

ITALY AND THE TREATY OF LAUSANNE OF 1923

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Recent Italian historical studies concur in saying that one cannot talk of "Fascist" foreign policy before the end of the twenties. It is true that Fascism came to power in October 1922. But until 1929 Italian foreign policy was decidedly subordinated in Mussolini's strategy to domestic and financial considerations.¹ There were two kinds of reasons: a subjective one which aimed to see Fascism grow stronger at home; and an objective one, which concerned the stagnation of the international scene not allowing much flexibility away from the mainly traditional foreign policy Mussolini had to follow in this period. It is also true that, at the very beginning, Mussolini was thought to have considered Fascism as a legitimizing ideology for his foreign policy.²

A change in this situation occurred, on account of the great economic crisis (1929). A more dynamic foreign policy was needed to bolster economic policies aiming at new markets for Italy in the Danubian-Balkan region.

This is why although the Treaty of Lausanne of July 24, 1923, falls into the Fascist era, one cannot think of it as revealing a precisely Fascist foreign policy. Italian action in Lausanne should be interpreted as reflecting a number of "traditional" interests, essentially aimed to safeguard the rights of Italy on the "Dodecanneso".

¹Renzo de Felice, *Mussolini il Duce: Gli anni del consenso, 1929-1936*, Torino, Einaude, 1974, p. 323.

²Ennio di Nolfo, *Mussolini e la politica estera italiana: 1919-1939*, Padova, Cedam, 1960, p. 31.

In a wider context, "winner in war, but defeated in peace", Italy found herself trying to cope with an uneasy dilemma: she had to lessen French negotiating power so as to press once more for those compensations she had not obtained at the Paris Peace Conference. It was for this reason that she would soon need Germany's support on the continental scene to face France. On the other hand, Italy also realized that an exaggerated recovery of Germany would have been dangerous. Moreover, Britain's hostility would not have been an easy obstacle to overcome. It was through the efforts of Ambassador Contarini, the General Secretary of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, that the foreign policy of the new Fascist government was based on new foundations.³

In the days of the Lausanne Convention the main inconsistency in Italian foreign relations following the end of the First World War was the development of a double-edged policy, based on her two traditional chess-boards, the continental and maritime ones, in swinging movements from one to the other. But time still had to pass before one could observe the so-called "grandiose" policy. Mussolini had talked about on the eve of his actions and again during his initial speeches in the Parliament as the new Prime Minister.⁴

Yet a great many of those who formulated or applied Italian diplomacy, at least the ones involved in the "Eastern question", waited a more trenchant action able to overcome that "renouncer panic" which had "stricken our diplomacy during the unhappy year of 1920."⁵

And when Mussolini attended the first part of the Lausanne Conference (with the precise intention of gaining back for Italy the prestige the Allies had denied her⁶), many were the favourable appraisals ascribed to his presence and personal performance towards the satisfactory solution for Italy of the Dodecanese question.⁷

Actually an interesting detail may be observed right from the beginning of Mussolini's leadership of government. When Carlo Sforza

³Raffaele Guariglia, *Ricordi: 1922-1946*, Napoli, Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1950, p. 24.

⁴Fulvio D.Amoja, *Declino e prima crisi dell'Europa di Versailles*, Milano, Giuffr , 1967, pp. 28-29.

⁵D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. n. 76.

⁶Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, Edoardo e Duilio Susmel, Vols. I-XXXVI, Firenze, 1951-1963, Vol. XIX, p. 19, note p. 30.

⁷Remo Sertoli-Salis, *Le isole italiane dell'Egeo dall'occupazione alla sovranit *, Roma, Vittoriano, 1939, XVII, p. 295; O. Pedrazzi, *Il Levante mediterraneo e l'Italia*, Milano, Alpes, 1925, p. 38 et altri.

proposed himself⁸ as chairman of the Italian delegation in Lausanne, he was met with a flat refusal. Mussolini was still annoyed with the former Minister of Foreign Affairs who had just resigned from the Italian Embassy in Paris in disagreement with Mussolini's policy on Yugoslavia. One could readily assess Sforza as an expert of the Turkish question. He had already dealt with it, not only as a High Commissioner in İstanbul during the first part of Allied occupation of the Ottoman capital, but in Paris as well during the Conference on German reparations, in January 1921, when the Turkish question had come to the surface and later, in February-March 1921 in London, at the Conference on eastern affairs gathered in order to revise the Treaty of Sèvres which had clearly become obsolete. Not only technically then, but just in the "spirit" of the Lausanne Conference, Sforza appeared as the most suitable person to represent Italy in a meeting which had to sanction international recognition of a new Turkey, regenerated by a national movement as the Kemâlist one to which Sforza had attached importance and encouraged.⁹ Unfortunate though it was, the developments around the personality of Sforza had been otherwise.

The Lausanne Conference, which convened on 20 November 1922, gave Mussolini a chance to appear for the first time in the international arena. Not a month elapsed since the "*marcia su Roma*", and someone like Poincaré had stated: "*donnait alors dix mois d'existence au fascisme.*"¹⁰ But the very trip towards Switzerland was the occasion for demonstrations in favour of the "New Man" who would claim those rights which the Italians thought to have been defrauded. There was a widespread expectation towards the victory Mussolini would win in the diplomatic battle in Lausanne. It did not matter that the diplomats who were with him judged the meeting of Territet (with Poincaré and Curzon) little more than a naiveté.¹¹ Italian public opinion had been positively struck by the "*piède di parità*" (equal rights) claimed by Mussolini, and shortly afterwards the English press too would highly praise Mussolini's political and diplomatic style.¹²

⁸D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, docc. 14 e 17: C. Sforza, *Pensiero e azione di una politica estera italiana*, Bari, 1924, p. 283 e *L'Italia dal 1914 al 1944 quale io la vidi*, 3 ediz., Verona, 1946, p. 172.

⁹Alexandre Jevakhoff, *Kemal Atatürk: Les chemins de l'Occident*, Paris, Tallandier, 1989, pp. 77-78; C. Sforza, *Portraits and Personal Impressions and Recollections*, Indianapolis, 1930.

¹⁰Philippe de Zara, *Mustapha Kemal: dictateur*, Paris, 1936.

¹¹Guariglia, *op. cit.*, pp. 18-19.

¹²D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 142.

The basis of the Italian position pursued at the Conference of Lausanne had already been laid down before Fascism had come to power: mere chance had a lot to do with it.

In fact, in March 1922, during Luigi Facta's last Cabinet, Schanzer had been appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs. He was entrusted with the task on his way from the United States. He had to go directly to the Conference called in Paris in order to discuss the new peace conditions to be imposed to Turkey. As Guariglia reminds¹³ us, Schanzer had had no time to get even a rough idea about the issues to be dealt with. When faced with Lord Curzon's precise request about the Italian position, it was the diplomatist who accompanied him, the young Guariglia who drew on a small map a border line more favourable to Turkey than the one proposed a moment before by the French. Those which later became the border lines "supported by the Italian Government" had been drawn on the spot by an official aware that, in the light of the situation which had been created in the Balkans, the Italian interest was to expand new Turkey's borders in Europe, as much as possible.

This immediately granted Italy an advantage over France, which had signed with the Kemâlists, through the assistance of Franklin Bouillon, an agreement favourable to the Turks. Italy had now gained a ground on the path of friendship with Turkey. The agreement had raised some criticism¹⁴ in Italy where it was considered a violation of the Tripartite Agreement signed together with the Treaty of Sèvres and Guariglia had acted accordingly.

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A note, dated 3 November 1922,¹⁵ and addressed to Lord Curzon by Mussolini (but, in fact, drawn up in expert fashion by Contarini,¹⁶) made the Italian point of view clear about the complex issues to be dealt with in Lausanne on the settlement of the Eastern problem.

It was the answer to a British note of 15 October, sent in response to Italian refusal to accept the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement. The Italian not brought to the fore the disagreements with Britain. In rough and peremptory terms, the British Foreign Office claimed the acknowledgment of the

¹³ Guariglia, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

¹⁴ During the negotiations on the Armistice of Mudanya (11 October 1922), facing an uncompromising Britain, Franklin-Bouillon had assured Mustafa Kemâl that "France would back Turkish claims at the Peace Conference." A. Jevakoff, *Kemal Atatürk, op. cit.*, p. 282.

¹⁵ D.D.I. Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 70, Allegato.

¹⁶ Guariglia, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

engagements previously undertaken by Italy, i.e., respect of the Agreement for the Restitution of the Dodecanese to Greece (the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement, signed together with the Treaty of Sèvres on 10 August 1920) under penalty of forfeiture of other agreements by which Rome had obtained some advantages in Anatolia.¹⁷

Essentially upset because of Italy's pro-Turkish policy, the British Foreign Office supported again the argument that the Dodecanese was an issue concerning the Allies as a whole, and not exclusively Italy and Greece which had signed the agreement.¹⁸ On the other hand, during the meetings between the Allied Ministers of Foreign Affairs, which had taken place in London and in Paris in previous June and July, it seemed to Rome that the British Government had accepted the Italian point of view according to which the issue of the occupied isles constituted a problem between Italy and Greece to be solved between them.¹⁹ Expressing the wish to get along with the British Government and abiding by Contarini's principle that what is useful for Italy, even in the British note, may well be accepted²⁰, the Italian document emphasized that peace with Turkey formed a whole, with relative advantages and disadvantages for the various parties and that Italy "was willing to undertake proportionally all sacrifices that would be accepted by her allies". The Italian presence in the Dodecanese was not to be ascribed to "fortuitous circumstances". At the outbreak of the First World War, Italy possessed these isles in accordance with the Treaty of Ouchy which had put an end to the Italian-Turkish war (1911-12). With a special clause (Article 8) in the Treaty of London of 1915, the Allies had undertaken the engagement according to which Italy should enjoy sovereignty over the isles, and later, war conditions further endorsed Italy's bonds with the Dodecanese. By her intervention, Turkey had failed, in fact, to abide by the Treaty of Ouchy (besides supporting rebellions in Tripolitania and Cyrenaica, which had compelled Italy to undergo greater risks and indulge in wider personnel and financial sacrifices.)

Contarini's argument was that even though the Allied position didn't conform to the official engagements of the Treaty of London, the Italian positions in the Dodecanese would be commensurate with her

¹⁷F. Coppola, "La catastrofe orientale", in *Politica*, Vol. XIII, p. 176; *Oriente Moderno*, II, p. 347; Temperley, *A History of the Peace Conference of Paris*, London, Oxford University Press, 1969, pp. 37-38. On the negotiations on economic concessions in the region of Antalya (Adalia) in 1913 and 1914: M. Toscano *Gli accordi di San Giovanni di Moriana*, Milano, Giuffrè, 1936.

¹⁸*Survey of International Affairs: 1924*, London, Oxford University Press, 1928, p. 471 e nota.

¹⁹*Oriente Moderna*, II, pp. 81, 141 e segg.

²⁰Guariglia, *op. cit.*, p. 20

accomplishments in the war, and by Turkey's position.²¹ As to the following agreement, signed by Ambassador Bonin-Longare with Prime Minister Venizelos, by which Italy undertook to give the Dodecanese back to Greece, it was to be considered among "the conciliatory elements" brought in by the common effort of the Allies with the aim to ensure, by means of the Treaty of Sèvres and the Tripartite Agreement, a lasting peace in the Eastern Mediterranean. Under the Sèvres settlement, Italy would have no problem in executing the Bonin-Venizelos agreement, but it was clear that the latest events in Anatolia i.e., the Kemâlist victory and the evacuation of İzmir by the Greeks, eliminated the possibility of attaining peace short of a wide revision of the desired situation. The Italian Government, therefore, perfectly agreeing that the issue of the Dodecanese was part of the general settlement of the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as the Treaty of Sèvres and the Tripartite Agreement, could not accept the "obligatory" nature of the Bonin-Venizelos agreement in case the other two agreements failed to be enforced as they had been conceived. Italy was, thus, willing to re-examine with the Allies the agreement envisaged in August 1920 on the whole, in order to reach a new settlement. In fact, already on 8 October 1922 Foreign Minister Schanzer had communicated to Metaxas, the Greek Minister in Rome, that Italy held as destitute the special agreements with Greece about the Dodecanese.²² Among the instructions relative to this question given the Italian Embassies in London and Paris, in order to inform those governments²³, he had insisted that they should emphasize the further difficulties Italy would encounter with Ankara which would not accept the Dodecanese being given back to Greece and would refuse at the peace conference their transfer to Italy while an agreement awarding them to Greece existed.

By denouncing the Bonin-Venizelos agreement it was possible to prevent Turkey from claiming the Dodecanese and therefore, Turkish sovereignty over the Greek populations of the islands.²⁴ This was the opinion of De Bosdari, the governor of Rhodes, who, from the very beginning of his mission (August 1922), was very much against "making a present of the isles to Greece", this being an engagement he held as the consequence of an "ill-omened policy such as Venizelosism" envisaged by

²¹D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 70, Allegato.

²²Italian nationalistic press maintained the Agreement forfeited since August 1921, Cappola, "Nuova politica per il Levante," *Politica*, Vol. IX, pp. 25-46.

²³Gaspare Ambrosini, *L'Italia nel Mediterraneo*, Foligno, Campitelli, 1927, pp. 80-81; Toscano, *Il Patto di Londra*, Bologna, Zanichelli, 1934, pp. 195-196; A. Gianni, *I documenti diplomatici della pace orientale*, Roma, 1922.

²⁴D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 76.

France and Britain to the detriment of Italy and of which the Greek people themselves had benefitted.²⁵

So, both on the ground of an accurate juridical analysis and because of a renewed nationalistic vigour, Italy was ready to claim her rights on the Dodecanese, rights she demanded to be devoid of conditioning.

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Among the three counterparts at the Conference, i.e. the Allies, Greece and Turkey, relations with the last-mentioned seemed more promising since the very beginning. Already in Paris, İsmet Pasha had expressed the hope that the Italian delegation would have a favourable attitude towards Turkey and also let it be known that Turkey would view with goodwill Italy's special interests.²⁶ Except the economic agreements, acknowledged by the İstanbul Government, but not yet by the Kemâlists, who scrutinized Admiral Chester's American plans,²⁷ Italian interests were mainly represented by the definitive assignment of the Dodecanese. Rome's position was to be satisfied with the simple transfer of Article 115 of the Treaty of Sèvres (which had already assigned the isles to Italy), and avoid elevating the question to a political level, and if this could not be done, to be content with the draft of the new treaty. In fact, there was some co-operation between the delegations of Ankara and Rome in this respect.²⁸

At the non-governmental level, the nationalist press in Italy insisted upon the fact that the Turkish National Pact did not seem to claim for the Dodecanese. It is true that in the agenda the Kemâlists intended to discuss in Lausanne, there was the issue of the isles off the Anatolian coast, along with the Dodecanese.²⁹ But no one imagined that the Turkish nationalist government would pursue a different path from the one they had chosen at Sèvres.³⁰ Similarly, not enough attention was granted to Bissolati's

²⁵Before his appointment De Bosdari had been Italian Minister in Athens: he was therefore seen as the most suitable person to be the Governor of Rhodes in such a delicate situation as that of Italian presence in the Dodecanese when new relations with Greece had to be established. Sertoli-Salis, *Le isole italiane dell'Egeo*, op. cit., p. 288.

²⁶D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 123.

²⁷Selim İlkin, *Chester Demiryolu Projesi*, İstanbul, 1981, pp. 317-8; D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 231.

²⁸D.D.I., Settima serie, Vol. I, doc. 171, nota 1.

²⁹*The Daily Telegraph*, 23 October 1922.

³⁰Sertoli-Salis, op. cit., p. 294; Coppola, *La catastrofe orientale*, op. cit., p. 177; Coppola, *L'abdicazione di Losanna*, in *Politica*, Vol. XV, p. 31.

socialists who thought it wise to make ethnical reasons prevail and declared that the islands be transferred to Greece on this basis.³¹

As to İsmet Pasha, correct and rigorous executor of Mustafa Kemâl's policies, who, in those same days was startling to get engaged in the revolutionary changes of his country, he had made it clear from the very beginning that the isles, in no case, could be transferred to Greece. For the rest, during the long negotiations between victorious Turkey, on the one hand, and Greece and Britain on the other, good relations between these delegations developed.³²

The Italian national press ascribed this tendency to the simultaneous presence in both countries of new strong governments.³³ It was apparent that there would be no particular objections by the Turks to assign the Dodecanese to Italy.

Differences of opinion with the Turks centered mainly on the island of Castellorizo, then known as Castelrosso,^{33b} It was a tiny island, very close to the Turkish coast which the Treaty of Sèvres had assigned to Italy. Turkey now wanted to keep it for itself for strategic purposes. But on the other hand, the Italian delegation was to obtain Castellorizo at any cost, since the new fascist government could not afford to lose what the previous "renouncer" governments had already managed to acquire.³⁴

³¹E. Driault, *La question d'Orient: 1918-1937*, Paris, Alcan, 1938, Vol. V, pp. 82-83; L. Bissolati, *La politica estera dell'Italia dal 1897 al 1920*, Milano, Treves, 1923, pp. 285-288, 405-406. Bilâl N. Şimşir, *Ege Sorunu: Belgeler*, Cilt I, 1912-1913, Vol. I Ankara, Türk Tarih Kurumu Basımevi, 1976, p. 337.

³²D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, docc. 455, 466, 473, 477; Alan Cassels, *Mussolini's Early Diplomacy*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1970, p. 38.

³³D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 464; on the pretended affinities between the two régime: M.A. Di Casola, "Tra Fascismo e Kemalismo: per una verifica delle relazioni italo-turche dal 1928 al 1934." *International Meeting*, University of Pavia, April 26-27, 1990, *Quaderni de il Politica*, n. 35, Milano, Facoltà di Scienze politiche, Università di Pavia, Giuffré, 1992, pp. 105-115.

^{33b} The name of Castelrosso was officially adopted on 31 May 1921. A. Bertola, *Cenni sull'ordinamento giuridico di Castelrosso durante l'occupazione francese: 1915-1921*, Rodi, tipografia Rodia, 1924, p.5.

³⁴Guariglia, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

The Castellorosso issue abruptly came up when, on 8 March 1923, Turkey delivered a note concerning its future status.³⁵ One month earlier, the Lausanne negotiations had been broken down mainly on account of economic and financial issues. The note included the complete drafts of the treaty and of conventions delivered to the Turks in Lausanne on 31 January³⁶ plus the changes now proposed by Ankara. The most surprising change concerned Italy because while allowing the Dodecanese cession, Article 15 stated that Castellorosso had to remain Turkish. Public opinion in Turkey, it was said, could not accept an Italian possession just opposite the Turkish coast of Adalia (Antalya), where the obsolete Treaty of Sèvres and the Tripartite Agreement had agreed to an Italian sphere of influence.³⁷

The Italian representative, still in Lausanne, immediately expressed "the vivid surprise and resentment caused by the Turkish claim", which was quite unexpected in the absence of any hint in the previous notes. Besides Italy's friendly behaviour should have entitled that country to a very different consideration.³⁸ Rome was then informed by Mustafa Şerif that the request came from the Grand National Assembly in Ankara whilst İsmet Pasha was against it. Was it plausible or was it just a negotiations technique? Probably the latter because it was being suggested that Turkey could drop its claim on Castellorosso if Italy engaged in due course not to hand over the Dodecanese to Greece.³⁹

It was on this ground that London, realizing potential Italian help on the Straits question and the way it could strengthen her own position, promised to back Italy's point of view on Castellorosso⁴⁰ and disallow any further discussion on territorial disputes. On the other hand, London was to accept Turkey's claims about Tenedos and the Maritsa border. A conflict between Italy and Britain thus strictly related to the one between Italy and Greece, was thus to come to a close.

London had been backing Greek requests on the Aegean islands since the very end of the First World War. Lloyd George had guaranteed British

³⁵D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, docc. 590, 591, 592, 594.

³⁶Libro Verde, n. 114. **Documenti diplomatici relativi alla pace con la Turchia presentati al Parlamento Italiano dal Presidente del Consiglio**, Ministro ad interim degli Affari Esteri, S.E. Benito Mussolini, Roma, Tipografia del Senato, 1923-24, Tomo II, pp. 35-131.

³⁷Libro Verde, n. 114, *op. cit.*, pp. 139-290.

³⁸D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 591: Cassels, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

³⁹D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 611.

⁴⁰D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, doc. 659.

support since December 1918,⁴¹ when Venizelos had clearly asked the Peace Conference for all the Aegean islands including Rhodes and the whole Dodecanese.⁴² Doing so the Greek Prime Minister confronted Italy with a moral question based on Wilsonian ethnic principles than with a legal one which the Italian position, stemming from the London Pact (1915) considered to be irreproachable. Actually, the Greek statesman had already secured support, the latter having based his approach on self-determination, and not on the London Pact.⁴³

It was mainly because of bad relations with the Allies of the Entente and the pressures exerted by them that Italy's "ill-omened" Nitti cabinet, had signed, in July 1919, the Greek-Italian agreement, known by the names of the negotiators, Titoni and Venizelos. It gave up the whole former policy on the Aegean islands, pursued for years from di San Giuliano until Sonnino, the new agreement stating this time that Italy would transfer "to Greece the sovereignty of the islands she occupies in the Aegean Sea" except Rhodes and Castellorizo where a wide autonomy would be granted.

Notwithstanding the mild reservation of Article 7 (in case Italy was not satisfied in Asia Minor, she was free with respect to all points of the present agreement) and the additional Protocol pledging a plebiscite in Rhodes, the very day England decided to give Cyprus up to Greece,⁴⁴ nationalist Italian quarters condemned Italian foreign policy as "a mere catastrophe" not concealing the regret for the Triple Alliance which had better guaranteed Italian Mediterranean interests.⁴⁵

⁴¹H. Nicolson, *Curzon: the Last Phase, 1919-1925*, London, Constable, 1934; L. Aldovrandi-Marescotti, *Guerra diplomatica: Ricordi e frammenti di un diario, 1914-1919*, Milano, Mondadori, 1938, p. 340.

⁴²E. Venizelos, *La Grèce devant le Congrès de la Paix (30 Decembre 1918)*, Paris, Imprimerie Chaix, 1920, p. 19.

⁴³"The only advantage to let Italy to have Fiume", President Wilson said on May 6, 1919, when Orlando and Sonnino were back in Paris, after the so-called "settimana di passione adriatica" - "would be to violate the Treaty of London", nullifying in the process Article VIII which had promised Rhodes and the Dodecanese. D.H. Miller, *My Diary at the Conference of Paris*, New York, Appeal Printers Company, 1926, Vol. XIX, p. 571, 559-60.

⁴⁴C. Sforza, *Pensiero e azione di una politica estera italiana*, Bari, Laterza, 1924, pp. 73-74; *Un anno di politica estera: Discorsi raccolti da A. Giannini*, Roma, Libreria di Scienze e Lettere, 1921, p. 33.

⁴⁵Sertoli-Salis, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

When a new situation was created with Italian recognition of Albania's independence, Sforza (now Minister of Foreign Affairs in the new Giolitti Cabinet) denounced the agreement in July 1920⁴⁶ soon after replacing it with the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement of 10 August 1920 which simply modified the Rhodes régime. Italian public opinion did not delay exhibiting its dissent against this agreement too; most of the press asked for a "tout court" occupation of the islands which the Treaty of Sèvres had definitely given to Italy, Castellorizo included.⁴⁷ On 11 March 1921 (the ratification of the Treaty of Sèvres having been delayed) Italy received Castellorizo directly from France which had occupied it (not because of sovereignty but because of the *iure belli* terms of the armistice with Turkey.) At the same time, the new Bononi Cabinet, with Della Torretta at the foreign office (*la Consulta*), promising a wide autonomy for both the islands, reaffirmed that with the revision of the Treaty of Sèvres, Italy would be also free from the consequent commitments with Greece, thus giving rise to new complaints among the friends of Greece.⁴⁸

Now, in Lausanne, where Italy wanted to curb and repress "Greek megalomania", the Turkish note of 8 March 1923, while confirming the intent to transfer to Italy the Dodecanese, brought up once more the fate of Castellorizo.

Was the demonstration, which had broken out on the islands on 13 April, and during which the people demanded to be left under Italian sovereignty, a spontaneous one?⁴⁹

Actually, the discussion on Castellorizo opened in Lausanne on 25 April 1923 when Sir H. Rumbold rejected the Turkish request on the basis of two arguments: a change of sovereignty meant an unacceptable change of the initial Draft, and Castellorizo's Greek-Orthodox population did not allow the island to be part of the Turkish National Pact.

During the sharp discussion between İsmet Paşa and the Italian delegation which ensued, the Italians backed the point that Ankara had already

⁴⁶Sforza, *Un anno di politica estera*, op. cit., pp. 74-75.

⁴⁷*La Tribuna, Il Corriere d'Italia, L'Idea Nazionale, Il Popolo Romano, La Gazzetta del Popolo, Il Mattino, Il Tempo, Il Corriere della Sera*, 29-30-31 luglio, 1-2 agosto. L'articolo del *Corriere della Sera* era stato riprodotto integralmente dalla stampa greca. Giannini, *L'ultima fase della questione orientale*, Milano, SPI, 1941, p. 368 e nota.

⁴⁸C.D. Booth, *Italy's Aegean Possessions*, London, Arrowsmith, 1928, p. 190.

⁴⁹Sertoli-Salis, op. cit., p. 298 e nota 49.

accepted to give the islands (in a letter dated 4 February⁵⁰ whilst Turkey kept standing on her ground on the basis of meticulous analysis of the Ouchy Peace (1912) and Article 1 of the National Pact.

Thankful for the help received from Rome in the last insidious dispute with Greece and pleased for Allied resolution to renounce the reparations (which Italian first delegate Montagna confidentially conveyed him as "a serious sacrifice for Italy"), İsmet Paşa pledged himself to withdraw his reservation on Castellorizo, as Italy withdrew that on the Ottoman Debt share relative to the Dodecanese.⁵¹ An exchange of letters followed between the two chiefs of the delegations which definitely settled the matter of Castellorizo with a bilateral agreement, separate from the Treaty of Lausanne, although approved by the Political Committee of the Conference. Montagna informed Rome as follows: "With the acknowledgement of our sovereignty on Castellorizo we have by now favourably defined in the best possible way all the questions of predominant Italian interest before the Conference."⁵²

In his speeches delivered in Milano (4 October) and again at the opening of the Parliament (11 October), Mussolini arrogated the success to himself. He was given credit for keeping London at bay for her deliberate will to affect Italian action in the Dodecanese, linking the question up to the end, to the Giubaland one: i.e. to those Italian "colonial" claims the independence of which from the "eastern" ones had been stated since the Pact of London.⁵³

Actually, the colonial puzzle dragged itself for still another year. The suspicions were not entirely removed about London's plan to bring Italy back to renew the Bonin-Venizelos Agreement which would finally let Greece have the Dodecanese. On the basis of a not perfectly clear clause (Article 16) of the new Treaty of Lausanne, Greece hoped to settle the fate of the islands together with Italy, both being interested parties.⁵⁴

The atmosphere created by Tellini's assassination in Albania (23 August) and the subsequent "Corfu incident" did not make the situation any better between the two countries. It also got rid of the international bewilderments on the real nature of the Italian strong man. "Fascism was

⁵⁰D.D.I., Settima serie, Vol. I, doc. 669.

⁵¹D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. II, docc. 39, 43, 57, 59.

⁵²D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. II, doc. 69.

⁵³Sertoli-Salis, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-301.

⁵⁴*Survey of International Affairs: 1924, op. cit.*, p. 466; Booth, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-3; E. Driault, *La question d'Orient, op. cit.*, p. 133.

throwing off its mask."⁵⁵ Mussolini's showdown looked to the English, whom the Duce thought to have fooled, "an extension to the foreign policy of the method adopted at home."⁵⁶

Moreover, how much of Mussolini's ambitious programme had crushed on the way of Lausanne negotiations when one thinks of Duce's early will to put the mandates up for discussion so as Italy too could at last be worthily rewarded?⁵⁷

The ratification of the Treaty of Lausanne, which took place in Italy on 6 August 1924 (when the Giubaland question was over) launched Italy into the "Mediterranean dream" when the governorship of Mario Lago and later, that of Cesare Maria De Vecchi di Val Cismon aimed to "*fascistizzare*" (turn into Fascist style) the "latinity" of Rhodes. (Actually, the Turkish people of the island were often pleased with it, as on the occasion when the *mufti* of Rhodes advised his fellow-citizens in a manifesto not to migrate to Turkey (as the Treaty of Lausanne allowed them to do) because many were the advantages granted by Italy, first of all the release from serving in the army.⁵⁸

In fact, the way the negotiations were conducted in Lausanne, so favourable to Italy and the conciliatory nature of the Italian delegation's action, together with the gratitude of such a personality as İsmet Paşa, raised the hope of exploiting "other fields" with particular advantages to be achieved with Turkey.⁵⁹ Unfortunately, in the subsequent years, Turkish occupation of some minor islands and recurring rumours about Italian military fortification on Rhodes, caused fears, not only removing prospects of cooperation in economic and financial fields, but also posing dangerous aggressive ambitions.

Besides, benevolent Turkish attitude towards Italy was also the reason why Great Britain changed her position towards Italian foreign policy, as London looked for Italian help in the important question of the Straits which she could then arrange so as to achieve a privileged standing in the Mediterranean. Italy, on the other hand, binded as she was to the Dodecanese

⁵⁵R. Moscati, "Gli esordi della politica estera facista. Il periodo Contarini, Corfu" in AAVV, *La politica estera italiana dal 1914 al 1943*, Torino, 1963, p. 85.

⁵⁶A. Berselli, *L'opinione pubblica inglese e l'avvento del Fascismo: 1919-1925*, Milano, 1971, pp. 127-8.

⁵⁷D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, docc. 141, 145, 166.

⁵⁸*Hakimiyet-i Milliye e İkdâm* del 27 luglio 1926, in *Oriente Moderno*, 1926, p. 466.

⁵⁹D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. II, doc. 140.

question, perhaps lost sight of the central issue of the Straits,⁶⁰ and entertained the thought that the Dodecanese could be an equivalent substitute. And while the Italian delegation as well as Mussolini could be proud of the Lausanne success, one could think that the Italian foreign policy, not choosing to let the Dodecanese to the Turks, lost an opportunity to start a new policy in the Mediterranean.

⁶⁰D.D.I., Settima Serie, Vol. I, p. 100 nota 3, p. 123 nota 2, doc. 198, doc. 206 e note.