

No. 578.—*DESPATCH from Earl Granville, recapitulating the events which took place with reference to the Boundaries of Montenegro, between 15th January, 1877, and 26th September, 1880. London, 2nd October, 1880.**

Earl Granville to the Rt. Hon. G. J. Goschen.

SIR,

Foreign Office, October 2, 1880.

IN the Instructions which, by the command of the Queen, I had the honour of addressing to your Excellency on your proceeding as Her Majesty's Special Ambassador to Constantinople, I called your Excellency's attention to the pressing character of the question relating to the Montenegrin frontier.

This question had been under discussion for a great length of time. The final proposals made by the Plenipotentiaries to the Porte at the close of the Constantinople Conference of the 15th January, 1877,† recommended a rectification of the frontiers of Montenegro, including the Kuci Kraina and other mountain districts east of Lake Scutari.

During the war the Montenegrins captured Duleigno on the 18th January, 1878, and occupied the country up to the Boyana, advancing nearly to Scutari.

By the Treaty of San Stefano (**No. 518**) a very large addition was made to Montenegro. The frontier was traced a long way to the north in Herzegovina; to the east it was made nearly contiguous to Servia; to the south it comprised Dulcigno and the Boyana, and nearly all Lake Scutari, leaving only the town to Turkey; and to the south-east it included the Hoti district, Tusi, and the whole of Gusinje and Plava.

By the Treaty of Berlin (**No. 530**) this was materially reduced, especially in the north and east, while to the south Dulcigno was restored to Turkey, the Clementi, Grudi, and Hoti tribes left to Albania, and the most material extension to the south-east was the district of Gusinje and Plava.

The Montenegrin troops, in fulfilment of the XXXIInd Article of the Treaty of Berlin, had been withdrawn from the district of Dulcigno, but the Porte had failed to comply with

* "State Papers," Vol. 72, page 278.

† "State Papers," Vol. 68, pages 1189, 1192.

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the Treaty by the transfer of Gusinje and Plava. On the urgent representations of the Porte of the difficulty of placing the district in the possession of Montenegro, the Powers agreed to an arrangement, to which the Prince of Montenegro had previously signified his assent, by which the Porte undertook to surrender instead a strip of territory inhabited by the Hotti, Grudi, and Clementi tribes, together with the district of Kuci Kraina.

An agreement to this effect, to be executed within ten days, was signed in the first instance between the Porte and the Montenegrin Chargé d'Affaires on the 12th April* (**No. 562**), and a Protocol recording that the new line of frontier therein described was accepted in substitution for the frontier specified in the Treaty of Berlin, was signed by the Representatives of the Treaty Powers and the Porte on the 18th April* (**No. 563**).

When the time came for the surrender of this territory the Turkish Commander failed to give 24 hours' notice, as had been agreed upon, to the Montenegrin authorities, and the result was that, when the Turkish troops evacuated the fortified positions on the Podgoritza plain, which command the road between Podgoritza and Scutari, the Albanians took possession of them, and the Montenegrins, finding that they would be resisted, did not attempt to advance. The Albanians continued to hold the country, and the Porte did not attempt to dislodge them.

This was the situation when your Excellency arrived at Constantinople. The Montenegrins and Albanians were face to face, skirmishes were occurring between the outposts, and it was evident that unless steps were taken without delay for the settlement of the frontier, active hostilities might at any time ensue.

In the Identical Note addressed to the Porte on the 11th June the Powers accordingly represented that the state of things created by the question of the Montenegrin frontier required pressing attention and immediate solution.

The note added :—

“The Turkish authorities have failed to carry out the engagement entered into between the Porte and Montenegro, and adhered to by the Representatives of the Powers in the Protocol of the 18th April, 1880 (**No. 564**). They have compromised the agreement accepted by His Imperial Majesty the Sultan, by allowing the Albanians to occupy certain frontier positions

* This is known as the “Corti Compromise,” see “State Papers,” Vol. 71, page 1205.

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assigned to the Montenegrins, and a collision may at any time occur between the Montenegrins and the Albanian forces opposed to them.

“The Powers, therefore, consider themselves absolutely bound to request the Government of His Imperial Majesty to state in the most explicit terms what their intentions are as regards the Montenegrin frontier, and to put into immediate execution the arrangement come to between the Sublime Porte and Montenegro (No. 562). The Powers hold the Sublime Porte responsible in advance for the grave consequences that might be produced by a further delay in giving satisfaction to the rights acquired by the Principality.”

On the 24th June the Porte replied to this part of the Identical Note by offering, if the necessary time were allowed, to again undertake the execution of the Protocol of the 18th April (No. 563), and to pay to the Montenegrin Government the taxes levied by the Turkish authorities upon the territory which the Montenegrins had been provisionally unable to occupy.

Abédine Pasha added that the Porte was at the same time ready to take into consideration any other mode of settlement which might be suggested by the Powers, and which would attain the desired result without bloodshed or the disorders which would follow on a violent resistance.

Her Majesty's Consul-General at Scutari, together with the Austrian Consul-General, had suggested some time previously that an alternative plan might be proposed with greater prospects of success for bringing about a peaceful solution of the difficulty, if the Porte would consent to the surrender of the district of Dulcigno, together with a small strip of territory between the Lake of Scutari and Podgoritza, and the Kuci Kraina, but excluding the Hoti district and the Grudi and Clementi Mountains, which had been comprised in the Agreement of the 18th April (No. 563).

Her Majesty's Government were informed that this scheme had been mentioned to some of the leaders of the North Albanians, who intimated that they would not be unwilling to agree to it if the Powers would guarantee to them some form of local self-government.

Her Majesty's Government have always had in view the importance of establishing a better system of administration for the various clans which occupy the highlands of Albania, and

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this proposal presented the advantage that, in relieving the Porte from the difficulty of carrying out the April Agreement (No. 563), it afforded an opportunity to the Powers of urging the necessity of restoring order in this part of European Turkey. Your Excellency is aware from the reports which have been received that the state of the country in North-east Albania is little short of anarchy. The Turkish officials are powerless to execute justice; murder, violence, and forced exactions are prevalent, and the peaceable population is at the mercy of the armed Committees, who, under the name of the Albanian League, have been allowed to assume absolute authority.

Communications passed between the Powers which resulted in a general assent to the scheme, and Mr. Green and M. Lippich, the Austrian Consul-General, laid the new proposal before the Prince of Montenegro, who, after some demur, accepted it.

The result of these communications between the Powers and the Prince of Montenegro and the Albanians was that the following joint proposals of Mr. Green and M. Lippich were telegraphed to your Excellency:—

All military posts recently erected by the Turks in an offensive sense against Podgoritzza to be destroyed.

“The frontier-line to follow the thalweg of the Boyana from its mouth to the point where stream from Lake Sas falls into it, thence in a direct line to furthest eastern projection of the frontier proposed by the Russian Commissioner last year, and marked in Captain Sale’s Map of ‘the frontier between the lake and the sea,’ to follow the Russian line up to XIth point voted by the Commission, thereabouts join Commission’s line and descend it to point XVIII on the lake, the waters of which to be divided by a direct line from points XVIII to XIX in Captain Sale’s Maps of 1879.*

“The frontier voted by Boundary Commission from points XIX to XXIII to be maintained, and thence follow red line to points XXIV and XXIV*, and be continued by Russian blue line as far as Suka-Gruda, and thence along southern frontier of the Kuci Kraina, as verified by Boundary Commission, up to its termination at Planinica; from that locality Count Corti’s line to stand good.†

* The originals of these Maps are in the Foreign Office Library. See Catalogue of Maps, Nos. 31B and 32B.

† It has not been thought necessary to give copies of the maps illustrating these various Boundary proposals.—(E. H.)

“The Consuls to be enabled to assure the North Albanians that their legitimate aspirations will not be disregarded, and an Imperial Proclamation in this sense to be issued by Turkish authorities.

“These administrative reforms should, in the opinion of Mr. Green and the Austrian Consul-General, be limited for the present to the Vilayet of Scutari.

“The Governor-General of the Scutari Vilayet to be an Albanian Mahommedan, to be chosen, if possible, in the vilayet; the Vice-Governor to be a Roman Catholic. A Christian Kaïmakam of the Roman Catholic tribes of the Great Mountain to be appointed to reside at Tousi.

“The proposed form of Administration to be submitted for consideration to the North Albanians.”

On the 26th June the new proposal was laid before the Porte in an Identic Note which, referring to the last paragraph of the Porte's note of the 24th, indicated as an equivalent for the Agreement of the 18th April (No. 564), a rectification of the frontier east and west of Lake Scutari, comprising Dulcigno. The note stated that this arrangement had the incontestable advantage of leaving no doubt as to the possibility of its execution, and that, moreover, in order to increase the favourable chances which this proposed exchange of territory presented from this point of view, it would be in the interest of the Porte to grant to the Albanians of the Provinces of Scutari administrative arrangements which, while maintaining their connection with the Ottoman Empire, would sufficiently satisfy their legitimate aspirations. As the Porte still continued bound by its previous engagements until the new arrangement had been completely carried out, if it refused to consent to the last proposal it would be under the necessity of immediately fulfilling its obligations under the Agreement of the 18th April (No. 564).

On the 15th July the Porte replied that it was resolved to use, as far as possible, every means to promptly execute the Agreement of the 18th April (No. 564). At the same time, it was ready to take into consideration the arrangement proposed by the Ambassadors, although it was surrounded by difficulties. According to the reports received by the Turkish authorities, the Montenegrins were willing to consent to the greater part of the cession under the April Agreement, and the

Porte proposed that this part should be surrendered, and compensation for the remainder given in the Dulcigno district, excluding the town of Dulcigno, which was inhabited by Mussulman Albanians.

With regard to the administrative arrangements for the Albanians of the Province of Scutari, Abédine Pasha observed that the inhabitants of that province had shown themselves satisfied with their condition, and had never thought of asking the Porte for any privileges beyond those which they already enjoyed. Moreover, the Turkish Government was at the time preparing, in accordance with the XXIIIrd Article of the Treaty of Berlin (No. 530), a Statute applicable to all the provinces of European Turkey, the advantages of which would of course be extended to Albania.

Your Excellency and your colleagues informed the Porte in the collective note of the 3rd August, that the Powers could not accept these proposals as satisfactory, or agree to a continuance of the system of postponement which had led to the actual situation, and were under the necessity of urging the Ottoman Government to put an end to it. After further recommending the cession of Dulcigno, as most in conformity with the interests of the Porte, and as being the arrangement most advantageous for all parties, the note proceeded to state that, in case the Porte preferred to execute the engagements taken under the Agreement of the 18th April (No. 564), it was warned that if, at the expiration of a delay of three weeks, the Agreement had not been fully carried out, the Powers would expect it to join them in assisting the Prince of Montenegro to take possession by force of the Dulcigno district, in order to give effect to the alternative plan proposed in the note of the 26th June.

On the 9th August the Ambassadors communicated unofficially a Memorandum to the Porte, explaining in detail the new frontier-line proposed, including the cession to the east of the Lake of Scutari, as well as the district around Dulcigno, in the terms recommended by Mr. Green and the Austrian Consul-General.

On examining this Memorandum, the Turkish Minister stated that it involved the cession of Dinosi and some part of the Gruda district in the occupation of the Albanians, and on the 12th Abédine Pasha went round to the Ambassadors to announce to

them that the Turkish Government would accept the Dulcigno proposal on two conditions :—

1. That Dinosi should not be included in the cession.
2. That further delay should be granted.

On the following day (13th) the Ambassadors addressed a *note verbale* to the Porte, requesting that they might be informed officially of the resolution at which the Porte had arrived.

On the 18th August the Porte replied to the collective note of the 3rd, that it consented in principle to the cession of Dulcigno to Montenegro, and that as regards the east of the Lake of Scutari on the side of Podgoritza, it was ready to conclude a Convention to the effect that the frontier should be drawn according to the points indicated in the Treaty of Berlin. It, at the same time, requested that the delay of 21 days should be prolonged for some weeks. If the Powers did not accept the proposals, the Turkish Government would be unable to join in any way in assisting Montenegro to occupy Dulcigno by force. In agreeing to the cession of Dulcigno, the Porte desired to give a new proof of its deference to the counsels of Europe, and thus remove every reason for taking extreme measures.

On the 23rd August Abédine Pasha made a further communication, stating that while adhering to the cession of Dulcigno and its environs, as desired by the Powers, the Porte was compelled to reserve the cession of Gruda and Dinosi, and on the 2nd September the Porte sent in another note declaring that the consent of the Albanians to the cession of Dulcigno could not be obtained unless the *status quo* were agreed to for the definition of the frontier to the east of the lake.

On the 14th September, the Porte having failed to do anything to carry out its engagements, the allied fleets were assembled at Ragusa.

The desire of Her Majesty's Government and the other Powers has been to bring about a conclusive settlement of the frontier, and with this object they had proposed a line east of the lake which would meet the recommendations of the Frontier Commission by establishing a boundary which could be permanently maintained, but they had not sought to include territory which would give rise to unnecessary difficulties. They were accordingly prepared to give way to the Porte in regard to Dinosi, which they were advised was not really necessary to be occupied as a defensive position by Montenegro. Your Excel-

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lency and your colleagues were therefore authorized to address a collective note to the Porte on the 15th September, in the following terms:—

“The Powers, appreciating the motives alleged by the Porte for preserving the district of Gruda in its entirety to Albania, are disposed to accept the reservation made in its note of the 18th August, in so far as concerns Dinosi and its territory. They can, however, admit no other interpretation as regards the extent of the territory of Gruda than that adopted by the majority of the European Commission for the delimitation of Montenegro. It is therefore understood that the line of demarcation proposed for the districts to the east of the Lake of Scutari proposed by the collective note of the 3rd August last,* will be maintained in all its extent with the exception of the territory of Dinosi, as indicated on the Map annexed to the present communication.

“It is equally understood that in case the arrangement in question is not promptly carried into execution, the compromise now agreed to by the Powers with regard to Dinosi would be annulled.

“In informing the Porte of the above, the Powers represented by the Undersigned observe that by immediately proceeding to the effectual surrender of the territories conferred on Montenegro by the present arrangement, with the exception of that of Dinosi, the Porte would give a proof of the sincerity of its intentions, for which the Powers would be disposed to give it credit.

“In return for this cession of Dinosi to Turkey, Dulcigno should be surrendered immediately and pacifically, and in the contrary case, Montenegro should resume her claim upon Dinosi.”

This collective note was crossed by a note from the Porte of the same date, in which the Porte stated that the prompt execution of the instructions received by the Turkish Commander for the surrender of Dulcigno depended on the Turkish Government receiving assurances that the Powers would abandon the naval demonstration in case of the surrender of that town; that the religion, life, and property of the inhabitants of the towns ceded should be respected, and that the line of frontier previously traced on the side of Podgoritza for the surrender of Dulcigno should be accepted by the Powers.

* See page 3002.

On the 23rd September the Austrian Chargé d'Affaires informed me that the Austrian Government had given the Turkish Ambassador at Vienna the following answer to the three questions in the Turkish Circular. He was to say that the Ambassadors at Constantinople had already agreed to a formula respecting the rights of Mussulmans and Catholics:—As to the naval demonstration, the Commander-in-Chief was, on that very day, sending Riza Pasha a summons to surrender Dulcigno, and in case he did not do so, the action of the Powers would commence in three days:—One month having elapsed from the expiration of the delay fixed in the note of the 3rd August, and the Porte not having seriously availed itself of this delay, but having continually brought up dilatory proposals, it alone must bear the responsibility for the consequences resulting from the non-execution of the surrender:—Concerning the demarcation line eastwards from Lake Scutari, the Austrian Government were not aware of any line previously agreed upon with regard to the *status quo*. They knew of no other line than that described in the last collective note to the Porte, and they must insist upon its execution.

I informed your Excellency that you might return a similar answer; but, without waiting for the reply of the Powers, the Porte had communicated to the Ambassadors a further note on the 22nd September, acknowledging the receipt of the collective note of the 15th September, and stating that the Porte had accepted the proposal for the surrender of Dulcigno; but that fresh difficulties had arisen, and agitation among the local population, while the Powers had determined on a naval demonstration, and that the Porte consequently found itself compelled to make the surrender of Dulcigno contingent on its receiving formal and official assurances:—

1. That the Powers would abandon all idea of a naval demonstration upon any question whatever, both at present and for the future.

2. That the property, life, honour, and all other rights of the inhabitants who desired to emigrate should be respected, as well as the property, life, honour, and above all, religion and other rights, of those who determined to remain.

3. That the Powers would accept the *status quo* proposed by the Porte, and would make no further demands of any kind with regard to Montenegro.

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Your Excellency is aware that when the naval demonstration was first contemplated Her Majesty's Government had proposed that under certain contingencies the Admirals should be instructed to enter, through the Consuls-General, into direct communication with the leaders of the Albanian clans, in order to explain to them the situation and ascertain their views of the local administrative reforms which would best be adopted for their respective districts, and the grant of which would compensate them for any disadvantage which they might apprehend from the proposed settlement of the frontier. Objections being entertained to this proposal it has not been proceeded with, and was not included in the Admiral's instructions.

Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, Her Majesty's Commissioner on the Eastern Roumelian Commission, then in session under the XXIIIrd Article of the Treaty of Berlin (**No. 530**), was, however, informed of the recommendations of the British and Austrian Consuls-General, and a scheme for the administration of the Sandjak of Scutari, in the sense of these recommendations, was prepared and presented to the Commission by the Austrian and French Commissioners. The Commissioners were unanimous that the General Provincial Statute which had been prepared was not applicable to some parts of Albania; but the Russian Commissioner, for the reasons stated by him at the time, was unable to accept this scheme without instructions. The other Commissioners adopted it, and recommended it to the Porte, adding that they would wish that, in introducing the new Provincial Statute into other parts of Albania, regard should equally be had to the immunities of the mountain districts beyond the limits of the Sandjak of Scutari, and especially to the immunities of the Chimara. The Commissioners also saw no objection to the Albanian districts being united in a single vilayet.

In supporting these proposals, Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, with the concurrence of all the other Commissioners, stated that the Commission ought not to separate without having given this tangible proof to the Albanians that the Powers were concerned for their welfare.

It would be very desirable that some opportunity should be taken to make the Albanians acquainted with the interest that has thus been taken by the Powers in the improvement of their local administration, and in securing to them their ancient pri-

privileges and immunities. One advantage of the Dulcigno Arrangement is, that it avoids interfering with the organization of the mountain clans; and as the free navigation of the Boyana is already secured to Montenegro by Treaty, it practically affects the Albanians as little as possible.

The note of the 22nd September has completely changed the situation so far as the acquiescence of the Albanians is concerned. It has been apparent throughout all these transactions that the Turkish authorities, while professing to be unable to overcome the resistance of the Albanians, have been stimulating it, and making use of the loyalty of the Albanians to the Sultan as a means of delaying the settlement, not only of this frontier question, but of the other questions pending with the Porte which the Sultan and his advisers are doing their utmost to evade. If the Albanians knew what was really taking place, they would probably realise this for themselves, now that the Porte has declared that it makes the settlement of the Montenegrin frontier depend, not upon Albanian interests, but upon an assurance from the Powers that they will abandon any future naval demonstration upon any question whatever.

The consequence of this note has been that Riza Pasha has refused to surrender Dulcigno, and that he has warned the Prince of Montenegro that any advance on his part will be considered as an act of hostility, and that force will be repulsed by force, whereupon the Prince has requested the Powers to inform him if in this conflict he may count upon political and military support more efficacious than that of a naval demonstration in its present limits.

The Ambassadors have replied on the 26th September, in a collective note, to the conditions required by the Porte in the note of the 22nd, that the first condition cannot be accepted, as no Power can consent to alienate or limit its inherent sovereign right to make use of its forces whenever it thinks necessary, and that all the Cabinets reserve to themselves in that respect entire liberty of appreciation and action; that the Powers accept the second condition, which has already been anticipated by the XXVIIth and XXXth Articles of the Treaty of Berlin, and are ready to formulate and complete the guarantees by a special declaration, and that the Powers must maintain the frontier-line indicated in the collective note of the 15th September, though they willingly agree, when the Porte has

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accepted and executed the conditions therein mentioned, not to demand any other territorial concession in favour of Montenegro.

The note further states that the Powers protest unanimously against the resistance of the Porte to their legitimate demands, and that the Turkish Government must bear all the responsibility for the consequences which may ensue.

This note has been entirely approved by Her Majesty's Government, as well as the *pro-memoriâ* which your Excellency has informed me was this day delivered to the Porte, and in which the Ambassadors state that they have taken note of the verbal declaration made by the Sultan through Artin Effendi announcing the resolution of His Majesty to settle the question definitively by the 3rd October, and express the firm confidence that this settlement will include the immediate surrender of Dulcigno, and the dispatch of instructions accordingly to Riza Pasha.

Her Majesty's Government cannot believe that the Sultan can seriously intend to refuse to settle the Montenegrin frontier, and they consider that the gravity of the situation arises, not so much from the immediate difficulty respecting the surrender of Dulcigno, as from the determination shown by the Sultan and his Ministers throughout all these negotiations to avoid, by procrastination, the execution of the engagements of the Porte under the Treaty of Berlin.

The Treaty Powers have done all they could to facilitate the settlement of this frontier question. After the Treaty of Berlin the Prince of Montenegro had consented to evacuate Dulcigno without waiting for the complete execution of the Treaty by the surrender of Gusinje and Plava. When the Porte declared itself unable to carry out this surrender, the Powers consented to the substitution of the Agreement signed between the Porte and the Montenegrin Chargé d'Affaires on the 12th April (No. 563), and when the Turkish authorities failed to execute this in good faith, and the Porte again declared that it encountered great difficulties in carrying it out, the Powers proposed an arrangement, the execution of which could be attended with no difficulties. When the Porte represented that the cession of Dinosi would prevent the arrangement from being acquiesced in by the Albanians, the Powers again modified their proposals, and agreed to the district around Dinosi being retained by Turkey.

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All these concessions have hitherto been unavailing, and now the Porte withdraws from its assent to the surrender of Dulcigno unless the Powers will agree to conditions which it was obvious that the Powers could not accept.

The settlement of this frontier is of the utmost importance to the Porte, as until it has been accomplished, there can be no prospect of this part of European Turkey being reduced to order; and, as your Excellency has on several occasions pointed out, the condition of the Vilayet of Prisrend is a standing danger to Turkey, since the assassination and oppression of the Christians and of all who show any resistance to the exactions of the armed gangs who infest the country in the name of the Albanian League may at any time provoke an insurrection or an appeal to Foreign Intervention.

I am, &c.,

Rt. Hon. G. J. Goschen.

GRANVILLE.

[The combined Fleets appeared off Dulcigno on the 28th September, 1880. On the 3rd October, a note was received by the Representatives of the Treaty Powers from the Porte entering fully into various other questions, besides that of Montenegro, such for instance as those relating to Greece, Armenia, the Réglement Organique for Turkish European Provinces, Finances, the demolition of fortresses on the Danube, and the occupation of the Balkans by Turkish troops; which note was looked upon as a defiance to Europe; and on the 4th a proposal was made by the British Government to the Treaty Powers to send part of the combined fleets to occupy Smyrna; but this step became unnecessary, in consequence of a note having been addressed by the Porte to the Powers, on the 11th of the same month, consenting to cede Dulcigno to Montenegro. But on the 22nd November, the Turkish troops advanced from Biela on the Boyana towards Dulcigno, where they were attacked by the Albanians; the Turks replied to the attack, and the Albanians, being defeated, retired. On the 25th, a Convention was concluded between Turkey and Montenegro, for the cession of Dulcigno to Montenegro (No. 579)].
