CHAPTER XVIII

THE GATHERING STORM

1922

As the year 1922 wore on Lord Curzon found his position growing more difficult. The Near Eastern question was not the only one on which his view differed *au fond* from that of the Prime Minister. He viewed with grave misgiving and with a strong personal dislike the tendency which Mr. Lloyd George displayed to seek a *rapprochement* with Soviet Russia. And, if his illness during the summer caused him infinite distress, it at least saved him from the embarrassment of accompanying the Prime Minister to Genoa, where Mr. Lloyd George had planned to receive representatives from Moscow.

The idea of a great gathering of the nations at Genoa seems first to have formed in Mr. Lloyd George's mind after the Washington Conference in November 1921. It was discussed with M. Briand in London in December and it was further elaborated at Cannes. It was to be no hole-and-corner meeting of the representatives of one or two interested Governments, but something more of the nature of a World Parliament, at which not France and Italy only but America, Germany and Bolshevist Russia were to meet in happy concord round a common board. The realisation of this ambitious project was defeated before ever the Conference assembled, by the attitude towards it first of America and then of France, as will be explained hereafter. But in spite of all discouragement preparations were proceeded with and, in the end, invitations were actually issued to, and accepted by, the Governments of no less than twenty-seven countries.

There is no need to question the sincerity of Mr. Lloyd George's belief that in a Conference of this kind, at which outstanding questions of every sort could be discussed by representatives of all the countries of the civilised world, was to be found the best hope of a solution of those economic troubles from which Great Britain herself was so sorely suffering. He possessed a mind which was at all times receptive of new ideas. The policy of wringing from Germany the uttermost farthing, with which he had proceeded to Paris in 1919, had already been discarded, and had given place to ideas on the real nature of the economic problem suggested by the writings of Professor Keynes. The theories put forward by Professor Keynes had been reinforced by the hard facts of the economic situation in the United Kingdom, of which the weekly statement of the number of the unemployed was at once the most dramatic and the most sinister example. During the year 1921 unemployment had risen with alarming rapidity, so much so that the number of unemployed persons shown by the Ministry of Labour as being in receipt of aid under the Unemployed Insurance Act of 1920, stood at the end of the year 1921 at a figure only a little short of 2,000,000. No one of Mr. Lloyd George's perception needed to be told that, with industrial depression of this kind weighing upon the population, there lurked very real danger to the stability of the country in the continued economic stagnation of the Continent.

But there is good reason for supposing that, in the eyes of those who believed that in the circumstances of the time the retention in office of a Coalition Government was in the highest degree desirable, much advantage might be reaped at home from the success of a gathering planned on the scale and with the objects of the Genoa Conference. The prestige and popularity of the Government were not what they had been. At home their position was threatened by the growing revolt of the Conservative party against the leadership of Mr. Lloyd George; while, abroad, the prestige of the British Prime Minister was suffering from the wave of hostility which was surging across France and finding clamorous expression in the Parisian Press. And there were many excellent reasons for supposing that at any moment the political stock of the Cabinet might experience a further fall. At the beginning of 1922 there were at least

some assets. Lord Balfour's striking success at Washington towards the end of 1921 was one; the Irish Treaty was another. Yet no one knew better than those who were specifically charged with the custodianship of the Government's interests, that when the Cabinet were called upon to deal with all the questions which must inevitably arise between the two Governments, the Irish Treaty would be likely to prove a rapidly diminishing asset. Neither did they derive much comfort from their contemplation of the impending Budget nor of the work of the Geddes Committee. They plumped, therefore, for an immediate appeal to the Country. And the irritation experienced in certain quarters when this plan was frustrated by the action of Sir George, afterwards Lord, Younger, was reflected in the speeches of the time and notably in Lord Birkenhead's description of Sir George Younger's interference as a display of insubordination on the part of the cabin boy against the authority of the captain.

There remained, however, the Genoa Conference. A spectacular success on an international stage might well redress the balance; and in the Conference as planned lay the possibility of such success. The presence of America would be welcomed by the British public at large; that of Germany by the growing volume of opinion that was being alienated by the attitude of France; that of Russia by the Radical and Labour parties, whose political doctrines were once again emerging from the obscurity into which they had been plunged by the stern realities of four years of war.

It was Mr. Lloyd George's readiness to parley with the representatives of Soviet Russia that Lord Curzon particularly disliked. At the Imperial Conference held in June 1921, he had spoken of the Soviet Administration as "this deplorable Government"; and he had declined to express any opinion as to the future. "As to the future of Russia I will refrain from speculating. I have no right to make a forecast. It is still the great mystery of Europe, the great dark cloud of the world, and what new forces are germinating behind it I do not know."[1] His hostility was certainly not lessened by time; for, more than two years later, he was still lamenting that Russia remained under a form of Government which, "though

[1] Speech at the Imperial Conference on June 22nd, 1921.

detestable in its principles and in much of its practice," was quite unlikely to be displaced, and was strong "because every body or agency that could dispute its strength has been eviscerated or destroyed."[1] And, it is not surprising that, holding these views, he looked forward with grave concern to the impending Conference at Genoa. "I hope to get back on Monday evening," he wrote from Paris on March the 25th, 1922. "I cannot commit myself in advance to a solitary recognition (i.e. by Great Britain alone) of the Soviet Government. Whether we recognise them at all must depend entirely upon what they do and to some extent on what others do at Genoa. And I do not think that an unfettered discretion to grant or to refuse recognition ought either to be sought or given."[2]

Glad enough to have escaped the necessity of meeting the representatives of a Government which he regarded as beyond the pale, Lord Curzon looked on at the proceedings at Genoa with mixed feelings from his sick bed in England. Much of the gilt had already been stripped from the proscenium before either the audience or the players had assembled. The belief that America could be persuaded to attend had been quickly dispelled. M. Poincaré had not departed from the view which he had expressed to Lord Curzon immediately after Cannes, that French public opinion was strongly opposed to Conferences. In view of M. Briand's promise to take part, he did not absolutely veto French representation; but at Boulogne, where he met Mr. Lloyd George, he insisted on a rigid restriction of the scope of the Conference and the exclusion from its purview of Reparations and other matters arising out of the Treaties of Peace; and, in the end, he delegated the duty of representing French interests to others and shore the gathering of much of its importance by remaining in Paris himself. Finally, the attention of the audience, when at last the curtain was about to be rung up, was directed away from the main performance by a sensational and unannounced *lever de rideau*, cleverly staged without previous notice to the other performers, by Germany and Russia. The Treaty of Alliance which they presented as a contribution of their own to the entertainment—known subsequently as the Treaty of Rapallo—pro-

[1] Speech at the Imperial Conference on October 5th, 1923.
[2] Letter to Mr., afterwards Sir, Austen Chamberlain.

vided a sensation after which everything else fell flat. In Moscow it was hailed as a diplomatic victory of the first order; by the stupefied delegates who had assembled to offer their hands magnanimously, if in some cases a little dubiously, to the outcasts from European society, it was regarded as a clumsy gesture of defiance on the part of the very outlaws whom they had condescended to befriend.

Lord Curzon's fear was lest, stung by these successive disappointments to some last desperate attempt by out-Heroding Herod to restore the position, Great Britain might find herself committed by Mr. Lloyd George to some disastrous Agreement with the Soviet Government. And he confided his fears to Mr. Chamberlain:

> "I am following very closely the Genoa debâcle," he wrote on May the 13th, "and have just been reading the full text of the Russian reply, in which they very clearly refuse the political conditions about propaganda—except it may be in such an anodyne form as to be even more worthless than the corresponding engagements in the Trade Agreement, and still more decline to give the undertaking against helping the Kemalists in Asia Minor. . . In these circumstances, that we should enter into any agreement with the Russians—without being sure on all these points (quite apart from the nature of their rejoinder on the other issues economic and otherwise); that we should still contemplate recognition of them in return for some patched up and illusory agreement, in which everything is thrown forward into the future and that we should even be prepared to do this alone, or with Italy and such other Balkanic States as we may be able to pick up, but without France and Belgium, would seem to be incredible, were it not that I read in the *Daily Chronicle* this morning, to which I look every day for the Prime Minister's views, that the Russian reply is rather a fine document. . . Now you said very justly in your telegram to the Prime Minister that the danger of the situation was in the political rather than in the economic sphere. But, if he is to come home with a proposed recognition of the Soviet on conditions at all like those to which I have referred, I think he

will rend our party, already badly split, from top to bottom and will break up the Government. Every word that I prophesied about the Trade Agreement has turned out to be true. The trade has been a farce, while the propaganda has continued and is still continuing unabated. . . To have dealings with such people is bad at all times. . . But to do it in the conditions described and in order to scrape something out of Genoa would be the nadir of humiliation."

He hoped that he was mistaken in his fears as to what was being done, but he was seriously disturbed :

"Of course nothing of this sort may be in contemplation and I may have misread the signs and symptoms to which I have referred. But, when I reflect that the Prime Minister is alone at Genoa with no Foreign Office to guide him . . . and when I recall the whole trend of his policy for the past three years, I can feel no certainty that we may not find ourselves committed to something differing in all essentials from that to which we gave a reluctant assent, and pregnant with political disaster here. I am no admirer of the present policy of France. But I do not think we can afford to split with her on such an issue as this. I have thought it only a part of my duty to tell you as leader of our wing of the Cabinet what is in my mind, and I do not believe there is a man in the Foreign Office or a British Ambassador in Europe, who would not endorse every word of what I have said."

Mr. Chamberlain's reply came as a great relief to him as is evident from a letter which he wrote to Lady Curzon on May the 16th :

"Chamberlain answered my letter which I wrote while you were here, agreeing with every word of it and saying it is out of the question that we should acknowledge these (people) while things are as they are. Genoa has now finally collapsed and the Prime Minister is coming back with nothing—entirely his own fault. I hope it will be the last of these fantastic

gatherings which are really only designed as a stage on which he is to perform."

Mr. Lloyd George returned from Genoa not more, but less secure than he had been when he started. At any moment a match might be laid to a powder train which would blow up his Government; and by the irony of Fate it was Mr. Lloyd George himself who in the end struck and applied the match.

Throughout the summer the deadlock in the Near East continued, and in July the British Government agreed, though with considerable reluctance, to a French proposal that representatives of the Allies and of the Greek and Turkish Governments should be invited to a preliminary Conference to discuss the Paris terms of March, without prior acceptance by the belligerents either of an Armistice or of the general principles underlying the Paris proposals. It was agreed after some discussion that the venue of this Conference should be Venice.

The belligerents themselves, however, had other views. Disgusted at the failure of the Powers, Greece was cogitating further efforts on her own, and in a Note handed to the Allies on July the 29th, announced her intention of occupying Constantinople, and followed up her announcement by landing 25,000 troops at Rodosto. She was at once warned by the British Government that, with Constantinople in the hands of the Allies, no such project could be approved, and she agreed to proceed no further with the plan in the absence of permission from the Allies to do so.

It was at this psychological moment, when the suspicions of the Turks as to the next move by Greece were thoroughly aroused, that Mr. Lloyd George's evil genius prompted him to make a speech which, in the circumstances of the time, could only be regarded by Greeks and Turks alike as an encouragement to the former to seek a decision by force. While he admitted that we were obliged, in the circumstances in which we were placed, to resist the desire of the Greeks to occupy Constantinople, he also admitted that, if not restrained, Greek troops would have little difficulty in seizing and holding the Turkish capital and by so doing in producing a decision. And he declared that it seemed a little unfair that we

should be defending the capital of their enemy against them. As it was, there was only one way in which the Greeks could obtain a decision, and that was by marching through impenetrable defiles for hundreds of miles into Turkish territory in Asia. He paid a glowing tribute to the prowess of Greek arms. They had established a military superiority, he declared, in every pitched battle and had only been deprived of victory by the conformation of the country and by the fact that they had been obliged to maintain lines of communication, that no other army in Europe would ever have dreamed of risking. It was one of the unfairnesses of the situation that we were driven by the position we occupied into not giving them a fair field and no favour to fight the issue out. And then Mr. Lloyd George made an observation into which, it is easy to understand, both Greeks and Turks were almost certain to read a special significance—"Peace the Kemalists will not accept, because they say we will not give them satisfactory Armistice terms; but we are not allowing the Greeks to wage the war with their full strength. We cannot allow that sort of thing to go on indefinitely in the hope that the Kemalists entertain that they will at last exhaust this little country, whose men have been in arms for ten or twelve years with one war after another, and which has not indefinite resources."[1]

Whatever may have been Mr. Lloyd George's object in making his speech, there is not the smallest doubt as to its effect. Both in Athens and in Angora it was interpreted as a thinly veiled invitation to Greece to renew the struggle. Passages from it were issued as an Army Order to the Greek forces. In the Council Chamber in Angora it led to a decision to risk an immediate offensive. On the night of August the 18th the Turkish army struck on a wide front and with complete success; and before many days had passed the Greeks had been flung from the plateaux of Asia Minor and were streaming in panic and disorder across the Straits to Europe.

This rapid change in the situation brought a host of difficulties in its train. Across the waters of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles lay those strips of Asiatic soil which, in all the various proposals

[1] Speech in the House of Commons on August 4th, 1922.

made by the Allies for the settlement of the Near Eastern question, had figured as demilitarised and neutral zones. Unless the whole basis on which it was intended that the eventual settlement should rest, was to be upset, it was essential that these zones should remain intact. And, on September the 14th, after the flight of the Greeks from Asia, M. Poincaré agreed, to representations in the names of the Allies being made to Mustapha Kemal to the effect that these zones must be respected by the Turkish troops.

In the meantime, from Constantinople, a stream of alarming telegrams poured in upon the Foreign office in London. It was reported that Mustapha Kemal had stated that it was his intention to settle not only the question of Smyrna, but of Thrace also, by force of arms. Rumour spoke of the vanguard of his army flushed with victory sweeping up from Smyrna and as having already reached the borders of the neutral zone. It was further stated that he was being urged by the more extreme elements in his entourage to provoke a rising in Constantinople and to incite to active insurrection the bands of military marauders which were in existence throughout Thrace. In short, all the news which poured in from the scene of action pointed to a determination on the part of a victorious Turkish army to fling back their hereditary foe and even the slender forces of the Allied Powers themselves, not from Asia only but from those lands in Europe—Constantinople, Gallipoli and Thrace—of which the vicissitudes of war had deprived the Turkish people.

This, then, was the situation at the middle of September. On the 15th, the Cabinet deliberated long and anxiously and decisions of grave importance were taken. Chanak on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles, occupied at the time by a single British battalion, was reinforced, and it was further decided that such forces, naval and military, as were available, should be concentrated upon preventing the violation of the neutral zone and the passage of Turkish troops from Asia to Europe. At the same time the Dominion Governments were informed of the critical nature of what was happening, and their co-operation, in the event of necessity, was invited. The Balkan States were similarly approached. In coming to their decisions the Cabinet not unnaturally assumed, in view of M. Poincaré's

Note of the 14th, that they were acting in conformity with the policy agreed upon by the Allies.

It is difficult to say how far Lord Curzon agreed with all the decisions arrived at by the Cabinet in the course of their proceedings on Friday the 15th. When judging his actions during this and the following days of stress, it is essential to bear in mind what has been said in chapter XV of his attitude in these days towards opposition on the part of his colleagues in the Cabinet. When telling of his successes in debate in those far-off days when he had dominated the Union, the Canning club and other political bodies at Oxford, I remarked that as often as not his triumphs were of a quasi-physical nature.[1] There were men in the Cabinet in 1922 of whom the same remark might not unjustly have been made; but Lord Curzon was not now one of them. On the contrary his vitality had been sapped by a long and exhausting illness. He entered the Cabinet room haltingly and sometimes in obvious pain. The foot-rest from which he never dared be parted was arranged for him under the Cabinet table. He took his seat slowly and often painfully. When strongly moved his hands would shuffle irritably with the papers in front of him; and from conflict, engendered by the vigorous expression of views with which he was unable to agree, he instinctively recoiled. That he was not wholly in sympathy with the majority, even on September the 15th, seems clear from a note in the form of a personal *aide-mémoire* which he wrote of the proceedings a short time afterwards. It was insisted, he noted, that British lives were about to be sacrificed, the British troops hurled into the Dardanelles, the freedom of the Straits lost for ever, Thrace overrun, Constantinople handed over to massacre. "I believe the bulk of this," he added, "to have been a gross and ridiculous exaggeration."

Nevertheless he must be held to have accepted the decisions taken, for he subsequently stated in public that after the meeting of the Cabinet he was engaged at the Foreign Office until past 8 p.m. in despatching the telegrams upon which the Cabinet had decided[2]. This task completed, he returned to Hackwood.

But, whatever may have been the position on Friday the 15th,

[1] See Volume I, chapter II.
[2] Statement by Lord Curzon in the *Morning Post* of November 10th, 1922.

it is clear from the happenings of the next few days that relations between Lord Curzon and some of his principal colleagues had now become gravely strained; and that, even if he was not in serious disagreement with their policy, he did, in any case, dissent profoundly from the methods which they adopted in giving effect to it. On Saturday the 16th, certain Ministers met and, in face of the natural demand for information, decided to issue a statement. In the absence of Lord Curzon a *communiqué* was, therefore, drawn up by Mr. Churchill, submitted to the Prime Minister and handed to the Press. Neither Lord Curzon, who had been in telephonic communication with the Prime Minister during the day, nor the Foreign Office was consulted. And there is little doubt that, had the aid of either been invoked, the statement would have been couched in very different terms.

Be that as it may, the *communiqué* as issued, if its object was to awaken the world to a sense of the gravity of the situation which had arisen, was certainly successful. But the process of awakening affected different people in different ways. It created in the mind of the public the idea that the Government, or some members of the Government at any rate, were leading them to the brink of war and a simultaneous determination that in no circumstances would they follow them there. It infuriated Lord Curzon who read it in the Sunday papers "with consternation" and characterised it as a "manifesto" in essence and as "flamboyant" in style. And it immediately and fatally alienated Italy and France. At the meeting of the Cabinet on Monday the 18th he protested against the action of the Government in issuing it, and expressed his intention of at once proceeding to Paris to endeavour to restore the position with France, bluntly refusing the suggestion of the Prime Minister that he should take with him another Minister.

M. Paul Cambon, the veteran Ambassador of France, had once said of an interview which he had held with Lord Curzon when the relations between the two countries were seriously strained, that during the whole of his long service in England, amounting to twenty-two years, that half-hour had been the most painful and serious moment that he had had to face. It was now Lord Curzon's turn to experience feelings of the same sort. His conversations with

M. Poincaré, at first alone and later in conjunction with Count Sforza, were carried on in so highly charged an atmosphere that at one point he was unable to bear the strain of the French Premier's bitter reproaches, and demanded an adjournment in order that he might consider his position.

It had been an inauspicious prelude to this first discussion that, on the previous day, i.e., September the 19th, M. Poincaré should have telegraphed orders to Constantinople to withdraw the French contingent which, by arrangement between the Allied commanders on the spot, had proceeded to Chanak to support the British force already there. Here was France's answer to the "flamboyant Manifesto." In Lord Curzon's eyes such action was deplorable in itself, in that it left the small British force on the Asiatic shore of the Dardanelles isolated. It was even more deplorable as a gesture to the Turks, who could scarcely be expected to read into it anything else than an indication that on the question of the neutral zones France no longer supported the policy of Great Britain. And this was, indeed, the case; for, if the conversation of two and a half hours' duration between M. Poincaré and Lord Curzon, on the morning of September the 20th, did little else, it at least made one thing unmistakably clear, and that was that neither the French Prime Minister, nor his Government, nor the French Parliament would consent to any action by the Allied commanders on the spot which might expose a single French soldier to the danger of being shot at by a Turk. From this position M. Poincaré firmly declined to depart. He reaffirmed it in the presence and with the approval of the Italian representative later in the day; and he remarked that the best advice which he could give Lord Curzon was that his Government should follow the example set by France and withdraw their troops from Chanak, since he was satisfied that in a military sense the position was in any case untenable.

On the question of summoning an early Peace Conference Lord Curzon found little divergence between M. Poincaré and himself. The French Premier expressed his willingness to exert such influence as he might possess with Mustapha Kemal to dissuade him from embarking upon any course of action which might imperil the prospects of such a Conference, or which might compel Great

Britain to act alone. At the close of this second meeting on the 20th, Lord Curzon began to entertain hopes of a successful outcome of his mission. He was to pass through many hours of mental perturbation, however, before he could claim success. Conversations on the 22nd showed how difficult it was to exclude from the discussions frequent mention of the refusal of the French Government to co-operate in any military measures against the Turks. And before matters had proceeded far on that day, the Council room was resounding with charges and counter-charges, with recriminations, attacks and retorts, until Lord Curzon could stand the strain no longer and rising from his chair, shaken with emotion, left the room.

Later in the day some progress was made towards an accord, when Lord Curzon proposed that General Harington should proceed to Mudania to meet Mustapha Kemal, with a view to arranging for mutual recognition by Turks and Greeks of lines behind which each should halt in Asia and Europe respectively, pending the assembling of a Conference. Should M. Poincaré wish for time to consider this suggestion, Lord Curzon expressed his willingness to extend his stay in Paris for another twenty-four hours.

This marked the turning point in the negotiations, and, at the end of a four hours' sitting on the evening of the 23rd, agreement had been reached on the terms of an invitation to be sent to Mustapha Kemal's Government at Angora. Agreement once reached, little time was lost in acting upon it. The invitation was despatched to Angora the same night; Lord Curzon returned to London the following day, and on Monday the 25th was accorded the hearty congratulations of the Cabinet on his successful handling of his difficult mission. He was equally complimentary to those with whom only a short time before he had been so gravely incensed. "At no point," he said, "did the Prime Minister and his colleagues fail to give complete support, going even beyond what I had asked for. The trust and wide latitude given me have contributed materially towards the result of the Conference."

The decision to send a joint invitation to Angora was received with unfeigned relief by the French press, in which the part played by Lord Curzon in the negotiations was spoken of in terms of high appreciation. His long and patiently fought battle seemed, there-

fore, to have been crowned with a great reward; for the Alliance had been restored, while harmonious relations between Lord Curzon and his colleagues in the Cabinet had been re-established. Yet precisely at this moment Fate, looking on as it seemed with a sardonic grin at the complacency of his puppets, gave another and somewhat vicious jerk to the strings at the ends of which they danced. Immediately the scene changed. Confusion reigned where complacency had been. A revolution broke out in Greece. King Constantine displayed both a capacity for quick decision and discretion in hurrying from his recently recovered throne; and M. Venizelos hastened to London as the Envoy of the new Greek Government.

There is no doubt that this unlooked-for development gave new hope to the phil-Hellenes in the British Cabinet. They thought that under the inspiration of M. Venizelos a rapid Greek revival might be expected, and that in these altered circumstances a settlement on the lines of the Paris Pronouncement of the previous March might be achieved—a view which Lord Curzon was altogether unable to share. And he put his fears on record in a letter to Mr. Chamberlain:

> "I was very much alarmed at the idea put forward" (at a Cabinet meeting) "that we should once again seek the precarious and as I think worthless alliance of the Greeks, and very likely find ourselves once more at war with Turkey, with Greece alone on our side. Nothing in my opinion would reconcile the Country to such a development, and it would, I think, bring about the fall of the Government. It would also destroy at one blow the Allied unity which I was sent to Paris to endeavour to rebuild."[1]

Away in Asia Minor, Mustapha Kemal displayed an almost uncanny insight into the working of the British Prime Minister's mind. He apprehended that Mr. Lloyd George might already be negotiating with the new Greek Government with the idea of flinging them once more into the field of battle in the hope of

[1] Letter dated September 27th, 1922.

robbing Turkey of the spoils of victory. He therefore left Smyrna, whither he had earlier summoned his Government, and in the company of M. Franklin-Bouillon, who had appeared upon the scene once more, retired to Angora. He refrained from making any answer to the Allied invitation, and instead, permitted his troops to advance across the border of the neutral zone until they bivouacked so close to the slender British garrison at Chanak that they even made grimaces at the British soldiers across the narrow strip of barbed wire entanglement which was all that now separated them.

Lord Curzon was no more willing to tolerate this contemptuous attitude on the part of Mustapha Kemal than were other members of the Cabinet; but he still believed that the situation could be dealt with by diplomacy without resort to force. And it was on this question that a difference in the Cabinet broke out once more. On September the 29th a conference of Ministers decided, much against Lord Curzon's will, to despatch immediately to Sir Charles Harington an ultimatum for communication to the Turkish commander. On the same afternoon Lord Curzon saw Dr. Nihad Rechad, the Kemalist representative in London; and, having explained to him that, owing to the attitude of Mustapha Kemal, a situation had arisen in which nothing short of the immediate withdrawal of the Turkish forces from the neighbourhood of Chanak could avert an outbreak of hostilities, urged him to telegraph in this sense without one moment's delay. And, having thus set the diplomatic machine in motion, he asked that a further meeting of the inner Cabinet might be held at his house that night, to plead for a delay of at least twenty-four hours in the presentation of the ultimatum. Those members who had remained in London—the Prime Minister had gone to the country—assembled at Carlton House Terrace at 10 p.m. But expert military opinion, which was to the effect that only by prompt military action could the danger of a military disaster be averted, prevailed, and Lord Curzon's appeal was rejected.

For the next two days the Conference of Ministers was in almost perpetual session, in the expectation of news from General Harington that the ultimatum had been delivered and hostilities begun. No news came and on Saturday, September the 30th, while a reply from

Constantinople was still being awaited, Lord Curzon sat down and wrote an account of all that he had been going through to Lady Curzon—

> "I have had a most terrible time since you left. On Friday evening I had a long talk with the Kemalist representative here. This was followed by a meeting at this house (No. 1 Carlton House Terrace) of Cabinet Ministers, 10 p.m. to 11.45 p.m. Yesterday there were three Cabinet meetings from the last of which I only returned at 12.40 a.m. I then did not have one wink of sleep. We began again at 10 a.m. and I have only just returned at 2.25 p.m. There is another at 3 p.m. I have had to sustain the battle single-handed against all the fire-eaters and war-mongers. . ? It is a Homeric encounter. But, so far, nothing has happened as they predicted and I hope there is still a possibility of keeping peace, though if left to themselves they would wreck it twice a day."

That same night at a further meeting of the Cabinet, at which great irritation was exhibited by some of those present at the continued silence of General Harington, the breach between those who urged an immediate resort to action and those headed by Lord Curzon who counselled patience, developed rapidly. Those who thought that the extreme limit of patience had been reached and, indeed, passed, urged the abandonment of the Mudania Conference, which had been the corner-stone of the agreement which Lord Curzon had so recently succeeded in re-establishing with France. This proposal was fortunately not insisted on, and Lord Curzon was congratulated by those who now gave him their support upon the outcome of the meeting:

> "I must congratulate you most heartily," wrote one of them, on October the 2nd, "that your views prevailed in Cabinet and that the Mudania Conference is to take place before we open fire! It is difficult for those of us who have not been attending the conferences of Ministers to pick up all the threads of all that has gone before at a moment's notice; but I was

simply horrified at the proposals made by certain of our colleagues to issue an ultimatum at once, and not even to wait for Harington's telegram which was known to be on the way. Happily, this proposal was not persisted in on Saturday night; but if it had been, I should certainly have supported your view and so would several others who sit at our end of the table. And yesterday things went alright in view of the telegram which had been received."[1]

General Harington had, in fact, refrained from acting on the ultimatum despatched to him on the 29th, and peace had consequently remained unbroken.

[1] Letter from Sir A. Griffith-Boscawen.