THE QUESTION OF ITALIAN CLAIMS.

THE Congress will be faced by very great difficulties over the question of Italian claims, and the possibility of giving Italy satisfaction alike for her efforts in the war and for her territorial, strategic, and economic requirements. These Italian claims may be divided into three parts:

1. Territories justly claimed by Italy on the ground of the racial affinity of their inhabitants, or of a considerable portion of them, with the Italians, or of their wish to be united with Italy.

2. Territories which, though not containing populations which can be regarded as Italian on the grounds either of race or of self-determination, are considered by Italy vital for the protection of her frontiers and coasts or to which she conceives herself, owing to their vicinity, to possess a prior claim to any other Power.

3. Asiatic and African territories which are considered by Italy as falling naturally within the proper zone of Italian control either on grounds of strategic and economic interests, or because the political equilibrium between the colonial possessions of the Great Powers is thereby safeguarded in the interests of Italy.

Further, (4) overlapping and partly including both (1), (2), and (3), are the territories already mentioned under these respective headings which have been assured to Italy by her Agreements with the British, French, and former Russian Governments in 1915 and 1917, as well as previous engagements entered into by Italy with any or all of these Governments.

It is proposed in this Memorandum, without entering into geographical detail or urging any particular solution, such as can only be proposed and accepted after consultation between all those responsible for British interests in the different spheres enumerated, to pose the question of what possibilities there are of satisfying Italian claims without serious injury either to principles such as self-determination, for which we have declared ourselves to be fighting, or to vital British, colonial, strategic, and economic interests.

(1.) The different areas may be examined in turn. Under heading (1) are the territories inhabited by Italian majorities outside the present boundaries of Italy. This roughly includes the part of the former Austrian province of Tirol, generally known as the Trentino, from the Italian frontiers as far north as a line running from the Ortler group south-eastwards to Mezzo Lombardo and thence north-east to the Marmolata group, as well as a few small adjustments of frontier further east. Further, within this category fall the territories (I) round Gradisca and Aquileia, between the Italian frontier and the Isonzo, and in some cases beyond it; (II) a thin coastal strip round the Gulf of Trieste, including the city of Trieste; (III) the western coast and about half of the hinterland of Istria within a line running practically due south, from just east of Trieste to just east of Pola. Beyond these territories there is nothing that can be claimed on the eastern coast of the Adriatic as Italian.
race, with the exception of the cities of Fiume and Zara, which, though they contain small Italian majorities, in the two towns themselves, are surrounded by overwhelming Slav populations.

(2.) Under heading (II) the territories enumerated under heading (I) are considerably expanded. For instance, on strategic grounds, probably legitimate, Italy claims not only the Italian-speaking Trentino, but the whole of Tirol up to the Brenner Pass, enclosing considerable German-speaking majorities. Not only does she claim the Gradisca-Aquileia district, but a line running considerably further east and enclosing both territories, with mixed Italian and Slav populations and territories purely Slav. This line includes within her frontiers the whole of Istria. Passing further south it takes in not only the great majority of the islands in the Adriatic, but half of Dalmatia (i.e., the northern half down to Cape Palaon), although, both in the case of the islands and of Northern Dalmatia, the population is practically entirely Jugo-Slav. Further down the Adriatic she not only proposes to annex Valona, but to obtain a Protectorate over the whole of Albania.

Mention has only been made here of the territories officially claimed by the Italian Government, not of those which a section of the Italian press, led by "L'idea Nazionale," would like to see included in Italy. The latter's chauvinist pretensions would include, further, Fiume and practically the whole of Dalmatia as far south as the river Narenta. On the other hand, moderate opinion in Italy, as typified by the "Unita," "Secolo," and to some extent the "Corriere della Sera," i.e., mainly Radical and reformed Socialist opinion, fearful of provoking a permanent quarrel with the Jugo-Slavs, would, while maintaining the full measure of Italian claims in the Tirol and round Trieste, abandon the eastern corner of Istria (east of Monte Maggiore) and the whole of Dalmatia, with most of the islands, to the Jugo-Slav State. In the case of Albania there appears to be no difference of opinion as to the need for an Italian Protectorate, though there may be difference of opinion as to the way in which this Protectorate shall be secured.

(3) The territories falling under this heading are
(a) The regions of South and West Asia Minor, in which Italy claims a prior interest, and which the 1915 and 1917 Agreements acknowledged to be within her sphere;
(b) the Dodecanese, regarded as important both as controlling the entrance to the Egean and as commanding the approach to the Anatolian coast; (c) adjustments of the Libyan frontier giving Italy certain points, mainly in cases, at present under Tunisian or Egyptian administration; (d) territories connected with Eritrea and Italian Somaliland, with which is bound up the question of Italian influence on Abyssinia.

It is hard to say to what extent Italian public opinion is interested in these acquisitions. They are naturally considered as offering good outlets for Italian capital and colonising energy, and the relative insuccess of the Libyan venture does not seem to have altogether damped colonial enthusiasm.

(4.) Our official commitments to Italy come under the

* According to the "Neue Freie Presse" (November 17), the figures for Central Tirol are: German, 215,553; Ladino, 9,462; Italian, 7,047.
two headings of the Treaty of London, the 26th April, 1915, and the Anglo-Italian Agreement, the 8th August, 1917.

I.—By the Treaty of London, Italy was to receive:—

(a.) Tirol, as far north as a line running from Stelvio through the Brenner Pass up to the Venediger-Spitze, and then south to the old Italian frontier east of Cortina.

(b.) The Austrian provinces of Kaisenland and Istria up to a line running from Triglav east of Adelsberg down to the coast just west of Fiume.

(c.) All the islands of the Adriatic except Veglia, Arbe, Solta, Bracza, and Sabinacino.

(d.) Northern Dalmatia down to Cape Palanka.

(e.) Valona and an enclave round it.

(f.) Protectorate over Central Albania.

(g.) The Dodkeletal.

(h.) The recognition of her interest in the maintenance of balance of power in the Mediterranean, and, in the event of the partition of the partial partition of the Ottoman Empire, or even the redistribution of zones of interest in Turkey, an equitable share in the region of Adalia.

(i.) If Britain or France obtain an increase in their colonial possessions in Africa, Italy might in principle claim equitable compensation, particularly in the shape of a favourable settlement of questions affecting frontiers between Eritrea, Somaliland, and Libya and the adjacent British and French colonies.

(Only territorial commitments are here stated.)

II.—Under the Agreement of the 8th August, 1917, we pledge ourselves, “subject to the consent of Russia” (which has not been obtained), that—

(a.) Italy might administer a zone consisting of the southern half of Asia Minor stretching from the northern point of the Gulf of Smyrna, east to the Erjes Dagh, and bounded on the east by a line running thence south-west to the coast between Mersina and Maidan.

(b.) In the zone north of this, running up to just south of Edrimid and Brusa, and including Kutaya and Ak Sheh, Italy might appoint functionaries, &c., on the same terms as France and Britain are allowed to do so in the zones created under the Sykes-Picot Agreement.

(c.) Italy was to enjoy reciprocal commercial privileges in the Allied zones.

(d.) If, as a result of the war, it were found impossible to partition the Ottoman Empire to the full extent contemplated in the above agreements, then the principle of the balance of power in the Mediterranean will be observed in any distribution which takes place.

It is, therefore, a question for British and Allied policy as to which of these claims, enumerated under the four headings, can be accepted as conforming with Allied engagements and not clashing either with the principles for which we have declared we are fighting or with our vital interests. It is clear that the territories enumerated under (1) pass without dispute to Italy, both on the grounds of the principle of nationality and because they are all included in the territories assigned to Italy by the Treaty of London; (2) and (3) are closely connected, and they are both in the main covered by (4). Territories enumerated under (3), however, were
granted to Italy with a less binding sanction than those under (2), for the 1917 Agreement, to which the signature of Russia was never affixed, may possibly be regarded as having lapsed. The Treaty of London, on the other hand, is certainly still binding. It is true that casuistic objections may be raised from our side that the Italians have not fulfilled the letter of the treaty in several respects. In one or two cases they have gone further, and may even be considered to have violated its spirit. For instance, whereas by the treaty only a protectorate over Central Albania was accorded to Italy, Northern and Southern Albania being left open to Serbia and Greece respectively, the Italian Government in June, 1917, on their own initiative, proclaimed a protectorate over the whole of Albania. Further, the agitation, which the Italian Government have taken no measures to discourage, for the annexation of Fiume to Italy would be, if it came to anything, a flagrant violation both of the letter and spirit of the treaty. But it may be submitted that it is not the policy of His Majesty's Government to insist too much on these infractions of the treaty by Italy. We must make it perfectly clear (1) that we have not had and have not now any intention either of breaking our pledged word or of appearing to break it; (2) that, on the other hand, President Wilson's principle that no populations should be transferred from one allegiance to another without their own consent has been accepted by all the belligerents, the Italian Government included; (3) that we have, both indirectly and directly, given every encouragement to the movement for Jugo-Slav union and independence, and are obviously, therefore, bound in honour not to put any unreasonable obstructions in the way of the attainment of this object; (4) that the Italian Prime Minister himself has recognised that the achievement of Jugo-Slav unity is not opposed to the vital interests of Italy.

Foreign Office, December 11, 1918.