

Britain in Mid-East . . .

Sir,

Probably I am not the only reader of *International Perspectives* who got the distinct impression from Albert Legault's article "Cyprus — Strategic triangle formed by Athens, Ankara and Nicosia" (November/December issue) that something was left out of his interpretation of nineteenth century expansionism in the Eastern Mediterranean. It seems to me that Turkey, in this regard, comes out looking quite spotless in this coverage, and really the facts are quite different from Dr. Legault's views.

The statement that "Britain intervened in 1878, ostensibly to give assistance to the Ottoman Empire in its struggle with its neighbour to the north, and at the same time decided to make Cyprus a British protectorate", leads one to believe that not only was Britain a newcomer on the scene but British policy was one of collaboration with Turkey. This is an unthinkable interpretation of some 60 or more years of policy aimed at directly opposite objectives, and I am truly amazed at this unique and somewhat distorted point of view.

England's position as a "landholder" in the Eastern Mediterranean began after the Napoleonic Wars, in 1815, with her tenure of a number of the Ionian Islands. However, much before this time, she had been the principal European advocate of Greek independence (note Byron's wonderful poetry on this subject) and, from the 1821 revolt against the Turks at Jassy until the London Protocol of 1830, her single-mindedness in this regard is remarkable. At times, Britain, France and Russia acted in concert against Turkey; in July 1827, in the London Protocol of that year, the three powers determined to strengthen their naval forces in the Mediterranean, for the sole and express purpose of meeting the ominous threats of the defiant Ibrahim Pasha. Their success at the naval encounter known as the Battle of Navarino is well known.

After the successful Russian campaign against Turkey in 1828-29, Greece was declared an independent kingdom and a period of relative stability ensued. French and British occupation of Greece in 1854 was designed to prevent Greece from assisting Russia in the war against Turkey. In this regard, their joint efforts were a judicious form of what today might be called a peace-keeping mission.

Dr. Legault seems also to imply, if I interpret him correctly, that Greece always came off not too badly in the conflicts and campaigns against Turkey. Certainly we cannot regard the indemnity imposed upon Greece at Constantinople on December 4, 1897 (\$18,000,000), as anything but the most extreme form of punitive measure, inflicted upon a weakened and disheartened people. All in all, I think that the Athens-Ankara-Nicosia tableau presented is rather unbalanced, and that it would be impossible to gain a true perspective on the present crisis situation in Cyprus without a great deal more background information inserted by way of support.

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