great Power. Disraeli and Salisbury decided it should be an island. In April 1878, on the eve of the conference, Disraeli opted for Cyprus and thereby destroyed the possibility of easy British relations with Abdülhamit.

However, during the early months of 1878 Britain examined carefully whether or not Crete rather than Cyprus should be the 'compensation.' The objective would have been to gain control of the deep-water port at Suda Bay, forestalling acquisition of it by the Russian navy.

Vice-Admiral Sir John Hay's visit to Suda Bay perhaps was made partly with an eye to seeing what Crete would offer to the British Empire. If so, the island was found wanting. The idea was considered and rejected even though both Christian and Muslim Cretans were to petition on occasion to join the British Empire. The difficulty of how to choose between the two great islands of the eastern Mediterranean was satirised by *Punch*.

"The chief of the Army and head of the Fleet
Went out on a mission to Cyprus and Crete.
The natives received them with shouts and hurrahs,
Hailed one of them Neptune , the other one Mars
They raised up an altar to Stanley forthwith,
But they put up a bookstall to W.H.Smith"

Admiral Sir Reginald Bacon, who was present as a young **midshipman**, in the eastern Mediterranean at this time explains in his memoirs why the British went for Cyprus rather than Crete.

> Crete was incomparably the better naval base, having a first-class Harbour at Suda Bay, whereas the anchorages off the coast of Cyprus, of Larnaca, Limasol, and Famagousta, were open to the sea. The island of Crete however suffered from two disadvantages. Firstly, it was very mountainous, so much so that the War Office estimated that it would take an Army Corps to subdue any rising that might take place among the natives. Secondly it was further from Palestine, which was an important objection from Lord Beaconsfield's point of view. Cyprus was therefore chosen in preference to Crete.[51]

Unlike Crete Cyprus, had as yet been surprisingly slow to respond with insurrections or disturbances to the gravitational pull of Greek nationalism. It had no history of internal disorder and—leaving aside Disraeli's possible personal interest in its proximity to Palestine—fitted fairly closely with the British lines of communication with India that ran through Egypt and the Suez Canal in which Britain had acquired a controlling interest in 1875.

Crete would only have made sense as a British imperial acquisition if Britain had expected the eastern Mediterranean to become a theatre for major naval warfare, presumably against Russia, in the near future. By acquiring Crete Britain would be making such a conflict much more likely, for it would be pushing Greece, which was at present deeply fearful of being turned into a Russian satellite, back into the arms of Russia.

[51] Reginald H. Bacon, *A Naval Scrapbook*, (London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924), 47.

The Greek nationalists on the island and the Hellenic committees in London and Athens would obviously press for union with Greece at the earliest opportunity, and since it was less than ten years since Gladstone had handed the Ionian islands to Greece, there was obviously a strong possibility that if the Conservatives established a British protectorate on the island, its life would be extremely short. A new Liberal government would inevitably come under heavy pressure from its own supporters to let the island go the way of the Ionian Islands and Gladstone would be extremely susceptible to their arguments.

On the other hand, it was not in British interests for anyone else, and especially the Russians, to get Crete and the deep-sea harbour at Suda Bay. Even if the island was united with Greece, there was always the prospect that this might happen *de facto* through the back door, should Greece fail to sustain its full independence from the larger Orthodox nation. In that case Crete might conceivably have become a Russian Malta or Gibraltar. It was therefore a reasonable stopgap option for British interests in 1878 to allow the island to continue as part of the Ottoman Empire.

In the settlement that emerged from Berlin, the question of the ultimate ownership and future of Crete remained opaque. There was no fundamental change in the *status quo* and certainly nothing that encouraged Greece to hope that it would get Crete in any foreseeable future. By allowing the island to develop political institutions which were dominated by its Christian majority, the Congress of Berlin was allowing the island to drift a little further from the rest of the empire.

A month and a half after the Congress of Berlin ended, Ahmet Muhtar Pasha, the tough soldier who had been sent to the island for a few weeks at the very beginning of 1877, returned as High Commissioner on 1 September. Adossides Pasha remained governor of the island until the end of November. By then Crete had embarked on a new era. But it is probably just to give the credit for this more to Ahmet Muhtar Pasha than to Adossides. Without a strong Ottoman military commander endorsing the changes, the new arrangements would probably not have been accepted by the leaders of Muslims.

By now the insurgency had fizzled away and there was little support for continued resistance to him, not least since his arrival came in the weeks before the beginning of the olive harvest, a time of the year when Cretan farmers were usually too busy pursuing their economic interests and political tensions usually subsided. There was a host of small political meetings across the island. Eventually, with some prodding from the British, a settlement document was drafted.

THE PACT OF HALEPA

The Pact which was to regulate the life of Crete and create a Lilliputian parliamentary system for it, was signed October 25 1878 in the village of Halepa, a suburb on the heights just outside Canea where the foreign consuls lived. The signing took place in the home of a leading Cretan, Costis Mitsotakis, great grandfather of the present prime minister of Greece.

The agreement has gone down in history as the Pact of Halepa and in the turbulent story of Crete in the nineteenth century, it was one of the few undoubted successes. It is also

unusual among Ottoman political documents in that it represents an agreement or pact between the Sultan and his subjects, rather than a set of rights unilaterally bestowed by him on them.[52]

The deal which the Pact now embodied was not so very different from the kind of autonomy for which the Cretan Christians had been pressing two years earlier. Yet the arrangements now devised essentially only refined the system of partial autonomy designed by A'ali Pasha ten years earlier. For most of the next decade, the new setup proved eminently acceptable to the majority of Cretans, more so perhaps to the island's Christians than to its Muslims whose economic and social decline would continue under the new regime.

"In theory, at any rate," wrote William Miller, "the Pact of Halepa was the high-water mark of Ottoman concessions in Crete."[53]

It was indeed perhaps rather more so than Abdülhamit, a believer in absolutism, had bargained for. The Pact had to be confirmed by a *Ferman* (imperial edict) from the Sultan but weeks passed without it being issued. The delay made the Christians nervous that the bargain would not be honoured.

On 27th November 1878, Adossides Pasha left the island, handing over to another and much abler Ottoman Christian Pasha, Alexander Caratheodori Pasha. The next day the *Ferman* went into effect and the Halepa Pact, one of a range of constitutional and administrative experiments created by the Treaty of Berlin, became law. However, it was generally regarded as the prototype which others copied—though they did not include the generous exemptions from most Ottoman taxation which Crete enjoyed.[54]

In contrast to the turbulence and bitter violence of the 1860s and late 1870s, Crete was now about to enjoy a decade of internal peace and even, for a while, good political relations between its Christian and Muslim populations.

[52] Henri Couturier, *La Crète: Sa Situation au point de vue du droit international*, (Paris: A. Pedone, 1900), 85.
[53] William Miller, *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors 1801-1927*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1936), 411.
[54] Turkey No 15 (1880), 5, Granville to Fitzmaurice, May 10, 1880. On taxation and law courts, see: Ibid Fitzmaurice to Granville, 15-17, June 5 1880.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Archive Documents:

Affairs of Turkey 1878, Sandwith to Derby, 8 February 1878.

Affairs of Turkey, no.35 (1878), 2-3, Sandwith to Derby April 1, 1978.

Affairs of Turkey, no.35 (1878), p. 4, Sandwith to Derby, April 2, 1868.

Affairs of Turkey, no. 35, 1878, Crete, pp. 7-8, Sandwith to Derby, April 8, 1878.

Affairs of Turkey, no.35 (1878), 33, Sandwith to Layard June 1, 1878.

Affairs of Turkey, Crete, vol. 82, June 1, 1878, Sandwith to Layard.

Affairs of Turkey, no.35 (1878), Layard to Salisbury, June 7, 1878; Cross to Layard.

Affairs of Turkey, Crete, vol. 82, June 15, 1878, Sandwith to the Marquis of Salisbury.

Affairs of Turkey, Crete, vol. 82, no.35 (1878), 34, Layard to Salisbury June 16, 1878.

Affairs of Turkey, Crete, vol. 82, no.35 (1878), 43-4, Sandwith to Layard, June 20, 1878.

Affairs of Turkey, Crete, vol. 82, no.35 (1878), 46-8, Sandwith to the Marquis of Salisbury, 24 June 1878.

Affairs of Turkey, no.35 (1878), 31-2, Sandwith to Layard, July 1, 1878.

Affairs of Turkey, no. 25, (1878), 1, Sandwith to Derby, December 22, 1877.

Other Sources:

Alexander, Michael. The *True Blue: The Life and Adventures of Colonel Burnaby,* New York: R. Hart-Davis, 1958.

Bacon, Reginald H. *A Naval Scrapbook*, London: Hutchinson & Co, 1924.

Barchard, David. "Modernity, Muslims, and British Archaeologists: Michael Gough And His Nineteenth Century Predecessors" in (ed.) David Shankland, *Archaeology, Anthropology and Heritage in the Balkans and Anatolia: The Life and Times of F. W. Hasluck (1878-1920)*, Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2004.

Barchard, David. "*Veli Pasha and Consul Ongley: A Diplomatic Relationship That Got Too Close"* in (ed) S. Kuneralp, *A Bridge between Cultures*, Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2008.

Couturier, Henri. *La Crète: Sa Situation au point de vue du droit international*, Paris: A. Pedone, 1900.

Miller, William. *The Ottoman Empire and Its Successors 1801-1927*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1936.

Kuneralp, Sinan (ed.). *The Queen's Ambassador to the Sultan. Memoirs of Sir Henry A. Layard's Constantinople embassy (1877-1880)*, Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2009.

Kuneralp, Sinan (ed.). *The Private Letters of Sir Austen Henry Layard during his Constantinople Embassy (1877-1880),* Istanbul: The Isis Press, 2018.

Sandwith to Layard, May 26, 1878, F0 195/1191, *TNA.*

Wright, Thomas. *The Life of Colonel Fred Burnaby*, London, 1908.