

**Roger Casement  
on the Great War:  
a commentary**

by

**Pat Walsh on Casement's**

***“Sir Roger Casement on Sir Edward Grey”***

**and**

***“A pacific blockade”***

**ATHOL BOOKS**

## SIR ROGER CASEMENT ON SIR EDWARD GREY

The report that Sir Edward Grey may cease to be the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Great Britain in consequence of British policy in the Balkans comes to us to-day from the Tory and Imperialist organs of the English press.

Over four years ago it was the Radical newspapers demanded Sir Edward Grey's resignation on the ground of his antagonism to Germany which a small band of far-seeing Englishmen then perceived must lead their country into war if Sir Edward Grey's policy was not restrained.

The reply in 1911 of the permanent imperialist powers (individuals within the British State, P.W.) that direct British policy to the attack then made public by a section of the Liberal press on a Liberal Foreign Minister was to make him a Knight of the Garter, an honour only once before conferred on a Commoner.

Now it is these unseen but omnipotent forces that rule King, Cabinet and Commons that apparently through their press, desire the retirement of the Foreign Minister who for ten years has served as their docile and obedient tool.

Tool is perhaps, an ungenerous word to apply to Sir Edward Grey, but it is the Minister, not the man; I would indicate it might be truer to say that for ten years, under the guise of a Liberal statesman, he has been used as a shield between the Foreign Office and all Liberal criticisms of its policy; the shield behind which, with a nominally democratic government in power the permanent plotters against German unity and expansion might develop their attack unseen,

unchecked and uncontrolled by the forces that were supposedly the masters of English public action. The ten years of 'Liberalism' at the Foreign Office since 1905, under the nominal direction of a Liberal Minister, will go down in history as the most criminal, the most audacious and, I believe, in the end the most disastrous in all English history.

It would be unjust to blame Sir Edward Grey for the failure of the Foreign Office policy in the Balkans any more than to blame him personally for its triumph in bringing about the war as a result of those long years of plotting.

The war against Germany was decreed years ago by those powers that own the Foreign Office and drive, not guide, the English people, and the personality of the Foreign Minister had as little to do with the result achieved as the personal character of an Archbishop of Canterbury has to do with the policy of the Church of England.

Sir Edward Grey was by constitution, temperament and lack of training, no less than the absence of the special qualities needed, unfit for the post the exigencies of political party life placed him in charge of, on the return of the Liberals to office, after ten years of exclusion from power in December 1905.

He knew little of foreign countries, or the life of other peoples. He was not a student of history, a profound thinker, a well read man or one even who moved much among his own countrymen. His tastes were those of a stay at home country gentleman, a Whig rather than a Liberal in political outlook, and one who preferred to be left alone with a

fishing-rod on the banks of a quiet stream to fishing with a rod he did not know how to handle in the troubled waters of European diplomacy.

The family traditions of a political house forced him into Parliament; the necessities of Party planning and the trickeries of Cabinet making forced him into the Ministry.

As he had filled the subordinate office of Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs in the last Liberal Ministry when Lord Rosebery was Prime Minister it was felt that on the return of the Liberals to office in 1906, Sir Edward Grey was designed to occupy the post of which he had once been Lord Rosebery's understudy.

For an explanation of Sir Edward Grey's failure as a Liberal Foreign Minister of England it is necessary to return to the period when Lord Rosebery succeeded Mr. Gladstone in 1893 and the seven or eight preceding years.

The explanation of very much of later English political life and particularly of the withdrawal of foreign affairs from the domain of party or public discussion in Parliament lies in Mr. Gladstone's downfall over the Irish Question.

The triumph of English Toryism, reaction and Imperialism, following the vain attempt of the greatest of English Liberals to do political justice to Ireland, was not a passing event.

The failure of Liberalism in Ireland brought with it the permanent eclipse of Liberalism as a power in foreign affairs and left those to be controlled without question by the influences that had opposed Mr. Gladstone's Irish policy as treachery to the majesty of England and which had hurled the Liberals from office on the grounds that justice to

Ireland was treachery to the Empire and the disruption of the Kingdom.

Up to Mr. Gladstone's surrender to the Home Rule demand, Parliament delighted in discussing, in inspecting, in prescribing and to a great extent even in controlling the foreign affairs of the country. Debates on foreign policy were the order of the day. Next to the Budget and the control of taxation the House of Commons regarded its influence over the conduct of foreign affairs as one of the prescriptive rights of the People, to be constantly affirmed. The claim was hateful to the Crown and the growing forces of imperialism that had no open place in party life, - still an affair of 'Whig' and 'Tory', of 'Ins and Outs'.

General Elections were lost and won on the issue of foreign affairs - as, for instance, when Mr. Gladstone turned Beaconsfield out of office in 1880 very largely on the question of the 'Bulgarian atrocities' and England's relations with Turkey.

At that date both front benches were equally patriotic in the eyes of the country. Neither asserted or could claim a larger share in upholding British interests abroad. No question of the "surrender of British interests" to "traitors" had ever arisen to taint the fair fame of the Liberal (or Whig) party until Mr. Gladstone discovered Ireland. But in the years 1880 to 1886 Mr. Gladstone committed a double surrender, in the name of Liberalism, that gave his opponents, the Conservatives, the chance of a century. In a night the Liberal party was rent in twain, the Conservatives became the Tories of a hundred years before. They laid hold of the Empire; they grasped the sceptre of Imperialism and bore it scornfully out of the House of Commons. The Englishman's birthright must not be so rendered to "rebels" and "traitors". Mr. Gladstone's surrender, first

to the Boers after Majuba in 1881 and next to Mr. Parnell and the Irish people in 1885/86, gave the Conservatives an opening they seized and held, and one they forced the Liberals to pass through as the only way of return to public life. The opening was the door that took the custody of 'imperial affairs' - i.e. foreign policy - out of the open assembly of the people into the closed air of the Cabinet Council and the closed doors of the Foreign Office.

The new Gospel of a Liberalism that sought to give political freedom to Ireland, that restored the Transvaal to the Boers, that was charged with intent to break up the British Empire, in fine, a gospel of Liberalism abroad as well as at home, was startling to the masses of Englishmen and hateful to the classes. The former did not understand and heard only the shameful words "surrender", "traitors", "treason mongers"; the latter understood it only too well.

They saw too that by associating Mr. Gladstone's most unpopular effort, that to be just to Ireland, and by linking up the hated name of Irish nationality with a policy of "Surrender of British Rights" they might exclude the Liberal Party from office for a score of years and in that period erect on solid foundations the framework of a great Imperial structure secure from popular interference or the prying eyes of popular representatives.

The idea of "Empire" was preached in place of patriotism and those who dared think first of England and the home necessities of Englishmen, were scornfully termed 'Little Englanders'.

Mr. Gladstone resigned in 1893, refusing to forego his Irish convictions, to be followed by a weak-kneed "Liberal" who had been his

Foreign Minister. Lord Rosebery, never at heart a Liberal, was always an Imperialist.

Sir Edward Grey, his admirer, and pupil in the Foreign Office, was there in 1895 when the crash came and the Liberals were driven into the wilderness at the General Election, charged with the crime of surrendering the Briton's birthright - Ireland, India, South Africa etc. etc. - to a band of traitors and blackmailers.

The heritage of John Bull's centuries of toil must not be left in the hands of such a party to dispose of. The cause of patriotism became that of Imperialism and was definitely committed to those who had opposed the great surrender to Ireland and got this surrender as their reward.

The Empire, imperilled by Liberalism was safe in the hands of those who had detected the crime and of these no question need be asked. The Liberals, in the wilderness, dare not air their voices on any foreign question without the cry of "traitor" being raised. For them it was too dangerous, for the Tories it was not fit that the representatives of "the people" should have any voice in matters best left to their Lords and Masters to deal with in silence.

It thus came about that the two Front Benches - the Tory Government in office and the would-be Liberal Government out of office - agreed to exclude the topic of foreign affairs from Parliamentary discussion.

Thenceforward a policy of parliamentary silence on all grave aspects of foreign affairs became the accepted role of both great parties of state.

The Tories had won. The Empire was saved, but at the cost that the people to whom it was supposed to belong should have nothing to

say about its management. Parliament was excluded from the greatest issues; a debate in the House of Commons on any matter of foreign concern became rarer and rarer; the two front benches willed silence.

With the return of Lord Salisbury to office in 1895, with a clear mandate to do as he pleased, the question of parliamentary discussion of foreign affairs may be said to have been settled.

The Foreign Secretary was in the House of Lords - a permanent institution of reactionary powers. He was represented in the House of Commons by a nobody or a fool, and as the Liberals dared not discuss the forbidden topic and the Tories were sure that all was being done as they wished it, the control of foreign policy passed absolutely into the hands of the permanent officials, men responsible to neither parliament or people, to whom their very names were unknown, but to the Crown alone.

Thus came King Edward. How he used his unchecked powers in the domain of foreign affairs is known only too well to-day.

When, in December 1905, the Liberals returned to office, with Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office, they did not return to power in matters of foreign policy. The system was already well established. The Liberals by their cowardice and treachery to the cause of Irish independence had really forfeited their own. No Minister, however strong, could have broken the power of the ring of irresponsibles around the King who drove the coach of state surely and relentlessly to a well-planned war with Germany. A strong and far-seeing man, a statesman, might have resisted, fought and resigned. Sir Edward Grey was none of these things. At heart a peace-loving, a domestic, a quiet man, he had been raised to an office he

was wholly unfitted for and chiefly just for that reason. The powers that drove the car of state did not want a wiser man.

They preferred a man with the taint of "Liberal Imperialism" in his blood, since a Liberal Government had to be accepted at the hands of the English electors.

They demanded that they should get a type of Liberal sent to the Foreign Office whom they should be able to adapt without trouble to the purposes of that 'continuity of foreign policy' they already had well in view.

That Sir Edward Grey was just the man they wanted is shown through every sentence of that momentous speech of his, delivered on August 3rd, 1914, to the House of Commons on the eve of the declaration of war.

Then, for the first time in his ten years of office, he tells the tale of how he had failed. In that fateful pronouncement the Minister stated the case against himself.

He shows how, in the Morocco crisis of 1906, at the time of the Algeiras Conference he allowed himself to be exploited by the Foreign Office and the French Government acting together, into giving that government a pledge of united military and naval support against Germany 'should a sudden crisis arise'.

Of course, like all the undertakings of the Foreign Office on behalf of the Entente these "conversations between military and naval experts" (already in 1906!) were purely diplomatic overtures and were in no ways to 'bind or restrict' the freedom of the Government "to make a decision as to whether or not they would give that support when the time arose".

How could a Government that knew nothing about these "conversations" and "agreements" decide anything wisely "when the time arose"? For Sir Edward Grey assured the House of Commons that if Parliament had been kept in the dark so, too, had the Cabinet. Speaking of these first "conversations between naval and military experts" in January 1906 - "when a General Election was in progress and Ministers scattered all over the country and I spending three days a week in my constituency and three days a week at the Foreign Office."

Sir Edward Grey explained in August 1914 to Parliament "the fact that conversations between military and naval experts took place was later on - I think much later on, because that crisis passed and the thing ceased to be of importance - but later on it was brought to the knowledge of the Cabinet."

We hear exactly the same phraseology of futility eight years later.

In July 1914 when war was certainly decided on and when, as Sir Edward Grey's speech of August 3rd shows, it had been prepared for and made certain by a series of naval and military agreements, he comes forward with a final assurance that a Fleet in line of battle at sea to support an Army in line of battle on land is only a measure of "diplomatic support".

This time it is the Assurance of July 27th, 1914 to the Russian Government feverishly mobilising all its forces for war that in order to ensure peace Sir Edward Grey pledges them the full strength of the British Fleet that will not disperse but will remain mobilised - to be used "for diplomatic support only."

The military agreement with France in November 1912, the precedent

"conversations" in 1906 between "naval and military experts," the attempt to compromise Belgian neutrality under the pretext of defending it by a military convention, the Russian understanding in Persia and elsewhere, and finally mobilisation of the British fleet in June-July 1914 under the guise of a review by King George - all these well-planned and carefully devised steps to ensure war are dismissed as kindly efforts to furnish "diplomatic support" to Powers with which Great Britain had no agreement of any kind, her hands being always "entirely free."

If Sir Edward Grey believed the things he said in his despatches to British representatives abroad, and later in his explanation to the House of Commons, we must believe him to be a very incompetent man.

If he did not believe the things he said we must believe him to be a rogue. Now I know Sir Edward Grey well enough to believe that he is at heart a kindly and well-disposed man, with very good intentions; and so I am convinced he believed the things he said.

I prefer to regard him, not as the villain of the piece, but as he himself once put it, "the fly on the wheel" of State - the victim rather than the vindicator of British Imperial aims.

Those aims were already fixed, and the driver at his post when, to vary the metaphor, Sir Edward Grey entered the car.

Instead of guiding the engine, he was received as a passenger, and became a helpless spectator as he was being whirled to destruction, along with his country, by a route he knew nothing of and the time-table in other hands. He heard only the voices of the resolute and determined band of imperial criminals who assured him that a war chariot being driven straight into battle was only an

international wagon lit (sleeping car, Editor) and that he might sleep in peace until the conductor announced the destination.

To-day, when they have brought the chariot to a standstill on the blood-soaked plains of Flanders and broken its axles in the gullies of Gallipoli, the criminals turn upon the hired man and charge him with bad driving.

Sir Edward Grey did just what he was told to do from the first and now when the "peace, peace" that was cried when the guilty hands were at the engine is turned into the horrid shouts of a war of destruction and annihilation instead of a paean of victory, they raise a cry of incompetence. Incompetent he is indeed, and always has been to control such a vehicle, driven by such men. But the end is not yet.

Sir Edward Grey will not retire. The English do not readily change horses when crossing a stream - and the river into which they have driven grows deeper.

Changes of plan, of direction, there will be - but no change of "driver". The battle will take on a new front, that is all. The Great War that was devised for the destruction of Germany is now fast developing into one for the downfall of the British Empire. Turkey instead of "digging her own grave with her own hands," as Asquith assured the world last November, has wielded a shovel in the Gallipoli peninsular that conceivably may dig the grave of the British Empire in the East and in the Mediterranean.

To openly abandon the operations in Gallipoli and admit a crushing defeat at the hands of the despised Turks might at once sound the death-knell of British supremacy in Egypt, to be followed by disaster in India. The way out of the Gallipoli cemetery lies clearly through the harbour of Salonica.

To involve Greece in the World War and get another "small nationality" into the fire on behalf of Great Britain's world empire is a simple effort for those who took up arms on behalf of Belgium's "violated neutrality". Greece with 400,000 armed men may yet save the situation. At any rate the fight there, on her soil, with her ports, her coast line, her railways and resources at the disposal of the invaders of her neutrality, will be a much easier one than in the shambles of Gallipoli.

It carries the scene of conflict too, a little further from Egypt and the East. Anything to achieve that. Stir up anew the fire and flame of Balkan animosities. If possible bring Cross against Crescent; put Macedonian against Greek and who knows but that the Empire of the East shall yet escape the shock of battle?

The complete failure of British Foreign policy is indeed in view - but the author of the failure is not Sir Edward Grey.

The war that began in the hope of destroying Germany is drawing to its close in the desperate fear that the British Empire cannot be saved.

To save it now lies far beyond the power of England alone. She must at all costs get fresh allies - involve new neutrals. Indeed if it is to be saved at all she sees that Neutrality itself is a threat. To be neutral to-day is to be the enemy of Great Britain, the foe of British Imperialism.

Greece, no more than Belgium, can be permitted to keep out of the conflict.

Since the Gallipoli adventure, if persisted in, must spell the destruction of British power and prestige in the East, England is determined to transfer the conflict to an easier battlefield and to compel Greece by

invasion and conflict on her own soil, to enter the field. A man cannot remain neutral if his home becomes the scene of a furious conflict between a housebreaker, bent on using his house and the neighbour he assails from that vantage point.

Once a conflict can be forced on the soil of Greece between the allied invaders and the Macedonian neighbour it will be impossible for the Greek army not to shoot someone.

The task of the invaders is to see that it shoots only in one direction. That accomplished, England has secured a fresh ally and an army of 400,000 men to help her desperate effort to keep the war from Egypt, the Suez Canal and India.

A fresh "Armenian Massacre" having been deftly provoked by a conspiracy engineered from the British Embassy at Constantinople, whereby English arms, money and uniforms, were to be furnished to the Armenians on condition that they rose against the Turkish Government, England now turns to the humanitarian impulse of the American people to secure a fresh sword against Turkey. America is being stirred with tales of horror against the Turks - with appeals to American manhood on behalf of a tortured and outraged people. The plan was born in the (British) Foreign Office; and the agency for carrying through the conspiracy against Turkish sovereignty in Armenia was Sir Louis Mallet, the late British Ambassador at Constantinople.

Just as the war began with England declaring she was fighting for the cause of Belgian neutrality so will it end with England's violation of Greek neutrality. The initial lie brings always the final lie - and this time the doom of the liar. The initial lie indeed lies much further back than the falsehood about Belgium. It lies in the falsity of the Liberal

party to its pledges to Ireland. In order to undo with the British Electorate, so far as possible, while preserving the Irish vote, the impression that because they were "Home Rulers" in word they were not good Imperialists in fact, the Liberal party consented to the whole domain of foreign affairs being removed from the control of Parliament and handed over to a clique behind the throne. Sir Edward Grey's part was only that of a weak and ineffective Liberal chosen to represent a Liberalism that had already abdicated, in a Foreign Office it had already agreed to hand over to the enemies of Liberalism. The result was certain and we see its fruits to-day.

King Edward and his secret counsellors had as much concern in a Liberal Foreign Minister's advent to office as they had in the advent of the Duma or the coming of the Persian "Constitution." They knew their man and they knew that the Foreign Office was theirs whoever might be nominally placed at its head.

To-day Sir Edward Grey may look back on ten years of "deceit, falsehood and treachery" without a blush. They were not of his planning, and only of his doing in so far as a puppet may be said to do anything.

He even believed, I am sure, throughout the whole period and up to the very declaration of war itself, that he was the Peace Keeper of Europe. He was told so by his advisers - and masters.

The men who for their own ends and the better to conceal their aims dubbed King Edward the plotter "Edward the Peacemaker," assured the other Edward that he was the greatest Foreign Minister in Europe and that in his strong hands reposed the peace of the world.



And the man who subscribed in my hearing, in November 1901 to Lord Rosebery's adjuring of his home Rule pledge to Ireland at Chesterfield - and who, in my hearing, got up before that great assembly of Liberals and declared in those perjured words the Liberal Party had a lead of statesmanship to follow - that man could easily believe that it was possible to enter into secret armed "conversations" of naval and military experts, all of them plainly directed to one end alone, the sure and certain attack on one people and one country, and that in so doing he was but pledging the "diplomatic support" of Great Britain to the cause of peace and not to the certainty of war. The price that English Liberalism has paid for its treachery to the cause of Ireland has been to hand the world policy of England over to King Edward VII and Sir Edward Grey.

Now that the end of that policy and of the plotters is well in sight, I hope that Ireland, the Nemesis of the British Empire, will be in at the death.

(October 11th, 1915)

#### **COMMENTARY BY PAT WALSH:**

This article written in The Continental Times is one of the most interesting pieces of writing on foreign affairs ever written by an Irishman. Hardly anyone living will have read it, however, since it has lain neglected for a century by our historians. What states of mind do they have to deny this greatly informative piece about a formative period of world history to the public?

Some of Roger Casement's writings on foreign affairs were collected in The Crime Against Europe - his only published book - and published in 1915 and 1916 in several versions, in the United States and Germany. I think the article on Sir Edward Grey from

"The Continental Times" has only appeared in German in "Irland, Deutschland & Der Meere & Andere Aufsätze" (Jos. C. Hubers Verlag, Diessen for Munchen, 1916). "The Crime Against Europe" collection itself only republished in 1958 and by Athol Books in 2003.

Sir Roger Casement on Sir Edward Grey is only one of a couple of dozen writings by Casement that have remained neglected. That a sizeable number of Casement's writings are unpublished apart from those in their original form is truly amazing, and hopefully it will be soon rectified.

Recent popular writing on Casement has largely consisted of diversionary action on the infamous Black Diaries. Attending centenary talks on Casement the present writer found speakers slipping in the suggestion that the Black Diaries are now accepted as authentic. By whom?

There is considerable controversy over the validity of the Black Diaries and the behaviour of the holders of them has given every indication that they were contrived for a purpose. The original diversionary objective of the Diaries is successful since argument is guided away from Casement's substantial activity and writings in life toward argument over a superficial and inconsequential alleged aspect of his personality.

The authentic aspect of Roger Casement of great political consequence are his writings containing inside knowledge of the British State and how it brought about a Great War against Germany that engulfed the world. It was the thing that made Casement so dangerous to Britain and got him hanged. It spoiled the moral propaganda which England was deluging the world with to justify the Great War it had plunged the world into,

when exercising its right to maintain supremacy over humanity.

Casement, whilst becoming an Irish nationalist, actually retained an English view of the world that understood instinctively what Britain was going to do with Germany. He did not like what he saw before his eyes and he predicted a criminally irresponsible British World War in the making. Britain went on to prove him wholly right.

The Black Diaries were used to ensure that Casement was not saved by humanitarians and to foul his name as a sexual degenerate in order to reduce the strength of what he revealed in his writings - which was far too close to the truth for comfort.

Casement's argument that it was Britain's intention to make War on Germany has never been challenged on its own ground. That is hardly surprising. Any historical knowledge of what Britain was doing from 1905 until 1914, as well as the course of actual events, along with documents and diaries of the important people that were revealed in later years, makes any contesting of his view impossible. So Casement's writings on the international situation are ignored and his sympathy for Germany, arising out of principled opposition to what he knew was being done in high places in England, is put down to a simple intensification of Irish nationalist sentiment within him. And the impression created is that he was deluded, perhaps mad, going into alliance with something he did not really understand the true evil of.

That was the impression conveyed by those explaining Casement to audiences during the centenary meetings. Without people having knowledge of the actual basis of Casement's writing and consequent activity - his inside knowledge of what Britain intended to do to

the world - that argument could pass muster. Leaving out the vital part of Casement's motivation, it was possible to leave the impression that Casement was a tragic, misguided fool and the author of his own tragic misfortune. Another good story for the Irish!

What is contained in Casement's article on Sir Edward Grey is the unacceptable and dangerous Roger Casement that our historians, if they value their careers, can only refer to, if needs must. That is because if thinking is done on the basis of what Casement wrote then the whole narrative of the Great War collapses.

That Britain was responsible for the Great War there was no doubt in Casement's mind. The question he addressed himself to was how much was its Foreign Secretary, whom he was acquainted with, was to blame, personally? Casement's verdict on the charge against Sir Edward Grey that he brought on the Great War on Germany is "Guilty, with diminished responsibility."

Casement's argument is that the Great War would have been organised without the particular participation of Sir Edward, as a distinct individual. He was merely "a fly on the wheel of state" using Grey's own phrase. The prime movers within the British State were determined on their Great War, with or without Grey, and, according to Casement, he was essentially a "useful shield" between their manoeuvrings and his party colleagues who dominated Parliament from 1906 to 1909. Grey was the balm to the English Liberalism and the "great English Democracy" as John Redmond came to call it.

In his verdict on Edward Grey Casement identifies the Liberal Imperialist development as being at the root of what

subsequently happened within both British Liberalism and Ireland, to produce Britain's Great War.

The Liberal Party, in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, was a coalition of many parts: the Whigs, who were basically the older aristocratic element which had dominated the Party prior to the 1832 reform; a large group of Liberals whose main preoccupation was advocacy of free trade; the Radical Nonconformists; and finally a social reform tendency grouped around Joseph Chamberlain. Liberalism was highly volatile ideologically and as the 1880s came it began to coalesce into three distinct tendencies - Gladstonian/traditional Liberalism, Liberal Unionism and Liberal Imperialism.

Casement suggests that back in 1880, in the days of Gladstone, British General Elections were still won and lost on issues of Foreign Affairs, before a kind of bi-partisan relationship was established between the two major parties of State, resulting from the Liberal acquiescence to Imperialism.

This was a peculiar point in English history. Christianity was ceasing to be a functional ideological medium of life for the English middle class, which had become the critical mass of political life in Britain as a result of their admittance to the franchise in the 1832 Reform. The British Empire was at the same time made by a body politic composed of a religiously sceptical ruling gentry supported by theocratic Protestant passions within the populace, cemented together by historic Anti-Catholicism.

But the science that was essential to the growing power of the Imperial State and the prosperity of the middle class, and which was bound up with industry and what was called "Manchester Capitalism," gradually

undermined the Christian belief system after attempts were made to reconcile the two. This development proved to be profoundly disorientating.

The ideological medium that bound together the different elements in English society, including the large proletariat that Manchester Capitalism had produced as a product of its unprecedented scientific/industrial development, was Imperialism. This was made into Social Imperialism to perform a cohesive function, particularly involving the proletariat that once brought into existence had to be sated in some way.

In 1876 there was a great mobilisation in English society around the "Bulgarian atrocities" with Gladstone at its head. It produced the forgotten "National Convention" at St. James' Hall - a last gambit to reunite British Protestantism in an alternative course. It failed. However, as "The Times" noted, the substance had to be taken account of by the State and could not be ignored.

Gladstone won the 1880 election on the back of it, as Casement noted. Then the British State absorbed the mobilisation, directing the discordant and potentially dangerous impulses it produced and pressed it into positive service. The Nonconformists became Imperialists with the more devout forming the Liberal humanist wing of the Imperial State and others developing toward Liberal Imperialism, as Imperialism became the social cement. The dissenters dissented from the worst of the Imperial savagery applied to the 'savages'. But they understood that it was the rougher edges of the thing they were all united in together, which was understood across the board as "Progress" and "Civilising".

In 1886 there was a split in the Liberal Party when Joseph Chamberlain, the Birmingham industrialist, and his social reformers left the party, dissatisfied with Gladstone's adoption and preoccupation with Irish Home Rule. Chamberlain's social reform radicalism which came from his experience as a successful manufacturer and which saw the necessity of state welfare provision to support the developing capitalism, was a new development in Liberalism and it sat uneasily with the laissez faire traditional liberalism of Cobden and Bright.

But the Irish Home Rule issue was only the occasion of the split in Liberalism, which was already on its way to being divided over social policy in 1886. The Liberal Party contested the 1885 election virtually as two parties with Gladstone tolerating the Chamberlain group with its 'Unauthorised Programme' of social reform for purposes of winning the election. When the election was over Gladstone's adoption of Home Rule, after private consultations with Parnell, was seen by Chamberlain as a political diversion to prevent what was needed to be done in Britain on social reform.

The Chamberlainites voted with the Tories against the Home Rule Bill and supported the Conservative Government from the Liberal benches over the following six years. They remained a distinct element outside both the Liberal and Tory parties for nearly a decade.

The Unionist Party was formed in 1894 after the defeat of the Second Home Rule Bill by a merger of the Tory Party under Lord Salisbury with the social radical section of the Liberals, led by Chamberlain. The Unionist Party dominated British political life from 1886 to 1905 and its Irish administration provided the most thorough reforming government ever experienced in

Ireland, with its enactment of local government democracy and the great Land Act of 1903.

The Unionist Party's successful mix of Imperialism and social reform set the political agenda in Britain and had fundamental repercussions for the Liberal Party. Whilst Gladstone lived his party remained anti-imperialist (in the sense that it did not support expansive spreading of the Empire). But after Gladstone's retirement as Leader of the Liberals in 1894, a Liberal Imperialist tendency developed, fostered by Lord Rosebery, his successor. This was a reaction to the 'irresponsible' Radicalism and the Home Rule policy which was seen as having debilitated the party.

The most notable New Radicals or Liberal Imperialists were Herbert Asquith, Richard Haldane and Edward Grey. Despite Rosebery's resignation after the 1895 Election defeat, this ambitious younger element availed of a new outbreak of Jingoism, generated by the Boer War, to promote Liberal Imperialism, which then took definite shape within the Liberal Party as a tendency. The Liberal Imperialists sought to outflank Unionism by trumping it on both Imperialism and social reform on a programme of "efficiency".

Gladstonian Liberalism had pledged itself to Irish Home Rule. But, after the Second Home Rule Bill had been defeated by the Lords in 1893, Gladstone's Government decided not to make this the occasion for an appeal to the country. In March 1893, Lord Rosebery, on replacing Gladstone and becoming Prime Minister, declared that Irish Home Rule could not come about until there was a majority for it in England, which he called the "predominant partner" in the Union. In 1896, Haldane, declared that a step-by-step approach to Home Rule would

be better than a Home Rule Bill. Gladstone's policy was scuppered.

Lord Rosebery's antagonism towards any measure of Irish Home Rule increased after John Redmond's 1898 amendment, calling for an independent Irish Parliament. And he voiced his antipathy to the Irish after the Nationalists had defeated a Bill to provide for a statue to Oliver Cromwell inside the Houses of Parliament at public expense. Rosebery paid for its erection himself, at the entrance to the building, and spoke at its unveiling in November 1899, just as the Boer War was getting under way.

The Liberal Imperialist position against Home Rule was based on several arguments: that the Irish alliance had been abrogated by Redmond; that the resurrection of a Home Rule Bill was futile in the light of Irish Party disunity after the Parnell split; and that the Irish question had been transformed by the Unionist Local Government Bill of 1898. Asquith, Grey and Haldane urged the adoption of an instalment approach to the Home Rule question by the Liberal Party, while Rosebery put forward the view that the disloyalty of the Irish leaders in the Boer War had disqualified the country from Home Rule altogether.

The ranks of the Liberal Imperialist faction in the Liberal Party were greatly swelled during the Boer War. At the "Khaki Election" of 1900 they put forward 56 candidates whose "unimpeachable patriotism" was guaranteed to the electorate by a newly-founded Imperial Liberal Council. But, during the election, the Unionists did not distinguish between Liberal Imperialist and "pro-Boer" Liberal and won a decisive victory by persuading the country that "every seat won by the Liberals was a seat won by the Boers".

Casement refers to Rosebery's most significant speech, made at Chesterfield in December 1901, where, along with defending martial law and the British Concentration Camps in South Africa, he called on the Liberal Party to realise the strength it would gain by embracing the Imperialist sentiment of the nation and rejecting as a liability Irish Home Rule and other "fly-blown phylacteries of obsolete policies". He called for a "clean slate" with regard to Liberal policy on Ireland, one which would involve the wiping away of the Gladstonian pledge to bring in a Home Rule Bill.

The adaptation of Liberalism to Imperialism as the undisputed medium of historical development in the world was to have the most fundamental implications for the Irish Party. Since the English State was the main agent of progress in the world, the Liberal Party had to be Imperialist in some shape or form if it was going to govern the State—and the world. And the Irish Party began to adjust itself to this development to secure another Home Rule Bill. Redmond the nationalist separatist became Redmond the nationalist Imperialist.

The thrust of British Imperial thinking prior to the Great War was that any remaining small nations were giving way to the Imperial super-state and the whole world was coming under its sway, in an inevitable progression of history. The old "anti-imperialist" Liberalism of the era of Gladstone was being superseded and becoming obsolete. Liberalism was adapting to the new Imperialism by producing an even more vigorous Imperialism than the Social Imperialism of Unionism and reconciling itself to what was seen as the general trend of progress. Even the Gladstonian Liberals now spoke of "constructing the Empire on Liberal principles".

There was nearly twenty years between the Second and Third Home Rule Bills. After the Boer War, Irish Home Rule was off the political agenda. The Liberal Party beat a hasty retreat from its Gladstonian pledge. When the Liberals returned to power in 1906 with their biggest majority ever they would not touch Home Rule and Redmond could do little about it. When the Liberals achieved a settlement in South Africa by accommodating the Boer enemy to the Empire he demand for Irish self-government began to re-emerge, in a new Imperial context, founded on the South African example. The future was Imperial with the Liberal argument for Irish self-government being expressed in terms of a strengthening of the Empire rather than a right in itself.

The division that began to emerge within British politics was now over whether measures of self-government increased the loyalty of component peoples of the Empire or not, and it was to the Liberal's adoption of this position, after the South African settlement, that Redmond and the Irish Party began to adopt. Irish Nationalism and British Imperialism began to be portrayed as complimentary within the general Liberal acquiescence to Imperialism and this became an Irish concession to Liberal Imperialism to gain Home Rule.

Redmondism, the Irish accommodation to the Liberal Imperialist development in Liberalism, had the effect of binding Ireland intimately to the development of Liberal Imperialism within the Liberal Party from around 1909 onwards. This bargain between the Irish Party and the Liberal leaders involved performing England's mission in the world and making Ireland an active and energetic component of "Greater Britain" in return for a measure of Home Rule.

When a Parliamentary stalemate ensued in two elections during 1910 between the

Liberal Government and Unionist opposition the Third Home Rule Bill was granted to Redmond by the Liberal Imperialist leadership of the Government that had previously disavowed it. However, the fact that a coterie within this tendency had begun to arrange for a Great War on Germany in collaboration with their Unionist Home Rule opponents and other elements outside the party system/democracy made for an unstable and ultimately explosive mix in British politics that was to blow up 4 years later.

Casement's Irish nationalism developed within the shifting sands of English Liberalism and the Redmondite Imperialist development in Ireland.

Casement saw Edward Grey as a most unsuitable person for the post of Foreign Minister. Grey had been sent down from Balliol College, Oxford, for idleness and when he returned only achieved a Third class Degree. He seemed to have little interest in foreign countries, never leaving England. He was a Whig country gentleman preferring solitude in the English countryside, bird-watching and fly-fishing. Only through duty as a member of a famous political family did he become an MP and serve under Rosebery, his mentor, in the Foreign Office.

But Casement presumably did not know that Grey had also been involved in a pivotal moment of British Foreign Policy, even before he took up office as Foreign Secretary in 1905/06.

Leopold Maxse wrote a very influential article in his "National Review" entitled British Foreign Policy around November 1901 proposing the idea of an agreement with the traditional European enemy of England and an Anglo-French Entente. A month later Maxse published another article

in the National Review under the title, "Some Consequences Of An Anglo-Russian Undertaking", which considered the other piece in an anti-German jigsaw through an arrangement with England's major geopolitical enemy. Edward Grey made suggestions on the drafts and congratulated Maxse on the effect of his first article.

The general idea for a new British Foreign Policy crafted by Maxse and Grey was that the decks should be cleared of all obstructions to facilitate alliances with England's traditional rivals, France and Russia, in order to re-orientate against a new enemy, Germany.

These articles, signed "ABC etc.", were taken very seriously in Russia, France, Germany and Japan, and a considerable amount of time was spent in efforts to find out who was behind it. Only recently has the truth come out.

Leopold Maxse's articles were not just another anti-German article in England because the people who were intimately involved in its composition were in a position - or would be in a position soon afterwards - to do something about the ideas in it. And they did do something, with the result that the article entitled British Foreign Policy turned out to be the British Foreign Policy, from 1906 onwards, under the Liberal Imperialist Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey.

Maxse's collaboration with Grey and those who would surround him in the Foreign Office along with Lord Rosebery, his mentor and leader of the Liberal Imperialists - George Saunders, "The Times" Berlin correspondent; Sir Roland Blennerhasset, President of Queen's College, Cork; Charles Hardinge, Secretary of the St. Petersburg Embassy and Permanent Under-Secretary at

the Foreign Office 1905-10; and William Tyrrell, Grey's future Private Secretary at the Foreign Office. Hardinge made sure the article found its way into important hands in Russia and later actually put the policy into operation in conjunction with his superior, Grey.

In January 1902 Maxse published a further article entitled "A Plea For The Isolation Of Germany" under the name, C.P. in his "National Review" Grey implemented Maxse's suggested policy of isolation/encirclement or, as the Germans called it, *Einkreisungspolitik*.

If one places oneself in Germany's shoes, how was this to be interpreted? Grey might have assured Germany that he was a lover of peace and his strategy was merely to confine Germany to her current territories and strength - a purely defensive measure on England's part. But what of the intentions of France and Russia that Germany had to take account of? France was looking to recover Alsace and Lorraine and Russia was an expansionist State of large proportions on Germany's Eastern flank. Even if Britain was reluctant to strangle Germany in conjunction with the other two, could it be relied upon to stay out of a conflict begun by them? That was the problem that increasingly confronted Germany until it was forced to act for its own security. Edward Grey made sure that the Germans never secured a straight answer on the question that would most determined activity.

The Liberal Imperialists achieved a strategic reorientation in British Foreign Policy reasserting the traditional impulse of the Balance of Power strategy. During 1901-02 Joseph Chamberlain advanced an alternative proposal of an Anglo/German/American alliance. Chamberlain was of the opinion that the recent South African conquest

should be the final enlargement of the Empire and that emphasis should be shifted to internal consolidation with Imperial Preference. The Germans offered shares and participation to the British in the Railway they were proposing from Berlin to Baghdad and Balfour pondered on the issue. Things were in the balance.

Chamberlain's policy and the Railway scheme were vociferously opposed by the Liberal Imperialists who out-Imperied the Unionists in Parliament and Press. Balfour began to shy away from the German Railway collaboration and he hesitated on the Imperial Tariff. Chamberlain's scheme for Imperial consolidation fell victim to the internal dynamic of British Imperial political life—the desire for continuous and unlimited expansion, superseding all inferior social, economic and political formations in its path around the world.

The Liberal Imperialists trumped Chamberlain's more limited, definite and realistic Imperial objectives with a new, more virulent, strain surpassing Unionism in its vigour. The combination of Liberal Free Trade and the Imperial creed produced an open-ended expansionism that could not be easily satisfied just at a time when territorial advance was coming up against the colonial possessions of the other powers.

It was the turning point in England's relationship with Germany and Sir Edward Grey and the Liberal Imperialists were the deciding factor in it.

In January 1903 Grey wrote a letter to the poet, Henry Newbolt, in which he said: "*I have come to think that Germany is our worst enemy and greatest danger.*" (Keith Robbins, *Sir Edward Grey: A Biography of Lord Grey of Fallodon*, p. 131)

Grey put the ideas contained in the ABC etc. articles into effect in the 1907 Agreement with Russia, a couple of years after he authorised military substance to the Entente with France. Grey made a settlement of frontier disputes in Asia very favourable to the Tsar.

All the elements that went into the making of the Great War were present in the ABC etc. articles that Grey helped produce: The alliance with Japan; the cultivation of France and Russia as allies; the luring away of Italy from the Triple Alliance and the isolation of Germany; the intention of breaking up the Hapsburg and the Ottoman Empires; and the destabilisation of the Balkans as a potential detonator for a Great War, if all else failed.

In 1905 after the Unionist Government had suffered some by-election defeats, the Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, resigned as Prime Minister, despite having a majority of 200 odd MPs over the Liberals. Balfour, seeing his party paralysed by the Tariff Reform issue, decided to sacrifice his Government in the interests of the State and a handover of the reins of state to the Liberal Imperialists while they remained in a strong position within the Liberal Party.

The King, who was in on the scheme through Lord Esher's counselling, called for Campbell-Bannerman to form a government. The Liberal leader said he preferred to have a General Election first. The King then suggested to Campbell-Bannerman that he would call for Lord Rosebery, the previous Liberal leader and Liberal Imperialist, to form a government instead.

Campbell-Bannerman was rattled by this threat and he was forced to appoint Ministers prior to an election, which placed the Liberal Imperialists in a much stronger position in negotiations with the Liberal leader. When



the Liberals won the 1906 election with a landslide Campbell-Bannerman regretted this decision as it had placed the Liberal Imperialists in command of a large Radical backbench which, if it had been in existence prior to Cabinet appointment, would have undermined the claims of the Liberal Imperialists to high position.

The ABC etc. articles showed how confident Edward Grey was of becoming Foreign Minister in a future Liberal Government and getting his own way on policy. His confidence was based on the fact that as second-in-command to Rosebery he had cultivated friendly and influential connections in the important places, beyond the democracy. The fact that Grey had been an advocate of developing "an understanding" with France, even before the Unionists had perceived any advantage to such a policy made him the favourite candidate of the Foreign Office to be their chief upon the assumption of power by the Liberals.

When Grey entered the Cabinet in 1905-06, having the backing of powerful figures at the Foreign Office and elsewhere, he had the presumption to stipulate that his leader Campbell-Bannerman should agree to clear the decks for him by entering the House of Lords. Grey had supported the Unionist Government's conquest the Boer Republics, defending the military sweeps, blockhouses, crop-burning and concentration camps that were used to win the war. He had attempted to remove Henry Campbell-Bannerman from the leadership of the Liberal Party for opposing the war and calling the military measures used "methods of barbarism." When Grey was frustrated by the new Premier's desire to lead from the Commons, Grey demanded a free hand in Foreign Policy as the price of loyalty and party unity.

Grey, Asquith and Richard Haldane had formed a pact - the Relugas Pact, named after Grey's fishing lodge where it was hatched - with demands for the top offices of State. The King was prompted to suggest to Campbell-Bannerman that due to his age, a peerage might be better so he could take himself off to the Upper House, so that Asquith could lead the government from the Commons. This was a key demand of the Relugas Pact. Campbell-Bannerman resisted this demand, but conceded most of the other demands of the Liberal Imperialists and Grey was made Foreign Minister, with Asquith Chancellor and Haldane, Minister of War.

The Times collaborated in the arranging of the next government through a series of editorials in November and December. One advised that: "*Sir Edward Grey would be in the Cabinet the chief guarantee to the country that the rash world of his leader would not be allowed to bring forth fruit in action, and further, that due continuity would be maintained in foreign affairs.*" (5.11.05)

Campbell-Bannerman had wanted Lord Cromer as his Foreign Secretary. But Cromer represented the old position of the Great Game against Russia and Imperial conflict with France. Though much more experienced and qualified than Grey he was most unsuitable for the new Foreign Policy that was being developed by the Liberal Imperialists.

The formation of the new Liberal Government was a collaboration at the highest levels of State to protect the new drift of British Foreign Policy and ensure there were no interruptions of the transformation by the Democracy.

The resignation of Balfour followed by the formation of a Liberal Government, prior to

a General Election, meant a political vacuum took up the early months of 1906. This allowed the State, under the auspices of the new Liberal Imperialist Ministers, unrestrained by their campaigning Gladstonian Party Leader, to begin organising for the project of a War on Germany without any unwelcome political interference.

Prior to his decision to resign Balfour had alerted those in the Liberal Party whom he favoured to take up the vital Ministries of State. Influential elements within the ruling strata went to work behind the scenes to ensure a "continuity of foreign policy" took place. In July 1905 Richard Haldane went to the Palace to give a detailed resume of the factions within the Liberal Party to the King. He stayed overnight to advise King Edward what to do in relation to Campbell-Bannerman becoming Prime Minister so as to preserve continuity and the safety of the State.

At the same time Balfour saw to it that King Edward arranged a meeting to consolidate the Committee of Imperial Defence to protect its existence and work, against Campbell-Bannerman, who was known to be suspicious of its doings. Lord Esher advised that he and Lord Milner be appointed permanent members of the CID to bolster it against the new government. Balfour thought the appointment of Milner would be too divisive, given his record in South Africa, which had made him a hate-figure among some Liberals. Esher was asked whether he would take the post of War Minister in the new government himself, but he declined, considering the Committee of Imperial Defence more important in the freedom of action it gave him.

Casement refers to the "*unseen but omnipotent forces*", the "*permanent powers*

*that direct British policy*", and "*the ring of irresponsibles around the King who drove the coach of state surely and relentlessly to a well-planned war with Germany*". And he informs his readers that "the war against Germany was decreed years ago by those powers that own the Foreign Office".

Casement was well aware, it appears, of the powerful coterie around Lord Esher and the King, who acted as his own Foreign Minister before Grey took up the reins. By maintaining an independence from formal responsibility Esher maintained a freedom that politicians lacked, the freedom to think about things from the point of view of the interests of the State and its long-term strategic objectives free from the hindrances of popularity in the democratic age. It enabled him to get things done in the background through organising the important people with the right outlook in the important positions of State, aided by the Crown.

There is a series of correspondence from around 1903 between Esher and Balfour in which the Prime Minister is advised how to reform the war fighting machinery of the State by Esher, in the aftermath of the Boer War. Out of this came the idea of the Committee of Imperial Defence.

Balfour and Esher built the CID into a regular department of the British State with a permanent Secretariat composed of Army and Navy representatives. The idea behind this was to construct a substance beyond the democracy and protect it against future Liberal Ministers who might wish to divert it from its work or run it down. Campbell-Bannerman was confronted with a substance he dared not challenge and he was forced to acquiesce in its activity. The Committee just had to bide its time until the Prime Minister was gone. The Liberal Imperialists who

obtained the key Ministries of War and Foreign Affairs in the new Cabinet when the government changed hands in 1905/6 had only the problem of keeping its activities from the prying eyes of the Liberal Party.

Lord Esher seems to have been the main driving force behind the political manoeuvrings that put the right men, who were in favour of the reorientation project, in the right offices, to see it through. Esher afterwards exercised a position of general surveillance over the War Office, being provided with confidential information by the Prime Minister and Sir George Clarke, the first Secretary to the CID, before Maurice Hankey took over.

The 1903-05 period was crucial to the future direction of things in Britain, but it is one of those periods that lies unexplored by its historians - something that can only be deliberate. What Balfour achieved, in effect, was a clearing away of alternative courses for Britain and the securing of the re-orientation of British Foreign Policy that had just begun through its transfer to other reliable hands in the opposing party. How remarkable!

Immediately upon assuming office in December 1905 Grey made a fundamental alteration to the 1904 Entente Cordiale. The informal conversations that had begun to take place under Lord Lansdowne in the Balfour Government between figures in the General Staffs of the British and French armies were given formal authorisation, for the first time, by Grey.

In December 1905, Grey confirmed General Huguet's estimates of the size of a British Expeditionary Force needed on the continent for a War with Germany. Then Haldane, at the War Office, began to build it.

The military conversations between the British and French military staffs became formalised in the period when the government of the State was being handed over from Balfour to the Liberals. All the evidence suggests that Eureka! there is suddenly a unanimous understanding within the highest levels of the State that England needs to fight a Great War on the continent against Germany and needs to get organised to do so.

By the time Campbell-Bannerman, who had not authorised the conversations, took charge after the election, he was faced with a fait accompli. Grey cleverly suggested the new Prime Minister go to his Cabinet to secure authorisation for the conversations knowing Campbell-Bannerman dared not risk his new Government with the possibility of a split in his party. The Cabinet never found out about the conversations, formally authorised by Grey and which continued to be developed under his watch, until November 1911, after the death of Campbell-Bannerman and his replacement by Asquith.

Edward Grey, himself, never sought Cabinet approval for these military conversations between British staff officers and the French, justifying secrecy by suggesting that these conversations did not involve an actual solid commitment to fighting in any war that might occur, and therefore nobody need know. Maurice Hankey, Secretary of the Committee of Imperial Defence and then War Cabinet Secretary, noted that they "took place in the utmost secrecy":

*"No reports were made to either Cabinet or Committee of Imperial Defence about them. Plans drawn up by the General Staff as a result of these secret conversations were communicated to the Committee of Imperial Defence but the conversations themselves were never alluded to. It was not until six*

*years later and after two general elections had taken place, that Grey in 1912 took the Cabinet into his confidence in the matter.”* (The Supreme Command, p.62-3)

Hankey, "the man of secrets" who knew everything, revealed that:

*“Grey and Haldane in their memoirs make a strong technical case for these conversations, without which military co-operation on the Continent could only have taken place in an improvised form and with disastrous loss of time. But the better the case the easier it should have been to carry the Cabinet in the decision. As it was, a considerable amount of suspicion was aroused among members of the Cabinet who were not ‘in the know’, and some of this was directed against the Committee of Imperial Defence, which was completely innocent in the matter; Morley frequently cross-examined me on subject but, as I had no precise knowledge, I was unable to inform him.”* (p.63)

Prime Minister, Asquith, Foreign Secretary, Grey and War Minister, Haldane denied all knowledge to Parliament of the arrangements being made, using very careful language that conveyed the impression that nothing was being done that committed England to war on Germany in conjunction with France (and Russia).

Grey's attitude to unwelcome questions from Liberals in Cabinet and Parliament about his conduct of Foreign Policy is summed up in a letter he wrote to his Undersecretary at the Foreign Office, Thomas Sanderson:

*"...one of the difficulties that exists with colleagues is to convince them there are such things as brick walls; the most certain way of doing this is to let them run their heads against them."* (K. M. Wilson, The Policy of the Entente, p.172)

And so Grey stonewalled, with the support of the Unionist Opposition.

By 1911, with Campbell-Bannerman gone, significant War planning had taken place within the War Office, Army and Navy and it had begun to be co-ordinated by the Committee of Imperial Defence. Hankey had started to compile his War Book - the instruction manual for every branch of State to know what needed to be done on a Declaration of War.

The Cabinet had still not been informed of the War planning when the Foreign Minister made a significant speech to the leaders of the Dominions instructing them to go back to their Colonies and prepare for military operations against Germany in Africa and the Pacific on a future Declaration of War. Hankey noted that in Grey's speech to the Imperial Conference in 1911 *"we find the underlying cause of our intervention in the Great Wars of 1914 and 1939."* (p.129)

The gist of Grey's speech is the Balance of Power: He said that Britain would always wish to involve itself in a war with a European Power or group of Powers who had the ambition of a "Napoleonic policy". By this he meant that a preventative war would be waged against any Power that England believed was attempting to unite Europe so that Britain no longer had any allies on the Continent to use in its traditional Balance of Power policy. The development of what Grey called "one great combination in Europe, outside which we should be left without a friend" was a situation which he was not about to allow develop without war.

At the Imperial Conference Grey also gave the Liberal argument for acting in an aggressive way: If a situation were to occur without British intervention to prevent it

England would have to pay for ships not just to a Two Power Standard but to a Five Power Standard to "keep the command of the sea." (Britain in taking Grey's gamble subsequently lost the command of the sea and dramatically increased its balance of payments deficit by ten-fold, crippling it financially for the action required to police the world it had gained after it had won its Great War.)

The Redmondites, in August 1914, presented the Great War on Germany as a great democracy going to war against the "Prussian Oligarchy". But the "great English democracy" did not plan, organise or arrange the Great War on Germany. It was the work of the political and military oligarchy in the British Foreign Office and Committee of Imperial Defence, supervised by a small Liberal Imperialist coterie, working effectively behind the back of the democracy.

The semblance of a democratic parliament existed, but as Casement notes the guidance of Foreign Policy would not be entrusted to it in the democratic age. That was the essence of the Liberal Imperialist movement. The continuity of Foreign Policy which they brought about was not the continuation of the policy of 1815-1905 but the continuation of Foreign Policy guided by an elite, who were determined on a great discontinuity - the re-orientation for War on Germany.

As Casement notes Gladstone attempted to make Foreign Policy a party issue and raised a big campaign within civil society over the "Bulgarian Horrors". But having won an election on working up the masses he then thought better of it.

It was the fear that the democracy might interfere with Foreign Policy that led to the establishment of the Committee of Imperial

Defence by the Unionist Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, and the ensuring that Edward Grey became Foreign Minister, so that continuity of Foreign Policy was maintained across administrations. It was the thing that the ABC etc. articles made a great point of addressing, so that Russia and France could be assured of England's continued commitment the military conversations which had just begun and support in a future war on Germany, whatever the management.

The Foreign Office maintained the privilege of acting in secret and retained the right to report Treaties, either not at all, or only in such parts as it deemed advisable, to Parliament. Parliament was only given the right to question such arrangements if it found out about them first, and then it could only question the Foreign Minister in formal interrogatories. General questions could be put to him, as to whether a Treaty had been made or not, but he was not obliged to reveal its terms, if he chose not to. In the period from 1909 Grey was very evasive and used tricky language to disguise what was happening in the background, to Parliament. Formal, open treaties were avoided in favour of secret commitments and debts of honour. Foreign Policy was kept close to the chest of those who confided their policy solely to the memory and honour of fellow gentlemen.

A good insight into the mind of Grey is given in a memo sent in January 1906 at the time of the Moroccan crisis, to Sir Francis Bertie, the British Ambassador in Paris, concerning the position that should be taken to the French request for a formal assurance Britain would fight alongside them in a coming war on Germany:

*"Much would depend as to the manner in which war broke out between Germany and France. I did not think people in England*

*would be prepared to fight to put France in possession of Morocco. They would say that France should wait for opportunities and be content to take time, and that it was unreasonable to hurry matters to the point of war. But if, on the other hand, it appeared that the war was forced upon France by Germany to break up the Anglo-French 'entente', public opinion would undoubtedly be very strong on the side of France. At the same time M. Cambon must remember that England at the present moment would be most reluctant to find herself in a great war..." (FO 371/70)*

The British position that "...it was unreasonable to hurry matters to the point of war" could only be understood by the French as confirming that Britain was predisposed and was willing to fight a great war against Germany under the right circumstances and right moment, after thorough preparations had been fully made. The preparations that Grey had begun with the secret conversations. And it impressed on the French the importance of British public opinion for the Liberal Imperialists. The major obstacle to the fighting of a Great War was, for Grey, the attitude of the Liberal rank and file. Grey was determined to participate in a European war against Germany at the right moment but his desire was for a united front to be shown to the Germans by the country. Only such a united front would maintain the Liberal principle of voluntarism and ward off Unionist demands for Compulsory military service.

Senior members of the Liberal Cabinet only became aware of the contingencies for War the Foreign Secretary and the Liberal Imperialist coterie had made in November 1912, when Grey finally revealed the conversations with the French General Staff to them. But they were kept sweet by Grey's argument that the conversations were

conditional and non-binding in character. While the pacifist element in the Cabinet were left to feel that they had achieved something by preventing an obligatory alliance with the French from taking place, Grey gained the Cabinet's consent to what was actually taking place. And this Grey communicated immediately to the French - who realised its importance in removing the potential situation of half the British Cabinet being only made aware of the war plans of their government on the eve of war, and a revolt occurring at the decisive moment. It also had the great advantage of enabling the military contacts with the French to feel more in their plans and to be able to develop them more fully in the knowledge that they would not be found out by an outraged Cabinet and suddenly disowned.

There had been suspicions and criticism of Grey's conduct of Foreign Policy through 1909-11 among some Liberal backbenchers and John Dillon of the Irish Party. Important questions had been asked in Parliament, which the Foreign Secretary evaded. But once the Home Rule struggle developed between the Liberal Government and the Unionist Opposition with the introduction of the 1912 Bill Liberal suspicion of Grey was dissipated, criticism began to cease and the desire to probe his secret dealings and arrangements ended. The Gladstonian Liberals acquiesced to Grey's Foreign Policy - which was declared to be conducted in the interests of peace but which they suspected to be something else - through party loyalty in the intensifying struggle with the Unionists that culminated in the near civil war over Irish Home Rule.

The Gladstonian Liberals found themselves in the same dilemma over Grey's Foreign Policy as the Irish Party were in over Home Rule, in relation to the Liberal Imperialist leadership. If they voted against the

Government they brought all their desired social reforms and Irish Home Rule down with it and let the Unionists in, and everything was thrown away. So they supported the Liberal Imperialist naval expenditure on the "better the devil you know basis" not realising they did not know the devil at all.

W. T. Stead was one of the great mobilisers in the "Bulgarian atrocities" back in 1876. The famous and influential Liberal journalist who drowned on the Titanic, began to suspect all was not what it seemed with Edward Grey, by 1910. Stead was shocked at Grey's failure to defend International Treaties during the Italian assault on Libya in 1911. Britain had insisted upon and made these treaties, which formed the Public Law of Europe and which previous Foreign Secretaries had defended through war or the threat of it, particularly in relation to the Tsar.

Stead was appalled that a constant of British Foreign Policy - the guarantees England had made in relation to the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire in the International Treaties it had signed up to in 1856, 1871 and 1878 - was being abandoned with the failure to follow through on its pledges to go to war to defend it. The Treaty of Berlin and Cyprus Convention were being undefended for the first time by a British Foreign Minister and Italian aggression was being appeased.

Stead was an unlikely defender of the Ottomans. He described himself as the greatest Gladstonian "bag and baggage anti-Turk alive". But he thought that something strange was afoot when Grey was acting, or not acting, in the destruction of the framework of stability that England had put in place with the other European Powers over the last half century. Stead published

Tripoli and the Treaties; or Britain's duty in this war, a book protesting Italy's invasion of Ottoman Libya and asking why Britain was not lifting a finger to protest or prevent it.

Stead smelt a rat and instinctively knew that something that really threatened the peace and stability of Europe was afoot. But although Stead could not see the real reason behind Grey's actions in relation to the Ottoman Empire he was observing a momentous revolution in British Foreign Policy, presided over by Grey, that was tearing up the Treaties on which the peace of Europe and beyond rested and which ultimately led to the Great War on Germany and Ottoman Turkey.

For twenty years Stead had urged on Britain a revolution in its Foreign Policy. He believed that a settlement with Russia was indispensable to peace in Europe. In 1907 that agreement had taken shape with a settling of accounts in the Great Game. Edward Grey sold the agreement in England as a peace policy and that was music to the ears of Stead and the Liberals, who despite their detestation of 'Russian autocracy' were prepared to celebrate the agreement as securing the peace of the world.

In 1911 Stead could not connect Grey's activity, or lack of it, in relation to Libya, to this policy because how could his heart's desire be producing something altogether different? And that very much gets to the heart of Sir Edward Grey.

What greatly facilitated War in 1914 was the peculiar nature of British politics between 1911 and 1914. Grey and the Liberal Imperialist leaders of the Government utilised the Tory and Press attacks on them to beat down their own Radicals and continue on the course they had set unmolested by Parliament. In the same way

they occupied the Gladstonian anti-war element by letting them have their way against the Tories in the domestic sphere, whilst they procured the Irish Party as loyal allies through the Home Rule struggle.

Once the Home Rule fight was joined, the Liberal Backbench and Irish Party settled into a passive contentment with Imperial Foreign Policy. By August, 1914 the Irish Party had become a virtual annexe of the Liberal Party. Having gone the whole way on Home Rule together, Redmond and his colleagues were in the pockets of Grey and the Liberal Imperialist coterie and they made the supreme sacrifice in August 1914 at the vital hour.

As Casement pointed out, Edward's Grey's slippery Foreign Policy, that could never be pinned down, greatly oiled the wheels of war. Grey's insistence on maintaining England's freedom of action and refusal to agree to a formal alliance with his allies against Germany was to have a crucial effect in July 1914. Of all Germany's opponents, only Britain had the freedom to stay out of any escalation once mobilisations for war had begun. However, at the same time, Grey would have understood that Britain was the one power which could determine the entire character of the conflict if it chose to participate. Only Britain had the power to turn a limited European conflict into a World War.

Grey's activity, or rather non-activity, during the crisis of July/August 1914 encouraged the development of a conflict which, by England joining it, turned it from being a purely European contest involving Germany and Austro-Hungary against Serbia, Russia and France into a conflict involving humanity at large.

Grey's insistence on Britain's freedom of action was the major element of uncertainty in the situation that had the effect of lubricating the war. During the critical few days at the end of July, Britain had in great measure the power to determine the course of events in Europe and the future of the world. If Grey had openly declared his intention to commit Britain in support of France that would have exerted considerable influence on German behaviour, which would in turn have greatly influenced Austria. Austria might well have warded off Russian mobilisation by taking a different attitude to Serbia. Or, if Grey had declared an intention to be neutral under specified conditions, that would have influenced French behaviour in drawing back, discouraging Russia.

But Grey chose to do neither of these things. Instead, Grey's non-committal gave the Germans hope that Britain would remain neutral, and encouraged the Kaiser to back Austria, whilst discreetly signalling to the French and Russians Britain's intentions if they remained on course for the War that had been planned over a decade.

After Austria had declared war on Serbia both sets of alliances made representations to Edward Grey to determine his position. The Germans argued that if England declared it would remain neutral, France and Russia would dare not to fight. The French and Russians argued that if England declared she would side with them, Germany and Austria would at once back down. Grey decided to do neither of these things and maintained his policy of fatal ambiguity in Britain's position. Sir Edward, by his deliberate inactivity encouraged neither side to draw back, and instead, manoeuvred both alliances to war. He was either the master puppeteer or the most incompetent of men.



Grey did not have a position that the other European states could take account of when deciding what to do. It looked like indecisiveness on his part at the critical juncture and it has become customary to say that Britain drifted into the War with an honourable man doing his bit but failing in the face of inevitability.

But it was nothing like that at all. Grey, Asquith, Haldane and Churchill had all decided a week before the Declaration of War that, in the event of a conflict occurring in Europe, Britain would take part in it. They calculated the chain of events and the drift, encouraged it to occur, and then in the time-honoured fashion of the Balance of Power strategy, they entered the European war as part of a military alliance against Germany.

It was at this point that the ambiguous nature of the Anglo-French Entente he had constructed came into its own for Grey. There were tight treaty obligations existing between France, Germany, Austria and Russia, which would draw them into any war that might break out among any two of the parties. Britain was the only real free agent in the situation and was not bound by treaty to join forces with France or anyone else. Grey had left his options open and Britain was not under any obligation to take part in the war. Britain could afford to let a European conflict run its course and sit back and watch the war run its course, without risking loss to itself, if it chose.

But it decided that the great opportunity had arrived to cut down Germany to size and play for higher global stakes.

The type of arrangement Grey had constructed with France, with no formal commitment, was open to being easily misinterpreted by Germany and could leave her miscalculating in the situation. A

preventative open alliance, rather than the vague and semi-secret understandings would have been sensible if Grey had really stood for peace in the world. But Grey's policy during the crucial week had the effect of a strategic deception on the Germans that encouraged them into war by making them delude themselves that Britain would stay out of it.

The trickiest problem the Liberal Imperialists at the head of the British Government still faced was in bringing the bulk of their party with them in making War on Germany. Insurance was taken out in case this was not achieved. The Liberal Imperialist "inner cabinet" opened up secret negotiations with the Unionist leaders in the week before the British Declaration of War. Asquith, Grey and Haldane calculated that if they could not persuade their Liberal colleagues to go to war, they would have to enlist the Unionists in a coalition to take it on.

The years of meticulous and secret War planning by the State had to be revealed to the Cabinet, Parliament and country at some stage. It was important that it was done so at the vital moment of decision, in the most favourable of circumstances. The War planning was a joint Liberal Imperialist/Unionist venture in which Balfour was intimately involved. When the right crisis emerged in July 1914 a letter was obtained by Grey from the Unionist front bench pledging support for a War on Germany, whatever the circumstance.

Grey and Asquith's most powerful weapon against Cabinet dissent was the threat of immediate coalition government - with the people who had been threatening the Liberals with civil war over Irish Home Rule only weeks earlier. The letter, produced to the Cabinet, enabled Grey to ensure the bulk

of the Liberals supported the War - because not to do so would have resulted in the fall of their Government. The War would still have been declared on Germany for Balance of Power reasons but as a Liberal Imperialist/Unionist coalition war rather than a Liberal War.

It is very important to remember that when Grey made his famous speech on 3rd August, the Germans had not entered Belgium. But formal sanction had been given by the Cabinet to the mobilisation of the British fleet and the immediate mobilisation of the army and reserves, although no decision had been taken to send an ultimatum to Germany, let alone Declare War.

Belgium was the difference between a united Liberal Government making War on Germany and a Coalition of Liberal Imperialists and Unionists declaring it on Germany, leaving a Liberal opposition to it.

Belgium was not as neutral as it was suggested. It was well known in Belgian governing circles, thanks to the efforts of Grey, that England was pursuing a secret policy of War against Germany. The Belgian Ambassadorial record tells us this. The Belgian State was really part of the political front against Germany and a kind of unofficial member of the Entente, that had to remain formally neutral to lure the Germans in. Belgium had its own war aims of an Imperial kind - and subsequently did very well out of the spoils of victory in 1919. Prior to 1909, the Belgian army numbered 100,000 men recruited by volunteering. In 1912 Belgium adopted a military programme raising the war strength of its army to a massive 340,000. In 1913 the Belgian Parliament introduced the principle of universal compulsory service, in preparation to meet her obligations and responsibilities

to her 'allies.' In August 1914, Belgium was able to put a larger army in the field than Britain - despite, in theory, being a neutral country.

When W.T. Stead visited Belgium in 1888, he took it for granted that it would be implicated in any future European conflict - despite its supposed 'neutrality'. He described not the "poor little Belgium" of future British war propaganda but a highly militarised society at the centre of the world's arms industry. And Stead made it clear that if there was a war between France and Germany an attack by either nation would have to cross Belgian territory if it was to be a success because since the Franco-Prussian War "*the two Powers have been busily engaged in rendering their respective frontiers impassable, by constructing lines of fortresses against which an invading army from the other side will break its head in vain*". (The Truth about Russia, p.2)

The Liberal press did not believe there was any treaty obligation binding England to protect the neutrality of Belgium. Both the Manchester Guardian and Daily News debated the matter on 1st August 1914 and quoted Lords Derby and Granville, the architects of the treaties in 1839 and 1870, to the effect that:

*"Such a guarantee has...the character of a moral sanction to the arrangements which it defends rather than that of a contingent liability to make war. It would no doubt give a right to make war, but would not necessarily impose the obligation. And that is the view taken by most international lawyers. We are, therefore, absolutely free; there is no entanglement with Belgium."*

The government's legal advisers did not believe there was any treaty obligation

binding England to protect the neutrality of Belgium. The Treaty of 1839 only bound the signatories not to violate Belgian neutrality themselves. It did not in any way bind them to intervene to protect Belgian neutrality. The Treaty's purpose was to maintain the separation of Belgium from Holland and did not take into consideration the matter of military incursions. From Britain's point of view, as Lord Loreburn, the former Lord Chancellor, pointed out, the objective was simply that Belgium "*should be a perpetually neutral state. We bound ourselves, as did the others, not to violate that neutrality, but did not bind ourselves to defend it against the encroachment of any other Power.*" ("How the War Came", p.420).

Belgium was one of the most brutal and reactionary of the Imperialist powers. One of its possessions in Africa was referred to, before the war in Britain, as "The Congo Slave State", where the Belgians worked millions of natives to death.

Casement had exposed the "Congo Slave State" that Belgium had been operating in the Congo nearly a decade before. He expected Edward Grey to do something about it in the moment of exaltation after the great Liberal triumph of 1906. There was also the belief that given the new Liberal Foreign Minister was of the Earl Grey family and the Prime Minister Grey had sponsored the Bill abolishing the slave trade a century earlier he would have some reason to pursue the issue. Britain had means of applying pressure through the Berlin Conference of 1884 which established a set of principles for regulating European behaviour in exploiting the Africans.

However, Edward Grey refused to pressurise or sanction the Belgians, instead demanding that they annex the Congo Free State that

King Leopold was ruling as a private fiefdom, to make it into the Belgian Congo.

The Foreign Office, mindful that strong criticism of the Belgians might make them noncompliant for British purposes, made use of Casement's report to ensure that Belgium would resist a German march-through in any Franco-German War. The Belgian Congo remained in August 1914, to all extensive purposes, what it had been under Leopold's Congo Free State. But everything was forgiven and forgotten and the Belgians were rewarded by Britain through an extension of their African territories in 1919.

Knowledge of these things would have convinced Casement that Belgium was merely an excuse for War on Britain's part, a War it was intending to fight anyway. And Casement might have been mindful of a letter he had written to E.D. Morel, the foremost campaigner on the Congo, in July 1909, urging Morel to lay off general criticism of Sir Edward Grey's general direction of Foreign Policy. (Donald Mitchell, "The Politics of Dissent", p.90)

In the Foreign Secretary's report to Parliament on what he had been doing to keep the peace, Grey made it clear that the Government intended to make war on Germany, in alliance with France and Russia. Grey's speech was regarded as momentous and a defining moment for those who heard it. But in its presentation of the Government's case it was fumbling and evasive and it skirted around the fundamental issue of the nature of Britain's obligation to France. Grey had repeatedly told Parliament that it was entirely free of continental entanglements or obligations, which might require it to participate in a European war. And whilst the Foreign Secretary finally revealed the historical development of the military conversations

that had taken place between the British and French general staffs since 1905, he stopped short of arguing that they entailed any obligation to act. He cited documents, leaving out crucial sentences that would have revealed the true nature of the arrangements he had made. And he made an appeal to the individual consciences of the Members, and the “debt of honour” to France which his policy had entailed and he made it clear that he felt it was in the national interest that Britain should save France from defeat.

Grey’s stumbling and disjointed speech was mistaken for honesty and indecision at a moment of great decision. It was described as “solemn” and “sombre”, discounting questioning, and it successfully conveyed the impression that here was a man desperately struggling for peace against all odds, and the sad inevitability of British intervention. Nothing could be further from the truth. But impression, rather than thought and reasoning, meant everything that day.

Grey described the situation as very grave, although he said there was one silver lining amongst the clouds – the situation in Ireland, where the European crisis had over-ridden the Home Rule crisis. This was where the issue of Irish Home Rule again intruded. The Liberal backbenchers, brought to the point of civil war against the Unionists over Irish Home Rule, were loathe to see the Liberal Government fall with its Home Rule Bill. This would have also have had the effect of the Irish dividing the State in a very dangerous situation.

And so up rose John Redmond, offering the alternative of a united State, backed by the Irish. With Redmond came the moral propaganda of the Home Rulers against Germany - the people England had most wronged historically were on Britain's side in the great moral issue to be decided by

War. Liberals, who had previously severely doubted the wisdom of supporting such a British intervention and who opposed it up to the vital hour, now had a righteous war that they could feel good about. Irish Home Rule, the cause of Gladstone, could get on the Statute Book. Liberalism could stay united and the tricky Liberal Imperialists who had engineered the moral dilemma could be prevented from joining the Conscriptionist warmongers. It could be a different war, of good versus evil, of right versus wrong, rather than a Balance of Power militarist adventure.

Grey might have been a Liberal Imperialist but he had enough of the Gladstonian Liberalism within him to prefer such a War. He was a Liberal, after all, and like all liberals he wanted to go to War with a good conscience.

The Liberal Imperialists who planned the War imagined a War something on the lines of that conducted against Napoleonic France a century before, albeit bigger in scale. The Royal Navy was to dominate the seas, blockading Germany into starvation, whilst the French, assisted by a relatively small British army, on one flank and the “Russian Steamroller,” on the other, flattened the German lines. Meanwhile British Colonial forces would seize Germany’s overseas possessions. They resisted calls for Conscription and hired General Kitchener to raise a gigantic volunteer army.

However, the war the Liberals imagined quickly got out of hand. It then had to be either escalated or called off, when the Germans proved a tougher nut to crack than was imagined. There would be no limited liability this time. And, in any case, how could a War fought against Evil be called off and compromise be made with the Devil depicted in Liberal War propaganda to salve

the consciences and raise the volunteer armies?

By late 1915, when Casement was writing his article on Sir Edward Grey, it had become evident in England that escalation was needed at home as well as abroad. A different kind of War, involving the full mobilisation of the country, was necessary, which the Liberal Government was not predisposed to wage.

Grey and the other Liberals had retained too much of the laissez faire attitude to be able to see through the project they had begun. (It is worth recording that although Lord Esher was strongly associated with the Liberal Imperialists, particularly Asquith and Haldane, he felt that they had enough Gladstonian Liberalism in them to disable them when it came to fighting the Great War they had Declared. Others, with more vigour, were needed to take on the task and he began to organise the necessary transition to Lloyd George etc.) Casement was mistaken in his view that Grey would remain at the head of State.

The Liberal answer to the Unionist demand for Conscription at home and to fight the Great War in a thoroughgoing manner, was to instead attempt to mobilise neutral countries in Britain's service. It was the Liberal objective, whilst preventing Compulsory service in England, to spread the Great War, by enlisting other peoples into England's War through a combination of fierce moral propaganda, irredentist bribery and naval/military pressure.

But it was not enough for what was declared to be at issue by the Liberals in the War to suffice and the Unionist Opposition began to gain the moral upper hand in the country as the War went increasingly badly.

The Liberals placed a moral duty on others to fight the "war for civilisation" that they would not fight themselves. Pressure was then applied to Italy, Romania, Bulgaria, Greece and others to bring them into the War. Setting the Balkans and the Middle East ablaze was done without a thought. And many paid dearly for their services to Britain's Great War.

Unionist contempt for Liberalism was given traction by the failure of the Liberal Government, which had launched the "Great War in for civilisation" and which failed to impose on the citizen a duty proportionate to the cause it was defending. Conscription was clearly a requirement of the Great War that the Liberal Government had mounted, but they continued to believe that given the Allied numerical superiority a limited war conducted on Liberal principles, and mainly waged by the Royal Navy, would be sufficient to dispose of Germany.

In persisting in fighting the Great War with volunteers the Liberal Government completely debased the idea of "voluntarism" by fostering a campaign of moral harassment that forced all but those with the strongest wills to enlist, at home and abroad.

Casement saw the first manifestations of this in the "Armenian Massacres" which appeared in British propaganda, courtesy of Lord Bryce, who had had an involvement with Casement in his earlier exposures of Belgian atrocities in the Congo.

Casement remembered the "Bulgarian atrocities" which had involved an utterly unsuccessful insurrection which had then produced a successful result due to Great Power intervention. It became a template for the Armenian revolutionaries - insurrection, Ottoman counter-measures/massacres, Great

Power intervention. Casement believed that the Armenians were facilitated by the tricky Sir Louis Mallet at the British Embassy in Istanbul and the Foreign Office. Sir Edward Grey had overturned the British Foreign Policy of a century, summed up in the phrase "The Russians shall not have Constantinople" to award the Tsar the city in return for a lend of the "Russian Steamroller" against the Germans. The Armenians were to be the cannon-fodder in a diabolical scheme played for the highest stakes that would involve the destruction of the Ottoman State and the unleashing of passions that would result in the destruction of large historic communities.

As Casement wrote in late 1915 Serbia was being defeated, Bulgaria had joined the enemy, Roumania and Greece had resisted British pressure and stayed out of the War, the Gallipoli Peninsula was about to be humiliatingly evacuated after a failed invasion the loss of 30,000 men, and the Turks had reinforced Mesopotamia.

Sir Edward Grey had claimed to be acting in defence of a supposed system of International Law when it had declared Great War on Germany for marching through Belgium. But in 1915 it had embarked on an Imperialist land grab in the Middle Eastern part of the Ottoman Empire and was making an attempt to force the Greek Government to abandon its neutrality, landing an army on its neutral territory at Salonica. England was making War on two states that were obstructing its Imperial ambitions in the name of International Law, in defiance of the principle of neutrality it was supposedly fighting its Great War for.

This was the political/military context within which Casement wrote his article about Sir Edward Grey.

Just after Casement penned his article, on December 11, 1915 Lord Esher met Grey and recorded in his Diary:

*"Edward Grey's appearance shocked and distressed me... I am afraid his health will not last out the war... he hankers after peace, which he thinks might come sooner than people expect, owing to universal exhaustion. On the other hand he cannot imagine or devise any terms of peace unless Germany admits defeat.*

*"I had a very long talk with him and was more than ever impressed by his worthiness to maintain the honour and dignity of our country. He is like Castlereagh in his truly British temperament, and in his hatred of shabbiness and trickery."*

A year later, in December 1916, Grey resigned with Asquith as the Lloyd George/Unionist Government took over the running of the War. Grey felt contented that the Foreign Ministry was in good hands as he handed it to Arthur Balfour, who had helped arrange for Grey to be Foreign Secretary a decade before.

Balfour saw the thing that he had tentatively begun, which Grey had facilitated in his decade as Foreign Secretary but had failed of complete, through to fruition.

On March 27, 1932 in a speech at the Albert Hall, on the subject of United Nations' inaction, Sir Edward Grey said: *"I do not like the idea of resorting to war to prevent war. What we wish is to prevent war. War is a disagreeable thing, even it is to be resorted to in order to prevent a war. It is too much like lighting a large fire in order to prevent a smaller one."* ("Grey of Fallodon", p.353)

Grey was a most effective deluder of others because he could delude himself so effectively. From 1905 he moved things all

the time toward War whilst preaching peace. He started a Great War without obviously trying. But by 1915 it was clear that his nature made him incapable of fighting it as thoroughly as a Great War deserved to be fought.

Roger Casement was really much too kind to Sir Edward Grey.

I think "lighting a large fire in order to prevent a smaller one" was exactly what Grey did in August 1914, when Britain intervened in a likely European war in order to make it into a World War. But the thought he had done this himself never crossed the mind of Sir Edward.

Pat Walsh

## **The Continental Times**

## **A PACIFIC BLOCKADE**

**13/12/1915**

A new disease appears to have been discovered in London. It was announced at a recent sitting of the Clerkenwell County Court when a medical certificate was handed to the presiding Judge to excuse a subject from his legal obligation on the ground that he was suffering from "War Depression".

We should say that War Depression is a widely extended malady to-day and probably has its acutest places exhibited in localities very remote from Clerkenwell.

We have known of cases of war depression in America, for instance, and a notable example is to be found in the depression of the English sovereign on the American exchange.

If gold be the "veins of war", then the English public shows a marked decline of vitality with the golden sovereign down from 4,90 to 4,57.

A new type of international malady is chronicled in the London press of the last few days to take its place beside "war depression" first discovered in the same quarter.

This latest form of the complex ailments, from which our civilization is suffering, is termed "a pacific blockade".

In some "Lost Words to Greece", uttered on the 22nd November, the Liberal "Daily News" defines in the following words the scope and aim of the new disease which has so providentially been discovered just when needed to aid the cause of the allies in the Balkans.

The specific object in view of those controlling the new international malady is to "assist" the King of Greece to arrive at a "decision" in conformity with their interests. To achieve this end the friends of Greece have devised a new weapon- we are told they have "ready to their hand a form of pacific pressure to which Greece is peculiarly susceptible."

This latest development of a war, begun on behalf of the violated neutrality of Belgium, takes the form of a scheme of "pacific pressure" to be exercised on Greek neutrality, which we are told should "be interpreted in a broad rather than a technical sense." In a technical sense it might be hard to defend, much less to define, but taken in a "broad" sense, its philanthropic aim is at once apparent. Greece is to adopt an attitude of neutrality based on a friendly blockade of her external trade calculated to "paralyse" the entire national life.

Her "extensive carrying trade" is to be brought to a standstill and her means of

existence out off by laying her "under a constricting grip at a moment when imports by land are unattainable."

The Euphemisms of the liberal "Daily News" are exchanged for the rattling of the bared sabre when the conservative "Daily Telegraph" takes up the case for "friendly neutrality" on the part of Greece.

The "pacific pressure" of the organ of the nonconformist Conscience becomes a very antithesis of a "peaceful blockade" in the mouth of the City money leaders. They have no hesitations of speech any more than of conscience. What the Greeks understand we are assured, and what must be applied to their case "is strength, not too refined in character, and a downright masterfulness which is first cousin to brutality."

Greece must be "under no illusions as to her position, if she chooses to oppose our projects and must be fully aware that a blockade would be ruinous to her trade, to her shipping and above all to her corn supplies."

The Allies mean to have their "way", we are told, "and will use all legitimate means to secure the objects at which they aim."

We are left in no doubt as to what "legitimate means" involve for this unhappy neutral State, but we should welcome a definition by the "Daily Telegraph", what illegitimate methods could be employed against a people whose sole desire is to maintain at once their neutrality and peace with their neighbours.

The "Daily Telegraph" assures its London readers that the French are popular with the Greeks "and so are the countrymen of Byron".

Byron came to aid Greece in a war of independence; "the countrymen of Byron"

to-day are doing their utmost to plunge Greece in a war of unexampled peril and disaster to all her future.

If Byron could say in his day "'tis Greece but living Greece no more", his fellow countrymen to-day are assuredly determined, that the strict fulfilment of the poet's words shall come to pass a century later.

Not content with occupying Greek territory and marching large forces through it in defiance of the protest of the Greek Government, these friends of Greece and of the small nationalities proceed to assail the very existence of the country they have lawlessly invaded and threaten it with everything short of open acts of war, if it will not "aid their projects."

**“Diplomaticus”**

#### **COMMENTARY BY PAT WALSH**

Roger Casement's article, 'A Pacific Blockade', was found in the Clare County Library (pp/1/48(1)). It was written by Casement on 27 November 1915 and published on 13 December. It is largely about the British/Allied violation of Greek neutrality during a Great War that England was originally claiming to fight because of a violation of Belgian neutrality.

As Casement noted:

"... a war, began on behalf of the violated neutrality of Belgium, takes the form of a scheme of 'pacific pressure' to be exercised on Greek neutrality."

On 5 October 1915, the British 10th and French 156th Divisions landed at Salonica without the permission of the Greek government on neutral Greek territory. On 23 October additional French and British forces invaded in an effort to force Greece into the Great War on the Allied side. The



original two Brigades were reinforced by larger forces until the British 22nd, 26th, 27th and 28th Divisions were occupying Greek territory.

What was the "Pacific Blockade" Casement was talking about? The following passage explains:

"Towards the end of 1902, Mr. Balfour, then Prime Minister, was interpellated in the House of Commons as to whether there could or could not be such a thing in international law as a pacific blockade. The immediate occasion for this was the joint action of Great Britain, Germany and Italy in blockading the coast of Venezuela without any formal declaration of war. According to the press dispatches from Germany, the United States had declined to submit to the position of a neutral on the ground that — the status of belligerency not existing — there could be no such thing as a pacific blockade, and Sir Charles Dilke demanded to know whether similar representations had been received at the British Foreign Office. Mr. Balfour answered: 'I think it is very likely that the United States will think there can be no such thing as a pacific blockade and I personally take the same view. Evidently a blockade does involve a state of war.' If the answer be somewhat vague as to the attitude of the United States, it at least pretty accurately reflects an objection once widely held by those who professed to speak with the voice of authority. 'Could there be a greater contradiction than to speak of a pacific blockade!' exclaimed Gessner in his *Le Droit des Neutres sur Mer*, published in 1865. To him, such a thing was a 'monstrous institution.' (Albert H Washburn, *Legality of the Pacific Blockade*, p.55)

Albert Hogan in a Preface to a 1908 book, *Pacific Blockade*, noted that

"It is strange that although Great Britain has been, perhaps more than any other nation, responsible for the practice, there is no work in the English language dealing with it at any length." (p.3)

The Royal Navy was undoubtedly the chief exponent of the "Pacific Blockade". It had originated the measure against Norway (1814) during the war against France and had also used it against Portugal (1831), Holland (1832-3), Cartagena (1834), New Granada (1837), the Argentine Confederation (1845-50), Greece (1850), Brazil (1862), Greece (1886), Zanzibar (1888-9), Crete (1897) and Venezuela (1902).

In 1902 Balfour described the "Pacific Blockade" of Venezuela as an act of war. As First Lord of the Admiralty during the Great War he instructed his Navy to impose it on neutral Greece.

England violated Greek neutrality on the first day of the War on Turkey by occupying the harbours of three Greek islands in the vicinity of the Straits. In justifying this action Britain came up with a very ingenious argument. It said that since these islands had been taken by Greece from Turkey in the Balkan Wars and so they were formally still part of the Ottoman Empire. So there was no violation of neutrality, there was simply a conquest of enemy territory.

On January 24, 1915, Edward Grey formally requested that the Greeks enter Britain's Great War, and in return, Greece would receive parts of Asia Minor.

Irene Willis is very perceptive on why Liberal England showed a great determination to draft in neutral countries to fight its Holy War on Germany:

“As the talk about conscription grew louder, the Liberals became increasingly interested in the mobilisation of other belligerents. The Conservatives were more concerned to conscript at home than abroad. But the Liberals’ dislike of compulsion did not extend to unwillingness to see it operated in other countries. Neither did their aforesaid interest in neutrality and in the attempt to localise the conflict incline them to discourage interventionist movements in Italy, Rumania and Greece. On the contrary the Liberal Press was most active in advertising war fervour in these countries and in pointing out the moral and material advantages which would accrue upon their entrance into the war.” (England’s Holy War, p.211)

English Liberalism was opposed to military conscription. A conscript army had been seen as a luxury for an island state without frontiers that only needed to dominate the seas to operate the world market. And it had become a principle of Liberalism to oppose it. That opposition in principle made it necessary, once the Germans had not been defeated quickly, to expand the War and get others to do the fighting for Britain – the fighting that the Liberal Party was reluctant to impose on its own citizens for fear of interfering in their freedoms. So began the process of intimidating and bribing other nations to fight to avoid Conscription at home.

While Liberal England hesitated to compel its own citizens to "Fight the Good Fight" it trumpeted its crusade around the world and went looking for surplus manpower to wage its Holy War. In looking for that manpower the British Government went to the neutral countries of Europe, carrying the message to their people that this was a War of Good versus Evil that it would be morally inexcusable for them to abstain from.

English Liberalism had to turn the War into a great moral crusade of Good versus Evil in order that its Gladstonian substance would support it. This meant that neutrality was almost impossible as countries had to be either ‘for’ or ‘against’ the "war for civilisation".

This really was an innovation in the conduct of war and gave the Great War its catastrophic character because an accommodation or peace could hardly be made with Evil, particularly for non-conformist Protestants, who made up a great deal of the Liberal rank and file. This moral aspect of Britain's Great War thwarted all efforts at peace, particularly those of Pope Benedict XV, who tried to put a stop to Europe destroying itself, but failed because the moral power of England trumped him.

The Liberal Imperialists favoured a policy of expansion of the War in a desperate attempt to win it. In France and Belgium the War had got bogged down into a static war of attrition where great casualties were being suffered. The thinking was that if the fringes of Europe, and even Asia, were set ablaze this would let others take the casualties and stretch the forces of the Central Powers wider and wider to weaken their lines. Then the breakthrough would occur on the Western Front.

Basil Thomson of the intelligence services, and later Scotland Yard, who acquired the Black Diaries which were used to blacken Casement's name as a sexual degenerate, wrote a book called *The Allied Secret Service in Greece*. In the early pages he describes the political situation in Greece at the start of the European War:

“Greece was in a state of internal peace which has been rare in her history. In 1913 she had emerged victorious from two consecutive Balkan wars in which her King

had led her so successfully in the field that her territory had been greatly enlarged. But her people were war-weary, and since the quarrel between Austria and Serbia seemed in no way to concern them, their feeling was for neutrality benevolent toward England and France. Their sympathies were with the Allies, and if the vital interests of Greece required the sacrifice, the great majority of people were resolved that their country should range herself on the side of the Allies... Not a voice was raised in favour of the Central Powers. No individual Greek could have been described as pro-German, for all the Greek material interests were linked with one or other of the Allied countries.” (The Allied Secret Service in Greece, p. 37)

Britain encouraged a great internal division in Greece to manoeuvre the peaceful country into the Great War.

Right from the outbreak of the Great War the Greek Premier, Eleftherios Venizelos, argued for an unqualified and unconditional Greek entry into the War on the side of the Entente. Venizelos, who had been an insurrectionist in Crete, wanted to use the War to advance Greek interests against the Ottoman Turks and he seems to have been made aware of the British plans to extend the conflict to the Ottoman Empire, even though it was neutral at this time (Churchill was forming a plan to involve the Greek Army in a naval attack on the Dardanelles at this moment and it seems to have been communicated to Venizelos).

Venizelos argued that Greece would never again be presented with an opportunity like the European War - the chance of fighting with so many powerful allies - to gain a “Greater Greece” in Asia Minor. He had as his ultimate dream the Megali idea - a large

Greek Empire across the Balkans and Asia Minor on the lines of Byzantium.

The Greek War of Independence created a Greek State with a majority of Greeks inside the territory of the new state but with a sizeable number of Greeks outside in colonies along the Black Sea and the coasts of Asia Minor. That presented the possibility of future Greek irredentist claims on Ottoman Turkey in Anatolia, where ancient Greek communities existed. The Greek contribution to the Ottoman Empire had been substantial and the Greek communities benefited in many areas of commerce, shipping and linguistics as well as enjoying privileged positions with the Porte. But the division between the free Greeks and the large communities of Greeks still inhabiting parts of the Ottoman Empire had implications for what happened to Greece between 1915 and 1922, since it inspired the dream of a “Greater Greece” taking in territories in Asia Minor at that point belonging to the Ottomans.

King Constantine of Greece who "had led her so successfully in the field that her territory had been greatly enlarged" whilst predisposed to the Allies, believed that it was in the interests of Greece that it remained neutral in the European War. He felt that the newly enlarged Greek State, which he himself had helped to enlarge, required a period of consolidation, and not war, if it was to incorporate and develop the new territories and people it had acquired in the course of the Balkan Wars in 1912-13.

The King believed that both Turkey and Bulgaria, the two countries which had issues with Greece regarding territory that the Greeks had prised off them in the wars would ultimately join the Central Powers and determined to keep Greece out of conflict with them. He also calculated that Britain

would be an unreliable ally and could not be trusted to make the military commitment necessary to make any gamble worth the risk.

Owing to Greece's geographical position her existence - and potential expansion - depended on the Powers who controlled the Mediterranean. Her large merchant marine could be destroyed, her islands captured and Athens easily shelled by anyone controlling the Sea. King Constantine, in refusing the Kaiser's overtures for help at the start of the War told him that "The Mediterranean lies at the mercy of the combined British and French fleets. Without being of any use to the Kaiser we should be wiped off the map." (The Allied Secret Service in Greece, p. 39)

King Constantine was well aware of the situation of the million or more Greeks inhabiting Constantinople and other parts of the Ottoman Empire, whose position would be made very difficult in the event of a full-scale conflict between Greece and Turkey.

Constantine, a trained military man, saw that such an adventure would be extremely unwise and, unlike his Prime Minister, he listened to military advice on deciding on military matters. The Chief of the General Staff, General Metaxas, who had been involved in compiling a report on taking and holding Western Asia Minor during the Balkan Wars believed that such an enterprise would be beyond the Greek Army. The General concluded that the basis of a Greek colonial venture would be the effete commercial classes of Greeks and Armenians in the vicinity of the town of Smyrna, who were surrounded by seven million hardy Turkish peasants. The long term prospects of survival of such a colony were not good. So Constantine, taking the advice of his Chief of Staff, informed the Entente that in line with his policy of

"benevolent neutrality" he would not fight Turkey unless Greece itself was attacked.

As a result of his stand on neutrality King Constantine was denounced as an agent of the Kaiser by British propaganda, including in the Greek newspapers owned in England. Because he was married to the Kaiser's sister Constantine was handily depicted as the Kaiser's man, although "Tino" had, in fact, resisted his brother-in-laws' efforts to court him.

Assuming the Greek Premier could deliver Greek participation in the Great War, Sir Edward Grey offered him a vague promise of "important territorial concessions in Asia Minor" in return for Greek military assistance in January 1915. Britain thus attempted to draw Greece into its Great War on irredentist grounds, as it did with Italy four months later.

The British Foreign Secretary was very careful with his offer, however. The Dardanelles expedition was being planned in England and Grey judged it imperative to promise Constantinople to the Tsar, something that was later formalised in the secret Treaty of London (Constantinople Agreement). Grey explained his actions thus, in a State Paper of November 1916:

"Russia would never have stood five months of reverses in 1915 but for the hope of Constantinople. Even now the assurance of it is absolutely essential to keep Russia up to the mark." (G.M.Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon, p. 282)

The Tsar had been brought into the Entente/alliance against Germany with the understanding that perhaps "the Russians shall have Constantinople" with British acquiescence. Through this indication to the Tsar England acquired the Russian

Steamroller, vital to the substantial military force needed on Germany's eastern flank that an alliance with France and Britain, a largely maritime power, could not provide. But Grey knew that the basic reason why Russia was fighting and sacrificing lives was for Constantinople and with the British forcing the Straits, cards had to be finally placed on the table.

Grey's biographer Trevelyan notes that for this reason although Britain desired Greece's entry into the War the Greeks had to be kept well away from the Dardanelles and Constantinople "or Russia would go out of the war" (p.282). England needed the Tsar's massive armies much more than the small Greek army. The Russians vetoed any involvement of the Greeks at the Dardanelles, knowing that Venizelos aspired to possess the city of Constantinople for Greece. So Grey declined Venizelos's offer in March 1915 to help Britain take Constantinople.

Venizelos's imagination had been aroused by the offer of the British Foreign Secretary and the Greek Premier attempted to flesh out the detail for his King, arguing that Greece should cede Cavalla, in Eastern Macedonia, to the Bulgarians, to facilitate Britain's acquisition of allies and encourage the Bulgarians to join the Allies. Venizelos was aware that the concern of the King and General Staff was that Greece could be attacked by the Bulgarians whilst her army was off fighting elsewhere.

The King was against the ceding of Cavalla to the Bulgarians. It was the richest agricultural province within the Greek State and it had been hard won in the Balkan Wars from the Turks. Venizelos suggested to the King that trading Cavalla to the Bulgarians for a hundred times that amount of territory in Asia Minor would be good business and

that the Greek inhabitants of Cavalla could be used as colonists to maintain order among the Turks in the future Asia Minor colony.

Venizelos calculated that Greece would double its territory and gain another million to her population. But the General Staff still refused to have anything to do with it, seeing it as the utmost madness.

Venizelos offered three Greek Divisions to the Allies for the Dardanelles expedition, without the knowledge or authorization of the King or Cabinet. Even though the King was totally opposed to this the Premier led the British to believe that he had given his assent to it. When the Greek General Staff learnt that Venizelos had been offering their forces to England without thought of the military implications they were furious and Metaxas, the Chief of Staff, resigned in protest. He had made a systematic study of forcing the Dardanelles and had concluded that such an operation would be doomed to failure because of the strengthening of the Straits defences, the increased efficiency of the Turkish Army under German direction, and the advance warnings already given by the Royal Navy through its earlier attack on St. Patrick's Day.

Venizelos told the Greek cabinet that the Entente would be in Constantinople in a week and it was best not to miss the bus. There was some enthusiasm within the Greek Cabinet for adopting his proposal but the King stated he would abdicate if the Cabinet agreed to participate in the venture, saying he would rather step down than sanction such a disastrous course that would ruin Greece.

King Constantine and the General Staff were proved correct by the events in the Dardanelles as the implications of the Premier's plans became evident. The

Ottomans left their Greek citizens unmolested outside some vital strategic coastal areas, whilst the Armenians, who had mounted an Insurrection, were forced into migration from the eastern war zone.

The governor of Smyrna, Rahmi Bey, operated a remarkably tolerant administration toward the 45,000 Greek nationals in the city. Both in Smyrna and Istanbul the flags of the Allied nations were hung out and their victories celebrated openly by the Greeks and Armenians. Whilst England interned anyone suspected of being a racial German the Turks declared business as usual and only demanded that the Turkish born Greeks, many of whom spoke Turkish rather than Greek, be ready for army service. Most in Smyrna avoided it. The Armenians also remained unmolested. British Air Force bombing raids, specifically targeting the city's Turkish quarter, which killed dozens of people in May 1916, aimed to stir up community tensions but the city governor was able to keep order. (see Giles Milton, *Paradise Lost, Smyrna, 1922*, pp.72-4, p.86, and pp.92-4)

Venizelos finding his proposal for intervention in the War shot down resigned as Premier on 6th March 1915.

On the day of his resignation Allied representatives signed the secret Treaty in London, assigning Constantinople to Russia. The Czar placed a veto on the Greek offer of participation at Gallipoli, seeing the Greeks as a potential rival for the possession of the Byzantine capital. Because of the secret nature of this Treaty the Allied Powers did not communicate its terms to the Greeks. So they had to create a smokescreen around rejection of Venizelos's offer of help which involved black propaganda against the King.

After the resignation of Venizelos an interim administration was formed under Gounaris

which adhered to the same policy as the previous government. However, the new Government submitted proposals as a basis for discussion to the Allies concerning the conditions under which Greece might enter the War. The new Government, in conversations with the Entente, ascertained that Venizelos had exaggerated the vague territorial offer to Greece in Asia Minor made by Edward Grey finding the British Foreign Minister had only offered Smyrna and its hinterland rather than large tracts of Anatolia as he had claimed. So the new Greek administration sought clarification of the deal that might be on offer if Greece eventually decided to enter the War on a calculation of its own interests.

The Greek Government wanted the Allies to guarantee the territorial integrity of Greece after the War, the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire to secure any Greek gains in Asia Minor, and exact details of war materials and finance available to the Greeks, along with the defining of the territorial gains on offer to her. If these details were provided, Gounaris offered to fully commit to the War on the Allied side.

But the Entente preferred the Venizelos offer - unlimited Greek commitment for undefined objectives, and did not take any notice of the new, more limited, Greek offer.

There was good reason to show why great care was required in dealings with Britain. Serbia, the ally, and Greece, the neutral, found out that Grey had already made formal offers of their territories to Bulgaria to encourage her into the War. In the case of "gallant Serbia" this was an outrageous stab in the back, because it was, supposedly, for her integrity that the Entente had went into the European War. And in the case of Greece the Entente was offering the territory of a neutral state, and a friendly one at that, to another state that had always been inclining

toward the enemy (England had a much higher opinion of the Bulgars as fighters than the Greeks from their performances in the Balkan Wars).

The knowledge of this double and triple dealing brought the relations of the Entente Powers with the Gounares Government to an end.

However, the effect of the Venizelist offers was to create a situation whereby Venizelos began to regard himself alone as the national will of Greece personified and the Entente to regard Venizelos alone as synonymous with the national will of Greece. In countless British accounts of the time, including Churchill's and Esher's, Venizelos is described as "imaginative" and "far-seeing" while the King is portrayed as a short-sighted ditherer or enemy agent.

On August 3rd 1915 the Allies passed a note to the Greek Government calling them to cede Eastern Macedonia to Bulgaria on a promise of compensation in Asia Minor. This was an eleventh hour bribe to keep the Bulgarians out of the ranks of the Central Powers by offering them part of a country - Greece - the Allies had no jurisdiction over. However, in the meantime the Serbian leadership discovered the details of the secret Treaty of London whereby Italy was promised large areas on the Adriatic Coast (that the Serbs had their eye on for a Greater Serbia) in return for their entry into the War. This scotched Britain from offering any other Serbian territory to Bulgaria in order to bribe her into the War.

In September 1915 Bulgaria mobilised her army and signalled her intent to join the Central Powers. Grey offered Cyprus to Greece if she would join the War at this point, despite the Cyprus Convention. Treaties and long-standing international

agreements became mere "scraps of paper" when the bit came to the bit.

The Allied Ministers let it be known that if Greece refused to hand over Cavalla to the Bulgarians pressure would be brought to bear and to demonstrate this was no idle threat the Royal Navy began to detain Greek shipping and harass its life-blood of sea-borne trade, to show what was in store for the country if it resisted the English embrace.

King Constantine held his ground, but the Greek King's refusal to surrender territory for a Bulgarian bribe increased the Allied naval pressure on Greece.

Venizélos returned to power in August 1915 after the resignation of Gounaris. The Greek public were unaware of the manoeuvring that the ex-Premier had been doing behind the scenes with the Allies and saw him as the representative of a unified neutral Government, in unity with the King. The dispute over Greek neutrality between Venizelos and the King was seemingly patched up when Venizelos returned as Prime Minister, having accepted to serve in the Government under a policy of neutrality. The publication of the Allied demand for Eastern Macedonia had produced a wave of indignation in Greece and Venizelos would have found it very difficult to openly advocate joining the War at this point in time and remain in power. Despite advocating the very policy the Allies were now demanding of Greece he dared not endorse it publicly and it seemed as if he had bowed to the King's wisdom in affairs of State. Venizelos was, however, biding his time.

After the Bulgarians had begun to mobilise Venizelos urged the King to enter the War on the side of the Entente, using his election as a sign of the popular will. The King agreed to mobilise the Greek Army in

response to the Bulgarian mobilisation but refused to go any further than his stated position of armed neutrality.

At the start of the European War the question of Greece's stance in relation to Serbia had emerged. Greece had a mutual defence Convention with Serbia, due to King Constantine's efforts between the First and Second Balkan Wars. There were those in the Entente who hoped this Convention would bring Greek military assistance to the Serbs but it only provided for Greek assistance to Serbia, and vice-versa, in relation to a Bulgarian attack. This was tested when Austro-Hungary declared war on Serbia and Greece saw itself as having no obligations to the Serbians, unless Bulgaria entered the war against Serbia as well.

King Constantine had made an offer to the Allies in late August 1914 of aiding the Serbians with 180,000 men on strict condition that this army was not used anywhere other than in the immediate theatre of war, so that, in the event of a Bulgarian attack, it could be pulled back to defend Greece. This was done outside the Convention.

Bulgaria was neutral, but one of Constantine's concerns was that a Greek mobilisation would provoke a parallel Bulgarian mobilisation and an allying of Sofia with the Central Powers. Britain had the same concern, but had been secretly making plans for an offer of territory, at the expense of Greece and Serbia, to gain the Bulgarians as part of the Allies. So the King's offer was turned down by Edward Grey.

According to the 1913 Convention between Greece and Serbia the Serbs were required to supply 150,000 troops in the event of a conflict with Bulgaria. Under an annex to the

Treaty the two armies were to form a line facing north-east, with the Serbs taking the north flank and the Greeks the south. If one of the parties failed to take up their position the overall stipulations of the Convention were deemed to fall. But overall, the Convention was meant to defend Macedonia from Bulgarian attack and never envisaged to be applicable to deal with a conflict with the Austro-Hungarians, or a World War.

The Greek King had requested assistance from Serbia just before the Great War when he feared that the British building of two powerful battleships for the Ottomans would encourage Istanbul toward war with Greece. The Serbs told Constantine that the Convention was not applicable and Greece took it that it had been therefore abrogated - until England raised it as an issue in 1915.

Throughout late 1914/early 1915 when the Entente were trying to induce the Greeks to march to the aid of Serbia, and offering them Ottoman territory as an inducement to do so, the Greeks pointed out that they could not send their army to the north leaving Salonika open to attack from Bulgaria, and whilst they stayed put Bulgaria was unlikely to move. The Greeks urged the Serbs to abandon their line on the Danube, which was getting dangerously exposed, and to join them on a line against Bulgaria, which would activate the Treaty of 1913. This was sensible but the Serbs, encouraged by the praise heaped upon them for their effective resistance to Austria, got over-confident. Then, under pressure from the Allies, they declined to retreat.

With the Serbians fighting on the Danube line they were in no position to supply their armies. So Venizelos sought to use the Convention in another way to end Greek neutrality. Without the knowledge of the King or Cabinet he contacted the Entente in private inquiring if they were willing to



make up the Serbian contribution with French or British troops. The Allies, realising the opportunity to break the Greek's neutral status, replied immediately that they would send 150,000 soldiers. When King Constantine got wind of what was happening he warned Venizelos of the consequences of this violation of Greek neutrality, particularly since the activation of the Convention was only supposed to come into effect in the event of war with Bulgaria - and Bulgaria was still neutral. He argued that the landing of Entente troops in Greece was most likely to be the provocation that would bring the Bulgarians into the war. The Premier communicated the King's wishes to the Entente governments and that seemed to be that.

But the Entente, seizing the opportunity, went ahead and despatched an army to Salonika - in spite of the Greek Government's position of neutrality. Bulgaria then entered the war.

Compton Mackenzie, the famous novelist and then a British Intelligence Officer in Greece, described this duplicity as an example of Edward Grey's "capacity for self-deception" and "an example of Whig mentality." (Greek Memories, p.152)

As Casement pointed out the difference between Liberals and Unionists regarding Greece was one of form rather than substance. The Liberals, with their moral sensibilities and conscious of how they had been brought to support the War, talked of executing "a form of pacific pressure to which Greece is peculiarly susceptible" (Daily News, 22.11.15) and used "euphemisms" to minimise the aggression implied in such threats. The British action against neutral Greece was to merely "assist the King of Greece to arrive at a decision" - namely the right one. It was meant that the

Greeks "saw sense", which really means co-operating with the transient British interest.

English Liberalism had a soft spot for the Greeks partly due to the central part the Classics played in an Englishman's education. Manchester Capitalism had also developed an economic alliance with Greek merchants, backing Greek nationalism with the interests of the Baltic Corn Exchange. The Gladstones of Liverpool had entered into extensive commercial connections with Greek merchants and their trading networks, for the mutual benefit.

In the early nineteenth century the Greeks had become the chief carriers of merchandise in the Mediterranean and they monopolised the lucrative Black Sea trade in corn. They were the sailors of the Ottoman Empire and owned most of the Italian merchant marine.

However, from Britain's viewpoint their assets were also their vulnerable spot. The Royal Navy was very experienced in the seizure of maritime trade and had a speciality in starvation blockade. This is what its function was for more than a century when Britannia ruled the waves. On top of this Greek settlements were very exposed to the guns of British battleships due to the geography of the country.

The Tory/Unionist press was more forthright in its threats to the Greeks to do England's bidding - or else!

The diaries of the famous Liberal journalist C.P.Scott reveal the differences of opinion within the British State over how Greek neutrality should be dealt with. The Unionists were for conducting the War thoroughly and they for no nonsense military intervention. Lord Carson wanted an attack on Vienna mounted from Salonika. The Prime Minister Asquith was for intervention

in Greece if a popular movement existed that Britain could point to in order to justify intervention. Lloyd George was of the opinion that Venizelos needed British might to be applied in the general region in order that a popular movement against the King could be cultivated and to swing the Greek people behind him.

Sir Edward Grey was paralysed by his reliance on the Tsar and his Steamroller. The French were pushing for direct military action to coerce Greece but Grey was mindful "that to encourage a revolutionary movement against the King of Greece would be much resented by the Emperor of Russia and might in consequence have unfavourable influence on Franco-British relations with Russia." (September 1, 1916, Trevelyan, p.289)

In an interview with Gilbert Murray in January 1918 Grey also conceded that he had hesitated over the deposing of King Constantine because he feared Greece could not be defended after such an event (p.302).

Britain generally took the position that Greece was made by England and so it was under a moral obligation through a debt to its creator to do England's bidding.

England had had a long history of interference in the affairs of the Greeks and regarded this interference as a matter of routine. Arguing for further interference during 1916 Ronald Montague Burrows, Professor of Greek and Principal of King's College, London, noted:

"As we created Greece at Navarino, so we recreated it in 1863, and the letter of the original guarantee must be construed in the spirit of the Treaty of 1863, and of the interference in the internal affairs of Greece

which that Treaty crystallized." (The New Europe, 19th October, 1916.)

Professor Burrows was adviser on Greek affairs to the British Cabinet and simultaneously to Venizelos during 1915. The Encyclopaedia Britannica has this entry for him:

"He... was principal of King's College, London, from 1913 to 1920, the period when he devoted much time to modern Greek affairs. His plan for bringing Greece into World War I was adopted by the British Cabinet in 1915. A confidant and adviser to the Greek statesman Eleuthérios Venizélos, he was chosen to be the Greek provisional government's semi-official representative in London (1916)".

Greece had been part of the Ottoman Empire until the Greek War of Independence in the 1820s. Britain, with Lord Byron to the fore, had intervened in this war on the Greek's behalf in the decisive naval engagement, destroying the Turkish fleet at Navarino, and making a Greek victory possible. A French army completed the process.

In 1832 the Greeks had wanted a Liberal Republican State but they had been straight jacketed by a monarchy complete with foreign King by the guarantors who, at that time, not long after the French Revolution, did not want to promote liberal democracies in Europe. So the Greek King, to a great extent, was the representative of the three great Powers of Europe, because his position was derived from their power over Greece, and they were always inclined to believe he should be their man (or not be king at all).

Burrows pointed out the fact that the Greek King Otho had been forced into accepting a Constitution by Britain and when he had refused to abide by it he had been deposed in

1862. In 1863 England put Prince William of Denmark (father of King Constantine) on the throne of Greece and defined the political status of the Greek State as “a monarchical, independent and constitutional state” in a Treaty with Denmark.

At the time of the Crimean War, Greece, under King Otho, was in favour of going to war with Turkey on the side of Russia. But France and England, who were in alliance with Turkey against Russia, would not allow it. King Otho was told that strict neutrality was the only policy consonant with the interests of Greece. The Allies landed troops at Athens to compel obedience to their will. The Greek sovereign was put on notice for daring to adopt an independent Greek policy.

The Royal Navy operated periodic "Pacific Blockades" against the Greeks to rein in their irredentist passions when over-enthusiasm threatened to disturb Britain's relations with the Ottoman Empire. Greece was seen as the creature of England in the region and it is no wonder that a Greek State has found it so difficult to consolidate itself with such regular interference over more than a century (1830-1945).

King Constantine was portrayed in British propaganda as a pro-German for doing the opposite to King Otho and declaring his country neutral.

As Andre Siegfried observed:

“When circumstances alter, the British have the gift of adapting themselves very quickly to new conditions without dwelling upon what is past. Old principles, old ideas, old memories do not influence them. It is, however, very disconcerting to those of their associates who cannot change their attitude with the same facility.” (L’Angleterre d’aujourd’hui, p.19)

The difference between 1855 and 1915 was that at the former time the English and French compelled the Greeks to neutrality whilst in the latter they were attempting to compel the country to make war. But in both cases Greece was taken to have no independent existence, or an independent existence only when it suited.

Professor Burrows, who like many others regarded the Greek State as a creation of England, urged the Government he advised to keep up the tradition of interference, which, he argued, had apparently been given formal status by international Treaty. The Liberal Daily News concurred with this view declaring in its Leader of June 23rd 1916 that because England had freed the Greeks at Navarino, drafted their Constitution, and become the country’s guarantor, it was “warranted in taking any measures for the protection of their ward.”

Burrows was not an advocate of Grey's ultimatum to Greece. He was in favour of the British Government putting its money where its mouth was, recalling the Ambassador, and declaring open support for Venizelos. This course, if Grey had been prepared to openly take it, would have logically resulted in a Venizelist coup d’état and probably Greek civil war. But Grey, with enough Gladstonian sensibilities within him to paralyse his mind, did not feel predisposed to risking it.

Professor Burrows believed that England should have simply invaded Greece under Article VIII of the Protocol of 1830 that suggested: “No troops belonging to one of the contracting Powers shall be allowed to enter the new Greek State without the Consent of the two other Courts who signed the Treaty.” Since England, France and Russia had been the contracting Powers of Greek independence they had the right to

overrule that independence indefinitely, according to the Professor.

This was casuistry called in to mask the exigencies of policy. The dethronement of the monarch was advocated not because it was lawful but because it was required as a war interest by England.

Venizélos protested in a telegram to London at how his question to the British had been turned into an invitation to invade - but he did so with a winking eye. And he proceeded to then announce to the Greek Parliament, with the knowledge that Entente forces were on their way, his belief that Greece should fight Turkey, Germany and Austro-Hungary, as well as Bulgaria, under the terms of the 1913 Treaty.

Venizelos's statement in Parliament was entirely contrary to the Greek Constitution, which laid down that declarations of war and conclusions of peace were solely Royal prerogatives.

In Britain it was pretended that it was King Constantine, the so-called "agent of the Kaiser," who had acted unconstitutionally in dismissing the Venizelos Government. Venizelos went along with that fiction, even though he knew better, and it is in numerous British accounts of the affair. But Article Thirty One of the Greek Constitution, that was given to Greece by Britain and France, stated: "The King appoints and dismisses his Ministers." Article Ninety Nine stated that "No foreign army may be admitted to the Greek service without a special law, nor may it sojourn in or pass through the state." And yet Venizelos had connived at this without any law permitting it.

It was also part of the Greek system that the King's consent was a requirement for an amending of the Constitution and the King

had the final say on external affairs. This was probably a stipulation of the creators of Greece so that only one individual needed to be influenced/pressured in the "birth place of democracy". But now "democracy" of a compliant form was being encouraged to sweep away the Constitution that was hindering the new British interest.

A new Government was formed after the resignation of Venizelos and this pledged to continue to uphold Greek neutrality - despite the presence of Allied troops on its territory.

As Casement wrote "A Pacific Blockade" the Great War England had declared on Germany and Ottoman Turkey was going badly. In the late autumn of 1915 there was stalemate on the Western Front, the Royal Navy was making little headway in the War, Serbia was falling and neutrals were resisting enlistment, or even going over to the enemy. Worst of all the Gallipoli invasion was seen to have failed and this was a mighty blow to British prestige - the main thing that was seen as keeping the lesser peoples it ruled in check.

Lord Esher, a spider at the heart of the web of State that had planned and directed the Great War, was aware that the Germans could now link up with the Turks to break the encirclement organised by England against Berlin. He confided to his journal:

"If the Germans get to Constantinople, that is the moment when they will be at the apogee of their power. The Kaiser will select it very probably to make ostensibly reasonable peace proposals through the United States President. Wilson will be confronted in December with an awkward question, raised by the humanitarians and supported by the Germans, as to the propriety of supplying the Allies with materials which enable them to carry on the war. The political situation may

tempt Wilson to put forward peace proposals, and possibly to support them. If they offer to create a new Poland, to give compensations to Russia, to give Alsace and Lorraine to France, and Trieste to Italy, restoring Belgium with the exception of Antwerp, taking the Congo instead of the German Colonies, and suggesting a treaty containing international arrangements for what they call the Freedom of the Seas, peace, and an unpleasant one for us, will be in sight. Certainly such proposals would divide public opinion, both in England and France." (15.10.15)

This is the authentic Great War Britain was fighting and the one that Casement understood, behind all the moral platitudes of the propagandists. The World War had not been planned, declared and waged by Britain to ensure peace and stability in Europe and its hinterlands. It was being fought to assert world supremacy. And a draw was tantamount to a defeat in any bid for the highest stakes.

Lord Esher and most of his senior military contacts were opposed to the Salonika expedition as a useless and belated diversion of the British War effort. They believed that the Germans had to be ground down in a great war of attrition that, though it might cost dear, was essential to a thorough defeat of the enemy. Lord Kitchener, who was close to Esher, threatened to resign over it. Esher contended that if the Liberals wanted to embark on adventures all over the map they should be raising the armies necessary for such operations through conscription of the population.

Lloyd George had warned for months that Serbia was likely to fall if it was not supported by its Allies. The Western Frontiers had ridiculed his suggestion that the Germans/Austrians might break through

when they were penned down by the war of attrition in France. But Lloyd George was proved right by the end of 1915 as Serbia collapsed. The Guardian of the Gates was gone and Lloyd George got his expedition to Salonika to reseal them.

By the end of 1915 a British (with Irish contingent) and French army composed of 13 divisions and 350,000 men had landed at Salonika, in spite of Greek neutrality – even though a similar German violation of Belgian neutrality had supposedly brought Britain to declare a Great War on Germany for the same violation of international law. It was claimed that the Allied armies in Salonika were there to fight for the Serbs. But by this time the Serbian front was collapsing. So it made little sense to move forces to the area, where they would be effectively bottled up. But there they stayed.

Churchill talks openly about the real purpose of the Salonika expedition in his *World Crisis*, where he states:

“As a military measure to aid Serbia directly, the landing at this juncture of allied forces at Salonika was absurd. The hostile armies concentrating on the eastern and northern frontiers of Serbia were certain to overwhelm and overrun that country before any effective aid, other than Greek aid, could possibly arrive. As a political move to encourage and determine the action of Greece, the despatch of allied troops to Salonika was justified.” (p. 585)

The Salonika operation which was bolstered by the evacuation of the British 10th Division from Gallipoli was really about putting pressure on neutral Greece and Rumania. And the British Prime Minister, Asquith, with this threat of force in mind, warned the Greeks and Rumanians of the

consequences of their continued neutrality and failure to be irredentists:

“A united Rumania, a united Greece, is possible if these nations can rise to the height of their opportunity. If Greece or Rumania consider Greece Irredenta, or Transylvania, not worth fighting for they will never receive them in the end, for a government and nation which will not risk its life for its enslaved brethren is a government and nation unfit by such cowardice to be given the privilege of ruling over them, even if liberated by other hands.” (Freeman’s Journal, 15 November 1915)

Irredentism is seen universally as a bad thing these days. But it was a positive virtue for Britain in waging its War. To fail to be an aggressive racial nationalist, wanting to conquer all the territory a nation claimed, was tantamount to cowardice. Except within Britain’s Empire, that is, where national self-determination was prone to be treated, as Casement found out, as Treason.

Despite the threats from Britain to Greek neutrality, the King stood firm. In January 1916 Constantine re-emphasized his policy of “benevolent neutrality” toward Britain and he requested the Allies to leave Greek territory - since with Serbia knocked out of the war they had no purpose in being there. He restrained his Army from defending Greek territory from the Allied occupation forces - perhaps sensibly - and simply requested the invaders to leave. All the time the Allies wished for a "provocation" from the Greeks, i.e. a defence of their sovereign territory, to justify a full-blooded thrust toward Athens.

On January 21st 1916 the Liberal Daily News, which employed the German violation of Belgian neutrality to encourage its pacifist readership to become warmongers had this to

say about the Allied violations of Greek neutrality:

“It is evident that the business-like measures the Allies are taking for their protection on land and sea have inspired the King with lively resentment. That is not altogether astonishing. The conditions under which the Allies are encamped, and will soon be fighting, on neutral soil are an anomaly without parallel in modern warfare, and they involve inevitably an attitude equally anomalous towards the neutrality of Greece. Apart from the occupation of the Salonika zone, her railways have been cut, her bridges blown up, certain of her islands borrowed, and Consuls accredited to her put under arrest. Such facts cannot and need not be disguised. They call for no defence from the Allies, for Greece has no one to thank for them but herself.”

That said all that was necessary to say of the moral collapse of English Liberalism as its principles were whittled away in the Great War effort.

By this time the Allies had occupied Lemnos, Imbros, Macedonia, Corfu, Salonika and the Chalkis peninsula of Greek territory and the Royal Navy lay off the coasts of the Greek mainland in force harassing Greek ships.

On 21st June 1916 the Allies issued an ultimatum to Greece. The Allied Governments stated that they were not demanding an end to Greek neutrality but put forward demands that would ensure the Greeks went along with the Allies’ project. It was demanded of the Greek Government that they immediately and totally demobilize their army, replace the present Cabinet by a new Coalition Ministry to the satisfaction of the Allies, dissolve the legislative Chamber and hold fresh elections and replace the

senior police in Athens with those acceptable to Britain and France. It was also made clear that if the Greeks did not oblige Athens would be flattened by the Royal Navy and the King and his family dealt with in the same way as Louis XVI.

This ultimatum was backed up by a demonstration of force in Allied occupied Greece. The French General Sarrail, in command of forces at Salonika, had recommended that the Allies “strike at the head, attack frankly and squarely the one enemy - the King.” Britain concurred, and on St. Constantine’s Day, when Salonika was honouring the King with a Te Deum, Martial Law was proclaimed by the Allies on territory that was not theirs. Allied detachments with machine guns occupied strategic points, the Macedonian gendarmerie and police were expelled, and the press was placed under an Allied censor.

On 6th June a Royal navy blockade of the Greek coasts was established and on the 16th, to back up the ultimatum, a squadron was ordered to be ready to bombard Athens, while a brigade was embarked at Salonika for the same destination. Before the guns opened fire, it was planned that hydro-planes would drop bombs on the Royal Palace; then troops would land, occupy the town, and proceed to arrest, among others, the Royal family that the English and French had put on the Greek throne.

In the Battle of Athens of December 1916 a force of 4000 French and British troops were landed in Athens after the King had protested the positioning of 10 battalions of Allied Artillery on neutral Greek territory. When Greek soldiers and the citizens of Athens drove them off, with over a hundred fatalities to the French and British, a state of official war was only just avoided. The British regarded the effective Greek defence

and defeat of the coup de main as a provocation.

To save the capital from the guns of the Royal Navy King Constantine complied with the four demands of the Allies, and a new Ministry with Ententists included was appointed to carry on the administration of the country until the election of a new Chamber. The chief of police was replaced to the Allied satisfaction and the Army began to be demobilised. The demobilisation of the Greek Army had an immediate effect as irregular bands of Bulgarians invaded Cavalla. Instead of the Allies resisting this activity the King was condemned for being unwilling to defend his country with his demobilized army, with the suggestion that the Allied Army could do this for him.

In response to the Greek acquiescence to their demands the Allies lifted the Royal Navy blockade but restricted the importing of foodstuffs into Athens - thereby keeping the people on short rations, with the understanding that they were existing in any amount of freedom only under Allied sufferance.

The General Election, which the Entente demanded through the guns of their battleships, was due to be held in September 1916 and this time the issue was clear. It would have given the Greek people an open choice between neutrality and War, under the threat levelled at them from the Royal Navy's guns.

Perhaps it would have been like the Treaty election of 1922 in Ireland, with the Greeks bowing to the threat of force. But we will never know.

Rather than contest the election Venizelos stole out of Athens, accompanied by approximately one hundred of his supporters,

in September 1916, with the help of the French Secret Service and he went to his homeland in Crete. He then took the head of a rival Greek Provisional government established by the Allies at Salonika. The Allied objective was to create a new government that would lead Greece into the War on the side of the Allies. The British and French supported the new government substantially with arms and money and its military forces.

On November 23, Venizelos's new Government, established by the Allied armies in Thessalonica declared war against Bulgaria and Germany in order to legitimize itself.

On November 19th 1916 the British announced a new full blockade of Greece and demanded the withdrawal of Greek troops from Salonika, the handing over of road and rail networks in the area and supply bases in Greek territorial waters. The Royal Navy blockade of Greece was designed to force Greece into the War, or else bring about a regime change in Greece that saw Venizelos in charge at Athens, so that he would bring the Greeks into the War.

On 9 December 1916, two days before he left the Foreign Office, Sir Edward Grey agreed to "the decision to coerce the Greek Government". He told General Robertson: "Diplomacy in war is futile, without military success to back it."

Grey's biographer concedes:

"French policy... of coercing the Greek Royalist party eventually carried the day. British policy, for which Kitchener, Grey and the Cabinet were all responsible, had not shown clarity or strength. We had never effectively resisted the French purpose, or proposed a real alternative, yet we hampered

and delayed it, and... prevented a firm hand in the Near East. The desire not to interfere with the internal affairs of Greece and not to violate her neutrality was a respectable motive, but was it a time and place to be respectable, and was our respectability saved in the end? These are difficult questions." (G.M. Trevelyan, p.290)

The dilemmas of fighting a Great War with a good conscience!

Sir Edward Grey idea hoped to encourage the Greek people into rebellion against their King by intimidating and starving them. But the blockade failed in its objective of getting the Greeks to abandon King Constantine and force regime change to the Allied liking.

So, in May 1917 the British and French decided on a three stage programme to ensure Greek entry into the War. It was agreed that the semblance of freedom of action should be left to the Greeks so that the Allies would not be seen to be involved in a direct military coup against King Constantine.

The Allies instead decided to seize the wheat crop of Thessaly, upon which the entire Greek population depended for bread; to seize the Corinth Isthmus, cutting off the Greek Army from the capital and deliver an ultimatum to Constantine demanding the immediate entry of Greece into the War. And it was decided that direct force would then be applied to the situation in Athens if Constantine refused to comply.

The Allied military occupation of Thessaly and Corinth, coupled with a Royal Navy threat to bombard Athens, finally had the desired effect and it forced Constantine to quit. The presence of the British Army at Salonika, the starvation blockade by the Royal Navy and the seizure of the harvest by



Allied troops had the result of a widespread famine in the neutral nation that finally forced the surrender of Constantine.

The King decided to save his people by sacrificing his throne on 11th June 1917. There were scenes of turmoil in Athens as large crowds tried to prevent the King's departure but Constantine was left with no alternative and he urged his people to remain calm and resolute in the face of the invasion forces.

The Allies treaded carefully due to events in Russia. They would not allow a Republic. But they would not have Constantine's eldest son, Prince George, as replacement for his father either. So Prince Alexander, the young second son of Constantine, whom they believed to be more malleable, was given the throne. Venizelos entered Athens with the French Army and Greece formally joined the War on the Allied side.

The invasion of neutral Greece, the overthrow of its government and the occupation of its territory by Britain and France involved, according to the English biographer of Venizelos, "deciding to invoke their obligations as 'protecting powers' who had promised to guarantee a constitutional form of government for Greece at the time the Kingdom was created." (H.Gibbon, Venizelos, p.299)

Venizelos had committed Treason against his King, setting up a rival government in Macedonia in collaboration with foreign powers who were violating the nation's territory. So care had to be taken to end the civil war that was developing in Greece and smooth over the antagonisms that had developed as a result of Allied actions. The Blockade was lifted, vessels that had been seized were returned to the Greek merchants and the war that was declared by Venizelos

in Macedonia was transferred with him to Athens and taken on by the Greek State.

That was only the start of the Greek tragedy. Casement was proved more prophetic than he ever lived to see when he said that "the countrymen of Byron to-day are doing their utmost to plunge Greece in a war of unexampled peril and disaster to all her future."

The political and military assault launched by Britain on neutral Greece led to the subsequent Greek tragedy in Anatolia because the puppet government under Venizelos, installed in Athens through Allied bayonets, was subsequently enlisted as a catspaw to bring the Turks to heel after the Armistice at Mudros. The Greeks were presented with the town of Smyrna in May 1919 and, encouraged by Prime Minister Lloyd George, advanced across Anatolia toward where a Turkish democracy had re-established itself, at Ankara, after it had been suppressed in Istanbul by British occupation.

The Greek expansion into Asia Minor was a joint venture of Lloyd George, Venizelos and the mysterious Sir Basil Zaharoff, the "man from God knows where". Zaharoff, the millionaire chief agent of the British arm's manufacturing firm Vickers had developed a financial and political relationship of mutual benefit with Lloyd George. Zaharoff had funded the Greek expansionary wars of previous decades and rose to prominence in England in supplying Lloyd George with cheap shells that helped undermine Lord Kitchener and made the Liberal's career in the Minister of Munitions - as well as a tidy profit. When he became Prime Minister Lloyd George made Zaharoff chief munitions agent for the Allies. Zaharoff nursed the desire to put the Greeks back into Constantinople and in control of Anatolia.

Britain was using the Greeks and their desire for a new Byzantium in Anatolia to get the Turkish national forces that had appeared to resist subjugation to submit to the punitive Treaty of Sèvres, and the destruction of not only the Ottoman State but Turkey itself.

Lloyd George was a fierce anti-Turk who believed in the crushing of the Ottomans as a greater imperative than even the crushing of Germany. After its Great War Britain was virtually bankrupt and the Prime Minister had made the promise to demobilise the army immediately in order to win a snap election he called just after the Armistices. So he employed the Greeks as an Imperial catspaw. At the Sevres Peace Conference in August 1920 the Greeks obtained great slices of territory in Turkish Anatolia that Britain had previously promised to Italy to lure it into the War. The Greek Army was thereafter employed by Britain to do the imposing of the Treaty of Sèvres which British dictated to the Ottoman Sultan with an occupation force in Istanbul and Royal Navy guns pointed at the city. Venizelos and his government were charged to do the work that British Imperial forces were unable to undertake.

In October 1920 the British imposed puppet, King Alexander, inopportunely *died* from the bite of a monkey. Venizelos returned to Athens from the head of his victorious army in Anatolia. The conquering hero of the new Byzantium decided to call an election to legitimise his rule, which had, after all, come about through an act of Treason and collaboration with foreign powers. The Greek people, however, had not forgotten. Venizelos lost his seat and the election and through a plebiscite the people invited King Constantine to return and resume his reign.

The King, surveying the Greek military position in Anatolia, which seemed to be

excellent, decided to continue the military adventure begun by Venizelos. He had the choice of retreating back to the coast and defending the Greek colonies from a Turkish advance or throwing everything at the Turks to finish them off and secure a settlement from the victory. Victory would presumably mean that the British were off his back. So Constantine ordered the Greek advance toward Ankara at a cracking pace, where the Turks had regrouped for a final stand.

But the British-financed 200,000 strong Greek Army was thoroughly beaten, just short of the new Turkish capital, after being skilfully manoeuvred into a position, by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, in which the Greek lines were severely stretched. The Conservative backbenchers in the Coalition Government used the event to rein in the Prime Minister's military support of the Greeks. The Greek State had been bankrupted by the British pressure of the previous years and was totally reliant on England financially for its expansionary adventure in Asia Minor.

The Greek army, after rallying and putting up resistance for a year, went into full retreat and it employed a scorched-earth policy to Turkish villages as it fled. The Greek population, fearful of the consequences of their actions, went with them. The ancient Greek community of Asia Minor that had lived peacefully and prospered under Ottoman rule for centuries now fled on boats from a burning Smyrna, with the remnants of their army.

This was the ultimate British betrayal of the Greeks, who they had encouraged and bullied into the Great War with promises of the fulfilment of irredentist dreams, only to be left in the lurch at the vital moment because the Greek democracy had voted to return their King. England washed its hands

of Greece and blamed King Constantine, who had all the time resisted their attempts to cajole the Greeks into the catastrophe.

Churchill justified the British let down of Greece thus:

"It would be absurd to ask the British or French democracy to make sacrifices or efforts for a people whose real spirit was shown by their choice of such a man... For the sake of Venizelos much had to be endured, but for Constantine less than nothing." (World Crisis - Aftermath, p.388)

It was not Britain who betrayed Greece but apparently the ungrateful Greeks who had betrayed England! The Turks were now the substance to take account of in the region.

It was a death sentence on the Anatolian Greek community which paid the price, like many other peoples that had been similarly implicated in Britain's Great War. How far-seeing about the Greek tragedy of 1922 was Roger Casement when he wrote in 1915:

"Byron came to aid Greece in a war of independence; "the countrymen of Byron" to-day are doing their utmost to plunge Greece in a war of unexampled peril and disaster to all her future. If Byron could say in his day "'tis Greece but living Greece no more", his fellow countrymen to-day are assuredly determined, that the strict fulfilment of the poet's words shall come to pass a century later."

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These articles by Roger Casement are just two of the many he wrote during World War I for *The Continental Times* which was a newspaper published for Americans in Germany. None of these articles have been reprinted since first published over a hundred years ago. They are typical examples of his writings at the time.

This pamphlet is to complement a special issue of the *Irish Foreign Affairs* magazine No. 33 (June 2017) which is republishing Casement's unknown writings of the period. The article on Edward Grey is in that issue and the *The pacific blockade* will be in issue No. 34.

Casement's perspective on WW I was incisive because of his inside knowledge of the British State and its workings in planning and bringing about a war to destroy Germany. It was this knowledge and his humanitarian reputation that spoiled the moral case that Britain sought to make for taking advantage of the military situation in Europe in August 1914 to launch and extend a war that engulfed the world.

And that is why he was hanged and attempts made to destroy his reputation.

Pat Walsh provides an assessment of each article and puts them in their historical context and continues his ongoing analyses of the background, cause and consequences of WWI. Some of his other publications are listed overleaf.

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