

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 167

“The Armistice of Mudros”

Transcript

[music: Fanfare]

Four years into the Great War, the Central Powers were victorious in the East, but still struggling in the West. When the end came, though, it would come like tumbling dominoes, as the four nations in the coalition gave up one by one, from the weakest to the strongest.

And it seems almost inevitable, in hindsight, that the collapse would begin in the same region where the war itself began. In the Balkans.

Welcome to the *History of the Twentieth Century*.

[music: Opening War Theme]

Episode 167. The Armistice of Mudros.

We’re going to begin with the Ottoman Empire today. I’d like to start by reminding you of those heady days of 1916, the year of Verdun, of the Somme, and of the Brusilov Offensive. Only, let’s consider 1916 from the perspective of Constantinople and examine the ledger. On the minus side, the Russians have advanced deep into eastern Anatolia and Turkish efforts to challenge British control of the Suez Canal have been frustrated. On the plus side, the British invasion of Gallipoli failed and the Turkish Army is besieging General Townshend’s mostly Indian army at Kut, in Mesopotamia, and as you know, Kut will fall in April. The entry of Bulgaria into the war last October opened communication and transportation links between the Empire and its European allies, Germany and Austria.

On the whole, though, the war was going about as well for the Ottomans as you could reasonably expect. It has seemed as if the Ottoman Empire has been living on borrowed time for more than a half-century, and now it appears to have slipped the noose once again. But how long can the Turks expect to keep this up? They have humbled the British twice, but the British are in no sense defeated. The Russian Army in the east is still a problem.

You’ll recall the Ottoman call for jihad against the Allies, and how that was not very successful. Part of the problem was Hussein, the Sharif of Mecca. The Ottoman Sultan’s claim to be the

Caliph, successor to the Prophet and supreme authority over Sunni Muslims, was based on Ottoman rule over the Holy City. But relations between Constantinople and the Sharif were strained, and that was part of the problem. Sharif Hussein did not endorse the call to jihad and resisted sending soldiers from the Hedjaz to fight in the Ottoman Army.

Neither was the Sharif happy with the reforms the Young Turks had instituted. They had deposed the true Sultan, Abdulhamid II, and replaced him with their puppet. Their reforms pushed ideas like increased civil rights for women and non-Muslims and secular education, ideas the Sharif believed to be un-Islamic. So when the call for jihad came, it seemed to Hussein empty and hypocritical. With the arrival of 1916, the conflict between the Turks and the British over the Sinai was flaring up again. The Turks wanted to get the Sharif on board to help in the struggle, while the British, as you know, were promising the Sharif an independent Arab state in exchange for a revolt against the Turks.

For the British, this offer promised multiple benefits. Besides the obvious one of sparking revolt within the Ottoman Empire and tying down Turkish forces, a Mecca liberated from Turkish rule would undercut the Sultan's religious authority. The call to jihad would be neutralized. One might even hope for a new *Arab* Caliph, one allied with Britain, who could turn the call to jihad against the Turks, or at the very least, inspire Arab soldiers in the Sultan's armies to defect and spark Arab uprisings across the Near East.

Sharif Hussein did sound out the Ottoman government in an attempt to get from them the same deal the British were offering: an independent Arab state after the war in exchange for support against the Allies now. To the Turkish government, this was treason, and they were in no mood to dicker with traitors.

Even before this treasonous suggestion was made, the Turks had reason to suspect the Arabs. The French have cultivated relations with the peoples of what we today call Syria and Lebanon, ever since the Crusades, really. And for the past century, the French have been harboring imperial ambitions in the region, positioning themselves as the protectors of the region's Christian minority.

When the Ottoman Empire entered the war in 1914, Djemal Pasha took command of the Fourth Army, based in Damascus. He ordered the seizure of the French consulate there and discovered extensive collusion not only between the French and Arab Christians, but with Arab Muslims and other minorities. The region is a patchwork of numerous ethnic and religious minorities, such as Jews, Druze, and Alawites. In August 1915, eleven Arabs were executed for treason in Beirut; significantly, only one of them was Christian. The rest were Muslim. Dozens of other Arabs were sentenced to death *in absentia*, including associates of the Sharif of Mecca. Evidently, the Three Pashas wanted to make a point that Muslim traitors in particular would be dealt with harshly.

And so, as you know, less than a year later, the Sharif did rise up against Constantinople and fight the Turks in exchange for independence after the war. Alas for the British, this event had no more theological impact in the Ottoman Empire than the previous call for jihad had outside the Empire. The British had hoped for mass defections of Arab soldiers from the Ottoman Army and copycat revolts among the Arabs of Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. None of this panned out, although the Arabs of the Hedjaz were handy in hamstringing the Ottoman Army when the British invaded Palestine, as we saw in episode 154.

You might be tempted to say that the British were cheated. Certainly some British officials thought so, although bear in mind that Sharif Hussein isn't going to get as much as he expects from the British, either. Hussein ruled the Hedjaz, a region of western Arabia along the Red Sea. Deeper in the interior of Arabia, there was another story unfolding, a conflict in progress over the Emirate of Nejd. Back in 1891, the ruling family of Nejd was deposed by Muhammad ibn Rashid. More recently, the heir to the old dynasty, a man known in the West as Abdulaziz ibn Saud, had been fighting a guerilla war to reclaim the emirate from the successors of ibn Rashid. The Rashids had turned to the Turkish government in Constantinople, their nominal overlords, for support against ibn Saud.

When the Ottoman Empire entered the Great War, the British thought it only natural to provide money and arms to ibn Saud, who seemed another useful thorn in the sides of the Turks, but there was no great love between ibn Saud and Britain's other ally in the region, Sharif Hussein. They had very different religious views, and ibn Saud was not at all happy with the way Hussein was running Mecca. But that is a story for a future episode.

It wasn't only British promises that induced Hussein to revolt, but also revulsion against the Germans. A German mission to Mesopotamia intended to bring Shiites into the jihad against the Allies went bad when the German commander heading the mission passed himself off as a Muslim in Karbala and kissed the hands of holy men there, forcing those holy men to go through a ritual cleansing after they learned that the lips that had touched them had belonged to an unbeliever.

Similarly, in 1916 a German military mission attempted to travel to Yemen at the southern end of the Arabian Peninsula in order to set up a radio relay station that would allow the German military to stay in communication with Paul Lettow-Vorbeck and his soldiers in German East Africa, who were giving the British so much grief there, episode 128. The Turks warned them that they could not guarantee safe passage across Arabia and that some of the more religiously extreme Arabs there, like ibn Saud, regarded their lands as off limits to non-Muslims. The Germans went anyway, some were killed, and the insult helped push Sharif Hussein into siding with the British.

Incidents like these contributed to a rising tide of anti-German sentiment in the Ottoman Empire. Keep in mind that by 1916, the Ottoman Empire had been more-or-less continuously at war since

the Italo-Ottoman War, and that was five years ago now. Accusations flew that the government in Constantinople was turning the Empire into a German colony. Thousands of German soldiers were serving in the Ottoman Army, and there were numerous incidents of them being attacked by Turkish soldiers. In April 1916, Enver Pasha was assaulted by a man who shouted that he had drawn the Empire into Germany's war. In June, a mob attacked the German embassy in Constantinople.

This was part of a general rising xenophobia in the Ottoman Empire. Greek, Armenian, and Kurdish subjects were forced into mass deportations numbering in the hundreds of thousands, this in addition to what the Armenians had suffered in 1915. Foreign language signs were removed from the streets of Constantinople, and German and Austrian soldiers were advised to wear Ottoman uniforms. The deprivations of war, including shortages of food and coal, as we've seen in other belligerent nations by 1916, help explain, if not excuse, the hostility toward foreigners.

The Ottoman Empire also found itself under attack from a new direction in 1916 when the Russians launched their first two Black Sea dreadnought battleships, *Empress Maria* and *Empress Catherine the Great*. Back in episode 83, I told you the improbable tale of the German battlecruiser *Goeben*, how it evaded the British in the Mediterranean and made its way to Constantinople, where it was reflagged as a Turkish warship, albeit with the same German crew, and was used to attack Russian Black Sea ports. *Goeben* gave the Turks naval superiority in the Black Sea for the early years of the war, but by 1916, the ship was worn out from constant patrols, it was getting hard to find coal to fuel her, and now the Russians have ships in the Black Sea that are her equal.

Admiral Kolchak took command of the Russian Black Sea Fleet in August 1916, and by the end of the year, the Russians had seized naval superiority on the Black Sea. This aggravated the coal shortages in Turkey, as much of Constantinople's coal came from Anatolia by freighter along the Black Sea Coast. By early 1917, the Russians were contemplating an amphibious assault on Constantinople, or Tsargrad as they liked to call it, an offensive that might have forced the Ottoman Empire out of the war. But the February Revolution came first, and the question of seizing Constantinople and the Straits, a Russian goal for more than a century, became politically fraught in Petrograd, and, bottom line, it was never attempted. Thanks to revolutionary turmoil in Russia, the Ottoman Empire, the Sick Man of Europe, survived yet another mortal threat.

March 1917 saw the British take Baghdad, scoring a propaganda victory, if not much of a military one. The Ottoman army in Mesopotamia had not been beaten and it still stood between the British and Anatolia. Farther north, in eastern Anatolia, stood the Russian Army of the Caucasus, which had proved the Turks' most formidable opponent for the past two and a half years. The British hoped for a Russian offensive south from eastern Anatolia and western Iran, one that would entrap the Ottoman army and allow the two allies to link their forces.

But then came the February Revolution and the Petrograd Soviet's Order Number One, which ended the threat from the Caucasus just as it had ended the threat of an amphibious assault on Constantinople. By the end of 1917, the British had taken Jerusalem, episode 154, another propaganda victory. In the Ottoman Empire, the fall of Baghdad and then of Jerusalem led to more rumors and whispering campaigns directed against the Germans. The suggestion circulated that the Germans in the Ottoman Army were secretly sabotaging the Empire. Wasn't the army group that lost Jerusalem commanded by a German, Erich von Falkenhayn? Are we supposed to believe that's just a coincidence?

It didn't help any that the same month Jerusalem fell, December 1917, Berlin announced that they were cutting off coal shipments to Constantinople. Germany had been shipping what coal it could spare to the Ottoman capital by rail, but the Germans no longer had coal to spare. And with the bread ration recently cut to 90 grams per day, it was shaping up to be a cold, bleak, hungry winter in Constantinople.

But in January came the armistice initiated by the Bolsheviks and the Brest-Litovsk peace agreement. With the end of hostilities, it was possible to ship coal in from Anatolia once again, as well as grain from Romania, and maybe even Ukraine, who knows?

Well, the Ukraine thing didn't work out, as the fledgling government in Kiev proved unable to rule its territory or keep the promises it made to the Germans, as Trotsky's taunt about the Rada controlling no more territory than its hotel rooms in Brest-Litovsk came back to haunt them. Meanwhile, south of the Black Sea, on the Caucasus front, the Russian Army pulled back and the Ottoman Army advanced. By April, the Ottoman government had secured its pre-war territory while continuing the army advance into the Caucasus to reclaim the lands the Turks had lost to the Russians in the 1877 war, lands that had been restored to them by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

The situation in the Caucasus was confused. Local governments popped up following the October Revolution, seeking autonomy or independence. In April 1918, Georgian and Armenian nationalists formed an alliance of convenience and declared a "Transcaucasian Democratic Federative Republic." The Ottomans quickly recognized the new state, but only for the sake of imposing their own peace terms on it. The Turks looked at Transcaucasia the way the Germans looked at Ukraine, primarily as a resource to be exploited.

But Transcaucasia only lasted a month before the Georgians bolted from the alliance and asked to be made a German protectorate, which they saw as their best defense against Bolsheviks to the north and Turks to the south. The Germans agreed, in exchange for generous mineral concessions, and began sending soldiers into Georgia via the Black Sea. The Armenians formed their own state, organized around a capital at the town of Yerevan. The Armenians took up arms and were able to resist the Turks, forcing the advancing Ottoman Army to bypass Armenian territory.

Because the Ottomans were not primarily interested in Georgian or Armenian territory. Once the Turks had secured the territory ceded to them by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the glittering prize that held their attention was the city of Baku, on the Caspian Sea. Baku lies in the territory of the third ethnic group in the Caucasus, the Azeri. In our time, we might call them Azerbaijanis. Unlike Georgians and Armenians, the Azeri are Muslims and a Turkic people at that, and thus have religious and cultural links to Turkey. The Azeri also declared independence, though unlike their Georgian and Armenian neighbors, they did not fear the Ottoman Army; they welcomed it.

They specifically welcomed Ottoman assistance in securing Baku. Now, the city of Baku at this time had a population over 200,000, making it the largest and most important city in Azerbaijan, and therefore the logical seat of government for an Azeri state. But though you might assume the largest city in Azeri territory would have a largely Azeri population, you would be wrong.

I want to underscore this for you, because soon the war will be over and we'll be talking about organizing post-war Europe and this problem will come up again and again. In multicultural empires like Russia or Austria, people move around a lot, especially educated urbanites. So, in a pattern you'll find repeated throughout both empires, while the countryside around Baku was populated overwhelmingly by Azeris, they amounted to only about 20% of the population of the city itself. Baku had an ethnic Russian plurality and a substantial Armenian community almost as big as the Azeri one, as well as many other ethnicities. The Russian and Armenian communities were divided between Bolsheviks and Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries, not to mention Russian Army soldiers returning from the front. These groups quarreled over many things but agreed on one big thing, that they had no wish to be ruled over by Azeris. Who started the fighting is in dispute, but in March and April, thousands of ethnic Azeri in Baku were killed.

This forced the would-be Azeri state to set up its would-be capital elsewhere and spurred them to invite the Ottoman Army in, to help them claim Baku. The Ottomans were more than happy to help, seeing as how Baku is the heart of the Russian petroleum industry, at the center of one of the most important oil-producing regions in the world at this time. Which also explains why so many non-Azeri live in the city. Ottoman officials saw Baku as a prize that could potentially reverse the Empire's decline and turn Turkey into an economic powerhouse. A few still dreamed of adding the Turkic nations of central Asia into the Empire. Control of Baku would aid in that effort as well. Baku is the largest port on the Caspian Sea; from there, the Turks could send troops into Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, perhaps even into India.

Of course, the Bolsheviks understood the value of Baku as well as the Turks did. Leon Trotsky maintained that holding Baku was more important than holding Moscow. Armenians in Baku remembered well the mass killings of their fellow Armenians by the Turks three years ago and were not about to allow them into Baku without a fight.

The Germans were also well aware of the economic value of Baku. Petroleum had grown hugely more important in the conduct of warfare even since 1914, now that tanks and airplanes and

tractors and trucks are becoming essential to a modern army. Placing German soldiers in Georgia gave Germany control over a Russian oil pipeline that ran to the Georgian port city of Batumi, on the Black Sea, from whence it could be shipped west, to Germany.

In June, as Turkish troops approached Baku, the panicked Armenian community invited a British military force in Iran, numbering about a thousand and commanded by General Lionel Dunsterville, to come by sea and help secure the city. At the same time, Erich von Ludendorff asked Enver Pasha to withdraw Turkish forces back to the new Turkish border set out in the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk.

The following day, Turkish troops actually exchanged fire with a German unit scouting near Baku and took a number of the Germans prisoner. An outraged Ludendorff demanded the prisoners be released at once, or else Germany would withdraw the 20,000 or so soldiers it had serving in the Ottoman Army. There were mutterings both in Berlin and in Constantinople that the two nominal allies were on the brink of war over Caucasian oil. The Germans complained to the Turks about their sending troops to Azerbaijan when Turkey was facing enemy armies in Mesopotamia, Palestine, and the Balkans.

There is a certain irony in this, given that the Germans have deployed hundreds of thousands of soldiers in a last-ditch effort to secure Ukraine and get those grain shipments that were promised but never materialized. And by September, German forces were contemplating an advance on Petrograd, the Germans having had quite enough of the Bolsheviks and their unwillingness to behave like a responsible government. All of this was happening as Germany's Western Front was crumbling.

But the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, and the consequent collapse of the Central Powers, would not begin in the Caucasus or on the Western Front, or even in the Near East. When the end came, it would begin in the Balkans, the very place where the Great War began.

[music: J.S. Bach, *Goldberg Variations*, No. 25]

There are four nations in the Central Powers coalition, the smallest of the four being Bulgaria. When Bulgaria entered the war, episode 111, it played a decisive role in defeating Serbia. Just as Serbia fell in 1915, the Allies took control of Salonika, eventually goaded Greece into joining them, and now have a considerable force in the southern Balkans.

For the past three years, the primary mission of the Bulgarian Army has been to contain the threat in the south. The Germans have been promising to send units to help relieve the Bulgarians of this duty, but for three years, these have remained mere promises. These defensive duties were costly, and Bulgaria wasn't getting much in return from the Central Powers for the hardships it was forced to endure.

War with Russia, in particular, was never very popular in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian state owed its existence to Russia, and Russia had until recently been Bulgaria's most supportive patron, while the Ottoman Empire had until recently been Bulgaria's biggest enemy. The Bulgarians still coveted Adrianople, the city they had won from the Turks in the First Balkan War and then lost in the Second. And when the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was negotiated, Bulgaria was not represented at the talks. Bulgaria had gotten none of the bounty that was pledged to Germany and Austria and Turkey.

In June 1918, just days after the Turks and the Germans had come to blows over Caucasian oil, and after Bulgarian troops refused orders to attack French and Greek forces in northern Greece, the government of Bulgaria, under its pro-German prime minister Vasil Radoslavov, fell and was replaced by a new government led by Aleksandar Malinov, a war skeptic who had been critical of Bulgaria's pro-German orientation. Malinov immediately opened secret peace talks with the Allies.

These talks failed, but the Allies correctly read the overture as a signal that Bulgaria's resolve was flagging. The new commander of the Allied Army of the Orient in Salonika was General Louis Franchet d'Espèrey, whom we first met all the way back in episode 88. On September 15, 1918, he began a general offensive across the Macedonian front. The Bulgarian lines disintegrated, and in a matter of days, the Allies had blown a hole 50 kilometers wide in the Bulgarian front and were advancing rapidly. Bulgaria sent a plea to Berlin for German reinforcements; the German high command told them there were no German soldiers available.

French and Serbian elements of the Army of the Orient headed north to liberate Serbia, while the British turned east and menaced Ottoman Thrace and Constantinople, where there were only about 7,500 Ottoman soldiers between the British and the Sublime Porte.

The Ottoman Grand Vizier, Talat Pasha was in Bulgaria at the time, on his way back to Constantinople following a meeting in Berlin. The Bulgarians informed him they would have no choice but to surrender. Talat Pasha reportedly turned to one of his aides and remarked, "We're finished." Actually, he said it in Turkish and actually that's not a literal translation because I can't give you a literal translation because this is a family podcast, but that was the gist of it.

In Palestine, General Allenby took advantage of this opportunity. The British had taken Jericho in March, while rebel Arab forces harried the Turks in southern Syria. On September 19, just as the Bulgarian front was collapsing, British forces began an attack on the Ottomans in Palestine at Megiddo, the location of the prophesied apocalyptic battle of Armageddon. The Ottoman forces collapsed. Arab units defected, perhaps sensing the end was near. Liman von Sanders, commander of the Thunderbolt Army Group, and Mustafa Kemal, commander of the Ottoman Seventh Army, ordered a retreat north to Damascus.

The very next day, the Russian foreign minister met with the Ottoman ambassador in Moscow and informed him that the Bolshevik government was renouncing the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as

it applied to Turkey. Enver Pasha had no choice but to comply with Russian demands to withdraw from the Caucasus. Units there were rushed to Thrace to defend Constantinople, and to Mosul to defend against the British advancing north from Baghdad.

On September 24, the Bulgarian government requested an armistice. A delegation traveled to Salonika, where a ceasefire agreement was signed on September 29, effective at noon on the following day. Bulgaria was out of the war.

This left the Ottoman Empire in a hopeless situation. Apart from the fact that a British army was marching unopposed against Constantinople, the withdrawal of Bulgaria from the war cut Turkey off from its remaining allies, Germany and Austria.

The collapse of Bulgaria was hardly any less of a disaster for Germany or Austria than it was for Turkey. Neither of them had any soldiers to spare to resist the Army of the Orient, now advancing northward, reclaiming Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro from enemy occupation. On October 4, just a few days after Bulgaria quit the war, Berlin and Vienna both reached out to Washington to ask for peace talks under the terms Woodrow Wilson had spelled out in his Fourteen Points.

Wilson's Fourteen Points sounded a lot more appealing than the demands London or Paris were likely to make, as the Germans and Austrians saw it, anyway. Constantinople followed suit, also asking the Americans to talk peace. The Three Pashas, Talat Pasha, Enver Pasha, and Djemal Pasha, who had basically been running the Empire for the duration of the war, resigned their positions, as it seemed likely to them that the Empire would get gentler peace terms from the Allies under a new government.

Unfortunately for the Turks, their armistice strategy had failed to take into account the fact that the United States had never actually declared war on Turkey, and therefore was in no position to negotiate an armistice. Washington merely forwarded the Turkish peace proposal to London.

The new Ottoman government formed under the leadership of a military officer named Ahmed Izzet Pasha, who had opposed the alliance with Germany back in 1914, and now was left to clean up the mess. He turned to the British General Charles Townshend. Remember Townshend? He had been British commander on the Mesopotamian Front until the surrender at Kut, two and a half years ago. The Turks had been exceptionally kind to Townshend, placing him in a villa on an island in the Sea of Marmara. This was in contrast to Townshend's soldiers, most of whom were Indian, whom the Turks had put to work maintaining and improving the Baghdad Railway.

Townshend repaid the Turks by offering to serve as mediator. He assured them that the British were a just and reasonable people, who would negotiate like gentlemen and not impose unjust or excessive terms. Izzet Pasha, inexperienced in the world of international diplomacy, was inclined to take these claims at face value, never mind the fact that Townshend himself had been out of

touch with his own government and people for thirty months and was in no position to assess the mood of the British government.

On the British side, there was a desire to conclude an Ottoman armistice as quickly as possible. Yes, the Germans were also asking for an armistice, but at this moment it was not clear whether and when that would happen, and in the meantime, the German Army was retreating, but in good order and you couldn't rule out the possibility that the Germans might regroup and build a new defensive line, say, along the River Rhine. You and I know the end is near for Germany, but this wasn't clear, not even in October 1918. The possibility of German resistance lasting another year, or even longer, could not be dismissed.

All the more reason to get an Ottoman armistice done, so British resources could be redeployed against Germany. And yes, Britain had territorial ambitions in Ottoman-controlled lands, but so did France and Italy and Greece. But the feeling of the British Cabinet was that Britain had essentially brought down the Ottoman Empire single-handedly, and David Lloyd George for one was in no mood to keep the war going just for the sake of the territorial ambitions of some of Britain's minor allies. Cough-France-cough. He told the Cabinet, "It would not be possible for the British to go on fighting the Turks simply because the French wanted Syria or Armenia or the Italians wanted Adalia." He even floated the idea of ditching the Sykes-Picot agreement. Nor did Lloyd George want Woodrow Wilson's input into the peace deal with Turkey, as Wilson would likely have something to say about Britain's ambitions in the region.

Speaking of which, you may notice we haven't had much to say about the Mesopotamian front lately, since the fall of Baghdad. That front has remained quiet, but in these hectic final days, after the Turks requested an armistice, British forces in Baghdad were ordered to move northward as quickly as possible to take the city of Mosul, in northern Mesopotamia. If you think back to the Sykes-Picot agreement, you'll recall that northern Mesopotamia was promised to the French. Why, you ask, are the British so keen to nail down a French territorial claim? Ah, but they aren't! And there hangs a tale.

In the years leading up to the Great War, geologists came to recognize that there was petroleum in northern Mesopotamia, potentially quite a lot of it. A Turkish corporation, funded by British and German money was organized to exploit this resource just before the war began. The potential oil from the region was not in mind when Sykes and Picot did their agreement, much to the chagrin of some in British government. Now, in 1918, the British were not content to allow what might well be the most valuable real estate in the Arab Near East to fall into the hands of a country that hadn't earned it. If the British Army held Mosul at the end of the war, well, there wouldn't be much Clemenceau could do about it, now would there?

On October 27, the British received an Ottoman delegation aboard the battleship *Agamemnon*, which was anchored at Mudros harbor in the island of Lemnos, not far from the Dardanelles. Representing Britain would be Admiral Sir Somerset Gough-Calthorpe, commander-in-chief of

the Mediterranean Fleet. Representing Turkey would be Rauf Bey, minister of maritime affairs. Rauf was an Anglophile who completely bought into Townshend's line about how just and reasonable Britain would be.

The French objected to this arrangement. They wanted a French negotiator present. The British refused, pointing out that in the interests of expedience General Franchet d'Esperey had negotiated the Bulgarian armistice all alone, on behalf of all the Allies. Now the British admiral was merely following the precedent set by the French general.

In fact, both allies truly were eager to reach an armistice agreement as quickly as possible, each for their own reasons. The British had given Calthorpe a list of twenty-four demands but also leeway to drop any but the first four, which related to granting British access to and control over the Straits to the Black Sea and the forts that guarded them. Had Rauf Bey fully understood how anxious the British were for a deal, the Turkish side might have extracted important British concessions. But Rauf agreed to almost everything, including a clause permitting Allied forces the right to occupy "any strategic points" in the Empire. What did that mean? Rauf wondered. Well, said Calthorpe, he'd have to check with London for a detailed explanation, but surely it didn't mean the Allies could occupy *any* place in the Empire; only the strategic ones. Rauf accepted this explanation.

Yeah, it totally meant the Allies could occupy any place in the Empire. The only concession Rauf was able to win from the British was an agreement not to permit Italian or Greek troops to occupy the forts along the Straits. As for the "any strategic points," thing, Rauf asked for time to cable Constantinople to confirm the government's agreement. Calthorpe warned him that "the longer the armistice proceedings took, the more chance there was of the whole thing being broken off." Rauf signed the armistice, effectively agreeing to the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire.

The agreement was signed on October 30, to be effective at noon on the 31st. In Mesopotamia, the British, now under the command of General William Marshall, defeated the Ottoman Sixth Army at the Battle of Sharqat on October 28. On the 30th, the same day the armistice was signed, Marshall accepted the surrender of the Sixth Army, but he continued to press northward toward the goal of Mosul, which his forces took on November 2, in open violation of the terms of the armistice which had taken effect two days earlier. The strong do what they will, and the weak suffer what they must.

An armistice with Austria would take effect just a few days later, and one with Germany just a few days after that, but we'll have to stop here for today. Thanks for listening, and I'd especially like to thank Pavlos for his donation and thank you Michael for becoming a patron of the podcast. Donors and patrons help keep the lights on around here and most importantly, help keep Mrs. History of the Twentieth Century from telling me to go out and find a real job, and I am forever grateful to you all for both of those benefits. If you're not yet a donor or a patron and

would like to become one, just visit the website, historyofthetwentiethcentury.com and click on the PayPal or Patreon buttons. While you're there, take a moment to leave a comment and let me know what you think of the podcast. And allow me to remind you once again that you can also find playlists of the music I use on the podcast. Most of it is free and downloadable, so if you hear something you like, you'll find a link to it on the website.

And I hope you'll join me next week on *The History of the Twentieth Century* as we turn our attention back to the Western Front to review the last gasps of the last German offensive as the initiative on that front at last turns, and turns decisively, to the Allies. The black day of the German Army, next week, on *The History of the Twentieth Century*.

Oh, and one more thing. I should mention, Mustafa Kemal had commanded that Ottoman Army during the Palestine Campaign. On November 1, he was given overall command of the Thunderbolt Army Group. This was after the armistice took effect, and so amounted merely to an administrative posting. The army group was to be disbanded within a few days anyway.

But Kemal took advantage of this opportunity to issue orders transferring military stockpiles from the Thunderbolt Army Group northward into central Anatolia before the Allies could get their hands on them. Kemal himself would return to Constantinople, for now. What happens next...well, you'll have to wait and see.

[music: Closing War Theme]